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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2001 Volume IV: Race and Ethnicity in Contemporary Art and Literature

A Chronological Look Through Fashion History: A Trip Through Fashion History as Art and Film

Guide for Curriculum Unit 01.04.11

by Toni Tyler

Clothing is an expression of the moral, social, cultural, and political attitudes of a culture. This unit is about the history of Fashion and how fashion has influenced our lives. In this unit I discuss the power of fashion and the manner of expressing a concept of any given style dating back to the early twelfth century. Taste is the criterion by which we assess the use of clothing, most designers draw upon five basic dress silhouettes to design our clothing but, by changing components within the dress form such as sleeves, necklines, collars and the position of a belt, an unlimited number of dress designs are possible.

Among the other factors that influenced American fashions were women's suffrage, wars, depression, stage and screen personalities, the rise of the cafe society followed by the international jet set, a more affluent society, and the migration to suburbia. The influence of the movies and rock video eased into our fashion, and let us not forget that fashion is a force that is difficult to explain, it motivates people to suffer physical discomfort and to go into debt in its name.

(Recommended for Family and Consumer Science, grades 9-12.)

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