



On the Cutting Edge

Curriculum Unit 86.04.06
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As my Home Economics students come in the door to the sewing and modeling rooms, they very often think they can leave the world of writing and expression behind. For them, Home Economics and English represent two separate worlds. Yet in the world of business, fashions do not exist in a vacuum by themselves. Although the average person may think of them as something that happens only because of the creative imagination or even the whim of a designer, they are part of a larger process that involves communication, marketing, and finance. By establishing visual models, fashions communicate attitudes and values and register social criticism. The designers role is simply that of an interpreter of the period in terms of fabric, design and business.

My unit will explore the kinds of writing needed for success in the clothing industry. Students will learn that there is much more to clothing than cutting and seaming the fabric.

The students involved will be those of a low reading level ranging in ages from twelve to fifteen and grades six through eight.

This unit will be taught over a period of twenty weeks with classes meeting three times a week.

Activities and research in the unit will include analyzing ads from current sources such as magazines, newspapers and billboards. Information about fashions, fashion designers, and the elements of design will be the organizing elements of the unit.

Unit Goal

This unit has grown out of the need to improve the image of home economics, by upgrading the skills a student would need to succeed in a home economics related career. Students need to know how to write and they need to be familiar with the background of their field, especially as skills have moved out of the home and into the commercial world. Success in a home economics course is made up of three things: home economics skills, writing skills, and a formal knowledge of the specific field.

Our focus is on one particular area, that of sewing. The lesson in background of design and designers will

combine with actual sewing skills to form part of the program. As students progress through these two areas, they will begin to study the kind of writing that is needed in the commercial world of sewing and design. They will learn to keep a journal of design; to record ideas from which to write commercials and slogans; and to write a brief news release.

The unit will emphasize the necessary coordination of the three different skills: sewing, reading and writing.

Principles of Color and Elements of Design The fashion industry has a great deal to do with the principles of color and the elements of design. In this first section, we will look at these two subjects.

A presentation and discussion of color will entail color and its properties, mood association, use in clothing and its selection. Discussions in design will cover the elements of design. These elements would be harmony, value, hue intensity, and thus would link design and color. Lessons involving the students' own ideas about color and design will follow these discussions. In these lessons, students will learn to recognize their ideas and record them in a journal.

Color is one of the most important design elements. It can make a fabric product dull or exciting. It can make you seem warmer or colder, larger or smaller. Color in garments can emphasize your good features. It can make poor features less noticeable. Color also offers a wonderful way to express yourself.

Color can set a mood. What color garment would you wear to a beach party? You might choose a sunny yellow, rousing red, relaxing blue, or bright green. At a funeral you might wear black or a dark nag. Bright, happy colors would seem out of place. What colors would you choose to create moods in your home? You might consider such ideas as these:

- Warm sunny for the kitchen curtains.
- Dark green for the living room carpet.
- Cool blue bedspread and curtains for the bedroom.

Designers must think about color and mood. A color they expose and choose must create the right mood for a design. Their choices must be attractive to consumers. Designing a black sunsuit would result in poor sales. Choosing black for a business suit or formal wear, however, would serve people's needs better.

Color can trick the eye. It can make a fabric product seem smaller and farther away. These are the colors with blue in them. They are called cool colors. They seem to move away, making the object look smaller. Dark or grayed colors absorb light. This also makes an Object look smaller. Designers use cool, dark, or grayed colors in home furnishings.

Color can call attention to a fabric product. Bright primary colors of red, blue, and yellow are attention-getters. Designers often use bright colors in party clothes to call attention to the wearer. Colors across from each other on the color wheel are called complementary colors. Such completion is used in design to create harmony.

Harmony is the goal of all design. We sense that a design has harmony when there is a feeling of similarity between the lines, shapes, colors, textures + and ideas that are used together. Harmony of idea is based on

appropriateness to use and to the individual. The idea of luxury or durability, of youthfulness or maturity, the time, the place, and the person, should all contribute to the total picture of harmony. Inconsistency of idea would be evident in the use of rhinestone buttons on a casual cotton dress, while traditional brass buttons on a navy flannel blazer pleasingly confirm the feeling of casual elegance.

