



## Special Feature - History Case Study



# The 1927 US–Japan Friendship Doll Exchange

This year marks the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a famous international peace education project: the 1927 *US-Japan Friendship Doll Exchange*. This unique event, designed to prevent war and promote goodwill, led to the exchange of over 12,000 “friendship dolls” between Japan and the United States, and involved tens of thousands of children, teachers, schools and communities in both countries.

Here, we present the story of this unique initiative for your students to study and discuss along with resources and ideas on how to teach it.

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “If we are to reach real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with children.” Today, more than ever, we need further international exchanges of this kind between youth in countries around the world. – Kip Cates

### Teaching Ideas

- Have students read the story of the friendship dolls, then answer the questions (pages 17-18)
- Have students do research to learn more about Sidney Gulick, Eiichi Shibusawa and the historical background to the doll exchange.
- Have students choose 1 American and 1 Japanese doll, then research & report their stories.
- Have students find out how many American dolls were sent to their city or prefecture in 1927, then research how many are left, where they are and how they survived World War II.
- Have students research the Japanese friendship doll that represented their prefecture in 1927, find out where it was sent to in the US, check if it still survives and research its story.
- Have students go to the local library, find old newspapers from the year 1927, then look for articles about the arrival of the American dolls in Japan, in their prefecture and in their city.
- Have students prepare an English Powerpoint or kamishibai on the 1927 doll exchange, then give a presentation in class or to the school.
- Have students read one of the English books about the 1927 friendship dolls listed on pg. 21, then write or give an English book report.
- The 1927 doll exchange aimed to promote goodwill in a time of fear, nationalism and militarism. Join your students to carry out a similar exchange today with young people in an unpopular, developing or “enemy” country.

### Websites about the 1927 Doll Exchange

#### English

- Great Summary (*Look Japan* 1995) [www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/media/magazine/lookjapan.htm](http://www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/media/magazine/lookjapan.htm)
- Bill Gordon Friendship Dolls (Wesleyan Univ.) [www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/index.htm](http://www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/index.htm)
  - best English website on the 1927 exchange
  - complete story of the 1927 friendship dolls
  - profiles of each American and Japanese doll
  - teacher’s corner, resources, books, videos...
- Japanese Friendship Dolls <[wikipedia.com](http://wikipedia.com)>
  - summary of the 1927 exchange with links

#### Japanese

- 青い目の人形 <<https://ja.wikipedia.org/>>
  - Japanese Wikipedia site: *Aoi Me no Ningyo*
  - detailed info on the 1927 doll exchange
- US-Japan Friendship Dolls (日米親善人形) [www.yoshitoku.co.jp/user\\_data/a\\_partner.php](http://www.yoshitoku.co.jp/user_data/a_partner.php)
- Miss Kagawa Doll <<http://misskagawa.com/>>
- For more info, search for “青い目の人形” “Blue Eyed Dolls” or “Friendship Dolls” on Google.

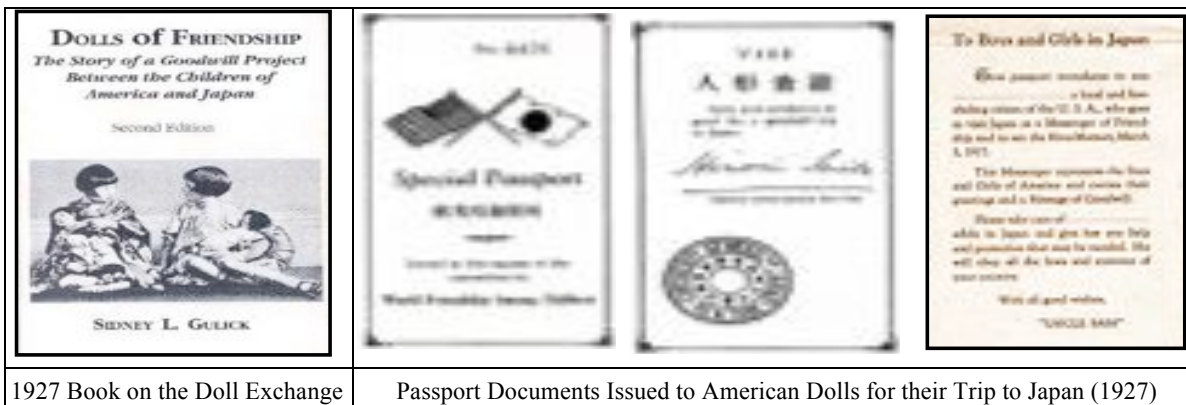
### Video Clips on the 1927 Doll Exchange

