

Kewpie Doll vs. World War I

2013 Homeschool History Fair of the Ozark

Student Paper *A13P-1*

Junior Division – Apprentice

This paper is about Rose O'Neill and the Kewpies and what happened when World War I broke out. Because the Kewpies were made in Germany, the Kewpies got caught up in the conflict. It is funny and strange to think of a little doll that represented love and kindness being involved in a war that killed so many people. But anti-German sentiment in America affected many things, including the production of toys. I will introduce you to Rose O'Neill and the Kewpies and then explain how World War I impacted Kewpies and changed their production forever.

Rose Cecil O'Neill, born Cecilia Rose O'Neill, was the creator of the Kewpie doll, an artist, and a women's rights activist. She was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania in 1874, but moved to Nebraska when she was a child. Later her family moved to Missouri. She had a family home named Bonniebrook, just outside of Branson. She loved Bonniebrook and spent time there for the rest of her life. Susan Scott, president of the Bonniebrook Historical Society, said, "Here in the Ozarks, in Missouri, she represented to the world, this famous artist, that loved Missouri, loved the Ozarks and she depicted that in a lot of her art." She didn't just live at Bonniebrook, though. When she was 19, she moved, alone, to New York. She also had a home on the Isle of Capri. Rose O'Neill was a serious artist and an activist, but she will always be remembered by most people as the Mother of the Kewpie. Rose O'Neill died in Springfield, Missouri, in 1944.

The Kewpie was created in 1909, as a character in one of Rose's cartoons. In her autobiography, O'Neill explains how she created the Kewpie. "In illustrating love-stories I had a way of making decorative head and tail pieces with Cupids. Edward Bok of the Ladies Home Journal cut out a number of these and sent them to me. He asked me if I could make a series of the little creatures and said that he would find someone to make accompanying verses...I invented the name for the little Cupid, spelling it with a K because it seemed funnier. 'Kewpie—

short for Cupid—thus/He’s shorter than that famous cuss.’” People loved the Kewpies a lot.

Kewpies appeared on everything from soda and tissue to china and car radiator caps. She got so many letters from her fans asking her to make a Kewpie to hold that she decided to make a doll. She worked with George Borgfeldt and Company, a toy distributor. She sculpted a Kewpie and sent it to Germany. German factories made many toys for children around the world. German bisque dolls were beautiful. But when Rose got the Kewpie back from Germany, she



said it was awful. She hated it. She called it “the worst shocking travesty of Kewpish face and form...Shoulders of a pugilist, tummy of a drunken Silenus, the face of an infant fiend—the sidelong eyes and the smile a diabolical leer.”

O’Neill was afraid she would have to give up the idea of the doll. Instead, she and her sister Callista went to Germany to show the factory workers how she wanted it done. She made twelve models of different sized dolls so poor children and rich children would both be able to buy Kewpie dolls. She stayed in Germany while the factory workers made the dolls. She enjoyed the whole process, but not the last step, when the dolls were cooked. She says in a biography by J.L. Wilkerson, “It was a bit ghastly to see hundreds of my babies lying white-hot in the great pans.”

The German-made dolls might have continued to have been made for years, except for one thing, World War I. In 1914, the British started a trade embargo on Germany. The Germans responded by sending submarines to attack British ships. Anti-German sentiment began to spread in America. Germans were depicted as beasts, who would cause violence. The German language was not allowed to be taught in schools anymore and some German Americans even changed

their names. Americans did not want to buy products made in Germany, even if they were very



well made. German-made toys were best sellers until the war broke out. According to author and O'Neill expert Vernon Jordan, "At one time just before the War, there were some thirty or forty factories in Germany making Kewpies." But the anti-German sentiment affected the sale of German-made toys. That included the Kewpie dolls. Rose O'Neill was very

protective of her Kewpies. In his book *May This House be Safe from Tigers*, Alexander King tells this story:

"...the only time I ever saw her really deeply depressed and heard her speak with accents of unmistakable sorrow was when I happened to refer to the First World War.

'I lost many dear ones in it,' she said. 'They went down in the English Channel, poor things. I was so prostrated at the time that my life was despaired of.'

'Were they relatives or friends?' I said.

'Kewpies!' she said. 'Bisque Kewpies, the first ones ever made out of that wonderful material. They were made in Germany and were on their way over to me when a whole shipload of them went down in the English Channel. Those terrible British torpedoed the lot of them. It is too awful to think about. Oh, that war! I've never really gotten over it. I don't think I ever shall.'"