Harmony of line in design is easily recognizable in a costume. A dominance of either curved or straight lines in both the silhouette and the lines within the costume is desirable, but exclusive use of one type of line may prove to be monotonous. Notching the edge of a collar may produce just enough variation to relieve an otherwise tiresome repetition of curved lines in a suit, just as the introduction of a restrained curve, used as a fitting line, will soften the severe effect of a straight-line costume. Restrained curves, because of their dual character, may be used harmoniously with either straight clothing or full clothing.

Combinations of similar or appropriate textures and unity of color add to the total harmony of the costume. Repetition of one element, particularly color, will permit greater variation of textures. Both line and color should be closely coordinated if great variation of texture is desired, while similarity of line and texture is desirable if colors are to introduce the variation.

Anyone beginning a study of design may demand too much uniformity and find it difficult to recognize or appreciate the subtle variations that are pleasing to the trained eye. Simple basic designs do not offend the sense of order and are certainly to be preferred to the confusion of lines and textures found in very poor design.

The elements as the basic ingredients of any design, are the designer's resources. To use these elements effectively one needs to study their characteristics individually. The design principles are broad general truths or laws of relationships that can guide a designer, either consciously or unconsciously, toward the goal of harmony and beauty. The principles provide a plan for organizing the elements as well as a yardstick for judging the desirability or quality of any design. The basic purpose of design principles is to provide guidelines that help to determine the more pleasing ways to combine different sizes, shapes, colors, and textures to achieve the desired effect; one that will be harmonious and acceptable for a particular situation.

The type of line found in a dress design is not entirely dependent on the structural cut. It may also be the direct result of the weight, pliability, and texture of the fabric used. The design, the fabric, and the construction all go hand in hand to determine the character and beauty of the line in any garment.

Principles of Color and Elements of Design

Lesson One :

Objective : Students will be given a brief explanation of a clustering activity. They will be given an example of a cluster and how this starts one writing.

(figure available in print form)

Directions to Students :

1. How are you going to create your cluster using a color wand?

2. Here are some designs for you to consider when selecting a design.

(figure available in print form)

Designers at Work Through Fashion

In this section, we will learn some well known designers. This background information has high interest for my students and will help to ease them into a connection between writing/reading and sewing skills. Reading and discussion about the designers will alternate with work on sewing skills. Lesson plans designed around these brief histories will follow the description of each designer's beginning and rise to an established position in the fashion world.

Webster's dictionary says a designer is "one who contrives for a purpose; to form and project with an end in view." What an oversimplification this is. Obviously Webster never worked in the garment center. I shall try to give you a bird's-eye view of the designing and manufacturing end of the fashion industry. (Cassell, p 92).

It is nice to think that the whole cycle of the dress business begins in the design room. It is even conceited to think that the care of the entire industry starts there; but if that is true, it is not without the help and support of many others. If the designer is the "contriver," there are so many more who help the "contrivances" that what finally appears in the perfect finished shape is the result of the labors of assistants in every form.

Let me try to explain to you what the designer does and how and where this all takes place.

The creators in the fashion world today are all very handworking people. The life is not the glamorous one depicted in the movies. We no longer wear the ubiquitous hat, spend three hours at lunch, and have pink-carpeted offices. More accurately the "design room" is one of ringing phones, frenzied assistants, and loquacious sowers. Lunches are more often eaten standing up, or on overcrowded desks. The "office" is probably an unattractive fluorescent-lit room built for cutting tables, bolts of fabric, belts, button boxes, and with a floor strewn with bits of materials and pins.

Since the designer has been defined, let's talk about a few, and give a brief biography of each.

