

The Fabric of History

Edited by Martha Merson and Amy Gluckman
Contributors: Lareese Hall, Clare Shepherd, Jim Dizio

Special Thanks to: ALRI Staff for their Support

Made possible with support from the Adult Literacy Resource Institute/Greater Boston Regional SABES Center, a joint project of Roxbury Community College and University of Massachusetts/Boston. Sponsored by the MA Department of Education and the Boston BRA/EDIC/Office of Jobs and Community Services.

c 1998

Contents

Introduction	5
Whose Idea Was This?	5
What the Curriculum Doesn't Do	6
Other Resources	7
How to Use this Curriculum	8
Leading Discussion	9
Timeline Activities	9
Introductory Activities	10
Clothing Survey	10
The Clothing Survey	11
Appearance Cards	13
Image	16
Portfolio Preparation	18
Creating a Personal Dictionary	19
Vocabulary Overview	19
Colonial Era 1600-1800	21
The 1790's	22
Colonial Era Fashion Overview	23
Native American Dress	27
Timeline	29
Sumptuary Laws	32
A Midwife's Tale	36
Early Industry 1800-1900	41
The 1890's	42
The 1800's Country Dress	43
Nineteenth-Century Fashion Overview	44
1800's Timeline	46
The Lowell Mill "Girls"	49
No Wonder They Were Always Fainting!	57
"The Bloomer Dress"	62
The Escape of William and Ellen Craft	69
Dirty Laundry	71

Susie King Taylor	76
A Woman Must Be Planning for Her Future	81
First Job	83
“Mother” Mary Jones	90
The Modern Era 1900-1980	95
The 1920’s	96
1900’s Fashion Overview	97
Timeline	101
1900’s Cars and Car Outfits	107
1900’s Baseball	111
Confessions of Madame Psyche	115
Changing Styles: 1884 to 1920	122
The Outfit Amused Us	124
No Sweat	127
View of Childhood	129
Key Words for Housework in the 1900’s	130
1950’s Ideal Woman	133
The Barbie Syndrome	136
Civil Rights Era	139
The Fitness Craze	143
Something to Say-Part 1	148
Something to Say-Part 2	149
Spanning Time	153
Spanning Time Overview	154
The Fall of the Hat	155
Clothesline Activity	157
Portfolio Review	159

Introduction

Whose Idea Was This?

The *Fabric of History* is a series of units which present a skeleton of U.S. history enhanced by information and activities about fashion, clothing, and textiles in each period. There are three historical eras and two units which serve to introduce the curriculum and sum it up.

This curriculum addresses some of the needs we have all felt as teachers of social studies aiming to prepare students for higher education and for multiple choice tests. Among the problems and needs we face are:

- To interest students, many of whom hate social studies or at best think it is boring.
- To prepare students for multiple choice tests. Students need to have at least a sketchy outline of U.S. history and to be familiar with the most significant events to succeed on multiple choice tests.
- To find texts which represent multiple perspectives. Such texts are often at higher reading levels than students can manage easily.

So, we tried to create a series of units that would be interesting to students, represent people from different social classes and ethnic groups, and provide practice in reading comprehension and multiple choice as well as in critical thinking.

The inspiration for this curriculum came from an experience in a GED class for young women. One of the authors, Amy Gluckman, had stumbled across a book of photographs of early 1900's Paris. She wrote, 'I cut a few of them out and showed them to my students. Among them were a photo of a corset shop window and one of a woman, dressed in black, sitting on her stoop. The students were instantly intrigued. They produced some excellent writing describing the pictures. Hearing that the woman in black was identified in the index as a prostitute was even more intriguing. Students said, "I didn't know they had prostitutes back then" and "I didn't even think people really

had sex back then.” They went on to frame some very thoughtful history questions: “Did they have any type of birth control, and what kind?” “Were abortions available at that time?” “Did they get lots of sexually-transmitted diseases?” “How did they raise their children?” One student started to look for information on the history of contraceptives. In the end, I felt that looking at these photos had opened up the world of history to my students in a whole new way.’

Finding documents and pictures of women and others outside of the mainstream (white men of the owning class) is a challenge. We chose to focus on women in history as a way to balance the predominantly male perspective which shapes most history texts. Images and readings on men and children are included throughout, nevertheless, students will benefit from additional texts which will broaden their perspective.

