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They Wore What? A History of Clothing

Leaders Guide

Give the Students the Time Line as the Student Handout. You may want to supplement your lesson with photos. Ask Students to bring any historical clothing they may have to the class.

Humans have been wearing clothes for a very, long time. It has been a necessity, a requirement, and a display of wealth and rank, (or lack thereof). In this lesson, we will chronicle the evolution of clothing from the beginning to the present and into the future. We will emphasis crazy and bazaar fashions throughout history, and we will close with a possible future of clothing.

About 170,000 years ago, some of our ancestors got tired of living in the Sun Belt (Africa) and decided to move north, where they could enjoy four seasons. The only problem was, fig leaves did not provide enough warmth and protection. One day someone took down the animal fur that she used for her shelter and put it around her shoulders. That did the trick. She had protection from the bitter weather. She moved her family north.

By 40,000 BC, the Northerners were sewing furs together with strips of raw hide, using needles made of Mammoth bones. These "Hunter Gatherers", as they were called because they followed the herds of animals that fed them and clothed them, got weary of traveling. So around 9000BC, people began to settle down. Some enterprising people learned to domesticate sheep and grow grains and flax. They chose Mesopotamia (Iran & Iraq) and Egypt to begin farming. They learned to twist plant fibers together and then they twisted wool strands together, creating yarn. Soon they were weaving yarn into cloth. One of the first looms used was a Back Strap Loom. Simple clothes were made, probably the "loin cloth". As comfortable as it was, it was not very fashionable. Even when colored with crushed vegetables, fruit or bark, it was hard to accessorize. Introducing the Tunic. The tunic was two pieces of material, sewn together at the sides with an opening for the head and the arms. The tunic was made of various materials such as wool, cotton, linen, and silk. Tunics were worn in almost every area of the known world, by both sexes. The Minoans (Crete) wore colorful tunics with small jackets. Egyptian women wore long tunics. The Assyrians (Syria), Asians, Celts, and Vikings, all wore tunics. The Greeks wore them under their togas. Roman men wore them with leather breast plates. We still wear tunics today in the form of "T" shirts.

Around 5000BC, Folks learned how to tan leather. Animal skin was scraped and rubbed with animal fat or smoked using tannin from trees. This is where the word "tanning" came from. Tanned leather was more flexible and easier to make clothes out of. Urine was also used to soften skins. Later formaldehyde was used.

In 2980BC, the wealthy ladies of India wore Saris, one long piece of fabric wrapped artfully around a woman's body. It was comfortable in hot weather. The first Saris used cotton but later they were made of silk. The Sari is still worn today for formal gatherings.

Silk was discovered in China around 2600BC. It comes from the cocoon of a silkworm. It was traded for goods brought by caravan from the west on the "Silk Road". The Chinese kept the secret of how silk was created for thousands of years. In 552AD, the secret was out. Two Byzantine Monks smuggled silkworm eggs out of China, along with Mulberry shrubs. Mulberries are the only food the worms will eat.

The most radical new garment to appear in 500BC, came from a nomadic tribe called the "Scythians". They were excellent horse people. They rode small fast horses through the plains of Manchuria. They invented a very practical piece of clothing, (especially for horseback riding), trousers. The Scythians made their trousers from leather of goat, marmot or sheep. Women wore them also. When Alexander the Great saw these trousers, he saw the practicality of them and so equipped his men with them.

During the period of 43AD, cloth was hand woven and costly to dye, so it was very expensive. The Romans felt that if you could afford to have yards of cloth draped around you, this showed that you were well to do. So the Toga was created, (probably by a cloth merchant). The Toga wrapped around the body a few times and then you slung it over your arm. Although the Toga showed off all that cloth you just purchased, it wasn't functional. It did not allow you to do anything but pose in it. So the Toga was saved for special occasions.

The Celts (Great Britain) of the same time period wore tunics except when they went into battle. In battle against the Romans, they painted their bodies blue and fought naked. That must have been a frightening sight.

