



ZOOM IN ON THE USA

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Do Clothes Make the Man?

Birds have feathers, fish have scales, and animals have fur coats that respond to the change of seasons and sometimes even to their owner's situation. Unfortunately, man's bare skin has never constituted sufficient protection against nature's elements. For this reason, man long ago invented clothes to serve and protect the human body. However, it turns out that clothes offer us much more than simple protection from the elements. Through clothes we communicate important messages

about ourselves. The attire we wear has an important influence on what others think about us, and not infrequently, can be vital in getting a job, being accepted in a social group, etc. In other words, clothes can make a difference. The March issue of *Zoom in on the USA* observes how fashion has changed in America and elsewhere from the 1920s to the present day. Though the topic seems to be tailor-made for women, page 4 features a very special contribution of two men to the fashion world.

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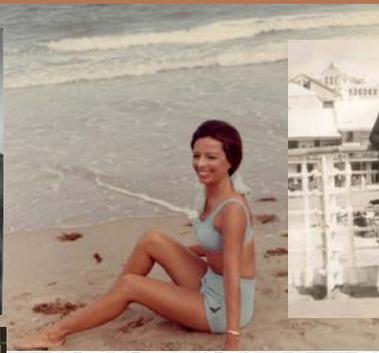


A model wearing a dress with the face of actress Judy Garland walks the runway in a "Wizard of Oz" themed presentation at the Heatherette show during Fashion Week, Tuesday, Feb. 6, 2007 in New York Photo © AP Images

Fashionable, but Uncomfortable

Imagine having to wear shoes one size too small so that your feet would look shapely and narrow. This was once considered a sign of gentility. Imagine having to wear a corset and a bodice, heavily boned and fastened with hooks and eyes to your skirt, or having to wear a high collar that was kept in place with

a silk-covered wire that helped to elongate your neck. Imagine having to wear fancy hats affixed to your hair with all kinds of hairpins, or having to wear gloves that must be kept on in all types of weather. Dressing like this must have been uncomfortable; yet, just one hundred years ago these were the unquestioned requirements of haute couture.



Photos from Wikimedia and Library of Congress

Jazz and film influenced the fashion of the **1920s** and **30s**. At that time cosmetics became a major industry and fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, *The Queen* and *Harper's Bazaar* gained popularity, therefore one's looks, figure, and fashion became very important. Styles changed quickly too. Somewhat loose dresses gave way to dresses without a waistline (called "shifts") which later evolved into a more fitted style. The fact that fashion is inseparably connected with social phenomena is clearly seen during the time of the Great Depression. "Thrift is the spirit of the day," was a popular saying of the period, and so clothes were mended instead of being thrown away and the styles became simpler. However, as soon as people began to feel more optimistic about the future, fashion also changed and a more feminine style of longer skirts, lower necklines and large, puffy sleeves was introduced.

During the first half of the **1940s**, World War II dominated all aspects of life, including the fashion industry. Paris, the world's unquestioned seat of haute couture, was occupied by the Nazis. Women worldwide began to dress in a more masculine fashion as they took on many jobs that had traditionally been seen as "men's work." At the time, a new style of women's suits came into

vogue: short straight skirts and short jackets. Cardigans were also worn with skirts. The end of the war brought yet another style as the family was once again reunited. Women's fashion became softer to reflect the role of women as good housewives and mothers. Soon, however, the rise to fame of stars like Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley in the **1950s** brought about a new wave of fashion emphasizing dresses with plunging necklines, pleated skirts, tight pants, and richly adorned shirts and vests.

The **1960s** saw men's hair grow longer while women's skirts became shorter. Turtlenecks came into vogue, as did sweaters and culottes. Unisex clothing began to make the life of clothing producers easier than before. Bell bottom jeans were worn by both sexes. The **1970s** are remembered as the "anything goes" decade. TV movies such as "Charlie's Angels" had a great influence on fashion and hair styles. Dressing to shock became popular, while at the same time more classic styles also made a comeback.

Fashion keeps changing. One thing, however, never seems to go out of style: women changing their wardrobe every season!

Fashion Week

New York is one of the world's fashion capitals; it is also where the idea of a week dedicated to fashion shows originated. This is now called "Fashion Week." The first such event was organized in 1943 under the name of "Press Week" by a journalist named Eleanor Lamber. It was a breakthrough for American fashion designers who had up until then been in the shadow of their French colleagues. The idea took off and so did American fashion. Press Weeks continued to be organized. New York Fashion Week is now one of the major fashion events in the world. A semiannual show is organized in February to feature fall fashion and in September to highlight spring fashion for the following year. There are many venues and the schedule is quite packed. The shows start every hour from 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning and go until 9:00 in the evening. Over 80 designers show their work during Fashion Week!

The Fashion Institute of Technology

Young people who want to pursue a career in the fashion industry might consider studying at the Fashion Institute of Technology, or FIT for short, in New York. Here, they can learn about clothing, accessories, textiles, exhibition design, and cosmetics, as well as develop skills essential for the global clothing industry such as marketing, fashion and textile conservation, and how to organize exhibitions and shows. The students have the opportunity to use the school's various facilities which include photography studios, painting rooms, a sculpture studio, a print-making room, a graphics laboratory, display and exhibit design rooms, life-sketching rooms and a model-making workshop. FIT has a museum with one of the world's largest and most important collections of clothing, textiles, and accessories with about 50,000 exhibits.



