

An Exhibition in the Classroom - Explore the Site with Your Students



Pedagogical Intent

Students explore cultural change and continuity through an inquiry into men's and women's clothing of today and of the Confederation Generation. They begin by discussing how clothing reflects current cultural attitudes towards men and towards women. After reviewing some of the Confederation Generation's ideas about the roles men and women were expected to play in society, students view and analyze examples of the clothing of that period. Then, using the Activity Sheet for this lesson, students analyze continuity and change in men's and women's clothing over time.

Subjects

History, History and Citizenship, Language Arts, Social Studies, Visual Arts

Themes

Change and continuity, culture and community, citizenship and identity

Skills and Competencies

Critical thinking and creative thinking, historical thinking, visual and written literacy, questioning, using primary sources, using information, research, examining social phenomena from a historical perspective, interpreting social phenomena using the historical method

Duration

60 to 90 minutes

Lesson 2, Grades 9 to 10

Grades 9 and 10 (all provinces and territories except Quebec); Secondary Cycle 2 (Quebec)

Men's and Women's Clothes — Then and Now

Teacher Preparation

Familiarize yourself with the contents of the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition. (www.civilization.ca/confederationdress).

Prepare copies of Activity Sheet: Clothing and Gender, Then and Now (at the end of this lesson) for students. Each student or group of students will need two copies of the activity sheet.

Students will need access to computers with an Internet connection to view clothes at the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition website and to





complete some of the website's jigsaw puzzles, matching games, and quiz questions. You could set aside approximately 30 minutes for this investigation.

Procedure

1. Explore men's and women's clothing today.

Introduce this lesson by asking students to think about the clothes that men and women wear today. As students discuss the following questions in small groups, suggest that they keep notes for future reference when they investigate men's and women's clothing of the Confederation Generation.

- What do the clothes people wear tell you about their society and their culture?
- How are men's and women's clothes of today similar? How are they different?
- What clues about a society's attitudes towards men and women can you get from studying the clothes they wear?

Encourage students to add their own questions as they go and to think about the social norms or rules that govern what is acceptable clothing for men and women in today's society. Where do people learn those rules and how do the rules affect their identity? What values and attitudes do those norms reflect? How do the clothes people wear reflect their identity?

2. Review information from the Online Exhibition.

At this point, you could briefly review with students some key ideas from the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition.

- The political, economic, and social status of Confederation Generation women in Canada was different from what it is today. For the most part, men controlled the economic welfare of the family, and they also controlled business and politics. For example, women didn't have the right to vote in Canadian provincial and federal elections until the 20th century.
- Appropriate activities for men and for women were considered by many people to be quite different. A woman's place was in the home. A young woman was expected to marry. Then her role was to keep house, be a companion to her husband, and raise their children. Men were expected to go out and earn the money for the family and to participate in politics.
- The different roles that men and women were expected to play in society were reflected in their clothes. For example, while a middle-class man's business clothes were often sombre — maybe even dull by today's standards — his wife's clothing could be more elaborate and colourful to reflect the social status of the family.



3. View men’s and women’s clothing in the Online Exhibition.

You may want students to work in small groups for this activity. First, refer them to their opening discussion about men’s and women’s clothing today, and remind them that people present themselves through the clothing they wear. Ask students to keep their earlier discussion in mind as they view the clothing in the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition.

Students could use the following questions to begin their inquiry. Once again, encourage them to add their own questions as they explore the artifacts in the exhibition.

- What do the clothes worn by men and women of the Confederation Generation tell you about their society and culture?
- How were men’s and women’s clothes similar? How were they different?
- What can you learn about society’s attitudes towards men and women by studying the clothes worn by people of that society?
- How would you interpret the social rules, attitudes, and values of the Confederation Generation society?

4. Look for clues in jigsaw puzzles, matching game, and quiz.

To help students focus on details and look for clues that could help them understand and interpret clothing of the Confederation Generation, suggest that they explore the matching games and jigsaw puzzles in the Games section of the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition. Jigsaw puzzles can be especially useful for visual and kinesthetic learners.

