



# The Genocide Education Project

## The stories "digniks" tell: Preserving Armenian culture through artifacts

Developed by GenEd Education Program Assistant Christina Chiranian

### Rationale:

Exploring cultures is an integral part of developing social-emotional intelligence. In the case of genocide education, deepening students' understanding of a culture allows them to engage more fully with the extent of the damage and long-term consequences of genocide beyond the number of deaths. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, the loss of lives, lands, and national and cultural institutions was accompanied by the real threat of the extinction of languages, national and religious traditions, professional expertise, and methods that had been passed down for centuries. Survivors of the genocide, now dispersed throughout the world, placed great emphasis on preserving their culture as a means of resisting genocide. Students will explore the significance of traditional Armenian dolls, “dignik” (pronounced “deegneeg”), in terms of their personal, historical, and cultural meaning, as well as the concepts of cultural preservation and resistance, promoting empathy and cultural awareness, especially in the context of genocide. To deepen students' understanding of the Armenian Genocide, utilize lessons 3, 4, & 5 of [Resistance, Agency, and Empowerment](#) on [The Genocide Education Project's](#) website.



### Sequence:

Grades 6-12

Social Studies, English Language Arts, and Art Classes

Can be used with [Humanizing History: A Doll's Dress](#) as an introduction to the Armenian Genocide and the importance of digniks.

## Student Outcomes:

Students will:

- Explore the significance of historical and traditional objects that serve to help preserve cultural heritage
- Understand the historical and symbolic meanings of “digniks” in Armenian culture
- Create a replica of a “dignik” to share Armenians’ cultural expression and prompt contemplation of their own cultural identity

## California State Standards:



**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7/9-10.7** (Grades 6-10): Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7:** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.2/9-10.2/11-12.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**CHSS.WHST.10.5.5:** Discuss human rights violations and genocide, including the Ottoman government’s actions against Armenian citizens.

## Materials:

- [Vocabulary and Translations](#)
- Slide Deck:  The stories “digniks” tell
- [Traditional Armenian dolls information handout](#)
- [Discussion questions: Traditional Armenian Dolls](#)
- [Digniks Cooperative Learning Groups](#)
- Video Link:  Nuri Dignik Video Instructions.mp4
- [Paper dignik instructions](#) and related materials
- [Fabric dignik instructions](#) and related materials
- [Post dignik. making discussion prompts](#)
- [Akh Ninar-Ode to a Girl Named Ninar](#)

## Day 1: Introduction to Armenian Dolls (50 minutes)

Step 1: Introduce students to digniks using the Slide Deck, [\*"The stories digniks tell"\*](#)

*Before you teach this lesson, please take the time to practice the pronunciation beforehand, using the [Vocabulary and Translations](#) provided.*

**Background Information:** “Digniks” were very prominent in Armenian households and were usually made from cloth, thread, clay, wood, metal, wool, or even household items such as a broom or a spade. These dolls have become cherished family heirlooms, passed down through generations, and now hold an important ethnographic and preservative function, promoting and preserving Armenian national costumes, accessories, and customs (Armenian Geographic).

*Use the slide deck to introduce digniks to students*

1. Slide 1-2: Display the bell ringer writing prompt: “Write about your favorite childhood toy or other object,” and ask students to describe their chosen object through the 5 senses (whichever senses apply), to draw a picture with words. Ask them to reflect on what made the item so special.
2. Ask a few students to share their examples, and perhaps share one from your own life. Focus on what made the item so important that you remember it so vividly today.
3. Slides 3-6: Present the historical and cultural importance of “digniks”.
4. Slides 7-10: Share a few pieces of information on types of Armenian “digniks”
  - Asilik Vasilik (Ah-see-leek Vah-see-leek): Fortune-telling dough doll
  - Vichaki Arus: Ascension Day doll, involved in rituals to bring good fortune.
  - Nuri (Noo-ree) (Bride of Rain): Doll made to ask for rain and a good harvest.
  - Armenian “bride’s doll” or “Doll of patience” (in some regions, “sabri khrtsig”)(Sah-bree Khur-tseeg): given to brides.
  - Boy digniks: embodiments of traditional Armenian professional men OR made to scare away evil
5. Highlight how these dolls were deeply cherished and carried through difficult times, as they were thought to have magical powers and often represented protection, luck, or a connection to home and heritage.

## **Step 2: Analyzing the Significance of Dolls in Armenian Culture**

1. Handout Documents A-E: [Traditional Armenian Dolls information handout](#) and [Discussion questions: Traditional Armenian dolls](#)
2. In small groups, ask students to read the Traditional Armenian Dolls information handout to themselves and then discuss the questions on the worksheet. At your discretion, you may ask each group to designate any number of roles, using the [Digniks Cooperative Learning Groups](#) as a guide:
  - a. Facilitator (discussion leader)
  - b. Researcher (seeks information to aid discussion)
  - c. Recorder (takes discussion point notes)
  - d. Writer (summarizes discussion consensus on handout)
  - e. Editor (reviews handout for accuracy of responses)
  - f. Presenter (reports handout answers to class)

## **Step 3: Reflective Discussion on Cultural Preservation**

1. Ask each group's Presenter to report their discussion handout summaries.
2. Pose questions to encourage deeper reflection on cultural preservation, for example:
  - How might the practice of creating and keeping traditional dolls serve as a form of cultural resistance?
  - Why would these dolls be important to children or families who survived the genocide?
  - What does keeping cultural artifacts like these dolls say about the importance of heritage for future generations?
  - How do you think these beliefs in magical powers might influence kids to take dolls on these death marches and hold on to them dearly during the Armenian Genocide?

