

Design**Fashion****Higher: Art & Design Studies****Learners
Booklet**

Analyse the factors influencing designers and design practice by

1.1 Describing how designers use a range of design materials, techniques and technology in their work

1.2 Analysing the impact of the designers' creative choices in a range of design work

1.3 Analysing the impact of social and cultural influences on selected designers and their design practice.

A study of**Coco Chanel**

Day dress, ca. 1924 Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (French, 1883–1971)
Wool



Theater suit, 1938, Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (French, 1883–1971) Silk



Evening dress, ca. 1926–27
Attributed to Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (French, 1883–1971)
Silk, metallic threads, sequins

What is Fashion Design?

Fashion design is a form of art dedicated to the creation of clothing and other lifestyle accessories. Modern fashion design is divided into two basic categories: haute couture and ready-to-wear. The haute couture collection is dedicated to certain customers and is custom sized to fit these customers exactly. In order to qualify as a haute couture house, a designer has to be part of the Syndical Chamber for Haute Couture and show a new collection twice a year presenting a minimum of 35 different outfits each time. Ready-to-wear collections are standard sized, not custom made, so they are more suitable for large production runs. They are also split into two categories: designer/creator and confection collections. Designer collections have a higher quality and finish as well as an unique design. They often represent a certain philosophy and are created to make a statement rather than for sale. Both ready-to-wear and haute-couture collections are presented on international catwalks.

The first fashion designer who was more than a simple seamster was Charles Frederick Worth, in the 19th century. Before he set up his fashion design house in Paris, clothing was made by anonymous dressmakers and fashion standards were derived from the styles worn by royalty. Worth was the first designer to actually dictate to his customers what to wear rather than following their demands.

Coco Chanel made a bold and lasting impression on women's fashion in the 20th Century. Her trailblazing defiance of gender expectations and her avant-garde approach still hugely impacts on the way we dress today. Born in France, Chanel opened her first shop in Paris in 1913 and quickly developed a dedicated clientele. She was one of the few women of her generation who created and ran a vast international business empire. Today no modern woman's wardrobe is complete without at least one LBD (Little Black Dress). Countless other innovations and styles she introduced have stood the test of time and remain relevant in contemporary wardrobes and lifestyles.

Some design issues to consider:

Function

Pioneer of the modern look that embraced **comfort** and **freedom**. Revolutionised fashion by replacing structured silhouettes with functional but flattering garments. Quoted as saying "**Luxury must be comfortable**" Her designs utilized typical **menswear** shapes and materials to achieve this. Believed that women could be active and still remain elegant.

Aesthetics / Style

Understated elegance in all her clothing. "My entire art consisted in cutting back what others would add" **Simplification** allowed Chanel to create a **timeless style**. The Chanel look was of **youthful ease, physical liberation, and sporty confidence**.

Materials / Techniques

Working method was **rigorous** and **precise**. Hired Russian immigrants to work in her embroidery workshop creating designs to **exacting specifications**. Known for her relentless drive for **perfection**, whether in design or fit. Clothing usually followed her favorite colour palette; shades of beige, black, and white. She also sometimes incorporated tulle, lace, and decorative elements to soften and romanticize garments.



By 1959, Chanel's famous **haute couture Chanel Suit** (*left*) had become the "uniform" of well-dressed women all over the world. The understated elegance of a Chanel suit never falls out of style. **Luxurious and made to transcend fashion**, the Chanel jacket is '**investment dressing**'. Though the buttons may change from season to season and jacket to jacket, sometimes brass, sometimes jet, sometimes diamante, a Chanel jacket is always lined in silk, woven with the Chanel logo. There is always a ribbon sewn in the waist of the skirt to prevent the blouse from slipping and the zipper is placed on the side of the skirt to maximise comfort. Very careful tailoring ensures that when the wearer moves, the suit still maintains perfect **grace and elegance**. A gold coloured chain ensures it hangs properly from the shoulders.

