

All about Poppet

Part 1: What is a Poppet? And Why Would I Want to Play With Dolls Anyway?

A poppet is, for lack of a better term, a voodoo doll. It is one of the most commonly used implements in sympathetic magick, which entails the idea that “like creates like”. Thus, if you create a poppet of a person, anything to do to that poppet will affect the person it represents. Poppets are especially useful for spells that attract (or keep) a lover, heal, or banish. They can be used anytime you need to affect a specific person.

Usually, a poppet is made out of cloth, but it can also be made out of clay, wood, wax, or other materials. It can be filled with herbs consistent to the purpose of the spell and a few personal items (called taglocks, but more on them later) that tie the subject of the spell to the doll. Of course, you can always use your creativity and add your own stuff. If you don't feel like using all those herbs, you could add some “filler”, such as cotton.

Once you have your poppet, you'll need to tie the doll to the person you want to be represented by it. After that, it's completely up to you to decide how involved the spell should be. It could be for a week, or over in minutes. It's your decision.

So exactly how can a poppet be used in a working? Here's an example. Say you wanted to banish a certain person from your life. You could make your poppet out of black cloth, and possibly put rue, birch, and/or garlic in it. Then you could bind his hands to stop him from meddling and toss him in a river or in a current that would carry the poppet away from you, which would symbolize him being carried away from you and your life.

Part 2: Worldwide Poppetry - More Than Just Pins in a Doll

When most people think of a poppet, they automatically think of the Voodoo doll. While the Voodoo religion is certainly the most well-known culture to use the poppet, the use of sympathetic magick goes back thousands of years. In fact, in 1100 BCE, the many enemies of Pharaoh Ramses the third of Egypt (which included the women of his harem and a treasury official) used wax images of him to bring about his death. (1)

The ancient Greeks often used sympathetic magick in love or defensive spells. Christopher Faraone, Professor of Classical Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago, is one of the foremost authorities on Greek magick today. Faraone states that Greek poppets, called Kolossoi, were sometimes used to restrain a ghost or even a dangerous deity. They could also be used to bind two lovers together. (2)

The Greek tragedian Theocritus refers to melting and burning wax dolls in Idyll 2, The Witch (Pharmakeutria), which was written around 270 b.c. (3) He describes the ways in which Simaetha, who has been dumped by her lover, Delphis, attempts to lure him back to her with magic. At the same time, she tries to make him forget any woman who might be a potential rival. Simaetha was quite a busy girl.

The idea of wax dolls has carried on throughout the centuries. When Caroline of Brunswick, Princess of Wales, was married to a perfectly awful gentleman who would become King George IV, she apparently spent many hours forming wax dolls of her husband and jabbing them with pins. There is no evidence as to the effect this may have had on George, but when Caroline decided to scamper off to a villa in Italy and shack up with her Italian lover, George didn't protest. The royal couple remained married but lived separately until Caroline's death in 1821. (4)

In West African magick, a doll called a fetish is used. The doll is actually possessed by spirits, and represents the spirit to the doll's owner. The fetish contains magickal power, and is

carried by its owner either on the body or as an amulet. Slave owners in North America were permitted to hand out a death sentence to anyone found in possession of a fetish. (5) Small wonder, considering that the owners didn't understand anything about African culture – and subsequently feared it.

In Voodoo itself, or Vodun, the use of poppet magick became popular in New Orleans after the end of the Civil War, although sources disagree as to whether poppets are used at all in Haiti, the home of the Vodun religion.

The Voodoo Museum of New Orleans even stocks a variety of dolls in their gift shop. This appears to be a bone of contention among practitioners, some of whom are trying to get away from the “serpent rite and pins-in-the-doll” rituals. (6)

Raymond Buckland recommends the use of poppets in healing spells, and maintains that even the sticking of pins in the poppet can be used for good. He states that if treating someone who experiences back pain, the pins can be inserted in the poppet's back. After concentrating on a healing ritual, the pins – representing the pain itself – would slowly be drawn out of the poppet. In other words, the sharp pain would be drawn out of the target's body. (7)

Regardless of whether you use a cloth doll, a wooden fetish, or a man-shaped glob of wax, remember that poppets have a long tradition behind them – a tradition that is influenced by the magickal practices of many cultures. If you find yourself drawn to a particular culture's pantheon of deities, by all means use methods that honor them. Treat your poppets well, and they will do the same for you.