#### English

- Alan Pate Lecture: *Friendship Dolls* (1 hour) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBNGH2mno5A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBNGH2mno5A)
- The Friendship Dolls (5 mins.) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFwVSAQfD2c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DFwVSAQfD2c)
- Powerpoint Intro: Blue Eyed Dolls (10 mins.) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVT0LlIzZHw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVT0LlIzZHw)
- Miss Osaka and the Friendship Dolls (3 mins.) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZPDZENYw\\_g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZPDZENYw_g)

#### Japanese

- Doll Project and War (Japanese, 10 mins.) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oMoFpx7FaI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oMoFpx7FaI)
- Historical Overview (Japanese, 6 mins., Kochi) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRpEqeihTM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRpEqeihTM)
- Friendship Doll Kamishibai (Japanese, 6 mins.) [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pngRp9nOtUY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pngRp9nOtUY)
- For more clips, search for “青い目の人形” “Blue Eyed Dolls” or “Friendship Dolls” on Youtube



1927 Book on the Doll Exchange

Passport Documents Issued to American Dolls for their Trip to Japan (1927)



Welcome Ceremony for US Dolls (Tokyo, 1927)



News Article about Tottori Student Research (2009)

**Classroom Report: A 1-Year Student Research Project on the 1927 US-Japan Doll Exchange**

My faculty at Tottori University offers a 1-year *Regional Survey (Chiiki Chosa)* course that gives students the chance to go off-campus to do fieldwork in the local community. In 2009, we chose the 1927 *US-Japan Doll Exchange* as our theme, and spent one year researching this event and its impact on Tottori.

**The US-Japan Doll Exchange in Tottori**

Of the 12,739 American “blue-eyed dolls” that were distributed to Japanese schools in 1927, 107 dolls were sent to Tottori Prefecture. Their arrival was covered enthusiastically by local Tottori newspapers and welcome ceremonies were held in Tottori schools. One of the 58 Japanese ambassador dolls sent to the US in 1927 was “Miss Tottori” who was given to the state of South Dakota. During World War II, the American dolls in Tottori, as in the rest of Japan, became “enemy dolls” and were vilified in the local press. Almost all were destroyed. Of the original 107 dolls sent to Tottori in 1927, only 2 remain: one in private hands and the other at a local elementary school. The 1927 “Miss Tottori” doll, however, is still on display at the South Dakota History Museum and even made a special home-coming visit to Tottori in 1989.

**Local Fieldwork**

To study this unique event, our students:

- looked through historical documents and newspapers from the 1920s at our prefectural library
- did online data searches in English and Japanese
- reviewed current research in books and articles
- interviewed historians and did e-mail exchanges with experts in Japan and in the United States

**Regional Contribution**

To share what they learned about this historical incident during our 1 year course, our students:

- organized a display table at a Tottori festival
- arranged newspaper coverage of their research in both the Asahi and Nihon-Kai newspapers
- taught a lesson about the 1927 US - Japan doll exchange to children at a local primary school
- gave a formal presentation about their research to Tottori history experts and the general public

**Your Class? Your City? Your Prefecture?**

The 1927 *US – Japan Friendship Doll Exchange* offers a chance for EFL students to acquire language, research and presentation skills through the study of a historical peace education event. Why not do a research project on this topic in your town?



# THE 1927 US-JAPAN FRIENDSHIP DOLL EXCHANGE



## Introduction

We live in a time of growing nationalism, fear and militarism. The world is rife with prejudice and discrimination. What can we do to promote peace and build friendship between nations?

One way is to look to the past and learn from case studies of individuals who have worked for international understanding. A good example of this is the US - Japan friendship doll exchange of 1927.

## Historical Background

The 1920s were a decade of growing tension between Japan and the United States. In 1924, the US passed laws restricting Asian immigration. National rivalry became intense. Japanese and Americans eyed each other with fear and distrust.

## A Goodwill Project

To counter this, two individuals decided to take action: Sidney Gulick, an American missionary, and Eiichi Shibusawa, a Japanese industrialist. They set up a special *Committee on World Friendship Among Children* and decided to launch an international doll exchange to promote goodwill between children in Japan and the United States.



Sidney Gulick



Eiichi Shibusawa

## American Dolls

To begin the project, Gulick sent out a call to American schools, churches and youth groups around the country to send dolls of friendship to Japan. Children throughout the United States responded enthusiastically to his appeal. By 1927, Gulick had collected a total of 12,739 dolls.

These were sent to Japan by ship from San Francisco and timed to arrive for the spring *Hina Matsuri* doll festival. Each doll was accompanied by a passport, gifts and a letter of friendship from American children to children in Japan.

