

Chapter 1

Fashion Then and Now

“Fashion is part of the daily air and it changes all the time, with all the events. You can even see the approaching of a revolution in clothes. You can see and feel everything in clothes.”

—Diana Vreeland

Individual fashion choices are based on certain physical, psychological, and social needs that all people share. These choices are influenced by what we do on a daily basis and how we live. For millennia, clothing has met the functional need to

protect our bodies from the physical elements of different environments. Throughout human history, fashion design has also provided the aesthetics that reflect personal style and cultural traditions.

1–1 This frieze from the Palace of Darius gives a detailed look at clothing styles from ancient Persia. From the details on the robes and draping of the sleeves to the shoes and headwear, it gives a sense of what soldiers might have worn at the time.

Achaemenid Empire (Persia), *Frieze of the Archers*, detail, from the Palace of Darius I, Susa, Iran, 522–486 BCE. Polychrome glazed brick. Photo by dynamosquito. www.flickr.com/photos/dynamosquito/4489669323. CC BY-SA 2.0.



Historical Context for Understanding Fashion Design

The historical or social events that influence fashion designers are integral to an understanding of the creativity behind designing clothing and accessories. The fashion industry taps into these visual cultural references, as well as available technology, for inspiration. By looking at what people have worn throughout the history of fashion, students gain insight into the social, political, and aesthetic attitudes of designers and consumers.

Fashion dates back to prehistoric times when people first used animal skins, plants, grasses, and tree bark to create clothing that protected their bodies from the physical and harmful elements of nature. Early people used primitive tools made from bones to stitch string-like tendons from animals, sewing animal skins together for clothing. As ancient civilizations flourished, artisans refined their techniques for making fashion. Tomb carvings, sculptures, paintings, cave art, and other antiquities provide visual records of what clothing looked like in ancient civilizations. A thorough historical review of costume and fashion gives a visual overview of how people with a higher social status dressed throughout history. The invention of photography shed light on what the broader population was also wearing. These visual records help piece together fashion throughout the centuries.

Fashion Movements in History

Presenting images of historic fashions helps students make connections to how people use clothing as a cultural, political, or religious symbol. A fashion movement is the prevailing style of a given time, dependent on the materials and technology available, and implies a change in style. The following fashion movements illustrate the continuously evolving fashions seen in cultures around the world.

Kimonos

In China and Japan, men wore simple long robes and women wore simple skirts with overcoats. During the 300s CE, the kimono became standard dress not only for women, but also for men. The kimono provided a symbol for one's social status, wealth, and even marital status. Today, the kimono is seen only at weddings, funerals, and other formal ceremonies.



1–2 Shōwa period (Japan), *Kimono with Birds in Flight*, 1942. Dye- and pigment-patterned plain-weave silk crêpe (chirimen), 76 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 49 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (195.3 x 125.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, gift of Harumi Takanashi and Akemi Ota, in memory of their mother, Yoshiko Hiroumi Shima, 2007, 2007.44.1.

1–3 Félix Bonfils, *Porteuse d'eau au Caire* (*Water Carrier in Cairo*), ca. 1870. Albumen print from collodion negative, 10 $\frac{3}{16}$ " x 7 $\frac{1}{16}$ " (26.8 x 20.2 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Robert B. Menschel Fund, 2004.87.1.



Head Coverings

In Muslim cultures, the hijab, niqab, chador, and burka are all examples of women's head coverings. Up until the 1200s, the veil was only worn by "respectable" women, since lower classes were forbidden from wearing veils. Since the 1800s, many Muslim women around the world have embraced the hijab as a cultural practice rather than a religious practice. The wearing of head coverings continues to evolve as contemporary cultures and laws may either mandate or prohibit their use.

The Renaissance

Western fashion changed very slowly up until the 300s CE. In the medieval period (476–1400s CE), men wore long tunics with tights underneath and women wore tunics over long gowns made from goatskin and sheepskin. As the middle class emerged, laws were created to keep commoners from wearing more luxurious fabrics, such as silk trimmed with fur and lined with silver, to separate them from royalty and upper classes. The Renaissance (1300–1600s) and humanist philosophy allowed men and women the freedom to recreate themselves through fashion, as innovations in footwear, hair styling, and dress provided for greater differentiation between the sexes. Fashion during the Renaissance featured more elaborate details and fabrics, such as colorful silks and laces. Both men and women wore ruffs—stiff, pleated collars that frame the face—and shoes trimmed with bows and buckles.