The fashion in China and Japan around 800AD was the Kimono. It was a "T" shaped robe often with embroidery on it. (The Chinese were the first to embroider). Both men and women wore them. To show off how wealthy they were, women wore up to 20 Kimonos at one time. Talk about being padded.

The Chinese of 1200AD decided that small feet were beautiful. A girl who wished to marry well had to have small feet. So they began the practice of "Foot Binding". At age four, a girl's feet were bound with linen cloth. The bandages were tightened regularly until the girl's instep broke and the foot doubled over. This was called "Golden Lotus". This crippled the girl for life. She was unable to walk which made her totally dependent on her husband. This practice ended in 1911, when the Communists came to power.

During the Middle Ages, 1000AD to 1300AD, the Pope of the Catholic Church was the most powerful person in Europe. His clergy thought that women should be covered from head to toe. *Women wore layers of clothing. They started with linen stockings, then a linen shift, then a gown of wool laced at the waist and bust. Then came a woolen garment with large arm holes. It went over her head and came down to her feet. Priests called the large arm holes "Hells Windows".* Can you imagine how hot that outfit would be in the summer? Tall headdresses which came to a point or multiple points were the style. This was the time of the Crusades. Pope Urban II sent the armies of Europe to the Middle East (Palestine) to take Jerusalem from the Muslims and to take religious artifacts. The European soldiers wore chain mail and the knights and their horses wore metal armor. Just the outfit to wear in the desert. The Muslims wore loose pants, tunics and comfortable shoes. When the Crusaders returned home, they brought back new materials such as muslin, satin and damask, in new bright colors, such as red, violet and yellow.

Men of the 1300s wore very short tunics with long stockings. These tunics left a man's private parts exposed. The "Codpiece" was invented. It not only covered his manhood but it doubled as a pocketbook. During the reign of Henry the VIII, the codpiece became a fashion statement. They grew larger and were decorated with jewels and fur.

Fleas were rampant throughout Europe. People tried various ways to rid themselves of the pests. In Italy, a solution was to wear a dead mink or marten. This was supposed to draw the fleas to the dead animal. The only problem was that fleas dine on live animals.

Queen Elizabeth I of England was a clothes horse. She had some 3000 plus gowns. It is good to be Queen. Clothes were very expensive in those days so one showed off their wealth by having clothes made of lots of fine material with jewels sewed into them. The latest style in 1558 was a farthingale. This was a petticoat with hoops made of willow branches, (later they were made of whale bones) worn under a gown to make the gown stand out on both sides of the body. Flat breasts and long waists went with the look, so women discovered they could achieve this by wearing a new undergarment called a corset. A really odd fashion of this period was called a "Ruff". It was a stiff, round, pleated collar. As the Ruff craze grew so did the Ruffs. Some were so large that one couldn't see their feet and a special long handled spoon was invented so a person could reach their mouth to eat.

1620s ushered in the "Era of the Cavalier". Men in Europe wore pants, colorful jackets which they flung over one shoulder, large boots and large floppy hats with feathers in them. Picture "The Three Musketeers". Meanwhile, women actually wore comfortable clothes. No corsets and petticoats, just elegant dresses gathered at the waist.

France had been the hub of fashion in Europe for some time, due to the elegance of the French Court. By the 1600s, each succeeding Louis to the throne brought his own ideas of fashion to the show. Louis XIII introduced Wigs to the court. His hair was thinning. Louis XIV began the High Heel craze for men. By 1689, pockets were added to clothes. Yeah pockets.

The 1700s saw some important inventions for the clothing industry. The Fly Shuttle was added to looms in 1733, which made weaving much faster. In 1784, the first steam powered loom was invented. Eli Whitney invented the Cotton Gin in 1793, which combed the seeds out of the cotton, making the process of cleaning cotton much faster. These inventions helped reduced the price of clothing.

Hats were all the rage in the 1700s. The best hats were made of Beaver Felt from North America. Hatters (hat makers) used mercuric nitrate to felt the pelts. This made beautiful hats but left the Hatters with orange fingers and damaged brains which made them a bit crazy. Hence the term "Mad as a Hatter".

