

BLEUETTE

The Doll and Her Patterns

by Agnes Sura

The first page of the first issue of *La Semaine de Suzette*, magazine for little girls, providing patterns in each issue for *Bleuette*.

Bleuette wears a pink summer dress from 1907. This *Bleuette* is marked with 6/0 marked on her head.



Bleuette made her first appearance as a *Jumeau* doll to be given as a premium with every subscription to *La Semaine de Suzette*, the upcoming newspaper for girls, published by Henri Gautier. In a France that was becoming increasingly secular by law, its mission was to prepare little girls to be good wives and mothers, while stressing the moral and religious ideals of Catholicism. One of the things a good wife should know was how to sew and this was the doll's mission, to teach little girls how to sew.

On February 2, 1905, the first issue was published and the little doll received her name with the pattern page entitled, "*Nous Habillons Bleuette*" (We Dress *Bleuette*). In this first issue Tante Jacqueline (Jacqueline Rivière), who was responsible for all the patterns until her death in 1920, stated that *Bleuette* comes to you with nothing, and that you will have to make her everything. The first garment to be made was a dress so that you could show her to all your little friends (and incidentally, sell more subscriptions to the newspaper). With the first six patterns *Bleuette* would have

a complete outfit. Techniques were taught while stressing that the intention of the patterns was to teach the subscribers to sew. Starting with the first year there were patterns for knitted and crocheted garments as well as for sewn ones.

From 1905 to 1960 *La Semaine de Suzette* was published every Thursday and was sold not only by subscription but also in the kiosks and shops where periodicals were sold. The only break in this history was from 1940 to 1946 when publication was halted by the Germans during World War II.

Starting in 1916 a catalog of ready-made clothing was published twice a year. These garments were completely different in design from the patterns. Thus *Bleuette* had two different wardrobes available to her.

Over the years the tone of the pattern instructions changed and there were fewer patterns in the later years but the appeal of the doll and patterns to make clothing for her continued to be popular. The first patterns had more complete instructions and even included such topics as washing woolens and transferring a design by pouncing (making holes along the design through which you pushed



Left: This printed spring dress with a solid jacket is shown on a Bleuette marked with 6/0 on her head.

Center: A Bleuette, marked SFBJ 60-8/0 on her head 1919, wears dressy dress of light green cotton with pink trim.

Below: The summer dress of three fabrics from 1932 is shown on a Bleuette marked SFBJ 60-8/0 with raised 1921 on her head.

colored powder to transfer the design) while the instructions were shorter in the later patterns.

As the 1920s arrived and Tante Jacqueline's daughter, Suzanne Rivière, continued the patterns after her mother's death. The patterns treated Bleuette more as the child of the subscriber, and there was a chatty tone. The patterns of the '20s and '30s, the golden age of the patterns, concerned themselves with the fabrics and colors to use, always noting the colors that are in fashion. In the last years of publication, when sewing was not as necessary a skill as it had been, the instructions were short and often not complete.

Patterns for garments authentic to their time period make the Bleuette wardrobe special. Traveling with Bleuette from 1905 to 1960 we see the fashions, fabrics, colors, trims and sewing techniques when they were new fashions for dolls, and also for little girls. If, along the way, we can sew for our dolls and make them wonderful wardrobes as part of our research, that allows us the bonus of being little girls again who enjoy playing with our dolls.

Over the years the Bleuette dolls had different head molds and she even grew two centimeters, from 27cm to 29cm, at the end of 1933 but her body size remained virtually the same so that the patterns fit all the different dolls.

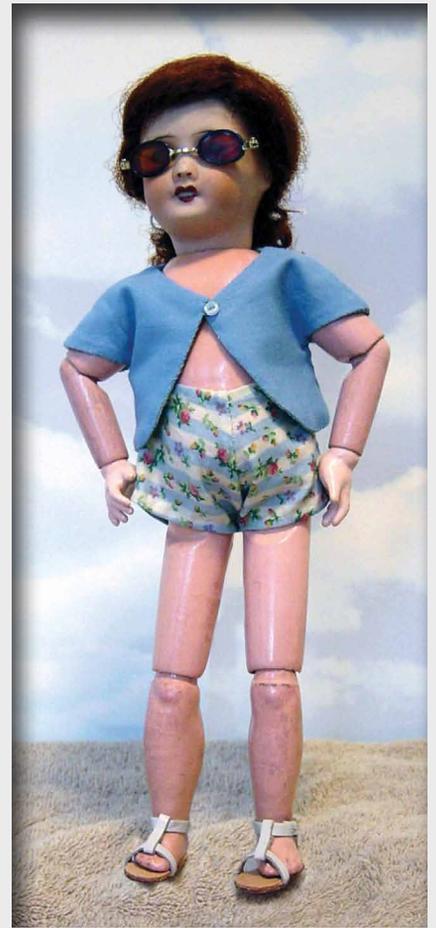




1940 red herringbone wool coat trimmed with black velvet is shown on a doll marked Unis France 301-1 1/4 on her head.