Chanel (1890-1971)—Gabrielle Chanel, the fabulous "Coco" whose life inspired the New York stage production of 1970, left home at sixteen to seek her fortune, first in millinery. She went to Paris to design clothes that set the trend for world fashions in the twenties. Famous for her charm and illustrious lovers as well as her design talent, she refused to marry the English Duke of Sutherland, saying with characteristic independence, "There are many English duchesses but only one Chanel". In the twenties she popularized short hair, established the fashion for comfortable, easy-to-wear clothes, short skirts, and the loose, uncorseted look. She was the first to use "poor" fabrics such as jersey and tweed for high fashion (Bender, p 104-105).

Dior (1905-1957)—Christian Dior helped to reestablish Paris in its fashion leadership after World War II. As the head designer for the house that bore his name, he was responsible for its successful collections from 1947 to 1957. The House of Dior is unique in the French couture in that it is not owned by the designer himself but by a corporation headed by a board of directors who employ the designer. The choice of Dior to head the business proved to be enormously successful as he demonstrated the unusual combination of business acumen, organizational ability, and a flair for publicity, together with a strong fashion sense. (Cassell, p 108).

Yves Saint-Laurent—Yves St. Laurent was born in 1936 and was sent to Paris at eighteen years of age to study art. There he won first prize at an International Wool Competition, was spotted by Dior who was one of the judges, and hired at once as his protégé and assistant. St. Laurent's first collection after Dior's death was acclaimed as a great success but his later collections failed to live up to expectations. In 1960 he was drafted into the French army and Marc Bolan, then designing for Dior's London House, was brought back to head the Paris establishment where he has remained, continuing to uphold the prestige and success of the House of Dior.

After being released from the army, St. Laurent obtained financing from the United States and opened his own salon. Now free to express his own ideas, he successfully launched numerous trends featuring a younger informal but elegant look, *Women's Wear Daily* said, in a July 1971 issue, (McJinsey, p 237).

Dubert de Givinchy—Givinchy's career in fashion was launched after World War II, at age seventeen, with Jacques Fath. Later, after Fath's death, he worked with Piquet and Lelong. In 1952 he opened his boutique. His success there prompted him to try his fortune in the haute couture. His close friendship with Balenciaga, who gave him encouragement and criticism, contributed to Givinchy's success, (Bender, p 75).

Pierre Cardin—Cardin is a force in fashion who feels that he has often been misunderstood. Instead of designing subtle fashions, many of his models have been exaggerated to the point of being vulgar, as the plunging neckline he designed that plunged far below the waist. At times his models have seemed ahead of their time, and he has been called the designer of the future. He is almost as well known for his designs for men as for women, always including models for men in his collections, showing men's velvet suits in green, rust, and purple, and including the groom's costume with the bride's at his openings. He was the first couturier to design men's wear in 1964, and in 1967 he presented the first children's wear line by a couturier. As an innovator he refuses to fit into any one mold, (McJinsey, p284).

Bill Blass—Blass formerly designed for Maurice Rentner, Ltd., a top Seventh Avenue house, where he successfully introduced a new softer feminine look to his first collections in 1959. Today in his own establishment he is known as much for his perfectly tailored clothes for men as for his feminine fashions. He is credited with bringing about the major change in the man's clothing business. Unlike Cardin, his clothes are never extreme and are always definitely masculine—no crushed velvet pants or jewelry; instead, the American-English casual look. He believes the androgynous society of the look-alikes is only for the young, (McJinsey, p 299).

Taste is the wand used most frequently to describe the Blass clothes; his strength lies in his color sense in coordinating fabrics and accessories rather than in introducing new shapes. Helped in his career by his charm, good looks, and social desirability, he associates with the "Beautiful People" and is aware of what they want.

Geoffrey Beene studied medicine at Tulane University from 1941 to 1945 but gave up medicine to become a designer. One of the biggest boosts to his career came when he was selected to design the wedding dress for Lynda Bird Johnson. Beene finds his inspiration for design from fabrics, making soft full-skirted evening dresses from chiffons or cottons as well as tailored coats and suits in tweeds. His fashion philosophy concurs with those who believe that by the turn of the twenty-first century clothes will have become increasingly simple and functional, since the lack of skilled labor and the necessity of depending on mass production techniques will eliminate details.