1–4 Petrus Christus, *A Goldsmith in His Shop*, 1449. Oil on oak panel, 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 33 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (100.1 x 85.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection, 1975, 1975.1.110.

Student Engagement

Ask students what trends they see in fashion today. How are current technology, values, and culture expressed through clothing choices? What might be the next big fashion movement?

Western Fashion Evolution Since the 1800s

Society influences what we wear. Prior to World War I (1914–1918), fashion centered on classicism. The 1800s featured raised waistlines for women and trousers for males, ending a 200-year tradition of men wearing knee breeches. Matching coats and vests were added at this time. Before the days of the hair salon, women covered their heads with caps (to allow for longer times between hair washings) and wore more stylish hats over them.

The Industrial Revolution (1760–1840) helped designers to focus on simpler lines and balanced shapes. New innovations in technology such as the sewing machine and spinning jenny, used to twist cotton, made producing yarn more efficient. The cotton gin helped to separate seeds from cotton to produce fabrics, which influenced new clothing styles. Although these technologies improved production, they often came with the exploitation of child labor and unsafe working conditions.



1–5 Late-1800s fashion featured low waistlines and high necklines.

C.M. Bell, W.A. Lewis, ca. 1873 to 1900. Glass negative, 5" x 7" (12.7 x 17.78 cm). Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.



1–6 Photographers shed light on child labor in clothing and textile production.

Lewis Wickes Hine, *Little Fannie, 7 Years Old, Helps Sister in Elk Mills, Fayetteville, Tennessee*, 1910. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.



1–7 Fashion before World War I maintained early styles with a softer silhouette.

Bain News Service, *Porfirio Diaz, President of Mexico*, ca. 1910–1915. Glass negative. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

In the early 1900s, while Coco Chanel (1883–1971) revolutionized fashion with her “poor boy” looks of jersey sport clothes, new designers such as Madame Grès (1903–1993) and Madeleine Vionnet (1876–1975) streamlined their silhouettes. Soft velvets and silk satins helped to highlight the curves of the body through the craftsmanship of draping. Ballet and dance costuming led to an Art Nouveau movement in fashion. The transformation occurred most obviously after World War I, when Christian Dior (1905–1957) and Chanel recognized that women became forms of art when designers constructed garments that expressed a woman’s own individual personality. These new looks exploited established ideas, products, and views in an effort to embody the latest aesthetic. Economic and social trends were formed through fashion, which created powerful cultural identities as creativity moved front and center in the fashion industry.



1–8 Women’s clothing of the 1930s reflected a more active lifestyle, promoted by icons like Amelia Earhart.

Harris & Ewing, *Amelia Earhart in Airplane*, 1936. Glass negative. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, DC.

1–9 From a jacket and skirt to princess gowns, Grace Kelly embodied sophisticated, elegant 1950s style.

United Press, *Grace Kelly Waves Good-bye from the Ocean Liner Constitution before Sailing to Monaco for Her Wedding to Prince Rainier III*, Photographer Joe Schuppe in the Background, 1956. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, DC.



Film and advertising began to influence fashion in the 1920s and 30s, as the sleek, sculptured hair of movie stars replaced the previously popular boyish look of the bob. New fashion shapes of wide trousers, backless tops, espadrilles, and floppy hats were introduced. The aesthetics of this era incorporated both form and function: women were skiing, skating, golfing, and flying, and Amelia Earhart inspired some of the boy-girl clothes that eventually became the foundation for American casual clothing.

The Fabulous Forties and Nifty Fifties

Modeled after the utilitarian clothes produced after World War II, women’s clothing in the 1940s typically featured squared shoulders, narrow hips, and skirts that ended just below the knee. Tailored suits were also quite popular, and fashion icons such as Katharine Hepburn led the way to their increasing popularity.