**Step 4:** Facilitate a brief class discussion based on students' reflections and earlier group discussions



## Day 2: Dignik-making activity (50 minutes)

### Step 1: Preparing students to make digniks

Students will have the opportunity to take part in the preservation of Armenian culture by making a dignik. There are different ways to make a “dignik”, and every student will put their spin on it. Before students begin making their digniks, you may find it helpful to watch this [video](#) from the “Machanents” center in Armenia. This center offers after-school programs in Armenia where kids of all ages learn how to make digniks. In addition to showing how to make the pre-sewn clothing dignik, the video goes through the explanation and symbolization of various pieces and materials used to make the digniks. It also includes a snippet of an Armenian folk song that was sung to “activate” the magic of the dolls. (See full song, lyrics, and translation here: [Akh Ninar](#)).

Step 2: Choose which type of dignik to make, then click the link for the instructions:



[Paper Dignik](#)



[Fabric Dignik](#)

### Step 3: Make the Dignik:

Before the students start working on their digniks, display the materials they'll use and explain the symbolism Armenians attach to those materials:

- Sticks in the shape of a cross: Christianity
- Seeds/Lentils: Fertility and prosperity
- Coin: Wealth and good fortune
- Colors: Each natural color (green, red, tan, blue, pink) represents a different “power”: strength, wealth, fertility, life, and prosperity (i.e. happiness, health, purpose)
  - Ex: Green represents Fertility (corresponding with plants, nature, etc.) Or Tan represents prosperity (corresponding with wheat - the more wheat harvested, the more flour/food for the family, and the more money, as you can sell the wheat).

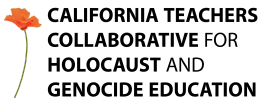
Encourage students to think about the significance of the object they are creating, reflecting on how it connects to the cultural heritage they are learning about.

### Step 4: Post-dignik-making discussion

Facilitate a class-wide reflection or have students complete a discussion exit ticket on the experience of making their doll and what it symbolizes about cultural heritage and survival. Create your own discussion questions or use those on the [Post-dignik making discussion prompts](#) chart.

## Extension Options:

- Family heirlooms like furniture, china, jewelry, etc., are often disregarded or discarded. Considering what you have just learned about these traditional Armenian dolls, what might be the potential impact of not knowing the history and significance of family heirlooms to the individual family and national heritage? What are your thoughts on preserving family heirlooms?
- Consider your cultural heritage and family. Is there something in your cultural heritage that would be a dignik equivalent? What is it, and what role does it play? What specific words or phrasing support your answer?
- Play the song [Akh Ninar](#) and have students read the lyrics. Why would Armenians choose this song to be sung to “activate the magic” in the dignik doll?
- Bake Asilik Vasilik dolls using this recipe. Have students reflect on the creation process.



*This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education, established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from the California Department of Education, Marin County Office of Education, and the State of California.*

## Vocabulary and translations:

### 1. Diaspora (English word)

- **Pronunciation:** dye-as-por-uh
- **Definition:** the dispersion or spread of a people from their original homeland.
  - A group of people who maintain a connection to their homeland
  - May include people who were forced to leave their homeland or who left voluntarily
  - May include descendants of people who were forced to leave their homeland
  - May include people who identify with a homeland but live outside of it

### 2. Dignik (Armenian word for Armenian national dolls):

- **Pronunciation:** deeg-neeg
- **Definition:** a general term for various types of traditional Armenian dolls
- **Translation:** doll

### 3. Dowry (English word)

- **Pronunciation:** dow-ree
- **Definition:** a payment (monetary, land, cattle, assets) that the bride's family pays to the groom's family to marry her off.
- **Armenian Word:** Ojid (Oh-jeed)

### 4. Harsneren (Armenian word)

- **Pronunciation:** Hars-neh-ren
- **Literal Translation/story:** “Language of the Bride”
- **Definition:** A gesture-based form of communication used by married women. Harsnerēn was used when communication was necessary, as restrictions were typically placed on the speech of married women (Kekejian). The practice was also called “chkhoskanutyun” (chu-khos-ka-noot-yoon) in Armenian (“muteness”)
- [Learn More](#) about Harsneren

## 5. Hampartsoum (Armenian word for Ascension Day)

- **Pronunciation:** Hahm-pahr-tsoom
- **Literal Translation:** Resurrection, Ascension
- **English Name:** Ascension Day — the day the Bible says Christ ascended into the heavens
- [Learn More](#) about the Hampartsoum Holiday

### Traditional Armenian dolls information handout

Doll description A: **Asilik Vasilik** (“Ah-see-leek Vah-see-leek”)



[\(photo: Sputnik Armenia, from Armenian Geographic “Armenian National Dolls”\)](#)

Armenian women and young girls would make Asilik Vasilik dolls out of dough, usually on New Year’s Eve. Asilikis were female dolls, while Vasiliks were male. The dolls could be of different shapes, styles, and edible decorations, often raisins or nuts. The Vasilik dolls had a belt to differentiate them from the women.

If the dough swelled during baking, it was a sign that the new year would bring good luck to the family. If, instead, the dough shrank, the year would bring bad luck. If there was a new bride in the house, and their doll’s stomach swelled during baking, it meant that the bride would have a child in the coming year. Sometimes, these cookies would also be shaped into a wallet or purse, and if that cookie swelled, the year would bring wealth.

#### Asilik Vasilik

- **Pronunciation:** Ah-see-leek Vah-see-leek
- **Literal Translation/story:** Vasil is the Greek name for leader/czar. So Vasilik is a word play on that - because this “Vasil bread” (Greek bread/ was made for the Greek emperor, the dough is similar to this cookie. Asilik is a play on the word and refers to the female cookie doll.
- **English Name:** Fortune Telling Cookie Dolls (Today, it’s called “Zadigi Kekhke” or “Easter Cookies”)
  - Kekhke (Kekh-keh): savory, crispy cookie
- [Asilik Vasilik Recipe](#)



**Traditional Armenian Dolls Information Handout**  
**Doll Description B: Vichaki Arus (“Vee-jah-gee Ah-roos”)**



Photos: [Xaratyan-Arakelyan Յայ գործընդհանուր Տոկերը](#)

Armenian unmarried girls would make their own Vichaki Arus doll (“Vee-jah-gee Ah-roos”) or “Fortune Telling Doll.” The doll was adorned with various beads, floral designs, and the girl’s jewelry in hopes that the more beautiful the doll, the more luck the girl would have to be married and have a positive fortune.

