

History of Fashion

History of Fashion – Key Periods, Trends, and Influences

1. Pre-Historical & Ancient Civilizations (c. 10,000 BCE – 500 CE)

Era / Region	Typical Garments	Materials & Techniques	Cultural Significance
Paleolithic (hunter-gatherers)	Simple wraps, animal skins, fur cloaks	Hand-tanned hides, bone needles	Protection, status expressed through decoration (paint, beads)
Ancient Egypt (c. 3100–30 BCE)	Linen kalasiris, kilts, pleated dresses, shendyt	Flax linen, linen bleaching, weaving looms	Symbol of purity; colors denoted rank (white for priests, gold for royalty)
Mesopotamia (c. 3500–539 BCE)	Woolen skirts, shawls, embroidered vests	Wool, early tapestry, dyed with madder & indigo	Garments indicated social class; elaborate fringe and fringe-work signaled wealth
Ancient Greece (c. 800–146 BCE)	Chiton, peplos, himation	Wool, linen; draped and pinned	Emphasis on natural drape; clothing reflected philosophical ideals of modesty and proportion
Ancient Rome (c. 753 BCE–476 CE)	Tunica, stola, toga	Wool, linen, silk (later imports)	Toga as a civic symbol; colors (purple) reserved for elite

2. Medieval Period (5th – 15th Centuries)

Sub-Period	Dominant Styles	Fabric & Decoration	Socio-Political Drivers
Early Middle Ages (5th–10th)	Simple tunics, cloaks, hose	Undyed wool, linen; occasional fur trim	Feudal hierarchy; clothing signified guild or status

History of Fashion

Sub?Period	Dominant Styles	Fabric & Decoration	Socio?Political Drivers
High Middle Ages (11th?13th)	Gowns with fitted bodices, surcoats	Silk imports (Venice), brocades, embroidery (couched work)	Rise of merchant class; church regulated modesty (sumptuary laws)
Late Middle Ages (14th?15th)	Houppelande, cotehardie, farthingale beginnings	Velvet, damask, metallic threads; elaborate fur lining	Courtly display; growing influence of the Burgundian court and the “fashion capitals” of Bruges & Paris

3. Renaissance (14th – 17th?Centuries)

Region	Signature Silhouettes	Innovations
Italy	Low?cut, padded shoulders, slashed sleeves	Introduction of triple?fold pleats (pannini), use of Italian silk
France	Tight bodices, farthingale skirts, elaborate ruffs	Development of couture workshops; Louis?XI's “sumptuary edicts” to control extravagance
Spain	“Spanish style” – high collars, stiff farthingales, black velvet	Alhambra influence; black became a status color (e.g., court of Philip?II)

Key Takeaway: Fashion becomes a language of power; tailors and pattern?books (e.g., *Il Busto* by Antonio da Trento) spread styles across Europe.

4. Baroque & Rococo (17th – 18th?Cent