



EDUCATOR GUIDE

Arthi's Bomma

Words By Mamta Nainy

Art by Shruti Prabhu

Picture Book | 5-7 Years | Grades K-2

Key Themes:

Father-daughter relationship, Craft & Craftspeople, Doll making, Traditional Folk Art, Artisan Communities, Telugu Language

LCCN: 2023936613

978-1-949528-74-9 (Hardcover)

978-1-949528-73-2 (Paperback)

978-1-949528-72-5 (eBook)

Available via Ingram, Follett School Solutions, OverDrive, EBSCO & more

Arthi's father is a doll maker, but she wishes he would be anything else. No one plays with the wooden *bommalu* her *nanna* makes anymore. But crafting dolls from wood is her father's entire world, so Arthi sets out to find out why these dolls mean so much to him. She asks everyone she knows in her small doll-making community and learns that *bommalu* are memories, warm as the sun, whispering stories older than time and capturing colors that run wild. They are a celebration of life and more. **Much, much more!** Arthi then sets out to make a doll of her own and discovers a special joy in doll making that is all her own.

An ode to the traditional craftspeople of India, this joyful picture book is a celebration of handmade objects in the digital age, imbuing each carefully wrought artifact with cultural significance and wonder that transcends generations.



Resources for the classroom

Educator Guide

Overview of Kondapalli Doll Making (Video)

Author's Note

Downloadable Activities

Book Trailer (Video)

Author Read Aloud (Video)

Pronunciation Guide



Mamta Nainy is an award-winning author of over thirty books. She is inspired by the unfettered imagination of children and loves to bake, build, draw, paint, shape, fold, or simply, make things with her hands.

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Shruti Prabhu is a children's book illustrator currently based in Mumbai. She loves to bring her colorful characters to life with mixed media, mainly watercolor, gouache and pencils. When she is not drawing, she is busy obsessing over her balcony garden and playing retro video games. Connect with her at shrutiprabhu.com.



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and Comparing

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NYSED | PK-2 Next Generation ELA Standards

Reading Comprehension, Grade 1-2: 1R1-2R1:

Develop and answer questions to demonstrate an understanding of key ideas and details in a text.

Reading Comprehension, Grade 1-2: 1R2-2R2:

Identify a main topic or central idea and retell key details in a text and summarize portions of a text.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Part A: Reading Comprehension

The objective of this activity is:

- A. To introduce students to the picture book *Arthi's Bomma* and help them understand its themes and messages
- B. To improve students' reading comprehension skills by engaging in various activities related to the story

Begin by asking students if they have ever heard of the word *bomma* or seen dolls made of wood.

Show them the cover of the book and ask them to make predictions about the story based on the title and the cover illustration. Record students' ideas on a virtual graphic organizer or the whiteboard. Then, read the story aloud to the halfway point. Ask students to make a prediction about what will happen next in the story.

Complete the story read aloud. As a whole class, complete a graphic organizer to answer the questions on the right.

Who are the main characters in the story?

Where does the story take place?

What happens during Arthi's first day at her new school?

How does Arthi feel when Chander makes fun of her doll?

Why does Arthi's nanna make bomma?

What does each community member say about the significance of the dolls?

NYSED | 3-5 Next Generation ELA Standards

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Grade 3:

3R9: Recognize genres and make connections to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Part B: Making Connections

In *Arthi's Bomma*, Arthi learns about the personal connections each of her community members has to crafting wooden dolls. When readers make authentic connections to texts, they gain a deeper understanding of the story.

There are three types of connections that students can make to a text: Text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world. It can be helpful to use an anchor chart in the classroom to guide students. [ReadWriteThink](#) shares some questions to consider for each of the above connections:

Focusing on text-to-self connections

What does this story remind you of?
Can you relate to the characters in the story?
Does anything in this story remind you of anything in your own life?

Focusing on text-to-text connections

What does this remind you of in another book you have read?

How is this book similar to other things you have read?

How is this book different from other things you have read?

Focusing on text-to-world connections

What does this remind you of in the real world?
How are events in this story similar to things that happen in the real world?
How are events in this story different from things that happen in the real world?

Students can use the prompts above to think about the connections that they can make to *Arthi's Bomma*. They can sort their connections using the graphic organizer on the next page.





MAKING CONNECTIONS

This story reminds me of a time when . . .

This book reminds me of another book I read . . .

This story reminds of something in the world . . .

NYSED | 3-5 Next Generation ELA Standards

Key Ideas and Details, Grade 3-4: 3R2-4R2:

Determine a theme or central idea and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize portions of a text.