The Vichaki Arus doll was made for the religious holiday of “Hampartsoum” or Ascension Day — the day the Bible says Christ ascended into the heavens. Girls of the village would take a special clay jug and fill it with seven handfuls of water from seven springs, seven petals from seven flowers, and seven stones from seven running waters in preparation for the Vichak (fortune-telling). Single girls would put a piece of jewelry into this prepared jug and then place the Vichaki Arus doll on top of the jug, which was left out under the moonlight overnight.

The next morning, the girls would take turns singing a fortune song and pulling a piece of jewelry out of the jug. The song that is sung represents the fortune of the girl whose jewelry was picked out. The dolls used for the fortune would be kept to be used as part of the girl’s dowry (“ojid” in Armenian). When the girl is married, they take the doll to their husband’s house as company and protection.

**Vichaki Arus**

- **Pronunciation:** Vee-jah-gee Ah-roos
- **Literal Translation:** Vichak: Fortune | Arus: Running/Flowing Water
  - Metaphorically: Fortunes flowing like running water
  - Also known as “Status Doll,” the doll would reveal the girl’s status - would she be married or single this next year?
- **English Name:** Ascension Day Doll

## Traditional Armenian Dolls Information Handout

### Doll Description C: Nuri



[Image and text from Armenian Geographic: Armenian National Dolls](#)

The Nuri Dignik (“Rain Doll” or “Bride of Rain”) was considered a symbol of Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter. The doll got its name from the Armenian goddess Tsovinar or Nar—the goddess of water, sea, and rain. She was a fierce goddess who forced the rain to fall from the heavens with her fury. The Nuri Doll is made every Palm Sunday by both boys and girls in hopes of bringing rain to their villages to ensure a season with lots of bloom and growth of crops.

Nuri was a beloved doll that little girls of all provinces would dance and sing with, going from house to house, sprinkling water on the houses during Palm Sunday. This doll, also called “bride of rain” represents the goddess of rain, as it was believed she had magical powers to bring rain during a drought. When there was a horrible drought and the soil dried out and cracked, Nuri would get upset. As she begins to cry, her tears, representing the rain, revive the fields.

Nuri was a distinct doll that had to be made to look as realistically human and feminine as possible. In the Armenian provinces, Nuri would be made from pieces of a broom or wood. Nuri had to have long hair and big almond-shaped eyes (the bigger the eyes, the more tears/rain would come). Her face had to be made with a white cloth symbolizing purity, and she had to have well-drawn eyebrows, nose, and mouth. Nuri’s shirt would be made by using colorful cloth to symbolize a rainbow. And on her head, Nuri would wear a wreath decorated with flowers and beads. She looked very floral and was the epitome of the coming of spring. Making this doll was believed to be a necessary step in ensuring the problems of inadequate irrigation, water, rain, and a good crop season would be solved through the magic of Nuri and the blessing of the Goddess Nar.



## **Nuri**

- **Pronunciation:** Noo-ree
- **Literal Translation:** Pomegranate
- **English Name:** Bride of Rain
- **Story of Nuri and Name:** Many priests like Reverend Der Minasyan would write about how Palm Sunday should be a holiday dedicated to the Armenian Pagan Goddess Nar (also known as Nuri) because of Nar's efforts to bring rain during a long period of drought in Armenia. The Nuri doll is supposed to celebrate the Goddess of Rain and is said to have magical powers to bring rain.

## Traditional Armenian Dolls Information Handout

### Doll Description D: Armenian “Bride’s Doll” - Sabri Khrtsig



[Image: ChinArmArt.com](http://ChinArmArt.com): "Armenian 'bride's doll' and its symbolism"

In some regions, newly married Armenian women were not allowed to speak to anyone in the household except to other women, and then, only in the “[Harsneren](#)” sign language, for a certain amount of time at the beginning of their marriage. Many newlywed women relied on their Armenian Bride’s Doll, or “Sabri Khrtsig” (Doll of Patience), for comfort. This was a traditional doll that was believed to have the power to protect the bride, fortune-telling, and serve as a confidant to the bride in her bedroom. In times of hardship, young married women could share their troubles with their dolls in one of the quiet corners of the house. Traditionally, this doll was prepared in secrecy by the bride’s mother or grandmother and was an important item in a bride’s dowry.

#### Sabri Khrtsig

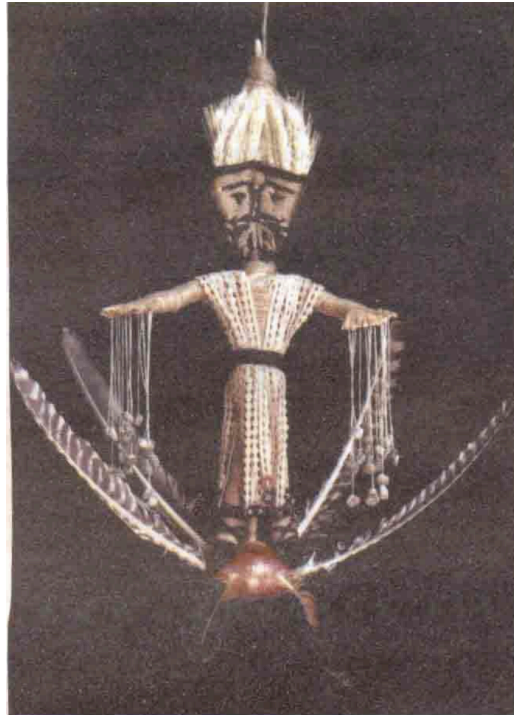
- **Pronunciation:** Sah-bree Khur-tseeg
- **Literal Translation/story:** “Yarn Ball” all of patience
- **English Name:** Armenian “bride’s doll”
- [Learn More](#) about the Sabri Khrtsig

## **Traditional Armenian Dolls Information Handout**

### **Doll Description E: Boy Digniks**

Boy digniks were almost always made by the women in families. A different version would be made for each holiday, and years later, we see boy digniks' role transition from scaring away evil to now representing traditional Armenian professions.