Although details such as exquisite fabrics, bias cuts and hand sewing contribute to the high cost, **Chanel was a firm believer that if the cost of her products was high, then her obsessively perfect designs would truly be valued.**



Chanel's original Little Black 'Ford' Dress - 1926

Target Market

Wealthy women bought her luxury **haute couture** (high fashion) as they were prepared to spend a lot of money on an investment piece. **A wider social mix** was able to buy some of her designs that were suitable for mass production such as the LBD (little black dress) that became available as everyday fashion ("prêt à porter") and therefore affordable to more people. Chanel wanted to create something **accessible** yet **exquisite** and **flattering** for women of all social class, age and shape.

INNOVATIONS

The Little Black Dress: Introduced between the wars, when bright colours, prints and heavy embroideries dominated fashion. Black was previously considered a colour of mourning with heavy, uncomfortable, floor length mourning dresses being worn. Chanel subverted this tradition, turning black into a **sophisticated, classy** and **feminine** look. It was called 'Chanel's Ford' as a nod to her bringing a product to the masses as Ford had done with cars. Influenced by the popular **flapper style**. In the 1920s Chanel popularised the "flat-chested" fashions that

were the opposite of the hourglass-figure achieved by the fashions of the late 19th century. She told Vogue the LBD was "**a sort of uniform for all women of taste.**" Concept of the dress **suitable for day and evening** became a **classic piece of twentieth-century women's wear**. The **versatile and affordable** Chanel little black dress became a symbol of **chic and sophisticated simplicity**.

Jersey

Much of Chanel's clothing was made of jersey, a choice of fabric both unusual and inspired. Until the designer began to work with it, jersey was more commonly used for men's underwear. In the early years of her design career, Chanel bought jersey primarily for its low cost. The qualities of the fabric, however, ensured that the designer would continue to use it long after her business became profitable. The fabric draped well and suited her designs, which were simple, practical, and often inspired by men's wear, especially the uniforms prevalent when World War One broke out in 1914.

Fashion Design**Outcome 1****Learner's
Helpsheet****analysis****Materials**

What is the piece made of? How does this effect the look, feel, and overall function?

Consider...

- Working methods
- Fit
- Textures
- Functionality of materials
- Feel of material
- Comfort for wearer
- man-made or natural fibres
- Unusual materials
- Recycled materials
- Dyed or natural colours

Process and Techniques

Answer:

How has the designer made this piece of clothing?

Consider...

- How it is put together
- Traditional or untraditional techniques
- Machine made or hand made
- Sewing techniques
- Knitting techniques
- Woven
- Any embellishments

Inspiration & Influence

Answer:

Where did the designer get ideas from?

How have these been developed?

Consider...

- theme (nature, architecture etc.)
- concepts (ideas, e.g. *the future*)
- work of other designers
- narrative (story)
- culture/society of the time (N5)
- choices the designer made and the

Form & Shape

Consider...

- volume & solidity
- three dimensional structure
- symmetry
- What kinds of shapes are used to give form?
- sources of shapes, soft or rigid material?
- stylisation of shape
- angular, geometric
- curved, rounded
- simple, intricate
- flow & movement

- Stick a *colour* printed copy of your selected design in the middle of your sheet.
- Add a caption with the name of the designer, her/his life dates; Name of the design; date; dimensions.
- Respond to whichever prompts (*Consider...Answer...*) seem appropriate for the work you are studying. Your teacher will guide you in this.

Style & Aesthetics

Answer:

What historical period or design movement does the designer/ design belong to?

Does it reflect the time, place, social/cultural events? (N5)

How would you describe it? *Elegant? Fun? Sophisticated? Sleek? Quirky? Kitsch? Fun? Futuristic? Retro? Etc.*

Ergonomics

Consider...

- safety issues: wearability and dimensions
- size and weight
- where on the body should it be worn?
- how is it attached to the body?

