

Student Worksheet: Exploring Fashion and History through the House of Redfern

Overview & Objectives

This worksheet explores the House of Redfern, a pioneering British fashion house known for its tailored womenswear, royal clients, and impact on transatlantic travel and Parisian couture. Students will analyze historical fashion trends, connect fashion to global events (such as World War I), and consider the cultural significance of clothing in shaping identity, social class, and the arts.

Main Takeaways

- The House of Redfern began in Cowes, Isle of Wight, and became a major force in Parisian couture.
- Redfern revolutionized women's tailoring, yachting suits, and traveling attire for the elite.
- It played a cultural role in WWI-era Paris by defending French fashion supremacy.
- Famous clients included Queen Alexandra and actress Lillie Langtry.
- Fashion was not just artistic—it was political, theatrical, and deeply personal.

Essay Prompts

Choose one of the following questions to respond to in a short essay (500–700 words):

1. How did the House of Redfern reflect the intersection of fashion, class, and global travel in the early 20th century?
2. In what ways did fashion houses like Redfern contribute to national identity and cultural diplomacy during wartime?
3. Compare and contrast the function of fashion in the theater versus high society. How do costumes shape perception?
4. Analyze how Redfern's focus on tailoring and silhouette reflected or influenced gender norms of its time.

Activities

- Use the GG Archives House of Redfern page to find an image of a Redfern gown. Describe the materials, colors, and silhouette. How would this gown be used—travel, evening, court, or theater?
- Research the RMS Titanic or other luxury liners. What kind of clothing would elite passengers wear onboard? How did fashion reflect their social status and the formality of ocean travel?
- Create a visual presentation or fashion mood board inspired by Redfern's designs. Include captions describing the historical significance of each piece.

Further Resources

- GG Archives Fashion Section: <https://www.ggarchives.com/Fashion/>
- Fashion History Timeline (FIT): <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/>
- The Met's Costume Institute: <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/the-costume-institute>
- Smithsonian National Museum of American History: <https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/subject/fashion>

