



WANDERING WARDROBE



LESSON 1.2: MAKING CLOTHES

Lesson engages in object-based analysis of a 1780s Court Coat and highlights the contextual and historical background of the garment in terms of the construction process and fashionable silhouette. The construction activity challenges students to work with 2-dimensional materials to create 3-dimensional art objects.

Associated garment: 1780s Court Coat

Associated web page: onstead.unt.edu/court-coat

Subject Areas: Theatre, Visual Arts

Grades: High school

Topics/Themes: Fashion History, Fashion Silhouette, 3-Dimensional Design

Set-up: Place display box with garment on a table in the

classroom that students can gather around and see easily; remind students not to touch

Materials: 1780s Court Coat, Scrap Paper, Tape or Staples, Fabric (can be scraps), Needles and Thread (dull, large needles/yarn can be used in place of small, sharp needles and thread), embellishments (paint, sequins, buttons, glitter)

Note: This lesson may take 2-5 class periods depending on which activities are completed

GOALS

Students will be able to:

- Gain understanding in applying 3-dimensional design principles
- Understand how cutting and assembling a flat, 2-dimensional material can create a volumetric 3-dimensional object/shape
- Gain understanding of clothes construction (handmaking methods, industrial revolution and mass-produced garments, fast-fashion)

TERMINOLOGY

- **Pattern Drafting:** “A system of patternmaking that depends on measurements taken from a form or body to create basic, foundation, or design patterns. An example is a draft of the basic pattern set.” (A basic pattern set would be a top, skirt, and pants.) (Joseph-Armstrong, 2000)

- **Dart:** “A dart is a small triangle of fabric which is effectively pinched out in order to turn a flat piece of cloth into a moldable form capable of going around all the curves of our body.”
- **Seam:** the place where two pieces of material are joined together, usually referring to sewing fabric or leather together. There are numerous types of sewing methods used to create a seam. (merriam-webster.com)

DAY 1: OBSERVATION: CONSTRUCTION AND SHAPE/SILHOUETTE

- Students conduct initial observation and discussion of 1790s garment: Give each student a chance to look up at the garment up close:
 - **See:** While gathered around the garment, ask students to share observations of what they see, and note questions they may have.
 - **Wonder:** Have students share (in pairs or as a group) questions they have about the coat. Share out to the larger group.
 - **Think:** Have students discuss (in pairs or as a group) questions from the students or one of the following: How do you think it would feel to wear this coat? Why would someone decorate their coat in this way? What kind of person might wear this coat, what are they trying to say about themselves by wearing this coat?
- Teacher will briefly discuss historical context on clothing silhouettes through the years, and how clothes are made to create these silhouettes
 - **Coat History**
This coat was made in Europe around the 1780’s and was designed to portray the wealth and power of the man who would have worn it. We can see this from the complexity of the design (it would have taken a lot of time and cost a lot to have this coat handstitched). The flowers may have represented allegiance to a particular leader or family.
 - **Fashionable Silhouettes**
[Alabama Chanin](#), [MyModernMet](#), [Reigning Men Article](#), [HeSpokeStyle](#)
 - **Clothes Making History**
Before the development of the sewing machine, all clothing was sewn by hand, and most clothing was made to fit specific individuals; garments often incorporated ways to adjust fit and style by leaving extra fabric in the seam allowances or using methods of construction that cut the fabric less. Wealthy persons would be able to commission a tailor or dressmaker to make their garments, while the less affluent would make their own clothing. Patterns were created using draft guidelines and body measurements.

With the invention of a successful sewing machine in 1846 ([Smithsonian](#)) and the assembly-line manufacturing methods introduced by the industrial revolution, mass-

production became increasingly more important to the way clothes were made and purchased.

[Ready-to-to Wear Clothing History](#)

[Industrial Revolution](#)

[Contemporary Garment Manufacturing Process](#)

[Men's Fashion in 18th Century France](#)

- Teacher will show historic garment silhouettes and accompanying patterns
 - [Vintage Patterns Wikia](#)
 - [Janet Arnold Pattern Illustration \(1.2.1 Supporting document: Janet Arnold Pattern Illustration\)](#)
 - [LACMA court coat info \(1.2.2 Supporting document: 1770's Men's Suit\)](#)
 - [Kate Middleton in Eliza Wickstead dress with pattern \(1.2.3 Supporting document: Kate Middleton's Dress\)](#)
- Students discuss how they think this garment might have been made. Prompting questions include: Can you see where the fabric has been cut and sewn together? What shapes do you think the fabric is cut into to make this shape? What shape do you think this would make if it were on a body? What activity do you think this garment was used to perform?
- Final questions and observations (let students know that lesson will continue tomorrow)