#### Swinging Boy Dignik



The Swinging Boy dignik was made by the matriarch of the household. It would be hung in a large space, most often in the living room of the house. The tradition was that all the unmarried girls would sit under this swinging dignik. The matriarch would tell each girl's fortune based on the way the dignik was swinging when it was her turn, explaining what the swing meant. Often, this would include fortunes about who the girl would marry, her future family, and other aspects of what her future life would be like.

### Modern Boy Dignik:



[Image from: WeddingDollsStudio: "Armenian Shepherd Doll"](#)

Over the years, Armenian women began to make digniks that resembled various embodiments of traditional Armenian professional men, such as shepherds, musicians, farmers, craftsmen, etc.

## Discussion questions: Traditional Armenian dolls

<u>Discussion Question</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<b><u>Infer:</u></b> What do the various types of Digniks reveal to us about Armenian culture and history?	
<b><u>Infer:</u></b> Given the belief in the protective and magical qualities of these dolls, why might they have been carried during the Armenian Genocide death marches or kept by Survivors?	
<b><u>Analyze:</u></b> How do you think these dolls would help Armenian children connect with their identity after the Armenian Genocide while living in the diaspora?	
<b><u>Synthesis:</u></b> If you could only carry one small object that represents your culture, what would you choose and why?	
<b><u>Application:</u></b> What do these digniks represent, and how would you explain their importance to someone unfamiliar with Armenian culture?	
<b><u>Reflection:</u></b> How does understanding the significance of these dolls affect your perspective on how the practice of creating and keeping traditional dolls serves as a form of cultural resistance?	

## Digniks Cooperative Learning Groups

<p><b>Facilitator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leads the group discussion</li><li>• Makes sure that every voice is heard</li><li>• Focuses work around the learning task</li></ul> <p>Sentence Starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Let's hear from ____ next."</li><li>• "That's interesting, but let's get back to our task."</li></ul>	<p><b>Researcher</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seeks information to aid the discussion</li><li>• Refers back to reading to pull out information</li><li>• Google searches for necessary information that is unknown to the group</li></ul> <p>Sentence Starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I will look that up for us!"</li><li>• "I remember reading about __, but I didn't quite understand it. I will Google it for us."</li></ul>
<p><b>Recorder</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Compiles group members' ideas on a collaborative graphic organizer or piece of paper (notes)</li><li>• Writes notes on discussions had by the group for everyone to see and refer back to.</li></ul> <p>Sentence Starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I think I heard you say_____; is that right?"</li><li>• "That's a great point! Let me write that down so we remember!"</li></ul>	<p><b>Writer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summarizes the discussion and notes to write the group's consensus response to the questions assigned.</li><li>• Writes the final responses to posed questions.</li></ul> <p>Sentence Starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "We discussed __. How would you like me to write this in our response?"</li><li>• "The question is asking this, so I am thinking of including the following points mentioned __."</li></ul>
<p><b>Editor</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reviews work assigned for accuracy of responses and makes any corrections necessary.</li></ul> <p>Sentence Starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I reviewed the questions, and this looks great!"</li><li>• "I noticed you spelled __ wrong, I corrected that."</li><li>• "This looks great, I think we are just missing __."</li></ul>	<p><b>Presenter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presents the group's finished work to the class</li><li>• report answers to class during the discussion</li></ul> <p>Sentence Starters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• My group and I discussed ____ and said ____."</li></ul>



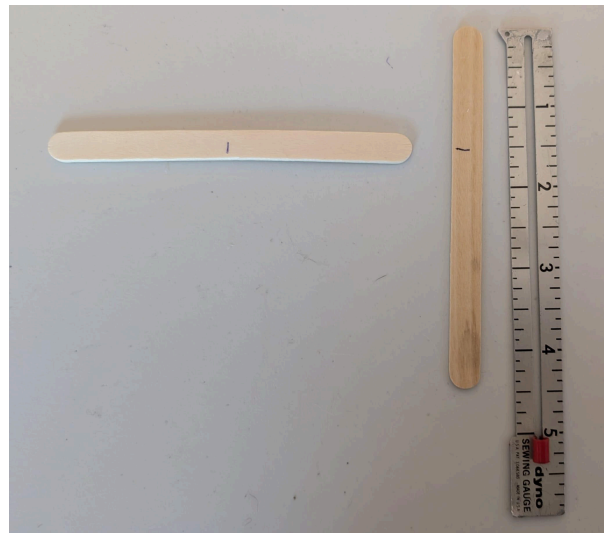
## Paper dignik instructions:

### Materials:

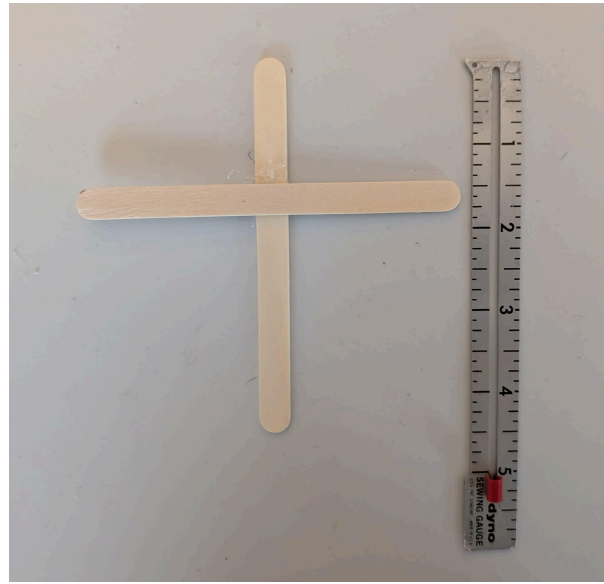
- (2) 4.5" popsicle sticks
- Construction paper
- Small paper clips
- Stapler
- Scotch tape
- Liquid or stick glue
- Hot glue gun
- Hole punch