Part 3: On Basic Poppet Construction - Building the Magick

Ok, so now you've decided to make a poppet. It can be as simple or as elaborate as you want it to be. It can be made of any material you like – and not just cloth, either. A poppet can be made from clay, wax, wood – let your imagination run wild.

Try to remember that the more work you put into it, and the more complex it is, the stronger your link will be to your goal. A poppet is a device for sympathetic magick. In other words, all of its components will be symbols of what it is you hope to achieve.

Poppet construction can either be done as part of the spellwork itself, or it can be done ahead of time, leaving the poppet to be used later on. The choice is yours.

Remember, the poppet is representing a person. Accordingly, before you begin construction, you need to determine what sort of spell you are doing. Do you have someone you want to keep out of your life? Want to stop someone who spreads gossip? Or is there a friend who wants to get a job and needs some magickal assistance? Do you just want a protection poppet to keep around your house or in your car? The possibilities are endless, but it's a good idea to determine your goal before you get started. It will save you from countless "do-overs" later on.

The directions here are for a simple poppet construction using fabric. We'll go through it step by step, but feel free to modify or "tweak" anything you need.

Selecting Your Fabric

Obviously, there are no hard and fast rules when it comes to material. However, you can choose your fabric based on your purpose. For example, someone doing a money poppet might select a piece of green or gold cloth, or a festive cotton print covered in dollar signs. If you're looking for love, try something in pink, or perhaps in a heart design.

Fabric is inexpensive – most craft shops such as Joann or Michael's – even Wal-Mart has a craft section -- sell cotton prints at less than 3 dollars a yard. You can make a lot of poppets with a yard of fabric. Be sure to check for the post-holiday sales, and you can get a ton of great fabric to save for later.

Another alternative to purchasing fabric is to use something that links the poppet to your target. Ask your friend who is job-searching to give you an old t-shirt, or when you're trying to draw love into your life, cut up that pair of silky pajamas that you slept in last night. Poppets don't care what you make them out of, and they won't be insulted if you use previously worn material.

When all else fails, and you just can't seem to find the right fabric, a plain piece of muslin or felt is perfect for the job.

Spell Goal	Fabric Color:	Patterns to try:
Prosperity	Green, gold, silver	Dollar signs, dollar bills, earth symbols
Love	Pink, red	Hearts, Cupids, roses or other flowers
Banishing	Black	Swords, wands, dragons
Creativity	Orange, Yellow	Suns, fire symbols
Protection	Red, white	Keys or locks, fences, mistletoe
Spirituality	White, blue, silver	Moons, clouds, air or water symbols
Animals	Brown	Cats, dogs, anything pet-related

When it comes to texture of the fabric, anything goes. Cotton is easy enough to work with, but if you're an inexperienced sewer, you may want to stick with something stiffer at first, such as felt, which is available in darn near every color imaginable. Felt will hold its shape nicely as you sew, and its

natural properties help keep the fabric from slipping during assembly.

Poppet Shape

Because the poppet is representing a person, we want it to look like -- you guessed it -- a person. Two arms, two legs, a head, that sort of thing. You can either create your own outline, or you can use the ultimate poppet template -- a gingerbread man.

Several of the major craft stores sell large gingerbread man cookie cutters, especially around the holidays. You can pick one up for about 5 dollars, and use that as your template. Alternately, you can design your own, but basically the gingerbread man shape is perfect for poppets.



If you're doing a spell for an animal -- such as healing a sick pet -- make the poppet shape accordingly. Remember, your poppet doesn't have to be huge, but it will need to be big enough that you can stuff it with all of the ingredients later. This is where planning ahead comes in handy!

Your poppet is going to start out looking something like this, although it may not be smiling when you get done with it. In fact, you can print this out, enlarge it on a copier, and use it for a pattern if you like.

Cutting and Sewing

So now you have your fabric, and you have a pattern. The next activity is going to be cutting out the poppet. This isn't hard, but you will need a good pair of scissors, and some straight pins might be useful as well.

You will need two pieces of your fabric. Place the pieces right side together on a flat surface. This means that if your

material has a print or design, the patterned sides should be facing each other. This is important!

