

*Discovering the Story:  
A City and Its Culture*

*DRESS THROUGH  
THE DECADES*

A Social Studies Lesson  
for Grades 9-12

Based on

*Reception Dress*

by Selina Cadwallader



Selina Cadwallader (active 1870-1886)

**Reception Dress, 1886**

Gift of Wilmar Antiques c/o Mr. Maurice Oshry, 1971.550 a-c

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## CONCEPT

Teacher will engage class in a research project that investigates the effect history has on fashion and vice versa. In doing so, students will understand that historical periods directly affect styles of clothing. Students will research one historical period from the twentieth century. Students will discuss how this historical period affected the fashion of the time and in doing so, learn more about the time period's culture and history. Students will relate this information in the form of an oral presentation with accompanying visuals.

The teacher will facilitate students in their understanding of historical effects on fashion trends through pre-videoconferencing lesson activities, a videoconference visit with Cincinnati Art Museum staff, and post-videoconferencing lesson activities.

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will learn the four main reasons for which clothing is worn: for decoration, for protection, for modesty, and for social acceptance.
- Students will choose one historical period from the twentieth century and research the effects that this historical period had on fashion.
- Students will create a presentation on their historical period and its effects on fashion.
- Students will appreciate the art and design of Selina Cadwallader through close inspection of her *Reception Dress*.

*"The source of genius is imagination alone, the refinement of the senses that sees what others do not see, or sees them differently."*

Eugène Delacroix

## Teacher Preparation

### CLASS PERIODS REQUIRED

1 to 2 (30-50 min.) periods for Pre-Lesson Activities  
1 (50-min.) class period for Videoconference  
1 week for Post-Lesson Activities

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background Information, which contains additional details on the *Reception Dress* and the artist who created it, has been written for teachers to review before the lesson and then share with students. It is at <http://www.discoveringthestory.org/goldenage/dress/background.asp>.

### VIDEO

Share the dressmaker video with your students prior to the videoconference. The video, on the website at <http://www.discoveringthestory.org/goldenage/dress/video.asp>, depicts Museum curator, Cynthia Amneus, as she prepares the *Reception Dress* for exhibition. While she works, she speaks at length on the *Reception Dress*. This video is an excellent resource that will help to prepare students for the videoconference.

Video Duration – 6 minutes.

*"Arts education is important as a means of giving our young people a sense of civilization and the multiple forms of literacy that will give them meaningful access to our culture. It is essential for all students, not just the gifted and talented. When taught well, the arts provide children with opportunities to develop creativity, to learn the tools of communication, and to create multiple solutions to problems. The arts provide individuals a language that is universal, one that cuts across the disciplines and helps to bring more coherent meaning to our world."*

Betty Castor  
Florida Education Commissioner, 1990

## PRE- VIDEOCONFERENCE

### VOCABULARY

Definitions can be found in the Glossary on the *Discovering the Story* website at <http://www.discoveringthestory.org/goldenage/bed/glossary.asp>.

Decoration  
Protection  
Modesty  
Fashion  
Style  
Trend  
Period

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Why do people wear clothing?
- Why do we choose the clothing to wear that we do?
- What is fashion?
- What is a trend?
- How does fashion change?
- Do historical periods affect changes in fashion?

### MATERIALS

- Image of the *Reception Dress* at [http://www.cetconnect.org/discoveringthestory/goldenage/images/dress\\_full.jpg](http://www.cetconnect.org/discoveringthestory/goldenage/images/dress_full.jpg)
- Images of clothing from the same time period (downloaded from website)

### PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Review and brainstorm guiding questions with students.
- Explain to students that throughout history there have been three consistent reasons for people to wear clothing:
  - Decoration
  - Modesty
  - Protection

- Make three columns on the chalkboard. Write the following words as headings for the columns:
  - Decoration
  - Modesty
  - Protection
 And ask students to brainstorm different types of clothing that fall into each of these categories.
- Introduce the fourth purpose of clothing: **social acceptance**. Discuss with students why they wear the clothing that they do, what makes them choose a certain shirt over another. Discuss peer influence and need for social acceptance.
- Open a discussion with students on fashion and ask them what is and is not in fashion today and why. Ask students who or what they think affects fashion. Ask them if fashion reflects how a person wants to be thought of (social acceptance).
- Discuss with students how historical periods affect fashion trends.
- Show students an image of the *Reception Dress* by Selina Cadwallader. Ask students whether they think it is in fashion. Why? Why not?
- Share with students that when this dress was created it was very much in fashion and that this woman wore this dress to be accepted into her circle of friends. Ask them whether we do that today.
- Share with them other images from the same time period. Explain to students that this dress is representative of the style worn during the late nineteenth century. Introduce other fashion trends of the late nineteenth century and ask students what might have affected these trends. Read the historical background provided in this lesson with your students. Discuss with them how the events that you have discussed might have affected fashion.
- Ask students to write out one question they want to ask the Cincinnati Art Museum staff about the dress. Email the questions to [emily.holtrop@cincyart.org](mailto:emily.holtrop@cincyart.org) prior to the videoconference.

*"The true artist, like the true scientist, is a researcher using materials and techniques to dig into the truth and meaning of the world in which he himself lives; and what he creates, or better perhaps, brings back, are the objective results of his explorations. The measure of his talent, of his genius, if you will, is the richness he finds in such a life's voyage of discovery."*

*Paul Strand  
photographer*

## VIDEOCONFERENCE

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will interact with the Cincinnati Art Museum staff through a sixty-minute videoconference. Information is at <http://www.discoveringthistory.org/videoconference/>.
- Students will learn about Cincinnati history from 1850 to 1900.
- Students will use Museum objects to reinforce activities completed in preparation for this videoconference.