### For the Dress:

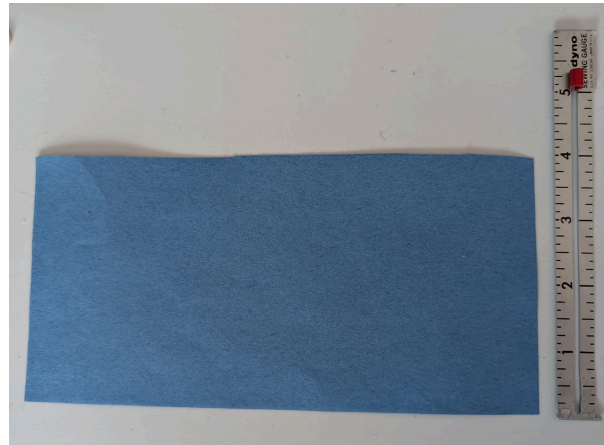
1. Make a cross or "T" with the popsicle sticks; mark the vertical stick 1.5" from the top; mark the horizontal stick at 2.25"



2. Use the hot glue gun to glue the sticks together, using your marks as guides



3. Cut a piece of construction paper to 4"x8" to create the dress





4. Overlap the short edges by 0.5" to create a tube, using a paper clip at the top and bottom to hold it in place; this creates a "tube," and the paper clips are the back of the dress



5. Flatten the tube to create side seams



6. Measure 0.25" from the top of the paper along the seams; use the hole punch to create arm holes



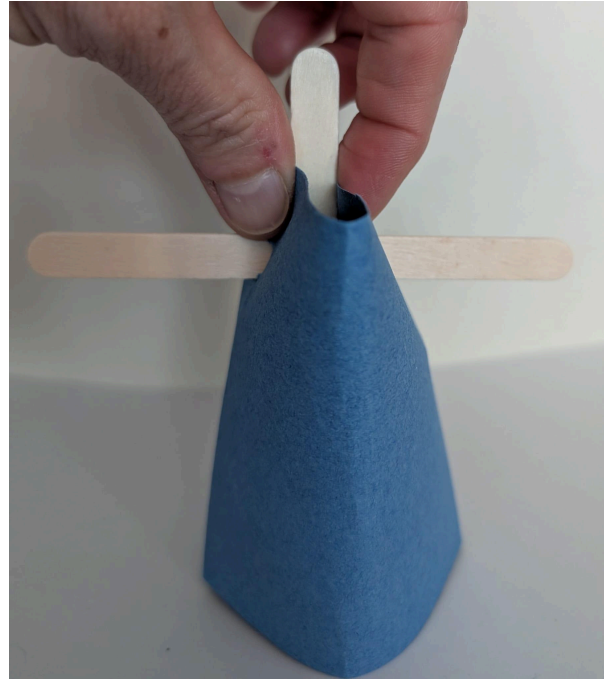
7. Remove the paper clips and unfold the paper; ease the “arms” through the holes



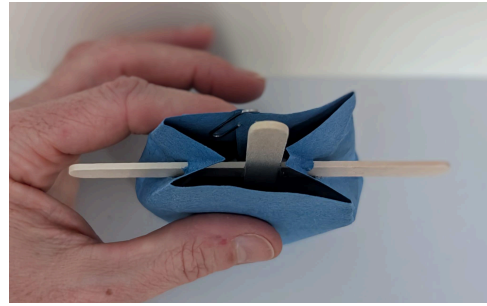
8. Wrap the paper around the cross sticks, being sure that the paper touches the surface so that it will stand the doll up; use a paper clip to secure the ends. This is the dress!



9. Push the seams of the dress toward the vertical stick



10. Like wrapping a gift, push the middle of the front and back of the dress to the vertical stick, creating folds in the paper



11. Use a stapler, tape, or glue to close the top (neck) of the dress



12. Tape, staple, or glue the bottom of the dress



For the head:

1. Using construction paper, cut out a circle, 1.25" diameter works well, which is the same size as a spool of thread (this can also be done using a Cricut machine if one is available)



2. Draw on facial features





3. Attach the head to the vertical stick using glue or a rolled piece of tape



4. Add head covering:
- Draw hair
  - Use cloth to make a head covering
  - Add yarn as hair



Notes:

There are many ways to create a doll.

Decorating the dress is easiest after installing it on the sticks

Decorating the face is easiest before attaching it to the stick

Use different pieces (scraps) of construction paper to make the doll unique  
Consider adding hair using construction paper or yarn  
Add beads, seeds (lentils), or other textured items as you see fit



## Fabric dignik instructions

Materials (1 dignik):

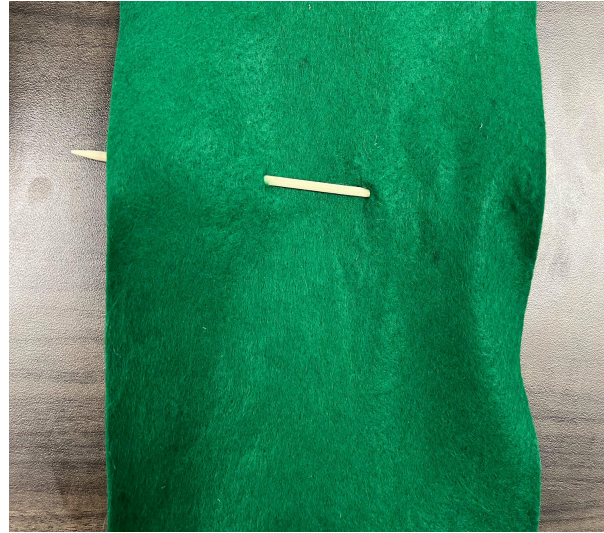
- ☐ Long wooden stick (skewer, popsicle sticks)
- ☐ Small wooden stick (half the length of long stick)
- ☐ 8x8 colored fabric/felt (for clothes/design of choice)
- ☐ Small, plain fabric for the head
- ☐ Small fabric for the head wrap
- ☐ Cotton Balls (to fill head)
- ☐ Yarn (for hair)
- ☐ Beads, seeds, beans (for decoration)
- ☐ Coins (for pocket)
- ☐ Glue/Glue Gun
- ☐ Markers (face drawing)
- ☐ Rubber Band