In the new United States, the Founding Fathers wore tight breeches, stockings (to show off their calves), a ruffled shirt and a tricorn hat.

When Napoleon became Emperor of France in 1804, a Greco roman style dress became the fashion. It was called the "Empire" dress. No hoops or corsets, and it was made of cotton or muslin. These dresses were graceful but not practical in cold weather. The flu outbreak was blamed on the skimpy dresses. It was called the "muslin decease". Women began to wear underwear for the first time in history, so they could keep warm. Meanwhile, men found tight breeches hard to get around in. They came up with a better option in long looser fitting trousers with pleats and jackets with tails.

Women just couldn't stand to be comfortable. By the 1840s, they ditched the Empire dress to go back to the corset and a new type of hoop skirt called a crinoline. This time the corset laced up in the back, so it could be cinched up real tight. The idea was to have an hour glass figure. (Scarlet O'Hara was supposed to have a 14 inch waist). Cinched up that tight on a regular basis caused the internal organs to find room where they could. No wonder women swooned. In one case a young woman claimed at a party, to have achieved a 13 inch waist.

She died two days later when her rib punctured her liver. The crinoline was a hoop made of whale bone or steel. It allowed the dress to fan out into a semi circle. The dangers of the crinoline were numerous. Women couldn't see the ground when they are walking. How do you get on a carriage or a trolley car? The greatest danger was from fires. The skirt would knock over candles or catch fire when too close to a fireplace. A London newspaper reported 2500 deaths directly related to the crinoline dress. It finally went out of fashion around 1870.

In 1853, a young man traveled from Germany to San Francisco and opened a dry goods store. His plan was to sell canvas tents to the gold miners. The gold miners told him that what they really needed were durable trousers. The young man, Levi Strauss hired a tailor, Jacob Davis to make trousers out of the canvas. He used copper rivets to secure the pockets and the fly. Those trousers were very popular. Strauss patented his Blue Jeans in 1873.

The bustle came into existence in 1870. Women took all that material used to cover the crinoline skirt and pulled it behind them. This gave them a sleek figure in front but it created a huge posterior. Unfortunately, the corset was still popular. Fashion designers told women that their waist size should be the same as their age. It was good to be in your 60s.

At the turn of the 20th century, hats were a must both for men and women. Women wore wide brim hats with exotic feathers decorating them. Ladies hats were held on their heads with very long hat pins. These hat pins could double as defense weapons.

Before the 1900s, clothes were made at home or by a dressmaker, who measured your size and made your outfit to order. After the 1900s, clothes were made in factories and sold in shops or by mail order. For the first time, sizes were standardized. These factories worked women and children up to 17 hours a day, six days a week, in terrible conditions.

The 1900s saw some amazing changes in swimwear. In the past, women wore dresses to swim in. In 1850, the first swimsuit was modeled by a French actress. The knee to the ankle was exposed. Shocking! By 1946, the bikini was introduced, also by the French. The Bikini would not be popular until the 1960s, when Bridget Bardow, also a French actress modeled it.

The Great War, (1914 to 1918) saw men going off to war and women going to work as factory workers, mill workers, postal workers, bus drivers, garbage collectors, and many other jobs that were previously performed by men. These jobs could not be safely done in dresses. Many women dug into their men's closets and put on their trousers.

When the war ended, many women, who enjoyed their independence and having their own money did not want to go back to the restricted life they had before the war. They dumped their corsets and floppy hats. They bobbed their hair and put on loose fitting calf length dresses. This new style woman was nick named "Flappers". It is a slang word from Britain for a "Party Girl".

The party ended in 1929, when the Stock Market crashed. The 1930s saw half the population of the western world unemployed. People were just glad to have clothes to wear. Costume Jewelry was introduced. It was considered to be in bad taste to wear expensive jewelry. Hollywood actresses, Marlene Dietrich and Katherine Hepburn introduced stylish slacks for women. They did not catch on as of yet.