## Impact

When the American dolls arrived in Japan, they were named “blue-eyed dolls” after a popular children’s song and immediately became a media sensation. A national ceremony was held to welcome them in Tokyo. A contest was held to choose the best “welcome song.” Major department stores held

exhibitions in their honor. From Tokyo, they were then distributed to each prefecture (and colony) in Japan: 643 to Hokkaido, 262 to Kyoto, 238 to Okayama, 152 to Fukui, 98 to Taiwan and so on. Local ceremonies were held at Japanese schools in every city, town and village to welcome these gifts. Each school proudly displayed its doll as a symbol of friendship from children in America.

## Japanese Dolls

In response to this gift from America, Eiichi Shibusawa organized a national campaign to send Japanese dolls to the United States. Children throughout Japan donated money. The best doll makers were hired. The dolls were expensive, reached almost a meter in height and were dressed in beautiful kimono. In November 1927, these 58 Japanese “ambassador dolls” were sent to the US: Miss Nagasaki to New York, Miss Toyama to Kentucky, Miss Kochi to Pennsylvania, Miss Korea to Connecticut. Each doll represented a different prefecture (or colony) of Japan and was accompanied by accessories and goodwill letters from Japanese children. The dolls were greeted warmly on arrival in the US and made a national tour before being sent to museums in each state.

## World War II

When World War II broke out, the American friendship dolls in Japan suddenly became “enemy dolls.” Teachers and students were instructed to hit, kick or torture them. Schools burned them, drowned them or used them for bayonet practice. Government officials ordered them to be destroyed.

The Japanese ambassador dolls in the US were treated quite differently. Most were put in storage while a few – like Miss Kagawa in North Carolina – stayed on display. Attached to her display case was the following sign:

*The Japanese made an insane attack on Hawaii on December 7, 1941. With a grim determination, we are committed to stop for all time Japanese aggression. This has no bloodthirsty implications to destroy peoples as such. We still believe in peace, goodwill, to live and let live. Men, women, and children of Japan have this goodwill, but they have been dominated by ruthless leaders. Proof of such goodwill - as displayed here - are the 1927 Friendship Dolls which were exchanged between children of the United States and Japan.*

## Re-Discovery

World War II ended in 1945 and the “blue-eyed” dolls in Japan seemed lost to history. Amazingly, in the 1970s, several American dolls were suddenly

re-discovered. During the war, a number of brave Japanese teachers and students refused to destroy these symbols of US-Japan friendship. Instead, they disobeyed orders and hid the dolls away, putting their lives at risk of being labeled traitors. A national search turned up more American dolls.

### The Friendship Dolls Today

At present, over 300 “blue-eyed” dolls have been found in schools, cities and towns around Japan. Some are in museums, others are in private collections and yet others are displayed in schools. In the United States, 48 of the original 58 Japanese ambassador dolls have been recovered. Most are on display in art galleries and museums. Efforts are still being made to trace other surviving dolls.

### The Doll Exchange Continues

The 1927 doll exchange is still going strong! Some of the Japanese and American dolls that

survived World War II now make goodwill visits to their home countries to promote understanding between Americans and Japanese. Denny Gulick, Sidney Gulick’s grandson, has dedicated himself to carrying on his grandfather’s work and runs doll exchanges with schools in the US and Japan.

### Conclusion

The 1927 doll exchange took place 90 years ago. It was a brave attempt by two individuals – one American, one Japanese - to fight against the hatred and prejudice of their time. The surviving dolls are treasured as symbols of peace and international understanding. Each has a unique story to tell. How many dolls are there in your prefecture?

Mahatma Gandhi once said, “If we are to reach real peace in the world, we shall have to begin with children.” Today, more than ever, we need further international exchanges like this 1927 friendship doll project between the children of the world.

**TRUE OR FALSE**

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\_\_\_ 1 This doll exchange took place in 1934.  
 \_\_\_ 2 US-Japan relations in the 1920s were bad.  
 \_\_\_ 3 Sidney Gulick was an American politician.  
 \_\_\_ 4 He collected almost 400 American dolls.  
 \_\_\_ 5 These were sent to Japan by airplane.  
 \_\_\_ 6 All the American dolls stayed in Tokyo.  
 \_\_\_ 7 58 Japanese dolls were sent to the US.  
 \_\_\_ 8 Each doll represented one Japanese city.  
 \_\_\_ 9 During WWII, all the dolls were destroyed  
 \_\_\_ 10 Over 300 American dolls survived the war.