Roy Halston Frorvick, now known simply as Halston, in his first three and a half years in business, has won three Coty Awards and emerged in 1972 as the American designer with the clearest concept of today's

fashion. A cashmere cardigan tied across his shoulders has become Halston's signature, indicating his rejection of fussy, contrived fashions and his preference for flattering, elegantly casual clothes. In a year when the young largely turned to their trusty jeans, and the fashion world groped for new directions, Halston alone sensed what fashionable women really wanted to wear. "Along with Yves St. Laurent," says Eleanor Lambert, "Halston is the most influential designer—not only in America but in the world, (McJimsey, p 217).

Designers at Work Through Fashion

Lesson Two :

Objective : Students will be clustering again to create actual paragraphs to submit to publications.

(figure available in print form)

Instructions :

1. Create a paragraph out of the connecting lines formed by clustering.
2. Each connecting word will become an explanatory sentence. A second sentence may be used to elaborate.
3. Organize the sentences in the order that makes no sense. Then arrange them in an order that makes sense.
4. Make sure you have a topic sentence telling what the paragraph is about. An example of a topic sentence would be: A designer needs to work on a lot of different skills to break into the fashion world.

Lesson Three :

Objective : Students will talk about designers and friends interested in finding out about and writing the life of a designer.

Instructions : Write a description of your favorite designer. Include:

Where you looked.

Where he/she was born.

How he/she started.

Who influenced him/her.

Any distinguishing styles each may have.

Selling Your Clothes

Designers are concerned with all aspects of their clothing, including the selling and marketing. After you have become a designer, or seamstress, or partner of a firm that makes and sells clothes, you will need to have writing skills to create the necessary advertisements. Advertisement is a large part of the clothing business; people like to know what new fashions there are and like to wear the kind of clothes currently “in” for that season.

Each student will learn to create and write an advertisement for the following sources:

Advertising. Companies advertise their products with pictures and words in newspapers and magazines. Some fabric companies advertise on radio or television. Other companies use signs or posters to advertise on radio or television. Other companies use signs or posters to advertise their products. Companies choose the best kind of advertising to reach as many customers as possible. The kind of advertising a company chooses depends on how much money it can spend. Small stores cannot afford to advertise in national magazines or on national television. Small fabric stores advertise in local newspapers and on local radio. Advertisements are simple and to the point. Customers do not take time to read or listen to long, detailed advertisements. Most advertisements use slogans to get customers’ attention.

SHOP NOW AND SAVE, BACK TO SCHOOL FASHIONS, and GET READY FOR SPRING are common slogans. These are often used to advertise clothing sales.

Displaying . Displayings are another way fabric companies promote their products. Displays show fabrics in store windows or on mannequins (dummies). Counters and racks inside a store also display fabric products. Customers notice displays which have:

Familiar Slogans . Familiar slogans repeat sayings customers remember from other advertisements. “Spring Carnival of Values,” for example, might be printed in a newspaper and on a window display banner.

New Ideas . Some displays use moving mannequins, mirrors, decorations, or other special effects to get attention.

Beauty . Displays often use background color and light to increase the natural beauty of fabrics. Colored lights, for example, add beauty to a silver evening gown.

Tell a Story . Some displays use stories to call attention to fabric products. Nursery rhyme characters might be dressed in children’s clothes.

Current Value . Many displays show products for a holiday season or special event. Just think about all the different store displays you see at Christmas, Father’s Day, and Easter.

Next time you see a display in a fabric store, see if you notice these things. Does the display get your attention? Are you influenced to buy?

Publicity . Any free newspaper, television, or radio story is publicity. To get publicity, a store or product must be newspaper worthy. That is, it must be interesting enough for people to want to hear about it. Many enterprises hire people for publicity work. These people get publicity for the enterprise. They give news of new products, company personnel, and building or remodeling plans to the news media. Often, special events such as fashion shows, exhibits, contests, and sales contests get publicity. A grand opening is one way many stores use to get publicity. Can you think of other ways a store can get attention? There are some illustrations on the following pages which illustrate advertising.