World War II began in Europe in 1939. As in the First World War, women took over the jobs that men left to go fight. Women welded, worked in munitions factories, built ships and so on. Again, women wore their men's slacks to work. They also repaired and repurposed the clothes in their closets. Before the war, women wore silk and nylon stocking under their dresses. These items were not available during the war, so women came up with the idea to draw a black line down the back of their legs to mimic stockings. Padded shoulders became a fashion statement for women.

Through the 1950s, the United States had a period of prosperity. The rest of the world was recovering and rebuilding from the war. Women's fashions took on a feminine look. Dresses were belted at the waist with full skirts. A small waist was back, so were corsets and girdles. Big hair, called the "Beehive" was all the rage. Hair was teased so it stood up, then gobs of hair spray was applied. It took two days to get a comb through your hair again.

During World War II, a cloth was invented which was made from plastic. It was called Polyester. It was durable and it didn't wrinkle. Manufacturers of the 1950s, began to make men's suits out of it. The advertisements claimed that you could shower in the suit and it wouldn't wrinkle. The suits were miserable in warm weather and highly flammable, but they were inexpensive.

The 1960s began with girdles and house dresses and ended with short skirts and no bras. The look was youthful and space aged. Women wore miniskirts in bright colors and geometric patterns. Miniskirts got so short that panty hose and tights saved women from over exposure. Let's not forget Go Go boots and platform shoes, (the ankle breakers). Then as if to go as far as possible in the other direction, Maxi Dresses came on the scene. Cotton Dresses that hung down to the ankle. Maxis were not popular for long.

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Women finally embraced the "Pant Suit" in the 1970s.

In the 1980s, clothes were oversized and padded shoulders came back in style. This was topped off with BIG Hair. Polar fleece, waterproof, windproof cold weather clothes came on the scene. Polar fleece was made from recycled plastic bottles. Pretty cool!

This was the time when Animal Rights Activists brought to the public's attention the cruelty with which the Fur Industry treated fur bearing animal. They also made us aware that endangered species (such as tigers and leopards) were being killed to make exotic fur coats, for the rich and famous. The popularity of Fur plummeted. A new product was introduced, "Faux Fur". It felt like fur but it was entirely constructed from manmade products, such as polyester.

The 1980s saw the wide spread use of "Nomex" and "Kevlar". These products invented at DuPont Chemical Company are synthetic fibers. Nomex is used by firefighters because it has fire proof properties. Kevlar has been used as body armor for the Military and for Law Enforcement.

Weird and unusual fashions have been seen throughout the centuries. Today is no different. Eco-minded designers are coming up with clothes made from food waste. Such glamorous materials as citrus peels, seeds and tea leaves are being used to make outfits. I think the top prize has to go to Lady Gaga and her dress made from raw meat.

Today, the most amazing change in clothing is how we purchase it. Shopping at a clothing store is rapidly being replaced by internet shopping. It is estimated that 70% of people now shop online. Some online companies offer clothing custom sized to the individual. You e mail your measurements to them, choice the outfit you want and they send clothes made especially for you. Some web sites will pick out clothes and accessories for you.

So, what will be the future of clothing? The styles of the future are anyone's guess. How clothes are created is not such a mystery. The 3D printer, patented by Charles Hull in 1986, will very likely, be as common in homes as the computer is today. Imagine, you will pick out an outfit, from the internet, and send the information to your 3D printer. The 3D printer will create your clothes and spit them out (Something like a 2D printer). Remarkable!

The History of Clothing chronicles the Human progression from supplying our needs to fulfilling our fancies. It expresses our creativity and our practicality. We are creatures of imagination. This is amply seen in clothing from our past, and I have no doubt this will be expressed in the clothing in our future.