**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

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1. What’s one way to promote peace?
2. How were US-Japan relations in the 1920s?
3. Who was Sidney Gulick? Eiichi Shibusawa?
4. What project did they launch?
5. How did Gulick start the project in the US?
6. How were the US dolls received in Japan?
7. What did Japan send to the US in return?
8. What happened to the dolls during WW II?
9. What happened in Japan in the 1970s?
10. What’s the situation today?

militarism	軍国主義	colony	植民地
rife with	豊富で	ambassador	大使
decade	10年	to torture	拷問する
immigration	移住	to drown	溺れる
missionary	宣教師	bayonet	銃剣
industrialist	実業家	storage	倉庫
to launch	始める	implication	含蓄
goodwill	親善	ruthless	残忍な
distribute	分配する	traitor	裏切り者

**RESEARCH TASKS**

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1. How many American dolls were sent to your city or prefecture in 1927? What happened to them during World War II? How many dolls survived the war? Where are they now? Who protected them? Do research to answer these questions, then give a report on what you find to the class.
2. Which state in the US was the Japanese ambassador doll from your prefecture sent to? Where is it now? Do some research to discover the story.

**1927 US - Japan Doll Exchange**

US dolls sent to Japan = 12,739

Japanese dolls sent to the US = 58

1927 Map of US Blue-Eyed Dolls in Japan  
(number of dolls given to each prefecture)

### Japanese Friendship Dolls in the USA

[www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/japanese/locations](http://www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/japanese/locations)

Japanese Doll	Sent to...	Now in...
Miss Akita	Michigan	Detroit
Miss Aomori	Massachusetts	
Miss Ehime	Mississippi	Gulfport
Miss Fukuoka	Oregon	Eugene
Miss Fukushima	Missouri	Kansas City
Miss Gifu	Ohio	Cleveland
Miss Hiroshima	Maryland	Baltimore
Miss Hokkaido	Iowa	Davenport
Miss Hyogo	Missouri	
Miss Ibaraki	Wisconsin	Milwaukee
Miss Ishikawa	Montana	Helena
Miss Iwate	Alabama	Birmingham
Miss Kagawa	North Carolina	Raleigh
Miss Kagoshima	Arizona	Phoenix
Miss Kochi	Pennsylvania	Pittsburgh
Miss Kyoto-fu	Massachusetts	Boston
Miss Kyoto-shi	Arkansas	Little Rock
Miss Mie	Nebraska	Lincoln
Miss Miyagi	Kansas	
Miss Nagano	Delaware	Wilmington
Miss Nagasaki	New York	Rochester
Miss Nagoya	Georgia	Atlanta
Miss Nara	Idaho	Boise
Miss Oita	Massachusetts	Springfield
Miss Okayama	North Carolina	Fargo
Miss Okinawa	Ohio	Cincinnati
Miss Osaka-fu	Ohio	Columbus
Miss Osaka-shi	New Jersey	Newark
Miss Saitama	South Carolina	Charleston
Miss Shimane	Indiana	Indianapolis
Miss Shizuoka	Missouri	Kansas City
Miss Tokushima	Washington	Spokane
Miss Tottori	South Dakota	Pierre
Miss Toyama	Kentucky	Louisville
Miss Wakayama	Nevada	Reno
Miss Yamagata	Maine	Augusta
Miss Yamaguchi	New Mexico	Reno
Miss Yamanashi	Wyoming	Cheyenne
Miss Yokohama	Colorado	Denver
Miss Japan	Wash. DC	Smithsonian
Miss Kanto-shu	Washington	Bellevue
Miss Chosen	Connecticut	W. Hartford
Miss Taiwan	California	Los Angeles

### American Blue-Eyed Dolls in Japan

[www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/american/locations/](http://www.bill-gordon.net/dolls/american/locations/)

PREFECTURE	1927	TODAY
Aichi	349	10
Akita	190	11
Aomori	220	7

PREFECTURE	1927	TODAY
Chiba	214	10
Ehime	214	5
Fukui	152	0
Fukuoka	259	3
Fukushima	323	17
Gifu	235	2
Gunma	142	19
Hiroshima	326	4
Hokkaido	643	24
Hyogo	373	9
Ibaraki	246	9
Ishikawa	205	3
Iwate	263	14
Kagawa	102	1
Kagoshima	209	0
Kanagawa	166	8
Kochi	187	1
Kumamoto	241	2
Kyoto	262	7
Mie	194	8
Miyagi	221	6
Miyazaki	124	1
Nagano	286	22
Nagasaki	214	2
Nara	144	4
Oita	182	5
Okayama	238	3
Okinawa	63	0
Osaka	429	4
Saga	98	1
Saitama	178	12
Shiga	135	2
Shimane	182	2
Shizuoka	253	9
Tochigi	213	5
Tokushima	152	1
Tokyo	568	10
Tottori	107	2
Toyama	150	6
Wakayama	177	1
Yamagata	205	10
Yamaguchi	200	4
Yamanashi	129	5
Ministry of Ed.	1,212	0