Students may also find it helpful to review key ideas from the Confederation Generation Online Exhibition by answering the Quiz in the Games section.

5. Analyze change and continuity in clothing over time.

As students explore the Confederation Generation’s men’s and women’s clothing, distribute two copies of the Activity Sheet: Clothing and Gender, Then and Now to each group of students. Suggest that students use one sheet to compare men’s clothing in the past and in the present. On the second sheet, they can compare women’s clothing then and now.

Students can either sketch or pick up a copy of a clothing sample from the Online Exhibition to compare with a clothes sample from today.

As they look for evidence of continuity and change in men’s and women’s clothing in the past and the present, encourage students to consider social and cultural aspects in their discussion. You could start off



with the following questions, but encourage students to expand the inquiry by adding their own questions.

- How do men's and women's clothes reflect the society of a particular time?
- How do they express the culture and values of a community?
- How do differences in men's and women's clothing over time reflect changes in society over time?
- How do similarities in men's and women's clothing over time reflect continuity in society over time?

When students complete their inquiry, ask each group to present their conclusions to the class.

Extension Activities

Comfort and function

Invite students to compare the clothing they are wearing today with that worn by members of the Confederation Generation in terms of comfort and functionality. Suggest that they look carefully at the styles and characteristics of the clothing worn by some Confederation Generation women, for example. How comfortable would women have been in their long skirts and bustles? What activities would have been difficult to perform in such clothes?

Following fashions

To help students think about the social phenomena of clothing styles, ask them what it means for clothes to be "in fashion."

- Who sets fashion trends? Who decides what is in fashion or out of fashion? Why do people follow fashion trends?
- What's the connection between changes in fashion trends and changes in society? How much continuity does there have to be in a "new" fashion trend and how much change?
- Do you follow fashion trends? If so, how do you find out what is in fashion?
- How do fashion trends affect your sense of yourself? Your identity?

Clothing and stories

To help students appreciate the importance of clothing as social phenomena, you could ask them to discuss the role that clothing plays in a story in their Language Arts program. Ask students to describe the setting of the story.



Setting includes not only the historical time and characteristics of a place, but also the way people live in their society and their culture. To get students started, you could ask them what part clothing plays in stories they may be familiar with from childhood, e.g., “Little Red Riding Hood” or “The Cat in the Hat” or “The Emperor’s New Clothes” or “The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing”.

- How do descriptions of a character’s clothing help a reader understand the setting of the story?
- What part does clothing play in the characterization, plot, and theme of a story?

Catalogue Shopping

Ask students if they ever use catalogues — print or online — to select and buy their clothing. What are some benefits or advantages of buying items in this way? What are some of the costs or disadvantages?

To give students an idea of the content of catalogues in the late 19th century, you could print out a selection of pages from *The Delineator: A Journal of Fashion, Culture and Fine Arts*. The catalogues are part of the Canadian Dress: The Confederation Generation Online Exhibition. This Canadian catalogue (1873-1937) was published for Butterick, a company that made and sold patterns for clothing. Suggest that as students view the pages, they think about who the catalogue was intended for and what kinds of products are included.

You could also ask students how the completion of the cross-country railway in 1885 might have affected catalogue sales in Canada. How do innovations — for example, the railway in the late 19th century and the World Wide Web in the mid-1990s — affect the way people select and obtain their clothes?



Activity Sheet: Clothing and Gender, Then and Now

Name: _____ Date: _____

Complete one copy of this sheet for men's clothing and one for women's clothing. You could use the following questions to begin your analysis:

- How do men's and women's clothes reflect the society of a particular time?
- How do they express the culture and values of a community?
- How do differences in men's and women's clothing over time reflect changes in society over time?
- How do similarities in men's and women's clothing over time reflect continuity in society?



Sample of Clothes – Then

Sample of Clothes – Now

Evidence of Continuity and Change _____