Often referred to as the Nifty Fifties, or the era of the Atomic Age, the 1950s heralded in some of the most notable fashion icons and designs of the century. From James Dean to Grace Kelly, the looks of this era included unpadded, rounded shoulders; defined waistlines; full, billowy skirts; and shapely bust lines, all of which helped to define the new, more feminine wardrobe after decades of tight corsets. Blouses, jeans, and long, narrow skirts also became popular.

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The Turbulent Decades

New technological developments in materials, such as polyester and plastic, and mass production methods changed the way designers and consumers approached fashion. Major events, such as the Vietnam War (1955–1975), and popular culture, such as the music and styles of the British Invasion, influenced fashion during the 1960s.

As the race to the moon intensified, designers like Pierre Cardin (b. 1922) and Mary Quant (b. 1934) featured geometric styles and plastic materials with space-age themes. Men wore jackets with wide lapels, and unisex looks were widely popular. Craftsmanship all but disappeared in this decade, as dissatisfaction with the establishment appeared in changing fashions: men sported mustaches, sideburns, long hair, and beards, and hippies donned jeans decorated with colorful patches, paint, beads, and embroidery.

Much like the decades of the 1920s and 1960s, the 1970s idealized a very thin figure. Fads from the previous decades reappeared. The 1970s also ushered in the glam and punk styles, as the Vietnam War lingered and the Watergate scandal made Americans distrust and question the authority of their government. Vivienne Westwood (b. 1941) caused consumers to take notice with her spiked leather jackets, punky plaids, and bondage trousers worn with overly large platform boots. Street fashion originating in urban settings like London and New York became one of the bigger stories in fashion. Tuxedo jackets for women were widely glamorized by fashion photographers. Hair was just as innovative, as geometric cuts became fashionable. Face painting, colorful and shaded for effect, was popularized by KISS and David Bowie.

In the 1980s, styles featured large shoulder pads reminiscent of the 1940s and tailored jackets with tailored shirts. Women and men wore bow ties and oversized shirts. Films such as *Flashdance* (1983) popularized a fitness craze that spread globally, as



1–10 Musical groups shaped everyday outfits and formal fashion in the 1960s, such as the glamorous style of the Supremes.

The Supremes, 1967–1970.
Bridgeman Images.



1–11 Fitness-inspired fashion became popular in the 1980s.

Adidas Ladies Wear, 1984. PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo.

Keds shoes, headbands, leggings, Lycra, and leotards became staple fashion accessories. Jean Paul Gaultier (b. 1952) and Madonna (b. 1958) became key figures in fashioning underwear into outerwear. As America became wealthy again through new financial and technology sectors, costume jewelry was replaced with real jewels and real furs. It was an era of dual identity: pant lengths were both wide and slim, and skirt lengths were both short and long.

New Generations

Starting in the 1990s, the internet changed the way we communicated, spent money, and did business. Fashion trends during this time were inspired by changing social mores. Baggy pants, oversized shirts, skinny tops, and the padded shoulders of the 1980s were soon replaced with new fabrics such as microfiber.

Fashion in the 1990s began with grunge style, as the anti-fashion look that emerged in the Seattle area during the 1980s took off nationwide. Hip-hop style was also born as boys' jeans, worn low on the hip, grew bigger and bigger, and girls wore bell-bottoms and polyester disco tops reminiscent of the 1970s. Polo shirts and khaki pants were the workplace norm, as dress-down Friday became more commonplace.

The millennium ushered in a mash-up of the previous decades. No particular style dominated this period, as consumers were attracted to updated versions of the fitted jackets of the 1950s, the sheath



1–12 Fashion in the 2010s reflected a variety of styles, including nods to 1990s fashion trends such as grunge.

Photo © Clique Images/Stocksy.

Student Engagement

Ask students what influence consumers have on the fashion industry. What role do they play in the fashion cycle?

dresses of the 1960s, and the wrap dresses of the 1970s. Baseball caps replaced the stylish hats of the previous decades, and leisure wear consisted of warm-up suits, tennis shoes, and long, baggy cotton dresses made popular by Laura Ashley. Individuality became the style icon of this decade, and attitude, rather than status, determined what was worn and how it was worn.

