

Dolls and Diversity

Table Talk: Family Conversations About Current Events



Facebook / Toys Like Me

Topic Summary

Recently, there have been several news stories about consumers demanding, and toy companies creating, more diverse representations of dolls for children. This includes more dolls of color, dolls with disabilities, and dolls with different body types as well as other physical characteristics like eye color, hair texture and skin complexion. Dolls are one of the first and most common toys for children and they provide a great deal of playing and learning potential. Because they also serve as a

reflection of children, dolls should include the diversity that is reflected in our society.

Here are a few examples of diverse dolls in the news:

- Mattel, the toy company, recently announced the addition of Barbie dolls that come in three body shapes: petite, curvy and tall. In addition, Barbie dolls now come in seven different skin tones, 30 hair colors (including blue), and 24 hairstyles and textures.
- A toymaker in England named Makies has released a line of dolls with disabilities. They were inspired by a social media campaign called *Toys Like Me*. The campaign encouraged parents of children with various disabilities to customize their toys, making them look more like real people. The company created items like hearing aids, walking aids and facial birthmarks for the dolls.
- A toy company called Malaville, started by model Mala Bryan, created dolls that come in different shades of brown with a variety of hair curls, coils and textures. They also wear African- and Caribbean-inspired outfits.
- Two adopted African American sisters, Patience and Jocelyn Dingle, who love to play with dolls, wrote a letter to Mattel asking if the company could make more dolls that look like them.

(To see photos of some of the dolls, see the [Dolls Are Us](#) lesson plan.)

Age

7 and up

Questions to Start the Conversation

- What do you think of the new dolls?
- Why do you think these dolls are being made?

- Do you think dolls should look like different kinds of children? Why or why not?
- Why do you think there is a need for more diverse dolls?
- If you could make a doll, what would it look like?

Questions to Dig Deeper

- What message is conveyed when dolls are not diverse (skin color, body shape, disability, etc.)?
- How do you think children will feel about having more diverse doll options to choose from?
- Are there other things in your life (toys, activities, books, etc.) that you think could be more diverse? How so?

(The "Related to this Resource" and [11 Empowering Dolls That Help Little Girls See The Beauty In Themselves](#) (*Huffington Post*) provide information that address these questions.)

Ideas for Taking Action

Ask: What can we do to help? What actions might make a difference?

- Talk to other students about the need for diversity in toys.
- Do a survey (verbal, paper or electronic) asking other kids about whether they have diverse representation of dolls and other important things in their lives.
- Write a letter to a toy company about the need for more diverse dolls and other toys.