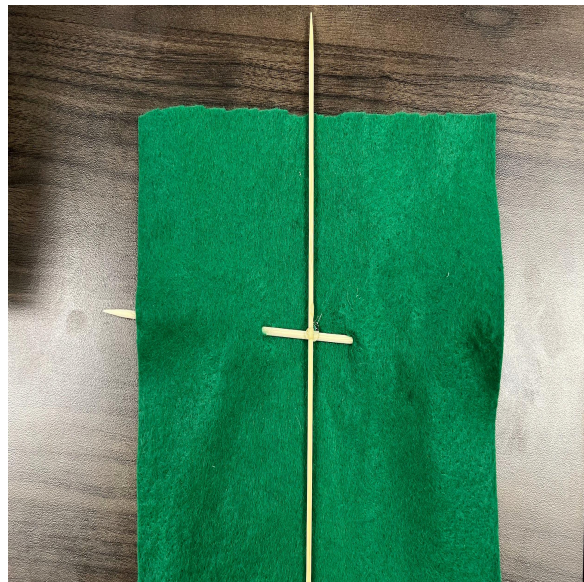
For a fabric pattern, see [Dignik fabric pattern kits](#)

**Instructions:**

1. Make 2 holes with a hole punch, 1-2 inches apart. Slip the skewer through the holes for the arms.



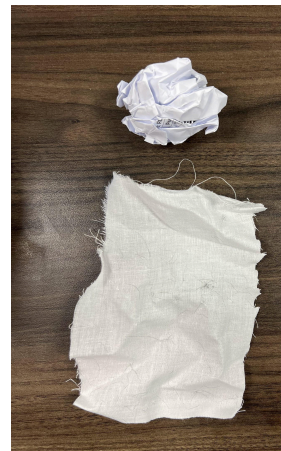
2. Glue the 2nd stick vertically (body) to the arms. Make sure the pointy side is on top. Leave about 1 inch of the skewer above the felt.





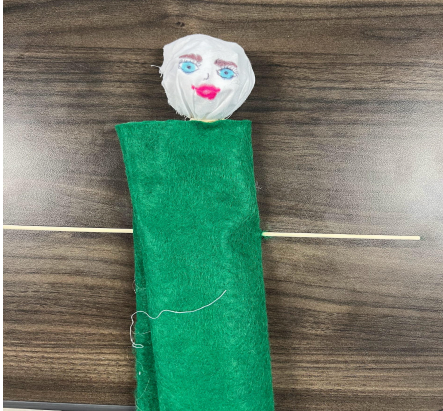
3. To create the dress, fold the felt from one side and glue it shut. Then fold the other side and glue.



4. For the head, take fabric and stuff it with a crumpled piece of paper or cotton balls. Take the excess fabric and close it shut with a rubber band.





	
<p>5. Design the face - draw eyebrows, eyes, lips, etc.</p>	
<p>6. Stick the skewer through the head. Tuck the excess fabric into the dress. Glue the bottom of the head to the body.</p>	

7. To make hair, braid the yarn. Make two pieces.



8. Glue braids to the side of the head on both sides.



9. Take fabric and glue onto the head like a headscarf.



10. Design head scarf and dress with various different papers, fabrics, seeds, beads, etc.



**Decorating:**

1. If desired, add a headband or veil to the head using additional fabric and decorate it with seeds or beans.
2. Draw a face on the head using markers or paint.
3. Add a pocket to the front of the dress using another piece of fabric, and glue the 3 sides of the pocket to the dress. You may decorate the dress and pocket with additional beans or seeds.
4. Place a coin in the pocket to bring “good fortune,” wealth, and prosperity.

## Dignik fabric pattern kits

### Materials:

18" x 8" fabric for the dress/body  
8" x 8" contrasting fabric for headpiece, scarf, and apron  
5 x 5 fabric for the head  
Embroidery floss (brown or black)  
10" wooden skewers (used for cooking)  
Piece of yarn  
Plastic sandwich bags

### Directions:

1. Fold 18x8 fabric in half from top to bottom ("hamburger style"). Lay the pattern piece 1 on the fabric, aligning the top of the pattern with the fold in the fabric and pin in place. Cut along the outside line. **DO NOT CUT ON THE FOLDED TOP.** Cut the V in the middle of the top and remove the pattern piece.
2. With right sides together, stitch along the lines as shown on the pattern, ¼" from the edge and only on the sides and bottom of the arm.
3. Turn the fabric and push the arms out. Iron flat.
4. Lay pattern piece 2, 3 and 5 on the contrasting fabric and cut 1 of each. Set aside.
5. Lay pattern piece 4 on the 5 x 5 fabric, pin in place and cut 1. Fold the fabric in half right sides together, and stitch ½" in on each side and across the top as shown on the pattern. Turn and iron flat.
6. With the piece of yarn, tie the two skewers together to form a cross

### Braids:

Cut 18 six-inch strands of embroidery floss. Twist three of the strands tightly together. Repeat a second and third time. Line the three twisted lengths together and braid them into one long braid. Cut the long braid in the center so that there are now two braids of equal length. Both ends of each braid will come unbraided about a quarter inch.

### Assemble Packages:

Lay out the dress/body. On one side lay the scarf on top, followed by the apron head piece, and two braids. Fold the body/dress in half over the other pieces and place inside the sandwich bag along with the crossed skewers.