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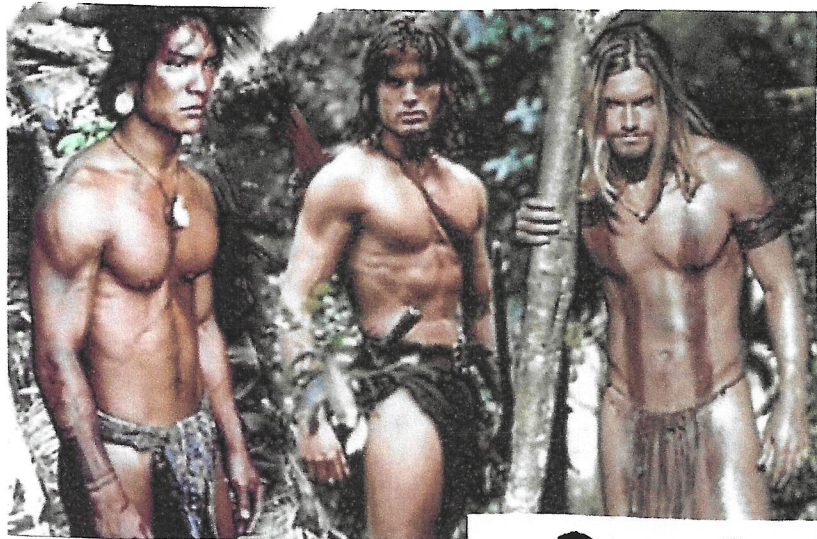
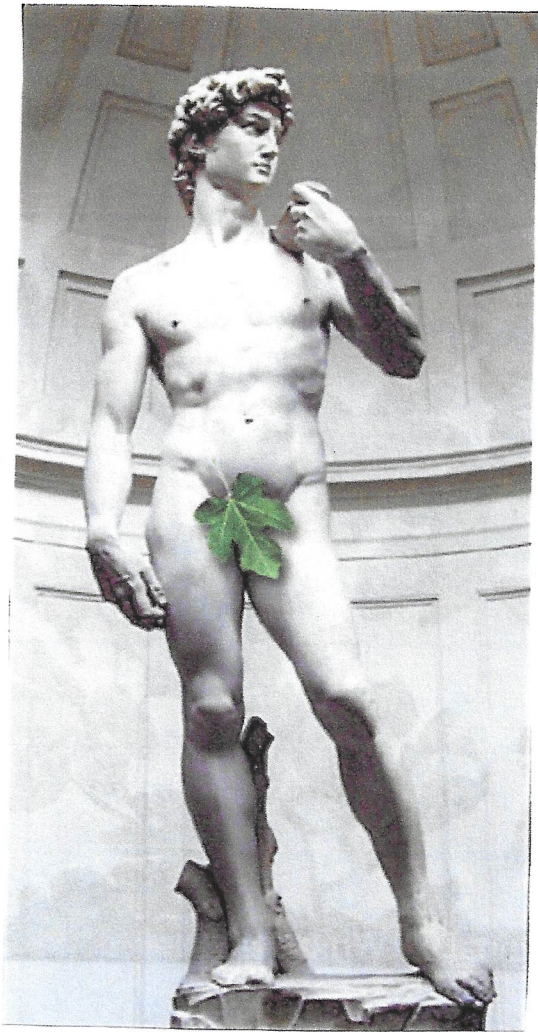
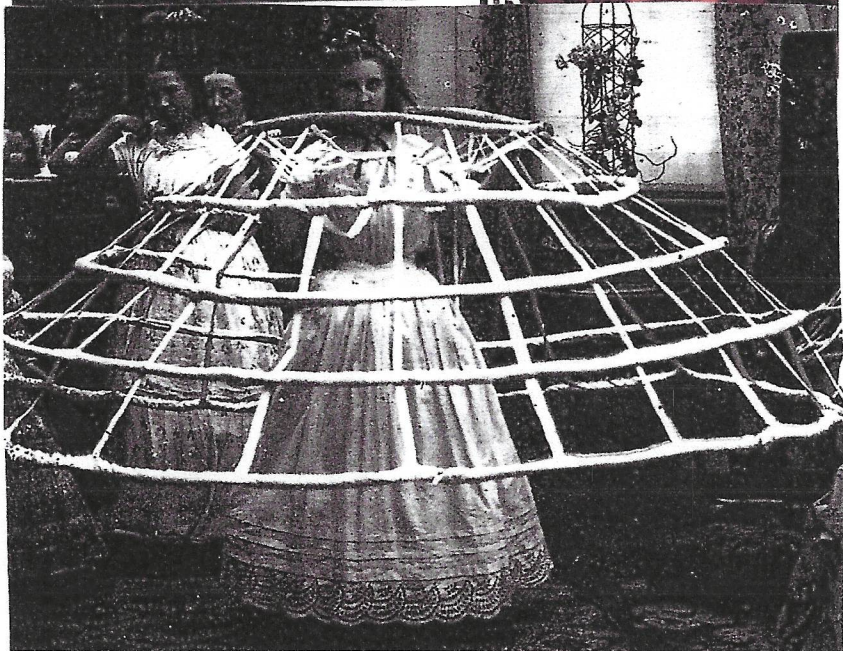
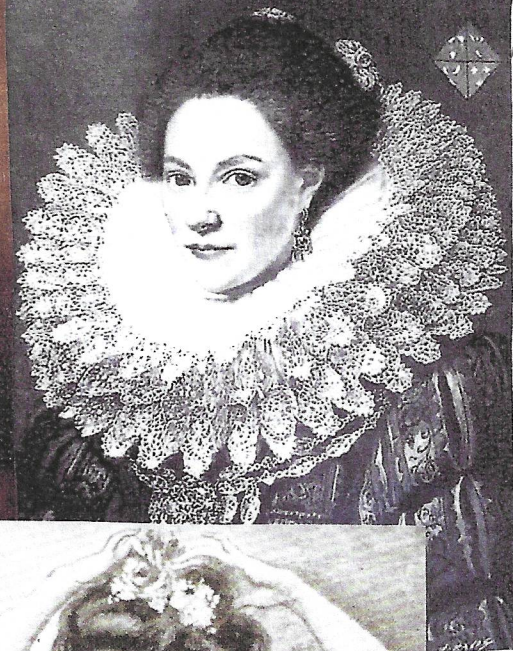


