

MOM'S JOY ROOM

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CERTIFICATE OF DESCRIPTION & VALUATION

Original 1958 Brookglad "Poor Pitiful Pearl" — Created by William Steig

POOR PITIFUL PEARL

Brookglad Corporation | Created by William Steig | 17" — Circa 1958

"She was never the prettiest doll on the shelf — and that was exactly the point. Pearl taught a whole generation of girls that compassion was worth more than curls."



MARKET VALUE

\$80 – \$140

Realistic quick-sale price for an original 17" Brookglad Pearl in displayable condition

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$150 – \$225

Ceiling for all-original 17" Brookglad first-run examples among character doll collectors



*Poor Pitiful Pearl — 1958 Brookglad Original
17" Vinyl/Hard Plastic — Sleep Eyes
Created by William Steig
The Doll Who Taught Kindness*

"Poor Pitiful Pearl" — Original Brookglad Corporation Doll, 17 Inches

Vinyl/Hard Plastic Construction — Sleep Eyes — Original Fancy Dress Outfit

Created by William Steig — Circa 1958 — First Brookglad Production Run

DESCRIPTION

An original **Poor Pitiful Pearl** doll, 17 inches tall, produced by the **Brookglad Corporation** circa 1958 — the first and most sought-after production run of this iconic character doll. She is constructed of vinyl and hard plastic with blue sleep eyes, rooted hair, and the characteristically wistful, slightly mournful expression that gave Pearl her name. Pearl was conceived as a dual-personality doll: she came packaged in her "pitiful" outfit — a raggedy, patched dress and floppy hat representing her sad, orphaned state — but could then be transformed into her "fancy dress" version, shown here in a cheerful party dress, demonstrating to children that kindness and compassion could change a person's fortunes. This example appears to be in her fancy dress outfit, representing Pearl after she has been "rescued" and loved.

NOTABLE INFORMATION

- ♦ Original Brookglad Corporation production, circa 1958 — the first and most collectible Pearl run
- ♦ Created by **William Steig** — legendary New Yorker cartoonist, later author of the children's book "Shrek!" (1990), which inspired the DreamWorks film franchise
- ♦ 17" size — the larger and more desirable of the Brookglad Pearl sizes (also produced in 13")
- ♦ Vinyl/hard plastic construction with sleep eyes
- ♦ Dual-outfit concept doll — came with both "pitiful" rag dress and "fancy" party dress
- ♦ Pearl was deliberately designed as the anti-glamour doll of the 1950s — a compassionate alternative to idealized baby dolls
- ♦ Featured in the December 25, 1956 issue of *Look* magazine when the doll was brand new

♦ CULTURAL ICON ♦

*Created by William Steig,
beloved New Yorker cartoonist
and later author of Shrek!
Pearl was deliberately designed
as the anti-glamour doll —
a lonely, pitiful girl meant to
evoke compassion in children.*

✦ A later Horsman reproduction was produced in 1963 — this is the earlier, more valuable Brookglad original

HISTORY & CONTEXT

Poor Pitiful Pearl is one of the most socially significant dolls of the mid-20th century — a character doll deliberately conceived not to be beautiful, but to be pitied, and through that pity, to teach kindness. She was created by **William Steig** (1907–2003), one of the most celebrated cartoonists in the history of *The New Yorker*, where he contributed over 1,600 drawings and 117 covers over a career spanning more than seven decades. Steig was also a beloved children's book author and illustrator; his 1990 picture book *Shrek!* would later inspire the massively successful DreamWorks animated film franchise, giving Pearl's creator an unlikely second act of cultural fame decades after her creation. But in the mid-1950s, it was Pearl who was his most famous creation off the magazine page.

Steig created Poor Pitiful Pearl in 1956, drawing on the character from his New Yorker cartoons — a lonely, bedraggled, orphaned girl with a perpetually mournful expression, oversized feet, and a hopelessly raggedy appearance. The concept was revolutionary for its time: in an era when doll manufacturers competed to produce ever more glamorous, idealized baby dolls and fashion dolls, Steig and the **Brookglad Corporation** went in the opposite direction. Pearl was designed as a deliberate anti-glamour doll — a child who had nothing, who looked pitiful and sad, and who was meant to be loved precisely because she needed love. The underlying message to children was clear and progressive for the 1950s: compassion, empathy, and caring for those less fortunate were virtues worth cultivating.

The doll was first produced by Brookglad in **1958**, following an earlier 1955 version made by Tristar. Brookglad's Pearl was offered in two sizes: a 13-inch version, which the **1958 Sears Christmas catalog** offered for \$4.98, and a larger 17-inch version, as seen here. The 17-inch size is generally the more desirable among collectors today, both because of its greater visual presence and because fewer examples survive in the larger size. Each Pearl came packaged in her pitiful outfit — a raggedy, patched dress with a floppy, oversized hat — but included a second, "fancy" party dress outfit, allowing the child to transform Pearl from pitiful orphan to happy, well-loved girl. This transformation was central to the doll's appeal: the child was the agent of Pearl's rescue, changing her fortunes through care and attention. It was a quietly feminist, emotionally intelligent toy concept for its era.

Pearl was featured in the **December 25, 1956 issue of Look magazine** when the doll was brand new, part of the promotional campaign that made her a modest sensation in the late 1950s. She was not a blockbuster toy by the standards of the era's biggest doll lines, but she sold steadily and found a devoted audience among parents who appreciated her message and among children who responded to her unusual, empathetic appeal. In **1963**, the **Horsman** company acquired the rights and produced a second run of Poor Pitiful Pearl dolls — these later Horsman versions are also collected today, but the earlier Brookglad originals, produced during the doll's original cultural moment, are the more sought-after among character doll enthusiasts.

Today, Poor Pitiful Pearl occupies a special place in doll collecting history. She represents a mid-century moment when the toy industry briefly embraced emotional intelligence and social consciousness over pure glamour — a small, poignant doll with a big heart, created by a man who would go on to give the world another unlikely hero in a green ogre named Shrek. Surviving all-original Brookglad examples in the larger 17-inch size, with their original outfits and accessories intact, are increasingly difficult to find, as many were played with extensively and lost their dual-outfit components over the decades.

Collector's note: All-original 1958 Brookglad Poor Pitiful Pearl dolls in the 17-inch size currently list and sell in the \$100–\$125 range when complete with original outfits and in good displayable condition, with particularly fine all-original examples reaching higher among character doll specialists. The smaller 13-inch Brookglad version and the later 1963 Horsman reproduction typically trade somewhat lower. Values here reflect this doll's status as an original Brookglad first-run example in the more desirable 17" size, combined with the cultural significance of her creator, William Steig, and the doll's unique place in mid-century toy history. Completeness of both original outfits (pitiful rag dress and fancy party dress) would place her at the higher end of the range; missing components would reduce value accordingly.