Place on fold

Donot cut

clip here

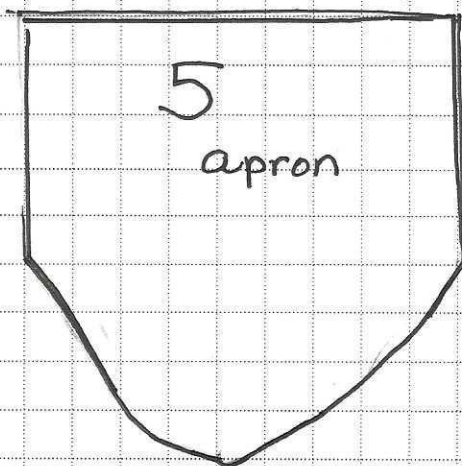
1 dress

$\frac{1}{4}$ "  $\rightarrow$

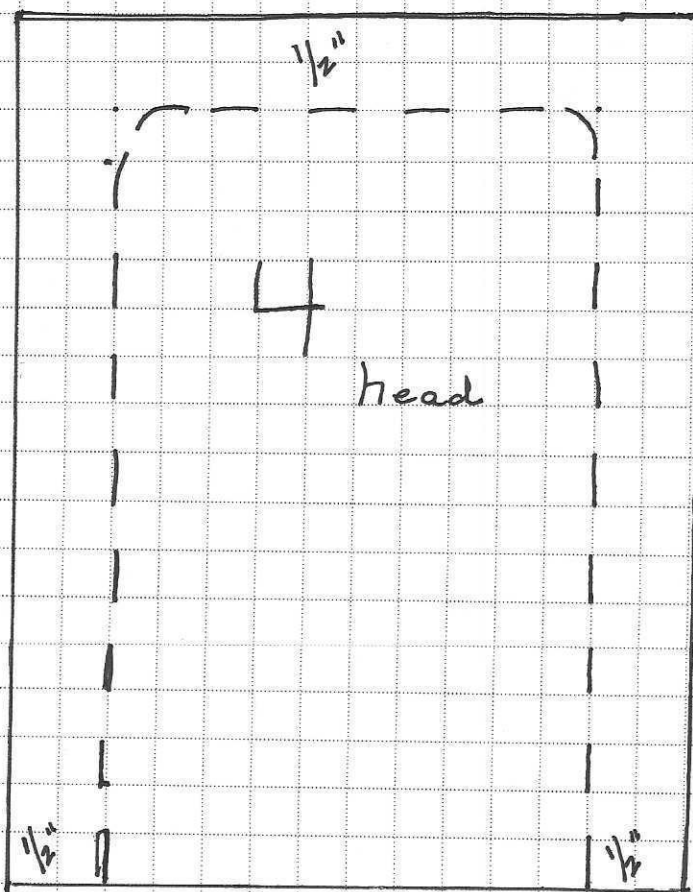
$\frac{1}{4}$ "  $\leftarrow$

2 head piece  
cut one





3  
scarf



## Post-dignik making discussion prompts:

6-8th grade	9-10th grade	11-12th grade
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What do Armenian digniks tells us about the way people lived and what they believed in the past?</li><li>2. How do digniks show the roles of women and families in Armenian history?</li><li>3. Compare Armenian traditions to other ancient civilizations' traditions.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What thoughts or feelings about culture, cultural preservation, or resistance to genocide came to mind during this lesson and activity?</li><li>2. Reflect on your experience making these traditional Armenian dolls. Do you think you contributed to the preservation of Armenian culture? Why or why not?</li><li>3. In what ways do digniks help us understand the roles of women, family, and tradition when digniks became a common part of Armenian culture?</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Think about what the Armenians experienced during the genocide. Today, many Armenians value cultural preservation. How was this dignik making an example of that?</li><li>2. Young adults today are not collecting family heirlooms the way previous generations have. What impact could this have on family history and cultural identity?</li><li>3. What role do American museums and cultural institutions play in protecting and promoting traditional artifacts like digniks?</li><li>4. Is the preservation of world cultures important? Why? Why not?</li></ol>

### Akh Ninar - Ode to a Girl Named Ninar, Village of Sasoon

**Meaning:** *The villagers ask for plenty. "From the cow I've milked, I want butter. From the multi-colored chickens I want eggs. From the sky I want clouds. From the clouds I want rain so that we will receive all that we need in plenty. Brother, help me prepare for a wedding! Raise me onto your horse and let us get ready with luscious cloth and henna."*

**Purpose:** This song is a folk song from the Village of Sasoon, a village in Western Armenia. This was the song sung to "activate" the magic of the dolls.

Hanig ninar eh ninar  
Janig ninar e ninar  
Hanig ninar eh ninar  
Janig ninar e ninar

Voch chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotir kisna kar.  
Voch chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotir kisna kar.

Akh Ninar - Jan Ninar  
Nuri Nurin yegele  
Shawl yev shabig hakele  
Nuri Nuri inch goozes  
Gutan govits yegh goozim.  
Char havoots havgit goozim.  
Yergunkoots amber goozim,  
Amberoots antsrev goozim,  
Vor mur oozadz da muzi.  
Antsrev ichni vur tsuzi.  
Hanig ninar eh ninar  
Janig ninar e ninar.

Akh Ninar - Jan Ninar  
Hanig ninar eh ninar  
Janig ninar e ninar

Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.  
Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.

Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Ով չըթըռնա զիդա պար  
Օղներ կողորի քիսնա քար:  
Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Ախ, նինար, ջան նինար,  
Նուրին, նուրին եկեր է,  
Ծալե շապիկ հաքեր է:  
- Նուրին, նուրին, ի՞նչ կուզիս:  
- Կըթան կովից յեղ կուզիմ,  
Չալ հավուց հավկիթ կուզիմ,  
Երկընթուց ամպեր կուզիմ,  
Ամպերուց անձրև կուզիմ,  
Որ մըր ուզած տա մըզի,  
Անձրև իջնի վըր ձըզի:  
Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Ախ, նինար, ջան նինար,  
Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Ով չըթըռնա զիդա պար  
Օղներ կողորի քիսնա քար:  
Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Akh Ninar - Jan Ninar  
Akhber, Akhber, im nshkhon  
Inch ees partser ko eeshkhon.  
- Khoong, hina oo apurshoom

- Veer vdnanis  
- puzezin  
Puzez yedev sareroon  
Poort gu kuze keeleroon,  
Tel gumane havkeroon,  
Shor gu gare jujheroon.