DAY 2: CUT AND ASSEMBLY/3D DESIGN PRINCIPLES

- Introduction: Refresh garment silhouettes/patterns and share examples of contemporary sculptural wearable art garments. Ask students to think about how these shapes are made.
 - [Comme de Garcons – MET](#)
 - [Comme de Carcons 2 - MET](#)
 - [Dolce & Gabbana - MET](#)
 - [Balenciaga – MET](#)
 - [Miyake - MET](#)
- Demonstrate how simple flat shapes can be assembled to create organic volumetric objects, discuss basic construction concepts of darts and seams.
 - [The Cutting Class](#) – Introduction to Dart and Patternmaking concepts
 - [Beach Ball & Cone Examples \(1.2.4 Making document: Beach Ball Pattern\)](#)
 - [Show Fabric/Velcro Examples \(1.2.8 Making document: Material Shaping and Pattern Making\)](#)

- Have students design shapes for an accessory, jewelry piece, a hat, or simply a small sculpture through sketching and experimenting:
 - Use scrap paper and staples or tape, cut shapes and experiment with connecting edges to create unusual shapes.
 - The piece can be enclosed, tubular, vessel-shaped, or even reminiscent of a garment. Additionally, ask students to consider embellishment.
 - The best idea for each student will be taken to fabric. Keep paper pieces from successful experiments to use as patterns for fabric, and plan whether embellishment should be done after or before construction of the form.

DAY 3-5: Making Activity

- Share Instructional files:
 - [1.2.5 Sewing document: Making a finishing knot](#)
 - [1.2.6 Sewing document: Using a needle and thread](#)
 - [1.2.7 Sewing document: Hand-sewing seams](#)
- Students Execute Design in Fabric:
 - Students will trace their patterns onto fabric to cut out.
 - Apply embellishment to pieces, if desired.
 - Using the straight stitch, students will sew the pieces together to create organic volumetric shapes.
 - Encourage the students to embrace the quality of the fabric (stiff, drapey,
- End with a “show”: Have students set their pieces out and walk through the room to observe each other’s work. Conduct a critique or final discussion. Prompt questions could include:
 - What was the hardest part of the project?
 - What was the most interesting?
 - What other kinds of 2-dimensional materials could you cut and assemble to create other 3-dimensional shapes?
 - Do you think you can imagine the shapes of the cut pieces in your clothes?

MODIFICATIONS

- have students work in pairs if the project seems complicated
- to shorten the lesson, the paper pattern experimentation could be the final product
- to extend lesson, allow students to paint or embellish their fabric before or after assembly

MATERIALS

Pencils

Paper

Muslin, Fabric Scraps

Needle/Thread OR Stapler/Staples

Paint, sequins, other embellishments (optional)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joseph-Armstrong, Helen. 2000. *Patternmaking for Fashion Design*. Prentice Hall: New Jersey.

Needle and Fabric Recommendations

To get the best sewing or embroidery results, it is important that the needle style and fabric work well together. Below are some recommendations with links to find them online, along with suggestions for the age group most appropriate to use each:

[Plastic needles](#): These are the safest, bluntest needles and are best used with [felt](#) or paper. Ideal for the youngest students.

[Size 16 Tapestry Needles](#): A step up from plastic needles, these needles are a bit smaller but still safely blunt. Easier to use on [plain muslin](#). When hand-sewing multiple layers a more open-weave fabric such as [this](#) or [this](#) is easier. Good option for all students, as they are large and blunt but still sleek enough to enable students to be successful.

[Yarn Darners, size 14/16/18](#): These are sharper/pointier, but also large in size making them easier to handle and see. Better for older elementary or high school students. These would work well with [muslin](#) and most basic cotton fabrics such as [this](#).

[Embroidery Needles, sizes 3-9](#): These are the best for embroidery, and work well on [muslin](#) and other similar fabrics such as [this](#). Appropriate for older elementary and high school students.

[Cotton darners, sizes 1-5](#): These would be good for both embroidery or hand-sewing as they are both sharp and large in size. Due to their sharpness, recommended for high school students. Would work well with [muslin](#) and medium weight woven fabrics like [this](#).