### CONCEPT

A videoconference conducted by the Cincinnati Art Museum staff extends student learning through emphasis on the viewing and discussion of art objects. During this videoconference with the Museum staff, students will explore Cincinnati art history and the methods and practices of many of the artists working in the city.

### SCHEDULE

- **5 minutes** Introduction to CAM staff (*This is also buffer time in case of complications*)
- **10 minutes** Brief discussion of student pre-videoconferencing activities.
- **10 minutes** Museum staff will lead an interactive discussion with students on the history of Cincinnati from 1850-1900
- **20 minutes** Museum staff will lead students in an in-depth investigation of selected Museum objects.

#### Objects Include:

- *Bedstead* by Benn Pitman, Adelaide Nourse Pitman, and Elizabeth Nourse. [http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/bedstead\\_full.jpg](http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/bedstead_full.jpg)
  - *Reception Dress* by Selina Cadwallader. This image can be found at [http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/dress\\_full.jpg](http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/dress_full.jpg)
  - *Aladdin Vase* by Maria Longworth Nichols Storer, which is available at [http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/aladdin\\_full.jpg](http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/aladdin_full.jpg)
  - *Ali Baba Vase* by M. Louise McLaughlin, which is available at [http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/alibaba\\_full.jpg](http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/alibaba_full.jpg)
  - *Vase and Dedication Medallion* by Tiffany & Co. This image is on the website at [http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/springer\\_full.jpg](http://www.discoveringthistory.org/goldenage/images/springer_full.jpg)
- **10 minutes** Questions and student sharing of art projects.
  - **5 minutes** Closing (*This is also buffer time in case of connection complications*)

## POST- VIDEOCONFERENCE

### MATERIALS

- Image of the *Reception Dress*
- Internet access
- Library access
- Paper
- Pencils

### PROCEDURE

Teacher will:

- Ensure that, upon completion of the videoconference with the Cincinnati Art Museum, students are more aware of the history of not only the *Reception Dress*, but also the city of Cincinnati.
- Review with students what they learned during the videoconference. Ask them whether it helped in their understanding of the effects of history on fashion.
- Tell the students that they are going to break up into collaborative teams, and explain that each team is going to research one historical period from the twentieth century (decade).
- Using the *Reception Dress*, model this activity for your students. You will have already spoken to them about the historical events that took place at the time the dress was created, but the review may help.
- Have students, upon completion of their research, prepare an oral presentation with accompanying visuals on their historical period. Students should be encouraged to create a demonstration board illustrating their presentation.
- Explain to students that presentations should address the following discussion question:
  - How did the historical period that we researched affect the fashion of its time?
  - What were the driving factors for this particular period's fashion and has there been a recurrence of this fashion and why?
- Give students a week to research and create their presentations. For younger grades, teacher may choose to do this as a class activity. This would be a wonderful lesson to use if you are studying a particular time period and want the students to focus on just that subject matter.

### ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

- Students actively participated in the videoconference with the Cincinnati Art Museum.
- Students chose one historical period from the twentieth century and researched the effects that this historical period had on fashion.
- Students related this information in the form of an oral presentation with accompanying visuals.



## ACADEMIC CONTENT STANDARDS

### NATIONAL STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES

#### Historical Understanding

**Standard 2:** Understands the historical perspective.

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 2:** Understands factors that contributed to changes in work, production, and the rise of a consumer culture.

**Benchmark 3:** Understands influences on urban life in America during the 1920s.

**Benchmark 4:** Understands the impact of new cultural movements on American society in the 1920s.

**Benchmark 5:** Understands how political issues in the 1920s influenced Americans.

#### Era 8 -- The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

**Standard 23:** Understands the causes of the Great Depression and how it affected American society.

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 1:** Understands influences on the national and global economy in the 1920s and 1930s.

**Benchmark 2:** Understands the impact of the Great Depression on American culture.

**Benchmark 3:** Understands how the Great Depression influenced local, state, and charitable resources from 1930-1938.

#### Era 9 -- Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)

**Standard 26:** Understands the economic boom and social transformation of post-World War II United States.

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 2:** Understands influences on the American economy after World War II.

**Benchmark 3:** Understands the socioeconomic factors of the post-World War II period in America.

#### Era 10 -- Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

**Standard 31:** Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

**Grades 9-12**

**Benchmark 4:** Understands the influence of social change and the entertainment industry in shaping views on art, gender, and culture.

**Benchmark 5:** Understands major contemporary social issues and the groups involved.

## NATIONAL STANDARDS: VISUAL ARTS

**Standard 4:** Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark 1:** Knows a variety of historical and cultural contexts regarding characteristics and purposes of works of art.

**Benchmark 2:** Knows the function and meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.

**Benchmark 3:** Understands relationships among works of art in terms of history, aesthetics, and culture.

## OHIO STANDARDS: SOCIAL STUDIES

**History:** Students use materials drawn from the diversity of human experience to analyze and interpret significant events, patterns, and themes in the history of Ohio, the United States, and the world.

### Grades 9-10

**Benchmark F:** Identifies major historical patterns in the domestic affairs of the United States during the twentieth century and explains their significance.

### Grades 11-12

**Benchmark A:** Explains patterns of historical continuity and change by challenging arguments of historical inevitability.

## OHIO STANDARDS: VISUAL ARTS

**Historical, Social, and Cultural Contexts:** Students understand the impact of visual art on history, culture, and society from which it emanates. They understand the cultural, social, and political forces that, in turn, shape visual art communication and expression. Students identify the significant contributions of visual artists to cultural heritage. They analyze the historical, cultural, social, and political contexts that influence the function and role of visual art in people's lives.

### Grades 9-12

**Benchmark A:** Explains how and why visual art forms develop in the contexts in which they were made (e.g. cultural, social, historical, and political).