The development of this curriculum was driven by the fortunate intersection of student and teacher interest. Our hope is that it will bring history alive in a new way, and allow students to view people in past times as more like themselves than different. We also hope that the fashion history will provide mental links that can help students remember the more mundane events. If students can use a fashion schema to place events, this may help them retain dates and sequences of events in a way that makes sense to them. For example, World War I and the Quota Act are events which happened just as women traded long skirts for short dresses.

What the Curriculum Doesn't Do

The curriculum does not cover U.S. history comprehensively, nor does it relate events in this country to events in Mexico, Europe, Asia or Africa. The units are meant to be used alongside other sources. Because of space, we felt that we could not adequately treat the influences on U.S. culture from any country or continent, we tried to avoid mentioning all of them. Your background, your students' backgrounds, and your geographic location will be natural directions to follow as you begin to explore the myriad influences on U.S. history and fashion.

The curriculum does not cover every decade equally nor does it cover every important historical event. Ultimately we hope that it will awaken students' curiosity.

Other Resources

These pictures are from the Huntington Theater's production of the August Wilson play, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. You can use them in your discussion of the 1900's. They appear here because they are reproductions and not actual people or photos from the period.

Costume designers study and recreate period dress, making costumes and theatres an excellent source for visuals from different eras. See:
www.costumegallery.com/
or
www.uvm.edu/~hag/godey/
or
<http://members.aol.com/nebula5/costume.html>

for more information on costumes or call a local theater and ask about costume designers who might be able to visit a class or be a resource if students begin a research project.



The photos are used with the permission of photographer Gerry Goodstein.

How to Use this Curriculum

The introductory unit includes activities that act as a catalyst for discussions about appearance, fashion, symbols, and the messages that clothing carries. These activities will help students tap into the information they have already that they can apply to understanding history. Most of these activities are meant to be done with a group and so have more notes to the teachers on facilitating, whereas the texts in the historical eras are meant for students to use directly.

Each historical unit has:

- an overview of fashion and major historical trends
- a timeline of events, inventions, and styles
- readings
- before reading suggestions
- after reading discussion questions, writing assignments and multiple choice exercises
- pictures
- historical fiction or poetry

You are the best judge of what your students can handle. We have included different lengths and types of texts to appeal to students of different abilities. The overviews can be dense and so you may choose to read them for your own background knowledge. Some readings have suggested vocabulary to preview, but even when there is no list, this strategy can help students' comprehension and fluency. Many readings can be used independent of other lessons in the units and you can vary your presentations. For example, assign shorter readings for independent work. Students could choose from some of the exercises, doing one thoroughly rather than doing several activities superficially. We supply discussion questions, writing assignments, multiple choice exercises and some assignments which draw on students' creativity. You could go further in this vein by encouraging students to make the material their own by doing research, acting out what they read, by illustrating it, or by becoming experts and telling others. This curriculum will allow you to address students' strengths, interests, and learning styles. You will notice that there is no answer key. In some cases the multiple choice questions will have more than one right answer. Use this as an opportunity for students to articulate their thinking, to practice their persuasive powers. This should be the criteria that determines the best answer.

Leading Discussion

There are some general approaches that will work well for each of the historical units. Each era has several readings to choose from. You do not need to do them all. Here are the general, over-arching questions which can be used to frame discussion:

1. Was anything a surprise to you?
2. What picture emerges for you of life in this time?
3. What changes/differences were there in fashion?
4. What were the rules like? This question has many permutations: What were the rules for men and women, rich and working people? How were the rules different for people depending on their race, religion, ethnicity? Where did the rules come from? How did people deal with them?
5. What were the desires, dreams, and hopes of people in this time? What did the clothing express in this era?

Timeline Activities

1. Pick one of the dates or events. Make three columns on a page. Write What I know in the first, What I don't know, in the next, and What I want to know in the third. Make a list for each column.
2. Pick an invention from the list and imagine how people did without it. If drinks weren't sold in cans, how did people buy them? What changes came about because of this invention?
3. The timeline can't include everything. What was left out?
4. Think about your family history or the history of your home country, state, or town. What was going on? Make a family or community timeline for this period.
5. Look around your city. Are there any buildings, monuments or gravestones from this time? What work was available? How did people get their food and water?

Introductory Activities

Clothing Survey

The survey can be used in many different ways; this one is an interview activity.

Ask students to form pairs and choose the role of interviewer or interviewee. Discuss what those roles involve. Then have the students conduct the surveys and collect the information. After students reverse roles and repeat the process, read the results out loud and record them on the board.