The 2000s highlighted a global society that could not live without its gadgets. Apple earbuds and smartphones became fashion accessories, along with UGG boots, fedoras, retro sneakers, and colored jeans. Social media helped to push these trends, and TV shows such as *Project Runway* showcased fashion's place as an innovative, creative industry and artistic practice.

Globalization also influenced the trends of this decade, as hybrid identity made its way into American culture through Middle Eastern and Asian dress. Pushing the trends for this new decade were the millennials, the generation born approximately between 1980 and 2000. Designers and retailers creating hipster, boho, hip-hop, nu-metal, rave, and goth styles competed for both the wealthy youth who wore expensive designers and also for the masses who wore inexpensive clothing. Whether through online specialty shops or brick-and-mortar big box retailers, fashion reinvented itself to cater to the demands of this new, youthful consumer group.

See page 128 for a timeline of American fashion from 1910 to 2000.

Fashion Influences

Fashion used to trickle down from haute couture to the mainstream. Now fashion trends usually involve three main cultural

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sources: high culture, pop culture, and street culture. People in the general public often develop their fashion style by adopting a look that is displayed

by someone they respect, aspiring to reflect a particular image. People shown in the media, like celebrities or athletes, frequently influence styles and trends.

Fashion Icons

The last 75 years have brought some notable fashion icons that have had a strong influence on everyday fashion. Celebrity endorsements, image publication, and hype that is created around a person induce interest about them and, typically, about their fashion. Media takes on the role of a fashion barometer, measuring the high and low points of celebrity styles and indicating the changing fashion elements and lifestyles of relevant popular celebrities, public figures, and public role models. Discussing how these icons influenced the public, what fashion changes occurred as result of their influence, and if their signature style evolved to impact the current fashion trends will allow students to do a quick analysis of the concept of “trickle down” fashion. It is most likely that people who are often shown in the media, like celebrities or athletes, frequently influence styles and trends.

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1–13 Large hats became fashionable in the late 1800s due to a portrait of Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire (1757–1806) painted by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788). The portrait features a hat designed by the duchess, which became known as the Gainsborough or the Picture Hat. There were several revivals of this style, including in 1907 with the appearance of an oversized hat featuring feathers and lace in the operetta *The Merry Widow*.

Gainsborough Dupont, after Thomas Gainsborough, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, ca. 1787–1796. Oil on canvas, 23 ¼" x 15 1/16" (59.1 x 39.9 cm). National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, Ailsa Mellon Bruce Collection, 1970.17.119.



1–14 **Former First Lady Michelle Obama was not afraid to defy tradition while in the White House, stirring controversy for picking a sleeveless black Michael Kors shift for her official portrait. Appearances in outfits by more affordable brands such as J. Crew and White House Black Market caused those items to sell out within days, evidence of her influence.**

Joyce N. Boghosian, White House photographer, *Michelle Obama, Official White House Portrait*, February 18, 2009. Public Domain.

High Culture

High culture refers to items that are highly prized by a culture, such as painting, sculpture, music, theater, photography, architecture, and design. Art is a form of expression, made to stimulate thought, emotion, or both. For many years, art objects were placed in special settings, available only to the upper or wealthy class of people. High culture also refers to characteristics and standards frequently exhibited by wealthy social elites. Art is an influence on fashion.

High couture, or *haute couture*, is French for “high fashion.” It used to refer to the expensive clothing that was constructed by hand by very experienced sewers to be exclusive and custom-fitted or tailored for one individual. The fabrics used are often unusual, expensive, and good quality. There is great attention to detail, which is very time consuming, adding to the labor costs. Often there is not a price tag because the time, money, and skill given to each piece of clothing may be hard to predict and very costly.

In modern France, only fashion firms that have passed certain standards may officially use the term “haute couture” to describe their clothing. However, the term is often used more liberally to describe all high-fashion, custom-fitted clothing that is created in Paris or other fashion centers, such as Tokyo, New York, London, or Milan.

Popular Culture

The daily interactions and cultural “moments” that constitute the everyday lives of the mainstream are included in popular culture. The celebrity culture has had an influence on pop culture, as they are consistently in the media. The “rules” of what is appropriate to wear for certain occasions are being blurred. Around 1965, popular culture became more important as the free speech movement gained strength in America. Fashion became more about the everyday person’s sensibility and decorum, not about following prescribed rules.