(figure available in print form)

(figure available in print form)

Creating successful Ads

Now that you have considered the various media and have selected the best vehicles for your advertising message, it is time to consider what you are actually going to say and how the message is going to look (or sound).

The easiest route is to pay an advertising agency to help you. For a signed contract and lots of money (most agencies will not take on clients with small advertising budgets), agency people will design your ads, decide where and when to place them, and take care of the actual placement.

If you do not have a lot of money to spend on advertising, your first thought might be to go to your newspaper anti department for inexpensive (sometimes) free help in putting your ads together. Unfortunately, newspapers are notorious for their low pay, so their layouts and designs will not be nearly as effective as those done by an ad agency.

Lesson Four :

Objective : Students will examine different types of ads.

Instructions : Analyze several ads from current sources such as magazines, newspapers, and billboards.

While looking at ads, we will look at: spacing between words and sentences, sentence structure (imperative), sentence length (short), use of personal pronouns (you, I, they, etc.), descriptive adjectives, action verbs, text placement in relation to pictures.

(figure available in print form)

(figure available in print form)

After students learn to recognize the elements of a good ad, I will expect them to create their own ads. The following is how I will introduce ads to the students. The following tips are not rules but merely sound advice to keep in mind as you proceed. The list sums up many of the observations made. After awhile you will develop your own list. You may work for clients who have their own thoughts about the subject. Some of these ideas are obvious, but they are always worth repeating. (Which is altogether appropriate since repetition is one of the tools of your trade). You'll find these tips worth referring to from time to time:

*Don't waste words. Say what you have to say-nothing more, nothing less. Don't pad, but don't

skimp.

- * Stick to the present tense, active voice—it's crisper. Avoid the past tense and passive voice.
- * Don't hesitate to use personal pronouns.
- * Cliches are crutches; learn to get along without them.
- * Don't brag or boast.
- * Be single-minded. Don't try to do too much.
- * Write with flair. Drum up excitement.

Ad Writing

Lesson Five :

Objective : Students will reflect back on writing successful ads. They will work on incorporating figurative illustrations into language writing skills.

Instructions : Describe several ads. Identify the difference. Write an an ad using the work requisitions (one for each type).

Della Femina, Travisano and Partner, Inc. Work Requisition
625 Madison Avenue

New York, New York 10022

Client ____ Date ____ Job No. ____

Product ____ Caption ____

Account Executive ____

Instructions:

Creative Team: ____ Copy-Art ____

Publications Issue Space Size safety Screen Closing

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Date Color

Production Estimate Needed ____ Copy Due ____

Order Space ____ Tentative ____ Layout Due ____

Mechanical Due ____

* Work Requisition Form: In an advertising agency, each specific writing assignment is authorized on a form like this.

Client: Copywriter's Name

Medium: Date:

Insertion Date: 5/6

Subhead:

Head:

Pix:

Text:

Pix:

Caption:

Caption:

Text:

Logo:

Copy Sheet: Each element appears in the order you see it in your own mental visualization of the ad. Note spacing; don't crowd copy. Elements must be reentered by name whenever there is a typesize change in your visualization.

The last area of writing we will work with will be the terminology of sewing and fashion designers.

Students will be expected to enter new words into their journals each day with anticipation of tests.

In conclusion, writing has no boundaries. Through this unit, I have found that writing creates new and exciting approaches to fields not normally associated with the writing activities. The designers need skills other than sewing and pattern construction. At every step along the way he uses verbal and written expression and communication of his ideas as well.

Through this unit I hope my students will acquire such skills in expression.

The illustration enclosed were drawn by Willie E. Gallop III.

Thank You.

Glossary

Ascot—scarf with broad ends.

Basque—bodice closely fitted by seaming from shoulder to waist.

Bateau—boat-shaped neckline.

Bertha—wide, flat collar.

Blazer—lightweight jacket, usually for sportswear.

Bodice—blouse or waist of woman's dress.

Bolero—short jacket, with or without sleeves; adapted from Spanish costume.

