



# WANDERING WARDROBE



## LESSON 1.3: SILHOUETTE & FOUNDATIONS

Lesson engages in observing the cut and shape of a garment, highlighting how prevailing fashionable silhouettes would have existed in society, how space was navigated wearing these fashionable clothes, and how the creation of these shapes involved engineered undergarments. The activity asks students to expand on the idea of shape and silhouette to engineer scaffolding for an accessory, miniature garment, or sculpture object.

**Associated garment:** 1780s Court Coat

**Associated web page:** [onstead.unt.edu/court-coat](http://onstead.unt.edu/court-coat)

**Subject Areas:** Theatre, Visual Arts

**Grades:** High school

**Topics/Themes:** Fashion History, Fashion Silhouettes, Foundation Garments, Costume 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:** 1790s Court Coat, Hoop Skirt, Fabric or Tissue Paper, Pipe Cleaners,

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

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## GOALS

Students will be able to:

- Gain understanding in applying 3-dimensional design principles
- Learn to engineer supporting structures for 3-dimensional shapes
- Recognize time periods of different fashion silhouettes

## TERMINOLOGY

- **Fashion Silhouette:** The line or shape of a particular design. ([University of Fashion](http://University of Fashion))
- **Foundation Clothing:** Garments engineered and designed to support the shape of garments worn on the exterior. Most often discussed in relation to women's clothing, but important for a variety of types of clothing.

## DAY 1: DAY 1: OBSERVATION USING ARTFUL THINKING: (SEE, THINK, WONDER)

- Students discuss observations of 1790s garment:
  - **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? What kind of person might wear this coat, and what are they trying to say about themselves by wearing this coat? What shape would this coat form if it were on a body? Do you think this coat would require an undergarment? What would be worn underneath?
- Teacher will briefly discuss historical context on fashionable garment silhouettes through history:
  - **Fashion Silhouette**

This refers to the overall shape of the garments as they are worn on the body. This is often guided by what is fashionable or stylish at the moment in time, and the prevailing fashionable silhouette changes over time. The silhouette is created by manipulating fabrics and materials in different ways. In tailored suits, the material is shaped using cut and sewn seams, heat, steam, or materials layered underneath, such as shoulder pads. This garment is cut and sewn to pull the shoulders back in a rounded shape, and the gathers at the back create a fuller skirt.

Another way to create a fashionable silhouette is wearing additional foundation garments underneath. These are commonly used to slim waists, widen skirts, or add fullness to certain areas of the body. For women's clothing, this has often meant layers of petticoats, bustles or padding worn underneath skirts to create a very distinctive shape.

[MET Museum](#) on the bustle:

"The bustle was at its greatest extension by 1885. It was almost perpendicular to the back and heavily upholstered. The 1880s versions were as padded and heavily embellished as a drawing-room hassock of the period. It was a popular conceit that the cantilevers of these bustles could support an entire tea service. To sustain the greater weight of the 1880s gowns, light and flexible infrastructures were created with flexible materials--wire, cane, whalebone--held together by canvas tapes or inserted into quilted channels."

[Mrs. Hutchings Classroom](#) – Simplified descriptions of 5 basic silhouettes  
[V&A Overview](#)

- **Mobility**

The ability to be active varied greatly between men and women, as well as between the affluent and working-classes. Consider these garments from the same time period for different wearers:

[Land-owning Man \(V&A\)](#)

[Wealthy Woman](#)

[Working Classes](#)

- Have students discuss how they think this garment might have been made or supported to create the shape. 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?
- Teacher will show historic garment silhouettes and accompanying foundation garments
  - [MET Paul Poiret](#)
  - [MET Wedding Dress](#)
  - [TFC Balenciaga](#)
  - [V&A Side Hoop](#)
- Final questions and observations (let students know that lesson will continue tomorrow)

## DAY 2: CREATING CREATIVE STRUCTURE FOR CLOTHING

- Introduction: Refresh garment silhouettes and undergarments, add examples of contemporary sculptural garments (functional and wearable art)
  - [MET Comme de Garçons](#)
  - [MET Dolce & Gabbana](#)
  - [MET Balenciaga](#)
  - [Football Pads](#)
- Use the hoop skirt to create interactive dialogue about both technical construction of garment as well as effect on ability to move
  - Let students try hoop skirt on and try to sit and navigate walking through the classroom
  - Have students think about how it would feel to perform other activities in the hoop skirt (sports, cleaning, driving, etc.)
- Introduce activity: Ask students to think of a shape or silhouette they would like to make for clothing. Think about creatively shaped sleeves, pants, shoulders, or even accessories like a hat, neckpiece, or shoes. Use handout croquis to design this object/s. The design will be executed using pipe cleaners the following days.

## DAY 3-5: CREATING STRUCTURED CLOTHING

- Students Execute Design: using their designs as a guide, students will create a miniature shape of their garment or accessory using pipe cleaners. A pipe cleaner figure can be created to “wear” the structure; see [1.3.2 PipeCleanerFigure SupportFile](#).
  - Pipe cleaners can be doubled up and twisted to create a stiffer structure
  - Encourage the students to experiment with the shapes they make and try different versions.
  - Newspaper or fabric can be draped over the wire structures to create small objects
- End with a “show”: Have students set their pieces out, walk through room to observe others work. Conduct a critique or final discussion. Prompt questions: What was the hardest part of the project? What was the most interesting?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Quick Synopsis of the Contemporary Garment Manufacturing Process:

<https://makersrow.com/blog/2015/11/why-you-need-a-cut-and-sew-factory-and-a-fit-model/#>

### MATERIALS

- Pipe Cleaners or stiff craft wire
- Fabric or newspaper to drape over structures (optional)