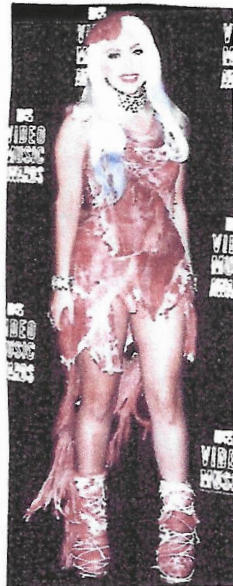
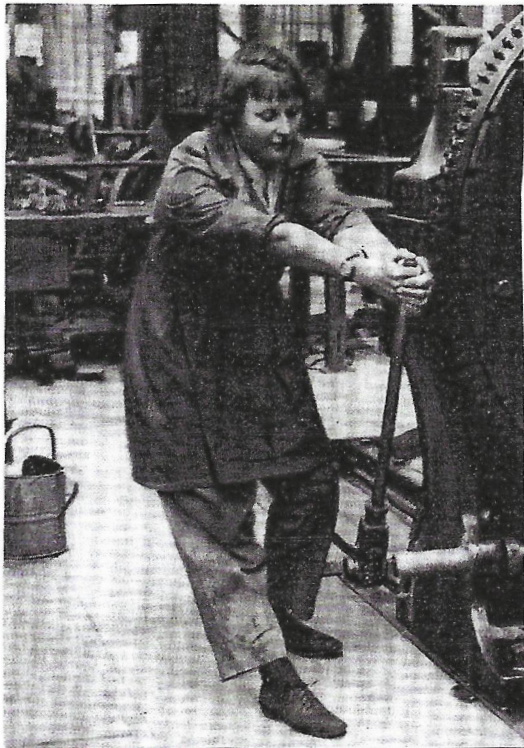
Fig. 1: 221 BCE-220 AD