This 1954 bouffant dress is modeled by a doll marked Unis France 301-1 1/4 on the back of her head.



The 1958 two-piece bathing suit is displayed on a doll marked Unis France 301-1 1/ on her head.



1938 knitted dress is modeled by a doll marked Unis France 60-8/0 on her head.

Beginning in the late 1990s doll collectors in this country began to be interested in Bleuette and her patterns but it was difficult to obtain both dolls and patterns which were written in French. Publications appeared with the French patterns translated into English and internet groups were started to share knowledge about Bleuette and her wardrobe as the patterns became more available. As the vintage Bleuettes were expensive and difficult to find reproductions were made by doll artisans allowing more people to be able to play with Bleuette. People continue to discover Bleuette through these groups and Bleuette remains very much alive here as well as in France.

Since it is winter Bleuette will need a clothing to keep her warm. The fur-trimmed coat from 1925 and the fur set of hat, collar and muff from 1923 will allow your Bleuette (or doll of similar size) to be both warm and fashionable. 🧤

INTERNET GROUPS:

Le Salon de Bleuette (the first group): <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Bleuette/info>

Bleuette Sewing Club: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BleuetteSewingClub/info>

AADCBLEUETTE: <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/BleuetteSewingClub/info>

For Bleuette (clothing to purchase): <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/ForBleuette/info>

Rosette (Bleuette's older sister): <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Rosette/info>



Semaine de Suzette, Weekly Newspaper for French Girls

Semaine de Suzette was a weekly newspaper for girls published in France between 1905 and 1960. During those 55 years the publication included not only the famous patterns for the Bleuette doll but offered games, stencils, comics, stories (some serialized), recipes; and other projects of interest to young girls.

Over the years 1060 patterns were published not only to sew but also some patterns provided instructions for knitting or crocheting and many of the patterns incorporated embroidery. These were the skills young girls were expected to master.

La Semaine de Suzette also introduced the comic character, Bécassine to its readers in the first issue of the newspaper in 1905. Bécassine portrays a provincial housemaid and heroine who performs all sorts of tasks. She is always dressed in Breton-type attire wearing a green skirt, a white cap and apron, a red sash, and clog-type shoes. She has been drawn by various artists of the years and is an important character in the history of comics as the first female protagonist. 🌿

c.m.



Here is a lovely coat, very fashionable and extremely simple to make. It is trimmed with fur, and can be worn not only in the winter but this vogue of fur lasts until the summer, it also trims the between seasons dresses.

It is also simple, if you wish the coat to be more spring like, to replace the fur trim with bands of velvet in dark or bright colors, to match or contrast with the color of the coat, such as brown wool velvet trimmed with fawn or otter. The colors of fur are easy to match to fabrics, because the majority of furs are nothing but rabbit dyed in all imaginable colors and imitating costly furs, from ermine to otter and even mink and chinchilla. For a gray coat use a smoky gray rabbit, very lovely and perfectly imitates gray fox.

There are two pattern pieces, the coat and the sleeve. Cut the back with the center back on the fold of the fabric as indicated on the pattern. The front is cut from the same pattern on folded fabric (but add 1/2" to the center front and cut down the center front so you have two pieces.

After sewing the shoulder seams make the sleeves, both sleeves cut the same on folded fabric. (Sew the sleeves to the coat front and back as indicated, then sew the underarm and side seams. Turn under the center front and the neck and hem with a catch stitch. Check the sleeves for

length and turn about 1/8" to the front and baste. Do the same with the bottom hem.) The dotted lines indicate the size of the fur or imitation fur bands that