Results can be graphed with a bar graph or circle graph. The figures can be represented with fractions or percents, depending on the students' level. Compare your results to those attached from a GED class

of young adults.

The Clothing Survey

Please take a few moments to answer the following questions. This is not a test.

1. How long does it take you to get dressed in the morning?
2. How would you describe your personal style?
3. What is your favorite item of clothing?
4. What do you like to wear when you want to feel special?
5. What do you wear when you want to feel comfortable?
6. Have you ever worn something that hurt? If so, what was it and why did you wear it?
7. What is the most you have ever spent on a piece of clothing?
8. Do you wear anything that expresses your racial or ethnic heritage? What is it?
9. When you shop, do you look for clothes that are made in the U.S.A.?

10. How often do you go shopping for clothes?

Survey Results

1. Maximum: 1 1/2 hours

Minimum: 10 minutes

Majority: 20-30 minutes

2. Most often used words: simple, normal, ordinary, and average.
Also mentioned: sporty, conservative, smooth, exquisite, boring, and original.

3. Favorite item was overwhelmingly jeans. Sneakers, Guess, and Levis were also popular. Baggies, Liz Claiborne, dresses and dress suits were mentioned.

4. Special clothes were dressy clothes, dresses, silk, lingerie, baggies, and something different.

5. Comfortable clothes were jeans, T-shirts, shorts, sneakers, teddies, and sweat suits.

6. 1/3 of the class had never worn anything that hurt. The items that did were sneakers, new shoes, bras, and girdles.

7. Most people mentioned \$100 as the top price they had paid. The maximum was \$300 and the minimum was \$40.

8. Four people answered yes: 12 said no. Some people changed their answers after a discussion where hair braids and claddagh rings were given as examples of items that express heritage.

9. One yes; 15 no. Many students had never considered the idea of selecting purchases based on the country of origin.

10. Answers were split between every month and twice a month, with several students responding that they shopped whenever they felt like it or on the weekends.

Appearance Cards

Materials: Set of photo cards of noteworthy women
Set of biography cards of noteworthy women
We used photos and bios from an issue of *Mirabella* featuring 100 American women. Other sources include calendars and postcards.

Activities: Depending on the size of the group, the level of interest, and the available time, you may choose to do one or more of the following activities.

Activity #1

Hand out one photo card to each student. Ask them to invent and write a short bio of the person on the card. Ask them to share their writing and show their photo to the rest of the class. Read aloud the actual bio that matches the card. Facilitate a class discussion. (See especially questions 1, 3, 4, and 5 below.)

Activity #2

Hand out one bio card to each student. Ask them to write (or draw) a description of the person based on the information on the card. Ask them to share what they have written (or drawn) and the bio information with the class. Show the actual photo that matches the bio to the class. Facilitate a class discussion. (See especially questions 2, 4, 5, and 6 below.)

Activity #3

Hand out photo cards to half of the students and corresponding bio cards to the other half. Ask them to circulate and share the written and visual information until they have found their match. Ask the pairs of students to tell the class about the individual on their cards and what information led to the match. Facilitate a class discussion. (See espe-

cially questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 below.)

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. How does an individual's appearance affect the opinion that others form about him or her? Ask for specific examples of appearances that might be considered powerful, attractive, threatening, intelligent, etc.
2. Have you ever changed your appearance to achieve a certain goal or effect? How and why?
3. How accurate is appearance as a tool for assessing character? Under what circumstances would you feel comfortable or uncomfortable judging someone by their appearance? How do you feel about being judged by your appearance?
4. What are the major differences between your assumptions about the individuals and the reality as it was revealed? Did the age/race/gender/class of the individual affect your expectations? Were there any surprises? Can we draw any conclusions or state any generalizations?
5. What were the major similarities between your assumptions about the individual and the reality as it was revealed? What visual or written clues aided you in your writing or in finding a match?
6. How does what we do for a living affect our appearance? Is this always a choice? Do different roles or careers demand different looks? Is this fair?
7. Do you think appearance plays a major role in our society? Why or why not? Does it matter more to some groups than others? What about the groups to which you belong?)
8. What do you think about dress codes and/or uniforms? Can you think of any situations where they might be useful or necessary? Have you ever had to follow a dress code or wear a uniform? How did you feel about that?
9. Is appearance important to you in choosing friends? In choosing romantic partners? Have you ever gone out with someone because of his or her appearance? Have you ever rejected someone because of his

or her appearance?