A highly upholstered, padded king, complete with codpiece





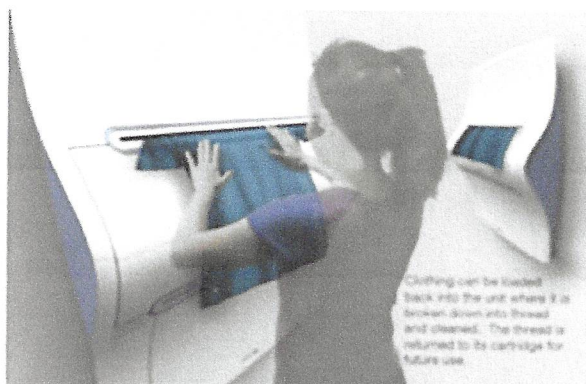
BRING CLOTHING PRODUCTION INTO THE HOME

to avoid shipping and disposal waste and save space in the smarted living spaces of the future



The concept would eliminate the need for closets, washing machines and dryers, thus saving space in the crowded urban environments of the future.

This connected, in-home clothing making device opens up new opportunities for the clothing industry. Fashion designers in the future can either sell cartridges of material or sell their designs digitally.



Images Credit: Joshua Harris

"The technology for a clothing printer exists but is not packaged in a form that would be suitable for consumer use. With the future potential of printing technology, an at-home clothing printer is a definite possibility. Our challenge was to define the experience." - Joshua Harris



Time Line of History of Clothing

Human History	Year	Fashion History
Man migrates to colder climates	170,000BC	Animal Skin was the rage
We were hunters & gatherers	40,000BC	Eyed Needle made of bone
	32,000BC	Linen made of Flax Plant
	20,000BC	1 st Thread created
Agriculture began in Mesopotamia & Egypt	10,000BC	
Sheep Domesticated in Iran	9,000BC	1 st Loom invented
		Spinning and Weaving began
Wheel is Developed	5,000BC	Beginning of Leather Tanning
Chinese Fish with Hooks and Nets		in Egypt & Assyria
Writing is Invented in Sumer (Iraq)	3,500BC	Cotton is Grown in Peru
1 st Pottery made in Colombia, SA		Alpacas used for woven wool
1 st Pyramid built in Egypt	2,980BC	Saris are worn in India
	2,900BC	Egyptian Men & women shave heads and wear wigs
	2,600BC	Silk discovered in China
	2,500BC	Clothes are dyed in Pakistan
	1,100BC	China makes Armor from Rhinoceros Hides
1 st Olympic Games in Greece	800BC	Phoenicians (Lebanon) create purple dye from snails
Emergence of Celts (Britain)	500BC	Scythians- 1 st to wear pants

Time Line of History of Clothing Pg2

Human History	Year	Fashion History
Golden Age of Greece	480BC	Greeks wore Tunics of wool/linen
Rome Invades Britain	43AD	Romans wore Togas or long robes Celts fought Naked
Attila the Hun invades Rome	452AD	Huns wore trousers of goat skins
	552AD	Secret of Silk stolen from China China 1 st to Embroider
Glass Mirror invented	636AD	Chinese wore Kimonos
Birth of Islam	662AD	Horizontal & Vertical Looms used
Vikings begin raids on Britain	787AD	China begins Foot Binding Girls Vikings wore Tunics & Trousers
	1000AD	Spinning Wheel used in India
1 st Crusade to Holy Land	1096AD	Knights wore Steel Armor
	1200AD	Tall Headdresses & Large sleeves worn by Women in Europe
3 rd Crusade ends/Muslims Win	1291AD	Crusaders brought colorful fabrics back to Europe from Mid East
	1330AD	Buttons Invented
1 st Signs of Bubonic Plague in Europe	1348AD	Spinning Wheel comes to Europe
Columbus Discovered America	1492AD	Men wore Codpieces/ Everyone wore "Ruffs" (huge collars)
Henry the 8 th rules England	1534AD	Hoop Skirt is the Style in Europe
Elizabeth becomes Queen of England	1558AD	Elizabeth had 3000 gowns

