

MOM'S JOY ROOM

2964 Fairmont Road, Morgantown, WV 26501 | (304) 282-3671

CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Vintage Topsy-Turvy Doll Collection — Six Pieces — c.1900s-1970s — Sizes 10"-15"



COLLECTION MARKET VALUE

\$175-350

Six pieces priced individually below — ranging from folk art cloth to hard-face composition examples

COLLECTION ESTIMATED WORTH

\$350-600

Specialty collector ceiling for a diverse topsy-turvy group spanning multiple eras and construction types



*Doll 1 — Black cloth folk art
red plaid dress, white apron*



*Doll 2 — Knit-face, tatted lace bonnet
embroidered features, lace collar*



*Doll 3 — Tropical composition head
yellow & red skirt, fruit headpiece*



*Doll 4 — Composition face
red dress, calico skirt, basket bonnet*



*Doll 5 — Cloth two-face pair
polka dot & floral, yarn hair*



*Doll 6 — Flat cloth construction
floral print skirt, two painted faces*

HISTORY OF THE TOPSY-TURVY DOLL

The topsy-turvy doll — also called a "flip doll," "two-headed doll," or "upside-down doll" — is one of the most distinctive forms in American folk doll history. Constructed so that two doll figures share a single body, each concealed

beneath the other's skirt, the design allows the doll to be flipped upside-down to reveal an entirely different character. One doll's full skirt serves as the other's concealment, so only one figure is visible at a time.

The origins of the topsy-turvy doll in America are deeply intertwined with the history of slavery and Reconstruction. The most iconic pairing — a Black doll and a white doll sharing one body — is believed to have been made by enslaved women for their children, or given to enslaved children as playthings. The dual nature of the doll has been interpreted in multiple ways: as a practical toy that offered two playthings in one, as a reflection of the dual worlds Black Americans were required to navigate, and as a quiet, subversive act of identity in a context that denied full humanity. These early examples were typically handmade from available cloth scraps with embroidered or painted features, and represent a significant strand of American Black folk art.

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, topsy-turvy dolls had entered the broader commercial toy market. Manufacturers began producing versions with composition or hard plastic faces alongside the traditional cloth construction, and the pairing expanded beyond the Black/white binary to include character pairings from fairy tales, nursery rhymes, and cultural stereotypes. The design remained popular through the mid-20th century, and handmade versions continued to be produced by home sewers and folk artists well into the 1970s and beyond. Today, topsy-turvy dolls — particularly early handmade cloth examples and those with original Black folk art heritage — are actively collected for their historical significance, folk art quality, and storytelling power.

INDIVIDUAL DESCRIPTIONS & VALUES

1. Black Cloth Folk Art Topsy-Turvy — c.1930S–1950S — ~13"

Hand-sewn black cotton cloth doll with yarn hair, simple embroidered facial features, and a red-and-white checked dress with white apron overlay. Classic homemade American folk art construction — no maker's mark. The red gingham dress and white apron are original and intact. A strong, clean example of the traditional Black cloth topsy-turvy form.

MARKET VALUE	ESTIMATED WORTH
\$35–65	\$70–120

2. Knit-Face Topsy-Turvy with Tatted Lace Bonnet — c.1900S–1920S — ~12"

An earlier and more unusual example — the face is constructed of knit/stocking-type fabric, stretched over a soft form, with embroidered black button eyes, stitched red nose and mouth accents, and locks of light yarn hair. A beautiful hand-tatted lace bonnet and lace collar trim speak to careful, skilled handiwork. The pink floral fabric body and lace details suggest early 20th century construction. A charming, handcrafted piece with significant age-related character.

MARKET VALUE	ESTIMATED WORTH
\$45–85	\$90–150

3. Tropical Composition-Head Topsy-Turvy — c.1940S–1950S — ~10"

A striking piece featuring a brown composition or hard rubber doll head with painted facial features, set atop a rope-wrapped neck, and adorned with a fruit and leaf headpiece (banana, green fruit, black bead). Bold yellow and red layered skirts with lace trim complete the tropical "Carmen Miranda" style presentation. The composition head and tropical styling suggest a mid-century tourist or souvenir market origin, possibly Caribbean or Latin American influenced. A vivid and eye-catching piece.

MARKET VALUE	ESTIMATED WORTH
\$30–60	\$65–110

4. Composition-Face Topsy-Turvy, Red Dress & Calico Skirt — c.1930S–1940S — ~15"

The largest piece in the collection — a composition-face doll with painted blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and a red bonnet adorned with a small wicker basket of flowers. She wears a full red dress with puffed sleeves and a white lace-trimmed apron over a full calico skirt printed with a red, white, and blue folk tulip pattern. The composition face is well-preserved with minimal crazing. A handsome, well-dressed example of the mid-century commercial topsy-turvy type.

MARKET VALUE

\$35–65

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$70–120

5. Cloth Two-Face Topsy-Turvy Baby Pair — c.1960S–1970S — ~11"

A later cloth topsy-turvy pairing — one doll with a dark-toned cloth face, red lips, and black yarn braids in a red polka-dot dress; the other with a light-toned cloth face, blue painted eyes, and blonde yarn hair in a blue floral print dress. Both faces are softly painted/printed with gentle expressions. A cheerful, well-made homemade or small-production example representing the folk tradition carried into the later 20th century.

MARKET VALUE

\$20–40

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$40–70

6. Flat Cloth Two-Face Topsy-Turvy — c.1950S–1960S — ~10"

A flat-construction cloth topsy-turvy doll with two printed or painted faces — one dark-toned with red features, one light-toned with pink and blue features — joined at the waist beneath a cheerful novelty floral print skirt in red, cream, and green tones. The flat body style is characteristic of a pattern-book or commercial kit doll from the mid-20th century. A sweet, simple example of the type made widely by home sewers from the 1940s through the 1960s.

MARKET VALUE

\$10–25

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$25–45

Collector's note: Topsy-turvy dolls are collected across several overlapping categories: Black Americana and African American folk art (commanding the strongest premiums), general folk doll collecting, composition doll collecting, and mid-century novelty toys. The most historically and monetarily significant examples in this collection are Dolls 1 and 2 — the handmade Black cloth folk art doll and the early knit-face example with tatted lace — both of which represent the American folk tradition most closely tied to the doll type's origins. The composition-face examples (Dolls 3 and 4) carry value as mid-century commercial collectibles. Dolls 5 and 6 are later, more accessible examples with modest but genuine collectibility. All six are priced and sold individually. Collection totals above represent the sum of individual values.

"Flip her over and the story changes — but the magic is the same. Each one holds two worlds in a single skirt."