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Part C: Exploring Themes

Theme refers to the overarching idea, message, or lesson in a story. The author of *Arthi's Bomma* doesn't uncover the theme explicitly in the story, but there are lots of clues in the text and art that help students infer what the theme or message of the story might be. These are the ideas that give the story a deeper meaning.

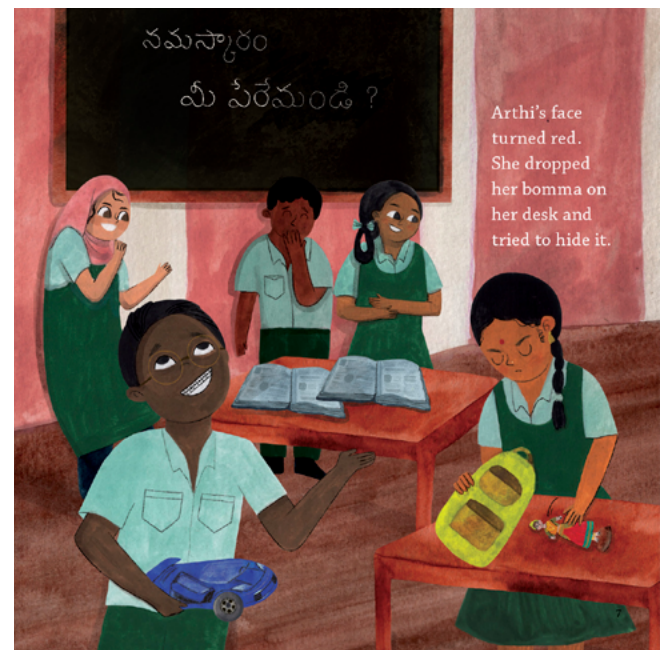
The author's note explicitly states one of the main themes or messages of this story: The value of traditional art forms. In addition, there are other themes that emerge from the text.

- Acceptance and "fitting in"
- The value of traditional art forms and cultural heritage
- The importance of expressing oneself creatively

This task can be differentiated to explore one or more themes in *Arthi's Bomma*. Students can work in pairs to go through the pages of the story to find clues that allude to the theme(s) in the story.

An example is given below.

Theme	Clues from text, illustrations, or author's note
Acceptance and "fitting in"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthi's face turns red when her new classmates make fun of her doll • She drops her bomma • She feels certain her old classmates from Bommala Colony would not have made fun of her bomma



Arthi's face turned red. She dropped her bomma on her desk and tried to hide it.

CCSS. Math: Measurement and Data, Grade 2:

Measure and estimate lengths in standard units

CCSS. Math: Represent and Interpret Data, Grade 2:

Generate measurement data by measuring lengths of several objects to the nearest whole unit, or by making repeated measurements of the same object. Present the measurement data in a line plot, where the horizontal scale is marked off in whole-number units.



MATHEMATICS

Measuring and Comparing

The beauty of handcrafted toys is that they are all unique. No one toy is exactly the same as the other! In this activity, students will be looking at pictures of various wooden dolls and reinforcing math skills in measurement, data collection, and graphing.

Materials needed:

- [Small cutouts or pictures of bomma of various sizes](#)
- Ruler or measuring tape
- Graph paper
- Pencil

Students may work independently or in pairs. Each student should be given 4-5 doll cutouts. They will need to measure their bomma using rulers or measuring tape. They will then record their measurements (height and width) in the table provided.

[We have a simplified version for younger students as a downloadable activity sheet here.](#)

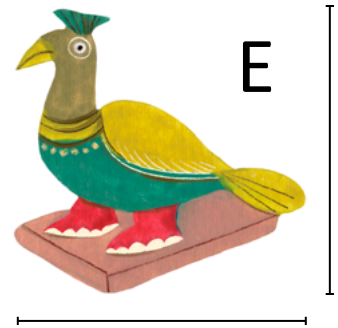
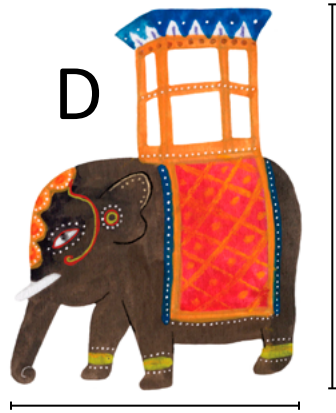
After filling in the table, students can use graph paper to create bar graphs for each measurement (height and width) using appropriate scales. Students can decorate their graphs with stickers or small cutouts of bomma images.

