PART One

Clothes and Fashion

The Why of Clothes
Knowing About Fashion
Garment Styles and Parts
Clothing does much more than just cover the body. Your appreciation of clothing will be broadened as you become more aware of the influences clothing has on you. It can influence you both as a consumer (someone who buys and uses goods and services) and as a future employee of a clothing manufacturing or retail company.

Throughout history, clothing has had great meaning. It has indicated people’s handicraft skills, artistic imagination, and cultural rituals. Cultures are the customs and beliefs of certain groups of people. Clothing also reflects advances in technology. In ancient times, clothing was made from items found in nature. The first clothes were probably made from animal skins. Today’s technology provides many different fibers, fabrics, finishes, and manufacturing processes. Regardless of these advances, however, the reasons to wear clothes are the same as they have been throughout history.

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:
- **explain** the various reasons people wear clothes.
- **analyze** how clothing satisfies certain physical, psychological, and social needs.
- **discuss** how values, attitudes, conformity, individuality, and personality affect clothing selections.

### Objectives

- consumer
- cultures
- protective clothing
- adornment
- beauty
- identification
- dress codes
- modesty
- status
- values
- attitudes
- conformity
- peer pressure
- individuality
- personality

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**The Why of Clothes**

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Why People Wear Clothes

Prehistoric people clothed their bodies over 75,000 years ago. This has been shown by the discoveries of ancient cave drawings, statues, and remains of materials used for making clothing. From the beginning, clothing has served the same basic human needs. Those needs are protection (a physical need), adornment and identification (psychological needs), and modesty and status (social needs).

Protection

Unlike other animals, the human body needs protection, or physical safeguards. Clothing can prevent harm caused by the climate and the environment. It supplements the natural body covering like a second skin. Protective clothing gives physical protection to the body. For instance, protection from drowning is provided by life jackets or other flotation clothing. As you will see, some clothing that offers protection is also stylish.

Protection from Weather

To preserve good physical health, people use clothing as protection from cold temperatures. It can protect them from sunshine or high winds. It can also protect them from the wetness of rain, as shown in 1-1. Where people live influences the clothing needed for protection.

Warm sweaters, coats, gloves, and long underwear help bodies retain heat, thus protecting people from frigid weather. Wide-brimmed hats can keep hot sunshine off faces and heads. People wear windbreakers and water-repellent jackets for protection against weather.

Sunglasses and hats are sometimes worn as fashion items as well as for protection. Fur pels were essential for warmth and protection long ago. Now fur garments might stir controversy as well as provide high fashion and warmth.

Protection from Environmental Hazards

People need physical protection from dirt, insects, and other harmful agents in the environment. Shoes protect feet from soil, hard objects, and hot and cold surfaces. Astronauts must have protective clothing to provide them with the correct atmospheric conditions to keep them alive in outer space. In medical settings, special clothing items, such as sterile gloves, gowns, and face masks, help reduce the transfer of germs and maintain sanitation.

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Protection from Occupational Hazards

Some garments protect workers from the specific dangers of their jobs. Unlike turtles that can use their shells for protection, humans must use clothing to guard against bruises, cuts, burns, and other injuries.

As industry and technology have developed, special protective garments have evolved. Hard hats, steel-toed shoes, and safety goggles have been standard equipment at many job sites for years. More recently, special garments to guard against acids, static, lint, fumes, and other potential dangers have been developed. Some specialized clothing can protect against contamination, chemicals, radiation, and fire. These clothes were devised for firefighters, factory workers, miners, and others as in 1-2.

Athletes often wear protective clothing. The helmets, gloves, and pads pictured in 1-3 provide protection while skateboarding. The special shoes worn by tennis players and basketball players are designed to protect them from slipping. Reflective vests enable workers in roadways to be seen.

Some garments were originally designed for protection while working. Later, they became fashion items. Examples include blue jeans and tall leather boots that were first worn by ranchers and outdoor workers.

Protection from Enemies

Throughout history, clothing has protected people from attackers. Physical protection against human enemies centuries ago was provided by body shields or suits of armor. Current army helmets protect soldiers’ heads. Pockets and belts can hold military weapons. Camouflage fabric helps the wearer hide by blending in with the environment.

Police officers often wear bulletproof vests, as shown in 1-4, to protect their bodies from gunfire. Other clothing that protects against enemies may be less obvious. The helmets and pads worn by firefighters, factory workers, miners, and others as in 1-2.