### COLONIES

Chosen (Korea)	193	0
Taiwan	98	0
Karafuto (Sakhalin)	20	0
Kanto-shu (China)	10	0

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,739</b>	<b>300</b>
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## BOOKS ON THE 1927 US-JAPAN DOLL EXCHANGE

Check out the following books (in English and Japanese) to learn more about the Japan – US Friendship Doll Exchange of 1927.



### BOOKS IN ENGLISH

Alan Pate's text and Bill Gordon's website give the best overview in English of the 1927 doll exchange. Check out the great story books below as well!

#### Art as Ambassador

by Alan Pate (2016) \$125

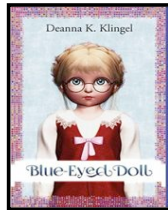
This brand new book documents the fascinating history of the 1927 US-Japan Friendship Dolls, shows photos of each doll, chronicles their fate during and after World War II, and discusses their role as Ambassadors of Goodwill.



#### Blue Eyed Doll

by Anna Klingel (2016) \$16

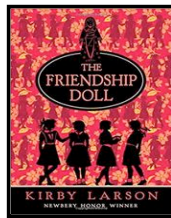
This fictional tale set in the US in 1926 tells the story of 8-year old Mary whose biased father refuses to let her take part in the blue-eyed doll exchange with Japan. As an adult after WWII, she sets off to search for surviving dolls.



#### The Friendship Doll

by Kirby Larson (2012) \$7

This historical novel for young readers tells the story of the 1927 Friendship Dolls and relates how the lives of 4 different American girls were touched when Miss Kanagawa arrived in the US as a goodwill doll from Japan.

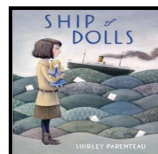


#### Friendship Doll Series

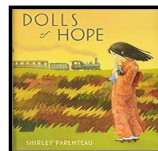
by Shirley Parenteau \$14 each

This is a great fictional series of stories about children in Japan and the United States that's based on the 1927 US-Japan friendship doll exchange.

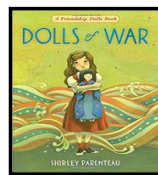
**Ship of Dolls** (2014) 11-year old Lexie joins with her American classmates to send a blue-eyed doll to Japan



**Dolls of Hope** (2015) 11-year old Chiyo tries to protect an American blue-eyed doll in pre-war Japan.



**Dolls of War** (2017) 11-year old Macy tries to protect a Japanese doll after the Pearl Harbor attack in 1941.



### BOOKS IN JAPANESE

There are a lot of great books about the 1927 doll exchange in Japanese, both general overviews (the first 3 below) as well as stories of individual dolls.

#### 青い目の人形と近代日本

*Blue-Eyed Dolls & Modern Japan*

H. Koresawa 是澤 (2010) ¥2,800

This book gives a good overview of the 1927 US-Japan friendship doll exchange including a detailed look at the historical background, a description of the project and a discussion of its impact.

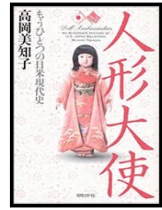


#### 人形大使 (高岡美知子)

*The Doll Ambassadors*

Michiko Takaoka (2004) ¥2,600

This book takes a comprehensive look at the 58 Japanese goodwill dolls sent to the US in 1927 with profiles of each one and a report on their current status in museums across America.



#### アメリカからきた

青い目の人形

*Blue-Eyed Dolls from America*

歴史教育者協議会 (1999) ¥10,000

This text, Book 5 of an illustrated history series on "Japan and the World", includes a great six-page summary of the 1927 Friendship Doll exchange.



#### 青い目の人形 by 原田一美

*Blue-Eyed Dolls* (2009) ¥2,600

This tells the true story of Alice, an American doll that survived WW II.



#### 友情の人形使節 by 星野義二

*Friendship Doll* (2001) ¥1,740

This tells the true story of Wohelo, a US doll, and those who protected her.



- 青い目の人形物語 (1) アメリカ編
- 青い目の人形物語 (2) 日本編
- ペッグイちゃんの平和と戦争
- あやと青い目の人形 —ナガサキ
- 青い目の人形メリーちゃん

