



Sweden Lesson Plan

Grade Level: K-2 **Activity Time:** 20-30 Minutes

Materials

- Dala Horse cutout
- Scissors
- Markers, crayons, or paint
- “Designing a Toy” worksheet
- Pom-poms, ribbons, yarn (optional)
- Glue or Tape (optional)

Introduction

Ask students, “What are your favorite toys?” Share with them that one very popular toy in Sweden is called the “Dala Horse.” These are wooden horses that are painted bright colors (often red). In the 17th century, little wooden horses were sold at markets in Dalarna, Sweden. About 100 years later, wooden horses were carved by men working in the forest and brought back for their children to play with. Pine trees are very abundant in Sweden, and many of the lumberjacks were chopping pine trees. Most Dala Horses are made of pine. They range in size from 2 cm to 5 ft. Some children even learned to carve horses after school. Families who did not have much money would carve and paint lots of Dala horses and trade them for food, goods, or even housing. You can still find Dala Horses all over Sweden today.

In 1939, Dala horses became famous around the world. At the World Exhibition in New York, the Swedish pavilion placed a large Dala horse outside the Swedish pavilion. Visitors were enamored by the brightly colored wooden horse. During the year after the exhibition, 20,000 Dala horses were shipped over to New York. The Dala horse became a national symbol for Sweden. If you were to make a toy that symbolized you, what might it look like?

Here’s a great YouTube video on Dala Horses:

<https://youtu.be/yYu1yFzTdlw>

Activity

1. Share the background of the Dala Horse with students and watch the video.
2. Have students decorate their Dala Horse. Encourage them to think about what the colors they’re choosing might symbolize and why they chose those decorations and colors
3. Remind students that the Dala Horse “symbolized” Sweden. Sweden had many lumberjacks, so it’s fitting that they toys were made of wood. They were often carved by lumberjacks for their

children. The bright colors and patterns were the same ones you could find decorating the walls and furniture of the buildings and homes in Sweden.

4. Have students create a toy that would symbolize them. You can keep it really general to allow students the opportunity to do something abstract. On the worksheet, they will write a short description and draw a picture of the toy. If they're having trouble getting started, here are some questions you might use to prompt them:
 - If you were designing an action figure, what accessories would you come with? What might your catchphrase be?
 - If you were a stuffed animal, what kind of stuffed animal do you think you would be?
5. Hang Dala Horses around the room. Encourage children to share their "Designing a Toy" worksheet with others.

Wrap Up

- What is a toy that is special to you? Describe it in as much detail as possible.
- Why is that toy important to you?
- Have you ever made or invented a toy? What was it?
- If you could make or invent a toy that represents you, what would it be?