Adornment

Clothing can affect a person’s mental attitude or morale in a good way. This is done through adornment or decoration. Adornment provides a psychological feeling of well-being through beauty. It differs between cultures and it changes over time.
Beauty is a quality that gives pleasure to the senses. It creates a positive emotional reaction in the viewer. Most psychologists believe beauty is essential to human life. People have a need to make themselves look more attractive. Body adornment enhances self-concept and personality.

The winter wear in 1-5 would be just as efficient if it were all black. However, the combination of bright colors adds beauty to it. Decorative clothing makes people more attractive. People wear clothing that is artistically designed, and combine garments in artistic ways. Then they further adorn themselves with earrings, bracelets, and neck chains. Makeup and nail polish add more decoration.

Adornment has been found in various cultures throughout history. Primitive people used colored clay or vegetable dyes to decorate their bodies. Jewelry was carved from animal bones or horns. The body was decorated with what was available. The decorations people use still depend on their native culture. In some regions, people decorate their bodies with paints and ornaments. Some bodies are intentionally scarred or bound for adornment. People may wear necklaces made of animal teeth, shells, or seeds. Individuals may imitate this type of decoration with tattoos and piercings.

The way one culture views beauty may be very different from how other cultures view it. The desirability of certain decorations is determined by the standards, values, and traditions of each society. For instance, many cultures have popular, but different, hairstyles. Fabrics and garments of different cultures vary in textures, patterns, and colors, as in 1-6. Often the traditional fabrics of a culture uses to create its folk costumes have great importance.

Individuals also have different thoughts about beauty and adornment because of personal experiences. A professional athlete may consider casual attire to be more attractive at all a few years later.

Clothing worn for adornment gives people a positive way to express themselves. They can express creativity and individuality. Clothing can contribute to increased self-respect, self-acceptance, and self-esteem. When people improve their looks, they attract favorable attention.

Sometimes people adorn themselves in a way that is different from their usual style for change or adventure. This gives relief from boredom. It adds psychological zest to life. A business person who wears dark suits all week might choose a bright outfit for a fun event on the weekend or on vacation, as in 1-7. Identifications

Identification is the process of establishing or describing who someone is or what someone does. Clothing can identify employees of restaurants, hotels, hospitals, or stores, and people of many other professions.

Uniforms are one way of identifying roles, as in 1-8. Uniforms are outfits or articles of clothing that are alike and specific to everyone in a certain group of people. They act as symbols of group identity. Besides giving a sense of belonging, uniforms can indicate positions of authority and the images companies want to project. People who provide protection to the public, such as police officers, need easily recognized uniforms in order to carry out their duties. Uniforms prove that someone really is a mail carrier, a military officer of a particular rank, a football referee, a flight attendant, or a member of the clergy.

Uniforms can decrease racial, religious, and other perceived barriers. Some schools require students to wear uniforms so individual differences and tensions are minimized. Identifying with that school can then shift students’ focus to academics. Uniforms give a unified appearance or public image among those in a particular group.
The regular clothing of many people can be considered a type of psychological uniform, because they tend to dress similarly. Look around at your classmates. Are most of them dressed in the same general kinds of pants or skirts, shirts, sweaters, and shoes? People who are close in age and share similar interests often dress like each other. By doing so, they gain confidence, acceptance, and psychological approval. They feel comfortable and secure. Such rules of dress are not formally written, but understood.

Many adults also dress like their peers. Men in a particular group might all wear dark suits and ties to work. To casual gatherings, they may all wear jeans and sweaters. This conformity, or unofficial uniform, makes them feel secure about being appropriately dressed.

Identification can also be accomplished with emblems, colors, badges, patches, and specific pieces of jewelry. Some students wear their class rings. Members of religious groups might wear stars, crosses, or other religious symbols. This identification gives the wearers a feeling of unity with others in the group. Athletic uniforms, nuns’ habits, and nurses’ outfits tell the world about those people’s special identities. Scottish Highlanders wear particular tartan plaids to show they belong to certain clans.

Ceremonial garments can provide identification. The caps and gowns worn by students indicate they are graduating. A white gown and veil indicates a woman is a bride, as in 1-9. Some ceremonies involve the use of elaborate robes, prayer shawls, christening gowns, and other unique garments.

Many businesses and schools have dress codes. Dress codes are written or unwritten rules of what should and should not be worn by a group of people. Although the garments worn are not uniforms, they must fall within a certain range of options. Besides achieving group identity, the clothes help the group members maintain a certain standard of behavior. Sometimes this comes from the symbolic meaning of the clothing. At other times, it is because of how the clothes look or feel. For instance, a business suit helps a person to act in a businesslike manner.