Cardigan—collarless, straight jacket or sweater opened in the front.

Chemise—loose garment, hanging straight from the shoulders in the front.

Chignon—knot or twist of hair worn at back of head.

Cloche—bell-shaped hat with small brim.

Dirndl—bodice dress with full gathered skirt, refers to style of skirt.

Dolman—set-in sleeves with deep armseyes.

Empire—high-waisted, straight draped silhouette derive from styles of the French Empire , and Empress Josephine.

Fabric—cloth made by weaving, knitting, or felting fibers.;

Fichu—draped, capelike collar, usually of sheer or lacelike fabric.

Gilet—vest or vestee.

Harem—skirt with draped hem as in Turkish trousers.

Middy—overblouse with a collar resembling a sailor's blouse.

Nylon—a man-made fiber.

Olefin—a man-made fiber: dyes easily; has similar characteristics to Dacron polyester fiber.

Pleat—flat folds of fabric usually laid in skirts to add fullness.

Ruching—pleated or gathered frill used as trimming.

Shirr—several rows of gathers used together to control fullness.

Surah -soft, lightweight, twilled fabric, usually of silk or silklike fiber, often printed in small geometric designs.

Taffeta—smooth, glossy silk or silklike fiber in plain weave, soft and fine, but with considerable body and crispness.

Tricot—knit fabric with silklike appearance, often used for slips and nightwear.

Tweed—wool, cotton, silk, or linen woven with different colored yarns which give a flecked appearance.

Velour—soft smooth fabric like velvet; or velvetlike felt used for men's and women's hats.

Voile—plain weave; fine, semitransparent fabric of cotton, silk, rayon, or wool.

Sewing Box—is used to hold the tools with which you will work. Much time is saved when everything you need is in one place.

Scissors—one pair of shears, seven or eight inches long, for cutting cloth.

Thimble—a thimble to fit the middle finger of your right hand. They come in different sizes. If you

find that the smallest one available is still too large for your finger, apply some adhesive tape to the inside. A thimble is for protection and speed in sewing.

Needles—a package of embroidery needles in assorted sizes. Crewel needles have long eyes and are easy to thread.

Pins—Dressmaker pins, sometimes called silk pins, which have very sharp points.

Tape Measure—a sturdy one with markings at both ends.

Ruler—a small ruler, four to six inches long, preferably one with a slide marker. You can move the marker to any seam width you may want to measure.

Pencils—one lead pencil and one white pencil, to outline patterns and dark fabrics.

Tailor's Chalk—at times this is better for marking than a pencil. The chalk comes in different colors and is easily brushed off your fabric.

Carbon Tracing Paper—found in white and in colors.

Tissue Tracing Paper—Transparent

Thread—Always choose weight and color to suit the fabric. Buy thread a shade darker than your fabric, as it will appear lighter when worked as a single thread. You will use 6-strand embroidery floss for some hand-sewing projects. This heavy thread is made of six fine threads and can be used all together or separated for fine stitches. Use Number 50 colored mercerized thread for most cottons. Use a thread of finer quality for lawn or sheers.

Fractions in one yard:

4 1/2 inches = 1/8 yard 22 1/2 inches = 5/8 yard
9 inches = 1/4 yard 27 inches = 3/4 yard
13 1/2 inches = 3/8 yard 31 1/2 inches = 7/8 yard
18 inches = 1/2 yard 36 inches = 1 yard

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Bender, Marylin. *The Beautiful People* , New York, 1967.

This book takes the reader behind the scenes and illuminates every aspect of the current revolution in fashion and society.

McJimsey, Harriet T. *Art and Fashion in Clothing Selecting* 2nd Edition, Ames, Iowa, 1978.

This book was written as an introductory text for those interested in understanding the world of fashion so they may use it more effectively; not only for themselves but for others who may seek their advice.

Parnell, F. Baynor. *Homemaking Skills for Everyday Living* , South Holland, Illinois: 1983.

This was an essential book related to communicating effectively with peers, skills of home economics, the fashion awareness and basic information on color in daily life.

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