Akh Ninar - Jan Ninar  
Hanig ninar eh ninar  
Janig ninar e ninar

Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.  
Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.

Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.  
Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.

Akh Ninar - Jan Ninar  
Hanig ninar eh ninar  
Janig ninar e ninar

Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.  
Ov chutrna zita bar  
Oghner gotri kisna kar.

Akh Ninar - Jan Ninar

Ախ, նինար, ջան նինար,  
- Ախպեր, ախպեր, իմ նըխշուն,

Ի՞նչ իս բարձեր քո իշուն:  
- Խունկ, հինա ու արըրշում  
- Վ՞իր վտանխ:  
- Բըզեզին:  
Բըզեզ ետն սարերուն  
Բուրդ կըզըզե գիլերուն,  
Թե՛ կըմանե հավքերուն,  
Շոր կըկարե ճըժերուն:

Ախ, նինար, ջան նինար,  
Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Ով չըթըռնա գիդա պար  
Օղներ կողրի քիսնա քար:  
Ով չըթըռնա գիդա պար  
Օղներ կողրի քիսնա քար:

Ով չըթըռնա գիդա պար  
Օղներ կողրի քիսնա քար:  
Ով չըթըռնա գիդա պար  
Օղներ կողրի քիսնա քար:

Ախ, նինար, ջան նինար,  
Հանիկ նինար է նինար,  
Ջանիկ նինար է նինար:

Ով չըթըռնա գիդա պար  
Օղներ կողրի քիսնա քար:  
Ով չըթըռնա գիդա պար  
Օղներ կողրի քիսնա քար:

Ախ, նինար, ջան նինար:

## Asilik Vasilik Recipe

(Easter Kehke)

No Rise - Makes 20 dolls or 40 cookies

### Ingredients:

1. 1 cup room-temperature butter
2. 1 cup sugar
3. 1 cup milk
4. 1 cup oil
5. 2 eggs
6. 1 teaspoon of Mahleb (find at a local Middle Eastern market) OR (substitute with cinnamon, cardamom, and almond extract)
7. 1 teaspoon of baking powder
8. Black Nigella seeds OR sesame seeds (optional)
9. Pinch of nutmeg
10. 7 cups of flour

### Steps:

1. Sift the flour
2. Melt the sugar in a bowl with the milk
3. In a bowl, add flour, mahleb, and baking powder. Create a dome and add eggs, butter, and oil.. Slightly mix by hand, then slowly add the sugar and milk.
4. Mix all the ingredients together by hand. (The dough should not be wet)
5. Let the dough sit for 10 minutes with a towel or Saran wrap covering the bowl.
6. Separate the dough into 2 inch balls
7. Roll the dough out lengthwise (like a snake) until it is half an inch thick
8. Take one end of the dough and create a circle then pinch the ends together
9. Once you do this with all the dough, spread the dough with light egg wash
10. Optional: Sprinkle Black Nigella seeds OR sesame seeds on top
11. Bake in oven at 360 degrees for approximately 12 minutes or until golden brown

**\*\*Instead of shaping the dough into circles, you can shape them into purses, shoes, dolls, etc.\*\*\***



## References:

- Armenian Genocide Museum and Institute - Dolls handmade by the orphans of the orphan city in Alexandropol, 1921-1928
- Armenian Geographic. (2022, June 7). Armenian national dolls - Ritual Dolls - Armenian Geographic. Armenian Geographic - ArmGeo.am.  
<https://www.armgeo.am/en/armenian-national-dolls/>
- ChinaMart. (2024, June 16). Armenian “bride’s doll” and its symbolism. Chinarmart.  
<https://chinarmart.com/2024/06/16/armenian-brides-doll-and-its-symbolism/>
- Kekejian, C. (2022, October). A Brief Introduction to Harsnerēn [Review of A Brief Introduction to Harsnerēn]. International Journal of Armenian Studies. Armenica.  
<https://doi.org/10.30687/arm/2974-6051/2022/01/004>
- Kekejian, Carla. (2017, March 15). Harsneren: Language of the Armenian Bride. Center for the Study of Women.  
<https://csw.ucla.edu/2017/03/14/harsneren-language-armenian-bride/>
- Minasyan, L. (2022, September). Rights and Wrongs | AGBU Magazine. Agbu.org.  
<https://agbu.org/armenian-woman/rights-wrongs>
- Najarian, T. (2012, May 17). Armenian Traditions: Hampartsoum. Notes of a Spurkahye Finally Come Home.  
<https://tamarnajarian.wordpress.com/2012/05/17/armenian-traditions-hampartsoum/>
- The Armenian Mirror-Spectator. (2022, May 26). *Beloved Armenian Rituals Play Important Role on World Doll Day*. The Armenian Mirror-Spectator.  
<https://mirrorspectator.com/2022/05/26/beloved-armenian-rituals-play-important-role-on-world-doll-day/>
- Victoria Atamian Waterman. (2022, June 11). Beloved Armenian Rituals Play an Important Role on World Doll Day. Victoria Waterman.  
<https://www.victoriawaterman.net/post/beloved-armenian-rituals-play-important-role-on-world-doll-day>
- Xaratyan-Arakelyan, H. (2005). Հայ ժողովրդական Տոները (E. Bedrossian, Ed.) [Review of Հայ ժողովրդական Տոները].  
[https://haygirk.nla.am/upload/1941-/xaratyan\\_2005.pdf](https://haygirk.nla.am/upload/1941-/xaratyan_2005.pdf)