**Modesty**

Human beings wear clothing to satisfy their social need for modesty. Modesty is the covering of a person’s body according to the code of decency of that person’s society. Standards of modesty differ among various cultures and situations, and they change over time.

In many societies, people would be embarrassed to appear without clothes in public. Modesty dictates the proper way to cover the body for social acceptance. Standards of decency are molded by cultures and social systems. Each society has its own accepted standards of modesty. In the 1800s, it was considered immodest for American women to show their ankles. During the early 1900s, the body was almost completely covered, even for sports. In the 1920s, older people were appalled at the short skirts worn by young women. However, short skirts soon became acceptable. Ladies’ swimsuits were once made of thick fabric. They covered most of the body. Now fashionable swimwear exposes more skin. See 1-10. The standards of society about modesty have changed a great deal.

The situation, or event people are attending, also influences modesty. Wearing only a swimsuit to school or to an office job would not be appropriate. A man may wear a kilt to play bagpipes at a traditional Scottish gathering. However, wearing a kilt anywhere else might embarrass him. By wearing appropriate or inappropriate clothing, people show their acceptance or rejection of their social environment.

**Status**

A person’s status is his or her position or rank compared with that of others. Good or high status is usually associated with recognition, prestige, and social acceptance. Clothing is sometimes used to gain a higher rank in society, along with achievement and peer approval. Thus, many people are willing to pay more for garments with designer labels or popular logos, as in 1-11.

Adults may try to achieve a higher status by wearing fur coats, diamond jewelry, or expensive clothing items. Examples might be a cashmere sweater or a beaded gown, as in 1-12.

Some items have important social meanings and make the people wearing them feel important. The items enable individuals to show others what they have achieved. Service stripes on a military sleeve, merit badges on a Boy Scout’s shirt, and a school letter on an athletic jacket all tend to raise the status of the wearer. In ancient times, hunters adorned themselves with the pelts of their prey to impress others with their achievements.
Why People Select Certain Clothes

You have just read that people wear clothes to fulfill certain physical, psychological, and social needs. Additional factors that influence people’s clothing choices are related to the mental image people have of themselves. Some of the most important factors are people’s values and attitudes, their tendencies toward conformity or individuality, and their personalities.

Fashion is a mirror of the times. It reflects the culture at a given time. Historic clothing has revealed many details about the lifestyles of those from various past cultures. Clothes tell others a lot about who people are and how they lived.

If only one current publication could be left from today for people to read in hundreds of years, some experts suggest it should be a fashion magazine. Many believe it would tell more than the volumes written by philosophers, novelists, prophets, and scholars.

Values and Attitudes

Values are the ideals and beliefs important to individuals. They are the underlying motivations for a person’s actions. They are the basis of a person’s decisions, lifestyle, and personal code of ethics. Attitudes are formed from values. They are an individual’s feelings about, or reactions to, other people, things, or ideas. Values and attitudes are learned over a lifetime. They are influenced by cultural customs and traditions. Economic and social conditions of the time also affect them. Values and attitudes can be passed from one generation to another. Family members, friends, and the community are important in forming them.

Some people select comfortable clothing because they value their own comfort. Others always choose bargains because they value economy. Some people value easy care. Others must have the latest fashions in clothes, or expensive items, because they value prestige and want to be noticed. People who are in the businesses of making or selling clothing items try to identify the values and attitudes of their customers. Then they can provide the items that will be preferred, and ultimately bought, by that group of consumers.

What people do with their money shows their personal values. Some like to spend money on many clothes and accessories. Others have few clothes, preferring to spend their money on concerts, movies, ski trips, or other forms of recreation. Still others save their money for a car or other large purchases in the future.

Advertising can influence people’s values, attitudes, and purchase decisions. Television commercials try to create a stronger desire for particular products. Fashion ads in newspapers and magazines play to desires for economy, status, easy care, adventure, and comfort. Shopping malls attract many customers who value convenience.

Age influences people’s clothing selections, too. As people go through life, their values and attitudes change. Students in their middle school years may consider conformity to be important. High school and college students may have to be budget conscious, but they still want the current fashions. Business attire, as shown in 1-14, might be selected by someone who plans a professional career. Prestige and status may be desired during middle age. Comfort becomes more important as people age.

Conformity versus Individuality

Pressure from other people has a great influence on how people dress. Conformity means obeying, or agreeing with, some given standard or authority. Humans learn early in life what others expect them to wear. Parents, teachers, and other authority figures set some of the rules of dress. Peer pressure, which is influence exerted to be accepted by a peer group, also contributes to conformity. To be accepted by a peer group, people must often conform to group standards of dress and behavior. Those who do not conform, risk rejection by the group.