A model walks the runway during Fashion Week, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2007 in New York
Photo © AP Images

The History of the Catwalk

"Catwalk" is the name of a narrow walkway or a platform (often elevated), which is used by models when they are demonstrating clothes at fashion shows. It may be that the word was used in connection with the manner models walk during shows placing one foot directly in front of the other, like the soft, careful and fluent walk of cats. Many young girls dream of becoming a model so they can one day be the focus of everyone's attention on the catwalk. What does one need to become a model? Well, according to the website ModelLifestyle.com, it's not the looks, age, or figure that counts, but the personality. Confidence, charisma and the courage to be oneself are the ingredients of success.

Calvin Klein - A Success Story

A graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology, he is one of the best-known and most famous fashion designers in the United States. He was lucky from the very beginning. The clean lines and elegance of his designs earned him recognition and acclaim. He came to be known as "the supreme master of minimalism." His lines of ck jeans, sportswear, underwear and perfumes are among the most successful, though the range of products include watches, eyewear, kid clothing, home accessories, etc. Calvin Klein Inc. has been in operation since 1968. Francisco Costa is the creative director of the company now. His designs neatly fall with what the CKI lines came to stand for: simplicity, elegance and comfort.



Activity Page

Win a Prize!



Participate and win an Ipod Shuffle.
More info:
www.estamosunidos.es

MARCH 2008 CONTEST

Is velvet a coarse or soft material?

Send the answer (with your home address) to: madridIRC@state.gov

Deadline: April 30

The answer in the February 2008 Contest was:
- feathers -

ZOOM

IN ON THE USA

About ZOOM

Zoom is online at www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html

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Clothes Make the Man and ... the Tramp and ... the Cowboy

Exercise 1 Put the words from below the texts into the blanks:



Charlie Chaplin Photo©AP

"A pair of baggy ... (1), a tight coat, a small derby ... (2), a large pair of shoes and the famous small moustache." This is the unforgettable style of the "Tramp," a film character created by Charlie Chaplin. Clothes are an indispensable factor in this creation. They play a role as important as the actor's mimicry, gestures and his characteristic uncomfortable walk. They are the clothes that others do not need and they do not fit the man well. They disguise a gentlemanly character who deserves a better lot and who will perhaps one day change this outfit for the businessman's black ... (3) and a flawless well-pressed white ... (4) and tie. He will take a leather bag in hand and mix with a throng of similarly looking successful businessmen in a busy street. But alas, we may not recognize him then...

hat, shirt, suit, pants

What an unforgettable bard of the cowboy myth he was! John Wayne in his black shirt and a leather ... (5), with an impeccably clean ... (6) round his neck and a black, felt ... (7) on his head. Charming to ladies, tough to bad guys, he created an image of a brave, manly character, a free and independent hero of open spaces whose home is vast prairies. Clothes are just as important as his tough character in painting this romantic image of a cowboy. They give him not only the look of importance, but ensure him comfort under the scorching sun, the thundering sky or in the streams of torrential rain.

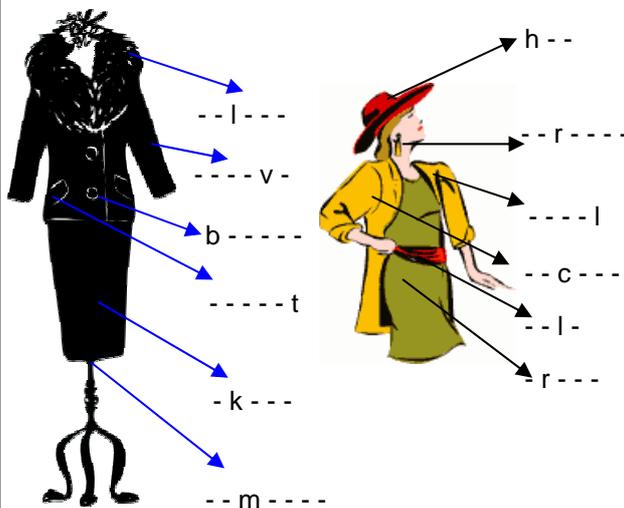


John Wayne Photo©AP

scarf, vest, hat

Exercise 2

What are the words for the parts of clothing marked with arrows in the pictures?



Glossary -

(in the order of appearance)

- scales (of a fish)**- small, flat pieces of hard skin that cover its body
- attire** - the clothes
- gentility** - word used to refer to people of high social status
- bodice** - the part of a dress that is above the waist
- eye (in clothes)** - a small metal loop which a hook fits into
- elongate** - lengthen
- haute couture** - designing and making high quality fashion
- evolve** - change
- thrift** - quality and practice of being careful with money
- plunging** - a low V-shaped neckline
- pleat** - a permanent fold in a skirt
- culottes** - trousers that look like a skirt

Find answers to activities on this page at: <http://www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html>