Movies and actors have had a strong influence on fashion since the early days of cinema. Clothing worn in movies during the 1930s and 40s was quickly copied by retailers at affordable prices. Teenagers and young adults often come under the influence of the media projection of a celebrity they admire and tend to imitate them.

There is a strong union between music and fashion due to the interest and curiosity among youth culture in the styles of musicians. In addition, recording artists are now using their fame to sell their own fashion lines. Musicians Jennifer Lopez, Sean (“P. Diddy”) Combs, and Gwen Stefani are just a few entertainers who have their own clothing lines.



1–15 Photographs and film of actors and singers have popularized fashion styles for decades.

Portrait of Doris Day and Kitty Kallen, Central Park, New York, ca. 1947. William P. Gottlieb Collection (Library of Congress). Public Domain.

Street Culture

Street style refers to the grass roots of youth culture from the 1960s through today. It stems from an individualistic approach to fashion in which people focus on putting together outfits that reflect their personal style and mood. There are not hard and fast rules on how to dress; many looks are often combined into one outfit. Much of the fashion in large urban areas is created and styled by young people and their desire to identify with certain groups, including punk, hip-hop, preppy, rave, hipster, and country.



1–16 The influence of subcultures is typically related to urban centers and often initially controversial. In Tokyo, the Harajuku district is a famous location for spotting Japanese street fashion.

Decora-style Girl in Takeshita Dori, Harajuku district, Tokyo, Japan, October 7, 2012. © Aluxum Photography/iStock.

Student Engagement

Encourage students to think critically about their own style influences.

Are there any celebrities that influence their fashion choices?

Do they identify with a particular group aesthetic?

Globalization

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Fashion images transcend boundaries and travel around the world through popular social media sites. Blue jeans, athletic shoes, baseball caps, and T-shirts are just some of the many popular items that surface in every city and every country. Western and Eastern cultures often borrow styles and textile elements from each other.

Transnational corporations, digital technology, and social media have created networks that cover the globe. These forces have reformed our daily living, global culture, and world economy. For consumers in the more affluent Western countries, globalization allows giant retailers to sell huge quantities of fashion through frequent turnover rates in updated inventory. This shifts the concept of buying for style to buying for the corporate brand. Marketing of fashion branding pushes the images that play on our desires to be attractive, athletic, or cool, as well as surrounded by friends having fun. It is important for students to understand what is influencing them to behave as they do. Less evident is the effect this globalization has on the production of fashion, which also should be addressed.

Appropriation vs. Appreciation

The concept of cultural appropriation as a negative occurrence finds its origins in colonists adapting elements of conquered cultures to their own styles. As opposed to the exchanging of goods between cultures, appropriation implies a lack of respect for history and identity. An example of this is a non-Native American wearing face paint and a headdress in imitation of Native American traditions. Feathers and

face paint are used to show honor, as they are earned through good deeds and may only be worn by those who have earned the right. Someone wearing the same look outside of the Native American culture is appropriating. On the other hand, people from Western countries traveling to Asia or the Middle East may be invited to wear more traditional clothing, such as a hijab, to show respect toward the local culture.

Fashion in the West changes frequently as styles come and go. Although the Eastern regions have adopted some of the relaxed clothing trends of the West, their traditional clothing styles are maintained, such as the Indian sari, the Chinese qipao, the Korean hanbok, and the Japanese kimono. In the East, the evolution is more in the textiles that are used. Whether it was in appropriation or appreciation, Americans regularly imitated or copied European styles until World War II. They watched what was shown on the runways from the fashion houses of Paris, which was considered state-of-the-art design. During the war, the couture houses closed, so there was no opportunity to copy. American fashion design started to reflect context, or the societal and cultural aspects of the country.

In today's global society, designers need to be aware of how inspiration and appreciation can cross the line into appropriation. In 2015, the French designer Isabel Marant was accused by the Tlahuitoltepec, a group of indigenous people of Oaxaca, Mexico, of stealing their indigenous designs after her latest collection looked very similar to traditional Oaxacan clothing. The designer claimed she was inspired by Oaxacan culture and denied issuing copyright documents on indigenous designs.