As discussed earlier, conformity can satisfy the needs for identification. By doing this, a safe feeling of belonging is achieved through approval. However, too much conformity can mean a loss of personal individuality.

Individuality is self-expression. It is the quality that distinguishes one person from another. It is the characteristic of being unique. When people choose styles and colors of clothes that are totally different from those of their friends, they are communicating their
individuality. They are satisfying their need for adornment while rejecting peer pressure and conformity. The girl in 1-15 has shown some individuality in her outfit.

Most people balance the influences of conformity and individuality in their clothing. Their clothing choices depend on their moods as well as different settings and situations.

**Personality**

**Personality** can be defined as the total unique characteristics that distinguish an individual, especially his or her behavioral and emotional tendencies. A person’s basic personality might be happy or sad, shy or outgoing, warm or aloof, kind or mean, relaxed or stiff, or something else. Personalities are influenced by in-born characteristics as well as people’s experiences.

Studies have found that certain ways of dressing give clues about specific personality traits. For instance, tests have shown that people who desire very decorative wearing apparel tend to be very sociable. People who mainly like comfort from their clothes tend to have self-control and confidence. They are often outgoing and secure, as in 1-16. People who are shown in the personality tests to prefer economy, rather than spending lots of money on their wardrobes, are usually responsible, alert, efficient, and precise.

**Summary**

People wear clothes today for the same reasons they have worn them throughout history. One reason is for physical protection of the body from weather, environmental dangers, occupational hazards, and enemies. Another reason for wearing clothes is for adornment or decoration that gives a sense of beauty. Clothing is also worn for identification through uniforms, emblems and badges, ceremonial garments, and according to dress codes. Modesty, which follows society’s code of decency, is another reason people wear clothes. Finally, clothing is often worn to raise status or to bring a person recognition, prestige, and social acceptance.

People select certain clothes to wear because of their values and attitudes, their tendencies toward conformity or individuality, and their personalities. Values are the basis of people’s decisions, lifestyles, and codes of ethics. Attitudes affect people’s feelings or reactions to other people, things, or ideas. Conformity and individuality are usually balanced in people’s clothing choices. Clothing choices can also give clues about personality traits.
Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

Matching: Determine the best reason a person would wear each of the items listed below and write the corresponding letter.
1. Designer clothes. A. protection
2. Swimsuit. B. adornment
3. Space suit. C. identification
4. Colorful necklace. D. modesty
5. Hard hat. E. status
6. Uniform.

True/False: Write true or false for each of the following statements.
7. The reasons people wear clothes are different today from those in historic times.
8. Clothes can offer protection from weather, environmental dangers, occupational hazards, and enemies.
9. Folk costumes provide information about how various cultures view beauty and adornment.
10. Uniforms eliminate group identity and take away the feeling of belonging.
11. All societies of the world have the same standards of modesty.
12. Clothing is sometimes used to achieve a higher status.
13. Clothing selection is influenced by people’s values and attitudes.
15. Personality tests have shown that people who wear very decorative clothes tend to be very sociable.

Rank Reasons. Think about the reasons people wear clothes. Rank the reasons in order of importance to you from most to least important. Are there people who might have different rankings than you do? Explain why.

Analyze Fashion Influences. What part does clothing play in people’s lives? Analyze how clothing satisfies certain physical, psychological, and social needs.

Analyze Clothing Selections. Describe and list factors that affect personal clothing selections. How does your list compare to those of others in the class?

Interview two or more older people about the clothing they wore when they were your age. Did their clothes reflect traditions of their nationalities? Did they follow different codes of modesty? Did garments provide the physical protection needed for their jobs? What forms of decorative adornment were popular? Write a short report about what you learned.

Visit a museum that features a clothing display. Compare clothes worn during that period to clothes worn today.

As a class, discuss how clothing choices are affected by values, attitudes, desire for conformity or individuality, and personality.

Print at least two pictures from the Internet to illustrate protective clothing. Mount them on paper and be ready to explain in class why such clothing is necessary. Also try to describe the technological advances that have made the clothing possible.

Using desktop publishing software, make a poster showing the reasons people wear clothes. Obtain permission to display the poster in your school.

Create a photo essay with written photo descriptions about why people wear clothes. Save your presentation for your portfolio.

Find at least two pictures of people wearing uniforms and mount them on paper. Write your impressions of what each uniform shows or tells to those who see it being worn. Also explain what design aspects of the uniform help the person wearing it.