People targeted the German-made Kewpies. One lady said, "I will board a ship that has German-Made Kewpies and smash every single one of them." There were even competitors to the Kewpies like the Maiden America doll. These dolls were created just to compete with the Kewpie dolls because the Kewpies were so popular. The Borgfeldt Company began looking to find factories to make the Kewpies in the United States because of the



The anti-German movement in America lead to the development of another doll called "Maiden America". The advertisements for the Maiden American Doll claimed that the doll was "Kuler than Kewpie", washable and durable and was available for only 48 cents.

This lead to many different ads stating that "Kewpie" was now made in America.

feelings about German-made toys. Soon signs began to appear in store windows announcing “American-made Kewpies!”

O’Neill’s Kewpies represented peace and love. And so did she. She hated the war and fighting and she just wanted peace. It made her sad to think about the German boys who worked on her Kewpies dying in battle. In an article in 1915, she spoke out against tin soldier toys. She said, “If we would only give toys of peace maybe in the generations that are to come there would be smiles instead of war.” Rose O’Neill was opposed to war and it must have been hard for her to have her peaceful Kewpies caught up in the conflict. The message of the Kewpies lasted longer than the war, though. Even today people collect Kewpie dolls. Their smiling faces and kind acts and goodness are still things that bring people happiness almost 100 years after World War I began.



WARNS AGAINST GERMAN TOYS

Chairman of Defense Society.
Boycott Committee Tells of
German Trade Plans.

That the arrival in New York of
10,000,000 pounds of toys, every piece
of which bears the words "Made in Ger-
many," is a precedent
which should not be sent
into the country.

THROW GERMAN TOYS
INTO BAY, CRY WOMEN

'INTO THE OCEAN
WITH HUN TOYS,
WOMEN'S SLOGAN

"Down with All Made in Ger-
many Articles," Urge Membr
of Federation at Meeting.

Boston's famous tea party will look trivial
in the perspective of the pro-
posed act of the members of the New York
city Federation of Women's Clubs, who
were urged to dump the entire
shipment of "Made in Germany" toys re-
ceived here, into the bay.

WOMEN WANT GERMAN TOYS PITCHED IN RIVER

Meeting of Club Women in Up-
rour Over Arrival of Cargo
From Rotterdam

The reception that is likely to be
accorded German toys should any of
the shipment from Rotterdam, which
has arrived here, appear in any of
the stores, may be judged from what
occurred at a meeting of the New
York City Federation of Women's
Clubs, which met at the Hotel Astor
yesterday. The 2,000 women who at-
tended the meeting were prepared
for anything not excluding a "tea
party" in which the historic "tea
party" by which our American an-
cestors first showed their estimate
of their foe.

ASKS AMERICANS
TO SHUN ALL TOYS
'MADE IN GERMANY'

REFUSE TO ACCEPT
GERMAN-MADE TOYS

Women's Clubs Meeting in Riot Over German Toys

Many Favor Raid on Vessel and Dumping of Dolls and Noaks.
Arks. "Made in Germany" Into Waters of Bay—
Committee to Act.

DESTROY GERMAN
MADE TOYS' CRY
GROWS IN VIGOR

Women Urge City to Do A
with Playthings Made in
Enemy Country.

'Made in U. S. A.'
to Rule Gifts of
Christmas Toys

TORCH FOR THE TOYS,
CRIES A CLUB LEADER
"If Uncle Sam refuses to protect
people from the shame of
German-made toys of war
in this crisis of the world's
toys, the women have no choice
but to burn them."

A BAS "MADE IN GERMANY."

Isn't it rather premature, this economic invasion
Germany seems to be making? And through such a
sweet medium! Such a delicate idea, this, dumping
toys, with the hated "Made in Germany" stamp in a
neutral country, so that after the war, or perhaps be-
fore, they may flood the world's market again—subtle
propaganda. There is a comic element in the arrival at
this port of about 10,000,000 pounds of German toys, con-
signed to local importers, with old-world names. Now
that the toys are here what can the importer do with
them? Sell them, you will undoubtedly say, before you
stop to think. True, that might have been the plan,
but the boycott committee of the American Defense
Society is not willing that there be put into the hands
of American children "toys made by the German hands
which drip with the blood of countless innocent non-com-

Wants Loyal Americans
to Boycott German Toys
GERMAN CUNNING SEEN IN
SENDING TOYS TO AMERICA

WOMEN OPEN FIGHT TO BAR GERMAN TOYS

Another Boston Tea Party Ad-
vocated at City Federa-
tion Meeting.