In analyzing the data they have collected, some questions for students to consider include:

- Which doll is the tallest? Which one is the shortest?
- Are there dolls with similar measurements?
- Is there a pattern in the measurements?

Gather the students back together and have them share their findings from the activity. Discuss how measuring and graphing can help us compare and analyze different objects, including bomma. Connect the math concepts learned in the activity to the story's themes of creativity and uniqueness.

MEASURING DOLLS



Doll	Height	Width
A		
B		
C		
D		
E		

National Core Arts Standards, Visual Arts-Creating: VA:Cr1.2.1a: Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.

VA:Cr1.2.2a: Make art or design with various materials and tools to explore personal interests, questions, and curiosity.



ARTS & CRAFTS

Make Your Own Bomma

The author of *Arthi's Bomma*, Mamta Nainy shares this in her note for readers:

“My tenderest hope for this book is that it sparks your interest in traditionally handcrafted objects and encourages you to learn more about them—or, better still, it makes you want to learn the craft yourself and create your own dolls. Because now you know that these bomma are not just toys, they are more. Much, much more!”

In this activity, students will be creating their own bomma-inspired art piece. [We have a simplified version for younger students as a downloadable activity sheet here.](#)

What you'll need:

- Paper and pencil
- Black permanent markers
- Wooden pegs
- Acrylic paints
- Paintbrushes (thin-tipped)
- Glue gun
- Googly eyes
- Scrap fabric, ribbon, or wool

Instructions for students:

1. First, plan your doll. Use a plain piece of paper or sketchbook, and pencil to trace the peg. Sketch how you would like your doll to look like when it is complete. Think about the face, clothes, and other details you would like to add. Be creative and make your doll uniquely yours!
2. Paint your doll's top half and leave it to dry. Paint the bottom half and leave it to dry again.
3. Use a black permanent marker to add details to the doll's face.
4. With adult help, use a hot glue gun to glue googly eyes onto the doll's face.
5. Use the fabric, ribbon, and yarn to add other details such as clothing and hair.

Facilitate a closing discussion about what the students learned from the story and art activity:

- What did you learn about bomma and their significance?
- How did Arthi's perspective change throughout the story?
- Why do you think we should appreciate and value traditional crafts and art forms?

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Culture

Explore and describe similarities and difference in ways various culutral groups meet similar needs and concerns

Presenting a “compare and contrast” chart demonstrating the similarities and differences between two or more cultural group in a given category



SOCIAL STUDIES

Virtual Field Trip: Dolls From Around the World

As the author of Arthi's Bomma shares:

“Doll makers draw inspiration from everyday life and mythological tales rooted in local storytelling traditions. The most recognizable Kondapalli bomma include the Dasavataram (ten incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu), Ambari elephants, and Butta Bomma, or dancing dolls. These dolls form the centerpiece of a special showcase known as Bommala Koluvu during the Hindu festivals of Navaratri and Sankranti every year.”

[Students can watch a video about Kondapalli doll making here.](#)

The objective of this activity is to:

- To introduce students to traditional dolls from different cultures
- To promote cultural awareness and appreciation for diverse folk art forms

In this activity, students will go on a virtual field trip to visit the [International Dolls Exhibit at St. Joseph Doll Museum using Google Arts and Culture](#). Teachers can lead the field trip as a whole class or students can explore in small groups.

Using the information in the virtual field trip and additional resources, discuss each doll's origin, cultural significance, and unique features. To ensure cultural relevance and responsiveness, teachers should also incorporate examples that reflect the diversity of the students in the class. Encourage students to ask questions and share their thoughts about the dolls they find interesting. Students can also identify the similarities between the various wooden dolls.

Facilitate a class discussion about the different wooden dolls:

- What did you learn from exploring traditional wooden dolls from various cultures?
- Which doll inspired you the most, and why?
- How do these dolls reflect the uniqueness and diversity of the world's cultures?

Extension Activity: Doll Fair

Students can research one culture's doll making and create a presentation to share their research. Teachers can organize a cultural fair where students can present their dolls and share interesting facts about the countries and cultures they represent.



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This guide was prepared by **Anjali Joshi**, a science teacher and curriculum developer by day and children’s book author by night. She has 15+ years of experience in the field of K-12 science education, and recently completed a Master of Science at the University of Oxford where she had the opportunity to research educational technology and the effective implementation of K-8 STEM curriculum.

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