Place your template or pattern on top of your fabric and secure it into place with your straight pins. Once your template is in position, you can cut out around it. Be sure to either leave some room around the edges, or design your pattern a bit larger so that you will have room to sew it shut. A $\frac{1}{4}$ " to $\frac{1}{2}$ " margin is a good size. Then remove the template.

Now, on to the sewing. If you've never used a needle and thread before, don't be alarmed. It's not as scary as it sounds, but it will require you to concentrate a little, and to be patient. If you're pressed for time, you could theoretically use a sewing machine, but poppets like it when you take a bit of time and effort with them and sew them together by hand.

It's probably a good idea at this point to pin the two pieces of material together, although if you're using something such as felt, it may stick together on its own. Use your own best judgment.

Place the right sides of the material together, and then stitch around the edges. Don't go all the way around. Leave yourself an opening (wide enough to get a couple of fingers into) at the head. Then turn your poppet right side out. Presto! You have one partially complete poppet.

Stuffing Your Poppet (or what will I put in there?)

Stuff your poppet with fiberfill, which is available at any craft store (or even Wal-Mart). If you don't have fiberfill, you could use cotton balls or even old pantyhose. Make sure you work the fiberfill all the way into the extremities. Once you have stuffed the arms and legs, you can work on the center of the body. This is where you will place your spell components. If you are adding herbs, stones, a taglock, whatever, and this is the place to do it.

You may be wondering what in the world a taglock is. Well, quite simply, it's the part of the poppet that links it to the person it represents. This can be hair or nail clippings, the person's signature or name on a piece of paper, body fluids (yes, body fluids) or even a photograph.

Once you have stuffed the components inside, finish filling the body and head. Sew the head shut with a small overcast stitch, as shown in the graphic.

Now that your poppet's body is complete, it's time to personalize it a bit more.

Naming Poppets

You've already placed the taglock and other goodies inside your poppet, but the more personalized you can make it, the better. Draw or paint a face on your poppet. Add yarn to represent hair if you like. If you have an item of the person's clothing, wrap your poppet in it, or copy any identifying marks like tattoos or scars onto the poppet's body.

Most importantly, repeatedly tell the poppet who it is they represent. You can say something along the lines of "I have made you, and you are John Smith", or whoever you are doing the spell for.

You can also add magickal or astrological symbols to the poppet, with paint, sewing or even markers. The possibilities are endless.

Poppets can be used for healing, for love, for money, for banishing, for revenge, to get a job – you name it, you can make a poppet for it. It's simply a matter of figuring out what your goal is, and the best way to achieve that goal. The only limitations to poppet construction are your own imagination and creativity.

Sample Poppet Ideas

To Gain Employment

The materials needed are green or gold satin. For stuffing inside, you may use herbs like Chamomile, Clover, Ginger, Jasmine, and Pecan. And lastly, you need a stone like Snowflake Obsidian or Sodalite.

Create the poppet to represent yourself, and as you are working on it, think of all the positive attributes you have that would make you attractive to an employer. Another option would be to make a poppet representing the employer, and tell it why it would be in the company's best interests to hire you.

Healing

The materials needed are white cotton. Use Lemon Nalm, Carnation, Ivy, and Pine for stuffing and place one Bloodstone.

When making this poppet, make sure you indicate on it what you are trying to heal, whether it is a sore leg, a bad case of lice, or even a broken heart. Focus all of your energy on the idea in question.

Love

The materials needed are Red silk, Rose Petals, Parsley and Peppermint for stuffing and place one Barite.

You can make a poppet to represent the object of your affection, or make one to represent both you and the other person. If you are trying to draw a specific person to you, you can use pink or red cord to bind the poppets together. If you are simply trying to attract love to yourself, but you don't have a specific target in mind, make sure you think about all the things that make you desirable to a potential lover.

Revenge

The materials needed are black cloth. Avens, Fumitory, Heliotrope, Horseradish, Pepper, Rue, Sagebrush, Witch Grass and Yarrow will be used for stuffing.

You can take THIS little guy, and burn him to a crisp on the grill. Then bury him somewhere FAR away from you. Another option would be to feed him to your dog, or just leave him out in the sun to spoil and rot.