Supplemental Activities

1. Ask students to write physical descriptions of themselves. Collect the writings and read them out loud. Ask students to guess who is being described.
2. Ask students to write brief autobiographies. Mount the statements on index cards. Take Polaroid photos of the students or ask them to bring in photos of themselves. Mount the photos on index cards. Use these photo and bio cards in the activities 1-3 described above.
3. Repeat previous activity using baby pictures of the students.
4. Ask students to picture themselves as having achieved a major goal in life. Ask them to write a description of this accomplishment and to include any physical changes that either result from the accomplish-

ment, contribute to the accomplishment, or both.

Image

If you choose to do this as a class activity, students will need to have paper and pen or pencil handy, however, at first, they can just close their eyes and listen. The following are prompts for you to read aloud. This is not a script, though it can be effective as is. Read slowly. Pose a question and allow time for students to visualize or begin making notes. Then go on. Make sure that students know they can respond to all the questions or that they can stick with answering the questions at length that appeal to them.

Begin here:

Imagine yourself on a Saturday. You are very comfortable. Anyone who visited you at your house or who saw you on the street would know you were perfectly comfortable. You are completely at home with yourself. The weather is the perfect temperature for you-not too hot, not too cold. Take a closer look at yourself. What are you wearing?

Start to write down a description of the clothing. If you are wearing a favorite T-shirt or sweater, what color is it? How does the fabric feel? How does it fit on you? Is it old or new? Did you buy it for yourself or did someone give it to you? What does it say about you? If you are wearing shorts or pants, a nightgown or sweats, describe those. Do you feel calm in this outfit or lively? Write a sentence about where you are as you describe yourself. Finish the sentence, I feel like a . . . in these clothes.

Now you are going to change your clothes. Instead of looking comfortable, you want to look competent. The message to the world is, "I am totally in control." Describe what you are wearing. Did you have to change shoes? How do these clothes fit? How do they feel against you? Do you know what the fabric is? What colors are they? Finish the sentence with the kind of animal you are most like: In these clothes, I am a blank. Describe where you would fit in if you were dressed in this way.

After Writing:

Read over what you've written. Add anything you want and change the order, but cross out no more than three things. Read what you have written to a friend or to your teacher.

For Discussion

1. In what ways did the outfits you described change? Were the changes significant? What would you do to turn this piece of writing into a compare and contrast essay?
2. Complete these sentences for your own or another student's writing:
 - (1) To make a point, the author appeals to the readers' sense(s) of
 - (2) The author uses the metaphor of _____ in line
 - (3) The author uses the simile of _____ in line

Multiple Choice Practice

If there were similarities between your choices of clothing and what you read about in another student's essay, would you attribute those similarities to:

- (1) Your taste and his or hers happens to be similar.
- (2) You are from the same cultural background so you make the same choices based on your upbringing.
- (3) You are from the same neighborhood and so you shop at the same stores.
- (4) You are about the same age and you both follow the styles for your generation
- (5) None of the above

Portfolio Preparation

Most students have a notebook or folder for their work. Creating a portfolio from the folder helps students assess their own progress, learn from their mistakes, and articulate what they have learned. Here are some hints on using portfolios with this curriculum.

Ask students to keep:

- Their notes from “Before You Read” questions
- A running list of the readings and to rank them from most favorite to least
- Any writing they have done
- Vocabulary lists or personal dictionary

In addition, students can

- Collect any magazine pictures or readings connected to the topic
- Add any of their own drawings, fabric scraps or postcards from times gone by.

Creating a Personal Dictionary

This curriculum includes historical terms, economic, psychological and sociological terms, as well as fashion terms. In order for students' vocabularies to benefit from the exposure to such rich texts, they will have to see new words more than once. To keep track of new words, students should keep their own reference guide to terms. They can do this by keeping a six page list with two pages for each century and the most important words to them categorized accordingly. Other options are for students to keep a stack of file cards with one word per card or have a small memo book with one page for each letter in the alphabet.

If students keep track of every new word, the task will become overwhelming. Encourage students to be choosy, keeping track of words they like, help guide them toward words which are used today as well as those which have historical significance.

Vocabulary Overview

Before beginning the curriculum, you may want to review some history terms that will recur throughout the units. Add your own to the list of words:

era

period

century

decade

expression

Make sure students know that the 19th century refers to the 1800's. (You may explain this confusing way of counting by pointing out that a baby's first year is before she turns *one* year old.)