Time Line of History of Clothing Pg3

Human History	Year	Fashion History
Renaissance Era (Rebirth of Arts) In Europe	1560AD	Heavy Face Makeup made w/lead worn to hide Small Pox Scars
Voyage of the Mayflower to New World	1620AD	Hats are the Rage in Europe made of Felt using Mercury
	1624AD	Louis 13 th /France introduces Wigs
	1661AD	Louis 14 th /France begins fashion of Men wearing High Heels
Peter the Great becomes Czar of Russia	1689AD	Pockets are added to Clothing
	1711AD	Patches worn on Face Becomes Fashion/ hides Small Pox Scars
	1733AD	Flying Shuttle Loom invented
Industrial Revolution	1760AD	Textiles becomes less expensive
	1784AD	1 st Loom powered by Steam
Start of French Revolution	1789AD	Wigs & Expensive Clothes go out of Fashion in France
Eli Whitney invents the Cotton Gin	1793AD	Price of Cotton Cloth Reduced
Small Pox Vaccine Discovered	1796AD	Face Patches go out of Fashion
	1797AD	1 st Washing Machine Patented
Napoleon becomes Emperor of France	1804AD	Jacquard Loom invented
Jane Austen wrote Pride & Prejudice	1811AD	Empire Dresses were in style
Battle of Waterloo	1815AD	Men begin to wear loose pants
Queen Victoria ascends English Throne	1837AD	

Time Line of History of Clothing Pg4

Human History	Year	Fashion History
	1850AD	1 st popular Bathing Suit revealed Crinoline Dresses in Fashion
	1851AD	Singer patents Sewing Machine Corsets laced in back are used
Charge of the Light Brigade during the Crimean War	1854AD	Marked the End of Bright Colored Uniforms in Battle
	1856AD	Perkins creates 1 st Synthetic Dye
American Civil War Begins	1861AD	
	1863AD	Butterick sells 1 st dress pattern
	1869AD	The Bustle is introduced
1 st Modern Bicycle (1885)	1873AD	Levi Strauss patents Blue Jeans
US Cotton Crop destroyed by BollWeevils	1892AD	
1 st Airplane Flight / Wright Brothers	1903AD	
Communists overthrow Imperial China	1911AD	Chinese Men & Women begin to wear loose pants and shirts
1 st World War Begins	1914AD	Zipper invented in 1913
American Women get Right to Vote	1920AD	Flappers are the Rage
US Stock Market Crashes/Great Depression	1929AD	Wearing Jewelry is Tacky
2 nd World War Begins in Europe	1939AD	Nylon is invented
US enters World War 2	1941AD	Women work in Factories and wear trousers to work
World War 2 Ends	1945AD	Polyester is invented

Time Line of History of Clothing Pg5

Human History	Year	Fashion History
	1946AD	1 st Bikini Modeled
Korean War Begins	1951AD	Polyester replaces Wool
President Kennedy Assassinated	1963AD	House Dresses & Pill Box Hats
	1965AD	Kevlar Invented
Neil Armstrong walks on Moon	1969AD	Mini Skirt in Bright Patterns
	1970AD	Washable Wool is Developed
President Nixon visits China	1972AD	Women wore Pant Suits and Platform Shoes
Margaret Thatcher is Prime Minister of Great Britain	1980AD	PETA sites Furs as Cruel to Animals
	1981AD	Jackets have Padded Shoulders
	1983AD	Polar Fleece made of Recycled Plastic Bottles
Charles Hull patented 3D Printer	1986AD	
Nelson Mandela elected President of South Africa	1994AD	Grunge Look in Fashion
Terrorist Fly Planes into World Trade Ct.	2001AD	Jeans worn with High Heels
Barack Obama becomes 1 st Black President	2009AD	Japanese develop a Wool Suit that can be washed in Shower
Donald Trump is President	2017AD	Shoemakers use 3D printer to make prototype of Shoes

What's Next ?