Answer:

Is the piece wearable? Why?

Colour

Answer:

- Do colours come from materials used?
- How is colour added to the piece?

Consider...

- warm & cold
- contrasts
- colour-tone
- subtle/bold
- complimentary

Other Visual Elements

Answer:

What other visual elements feature?

Consider...

- line: structure, framework, edges
- pattern: surface design, repeats
- texture: surface quality, feel

Cost & Market

Consider...

- target market: for whom?
- hand-made/mass produced
- types/costs of materials
- time taken to create one piece

Function & Purpose

Answer:

What is the piece of clothing for?

Where and when would it be worn?

Consider...

- target market: gender/age group
- target market: social class/wealth
- wearability
- occasion: costume/theatre or specific event
- Part of a wider collection of clothes?
- Where was it shown, what season?

Facts & Opinions: Say WHAT you think, but also WHY: give your opinions with some *explanation and reasons!*

Design

Exam Help

Coco Chanel

Some of the information on this page will help you to answer part B of Questions 3 and 4:

Question 3 or 4 (Part B) 10 marks total

(5 marks for each artist) The question will ask you to explain the influence of social cultural and/or other factors on any of the designs discussed.

Modernism

Chanel was linked to the **Modernist** movement. Modernism felt the "traditional" forms of design were becoming outdated in the new economic, social, and political conditions of an emerging fully industrialized world. Chanel's designs were thought of as **avant-garde**. Avant-garde is a modernist word that means experimental, innovative and pushing of the boundaries of what is accepted as the norm.

Women's changing role in society

Chanel's own lifestyle influenced how modern women looked, acted, and dressed. Her slim boyish figure and cropped hair became very fashionable, as did her tanned skin, active lifestyle, and financial independence which **challenged the gender stereotype** of her time. Chanel's simple styles, with their boxy lines and shortened skirts freed women for the practical activities made necessary by **World War One**. Along with Paul Poiret, Chanel was credited with **liberating women** from the constraints of the **corseted silhouette** and popularizing the acceptance of a **sporty, casual chic** after the war. Gone were the frills, fuss, and constraints endured by earlier generations of women.

Uniforms and working clothing



Chanel was often inspired by the everyday clothes worn by working people around her, borrowing from a mechanic's blouse, a ditch digger's scarf, and the white collar and cuffs of a waitress for ideas.

The Breton top was based on sailors' uniforms. Chanel (centre photo) turned it into a design classic.

Men's Clothing

Chanel would often wear men's clothes, only slightly altered. The horizontal striped shirt, bell-bottom pants, crewneck sweaters, and espadrille shoes—all traditionally worn by sailors and fishermen were adapted. Men's suits, cardigans and jackets were also an influence.

The Suffragette and Women's Lib movements

Chanel lived through the feminist struggle of the Suffragettes that started around 1910, and also through the Women's Lib of the 1960s. Although she did not publicly affiliate herself with the movements she shared many of their ideals.



WHALEBONE UNBREAKABLE.
Cheapest and most fashionable Corsets in Europe.
"Small waists" never so easy to make, and so comfortable. Full bust support. No ordinary corset. No ordinary price. No ordinary quality.
H. GIRAUD ET CIE.,
30, ST. PORTLAND ST.,
LONDON, W.



Christian Dior's New Look Collection

After World War Two Chanel also reacted against Christian Dior's "New Look" collection which featured cinched waists; women's freedom and movement were once again constricted so they could have an "hourglass figure." She felt this was neither modern nor suitable for the



liberated women who had survived another war by taking on active roles in society and set out to rescue and reinvigorate women's fashion. She had a comeback collection in the 1950s when she enjoyed newfound respect through reworking her jackets and suits with an emphasis on **comfort and simplicity**.

Dior's New Look 1947

Mass Production

The simplicity of Chanel's designs made them easy to copy in the factory. She is credited with being the designer who had the greatest effect on the early development of mass production