Fashion History

1900- Now
Thorstein Veblen
*Theory of the Leisure Class*

“Conspicuous Consumption”

Very useful in describing how fashion worked in early 1900s.
Silhouette is still pinched in the middle but outrageous padding begins to disappear: Suit-like fashions
Paul Poiret (20 April 1879, Paris, France – 30 April 1944, Paris)

Fascinated by the East
War brings utility to fashion, especially in Great Britain. Women leave home to work in factories and offices.
Masculine and utilitarian in response to the War Effort.

Athletics (tennis, swimming, and cycling especially) move women toward function over form in those settings, athletics make its mark on streetwear.
1920s bring economic boom. Urban life becomes home to “flappers” (party girls). Skirts radically rise by 1925 for most women. (Who is going to go back to the old ways?)

Silhouette is boxier and flat chested (androgynous). 1929
The slang word "flapper", describing a young woman, is sometimes supposed to refer to a young bird flapping its wings while learning to fly. However, it may derive from an earlier use in northern England to mean "teenage girl", referring to one whose hair is not yet put up and whose plaied pigtail "flapped" on her back;[2] or from an older word meaning "prostitute".[3] The slang word "flap" was used for a young prostitute as early as 1631.[4] By the 1890s, the word "flapper" was emerging in England as popular slang both for a very young prostitute,[5][6] and in a more general – and less derogatory sense – of any lively mid-teenage girl.[7]
Coco Chanel learns from wealthy men how to fashion form with function comfortably.

Jersey knits, costume jewelry, looser fit

Coco Chanel
1930s: Hemlines drop down again – but not to floor. Silhouette softens. This is the decade of the Great Depression.
Street fashion: A nod to glamour in the stole.

New influence: Hollywood (escapism!)
Influence of the entertainment world
Cab Calloway in a “zoot suit.”
Women: Broader shoulders but softer drape. Men: Broader shoulders and elongated torso.
New kinds of fashion influencers:
Those who can get away with trousers in public!
Why are these women wearing trousers?

WWII: Here we go again.
Skirt shortens a bit and the overall look is functional and somber. Hats are where the average woman can express herself. Shoulder bags are more popular.
Tired of war time and war rations, women go NUTS for The New Look: Full bust and hips, cinched waist accomplished with restrictive undergarments. Coco Chanel is NOT happy.

Christian Dior’s New Look, 1947

Feminine, glamorous, in tune to new and better times.
1950s are time of economic boom.
The hourglass silhouette remains the guiding standard. Hair is coiffed and makeup becomes more popular.

Men’s suiting is fuller and broad shouldered.
The rise of Teenage Subculture

Blue jeans begin to catch on but not for everyone and not everywhere.
The 60s begin with Jackie

Increased domestic activity means that fashions can be copied with "easy to use" patterns at home.
Mary Quant, London Fashion, and the demise of Haute Couture, mid 1960s
A new thing to worry about: “A woman is only as young as her knees.”
1969: Workwear for working women

Leaner, more youthful styles carry over into the 1970s.
American Hippy influence
Menswear is relaxed and easy (relative to before).
Youth subculture becomes muse for many more.
New kind of glamour (helped along on the dance floor). Young, urban men dress just a little less soberly.
Workwear for women gets a little more serious as more women work in professional settings.
1985: Princess Diana is a fashion leader in the 80s.
Donna Karan answers women’s plea for more relaxed and understated professional wear.
1980s: Brook Shields for Calvin Klein shows American young women that “designer” jeans are a staple in the wardrobe.

Cindy Crawford for Sears
14A.B  Sporty partners of golden linen. The wrap-jacket is trimmed with graphic buttons off polished wood. The pleated trousers have zip front and side pockets. Both lined. Made in the USA from imported fabric Sizes 4-14. From Mail Order only.
14A. Jacket, $94.00
14B. Trousers, $120.00.

Grunge of early 1990s.

Broad shouldered and bright for work.
Late 1990s and early 2000s and new muses for fashion. (Glamour, Hollywood, and the quest for sexiness.)

Rise of “Fast Fashion.”
1990s is the rise of urban street wear and musical influence on fashion.
Now: Continued casual, more fitted, athletic apparel for most occasions.
More than ever, “fashion” means clothing, décor, and lifestyle. It’s a whole package.
Shhhhh! On a sheet of paper, write the words, ideas, images, and values which come to mind for each photograph.
The Language of Fashion

In your small group, discuss the words, ideas, images, and values which come to mind for each image.