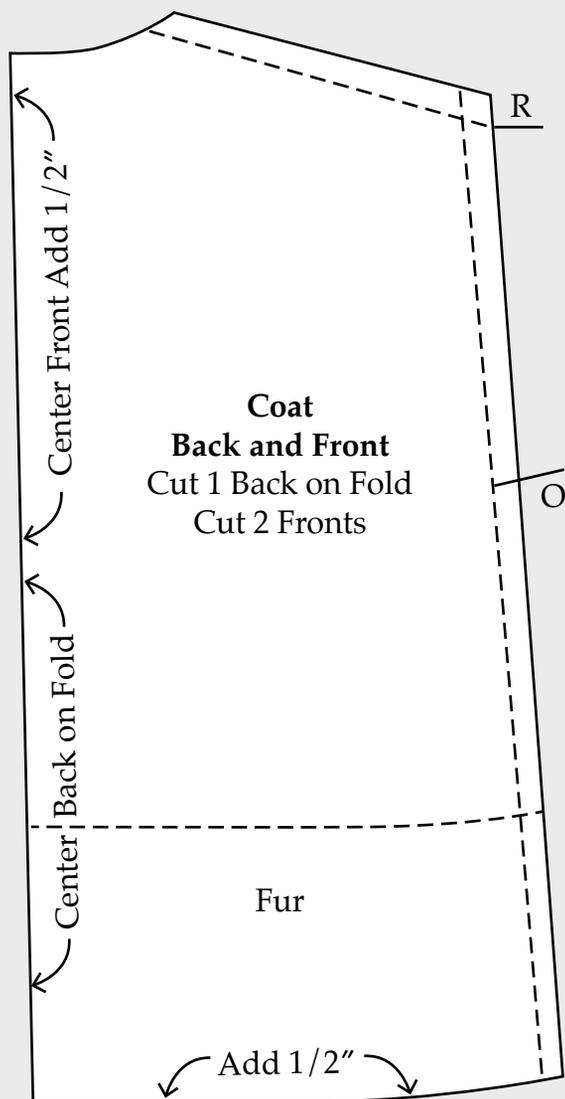
are sewn at the hem and the bottom of the sleeves. The neck scarf adds a note of fashion. It is a straight band of fabric 3cm wide by 16cm long (Narrow hem it or make it 6cm wide, double it and sew it with a narrow seam leaving an opening in the center to turn it, hem the opening closed.) Attach it to the center back with an invisible stitch. (If you leave it loose you can make a fur collar for a different look.) Bleurette will be very fashionable with the scarf tied at one side, one end down her back and one down the front. Sew a narrow band of fur at each end of the scarf.

The coat can also be made in velvet, silk, ottoman, or in wool.

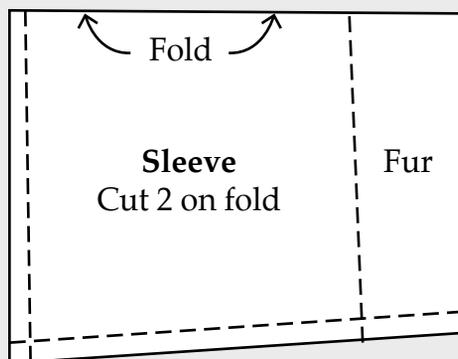
Suzanne Rivière



1925 imitation Persian lamb-trimmed red wool coat and hat from 1923 fur set



Coat
Back and Front
 Cut 1 Back on Fold
 Cut 2 Fronts



Sleeve
 Cut 2 on fold

Bleurette's Fur-trimmed Coat, Hat, Collar and Muff

The coat and hat, collar and muff patterns are from the 1920s, the golden age of Bleurette patterns. Originally published in *Bleurette's World*, they are direct translations of the French patterns. Additional construction information is in parentheses since it was not included in the original patterns.

Agnes Sura

The cold weather is here and Bleurette doesn't have a set of furs. Work quickly before she gets a cold! So that she will be warmly and elegantly clothed, this happy little doll must have a hat, collar and muff.

These three pieces are made of fur, either otter, Persian lamb or lamb, or in plush fur which imitates all types of fur and is much easier to work with. Beige, brown, gray or black are best to work with but white will make a good imitation of lamb, Persian lamb or caracul.

The hat is made of two pieces, the brim and the crown. The crown is a circle, a quarter of which is given. Cut it out from fabric folded twice with the straight lines on the folds. This can be cut from the fur if you want the hat to be all in fur or from fabric if you don't have sufficient fur. (Use fabric to match the coat.) The brim is made of fur. It is made of two pieces cut on the fold. Sew them together and turn the curved top edge under (or line it with fabric. Gather the circle to fit the bottom of the brim and sew the two together with the seam on the outside, then turn the brim up and the seam will be hidden.) This hat will look lovely on her curly hair and will make her very proud!

The muff is quite simple. Cut it from folded fabric, sew the side seams and turn to the right side. The muff is large enough for Bleurette to put her hands in. If you want a very elegant muff line it with bright colored silk. (With the muff inside out, seam the muff ends, turn under the ends of the lining and slip stitch the open ends together. You can use a cord or ribbon to go around Bleurette's neck to hold the muff in place when she doesn't have her hands in it.)

The collar is a straight strip of fur lined with silk and closed with a button and thread loop. Make the strip large enough to fit over the coat collar. If you have enough fur sew a band of fur at the bottom edge of the coat, the current fashion.

Real fur is much more difficult to work with than plush. To cut it out draw around the pieces on the back of the fur and cut it with a knife, being careful to cut only the skin. This way the fur itself isn't cut.

Suzanne Rivière



1923 set including an imitation Persian lamb trimmed hat with red wool to match coat, muff and collar