WANT WILSON TO STEP IN

News That Tons of Goods "Made
in Germany" Have Been Landed
Brings Angry Protests.

There was the usual moment of great
excitement near the end of the meeting
of the New York City Federation of
Women's Clubs, which held its forty-
seventh convention at the Hotel Astor
yesterday. It has become the custom
for the federation conventions, which
are big, brilliant, all-day affairs, to roll
along peacefully to the latter part of the
afternoon, when some member suddenly
springs something of moment to which
the assembly listens with interest.

ADMISSION OF GERMAN
TOYS CALLED MISTAKE
Flood of Cheap Goods by Way
of Neutral Lands Feared.

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WANT WILSON TO STEP IN

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Brings Angry Protests

GERMAN MADE TOYS REFUSED BY OWNERS

Butler Brothers Will Not Ac-
cept 109 Cases and See
Teuton Propaganda.

DIDN'T ORDER SHIPMENT

Some Firms, However, May Ac-
cept Consignments and Store
Them Till After War.

100 worth of German made
toys arriving here, unex-
pectedly on a Holland-
America steamship will never, it
is said, be hung on American
trees or arouse the interest
of youngsters from glittering
trees.
The largest wholesale toy
country has refused to ac-
cept the consignment and
other firms will take
care of them. The toys were bought

Works Cited

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Homeschool History Fair
of the Ozarks



Junior Division Apprentice (Ages 8-10) Worksheet

(This may be dictated to and filled out by a parent or guardian.)

1. What is the title of your project?

The Kewpies and Anti-German Sentiment during World I

2. Please explain in your own words what your project is about.

This project is trying to tell about the struggles with the Kewpies being made in

Germany, the issues with World War I, and anti-German feeling.

3. What was the most interesting thing that you learned during your research?

It was interesting getting to interview people and reading about the things that happened.

4. What is the difference between a PRIMARY source and a SECONDARY source?

A primary source is like an autobiography or something written by a witness of

the event. Photos and letters are also primary A secondary source is like a

biography that is written later by someone who wasn't actually there at the event.

5. What is a TERTIARY source?

A tertiary source is like an encyclopedia.

6. What do you think is the best kind of source to use in researching history?

The best source is a primary source, because you get more true information.

7. Why do you think that is it a good idea to look at several sources when doing research on a subject?

It is best to look at different sources because you can see other things that one

source might not have.

8. Why do you think that it is important to cite the sources we use in our research?

So that people can see what you used and learn other things.

9. What is an annotated bibliography?

It is how you describe what you read for your research, and how you used it.

10. What kinds of sources (books, television programs, documentaries) did you use in your research? Please list the three sources you found most helpful.

Example for book. J. Perry Leavell, Jr., *James Madison*, New York, NY: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988.

Example for a documentary. "Boom." 2012. *The History Channel* website. July 10, 2012.

O'Neill, Rose. *The Story of Rose O'Neill: An Autobiography*, edited by

a. _____
Miriam Formanek-Brunell. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1997.

What was this source about and how did you use it in your research?

This is an autobiography. It is Rose O'Neill's story in her own words. She tells.

the story of her life. I used it to see how she created the Kewpies and her

experience of having the dolls made.

Wilkerson, J.L. *American Illustrator: Rose O'Neill*. Kansas City, MO: Acorn

b. _____
Books, 2001.

What was this source about and how did you use it in your research?

This is a biography about Rose O'Neill. I used this book to explain how Rose felt

when she went to Germany to see the factories.

Jordan, Vernon. Email interview with the author. September 17, 2013.

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What was this source about and how did you use it in your research?

I emailed questions to Mr. Jordan, a Rose O'Neill expert and author. He sent me pictures and old advertisements and answered my questions. He even sent me information that will be in the book he is writing. I used this interview to learn more about anti-German feelings during World War I.

11. What did you enjoy most while putting together your project?

I really enjoyed learning about the anti-German laws and how there were competitors to the Kewpie doll.

12. What did you enjoy least while putting together your project?

I was not a fan of typing the paper. It was boring sometimes, but in the end it paid off, and it was really fun.