

Most people like to think they are individualists and simply wear whatever they like. Few people will admit to being slaves to fashion. However, we are not just talking of the expensive haute couture of the Paris and Milan fashion houses, which not many people can afford anyway. We are talking of fashions and trends in everyday clothes. We say that we wear jeans and sweaters, because they are cheap and practical, but isn't it true that our jeans and sweaters tend to be the same as everyone else wears? Doesn't that mean that we like to be trendy? Of course, the big chain stores, to some extent, dictate what we wear, but they always offer a choice, which extends beyond clothes to make-up, personal ornaments (men wear earrings too nowadays) and hair styles. It is easy to declare that we do not slavishly follow the dictates of fashion, but aren't we all conformists in the heart?

Every fashion goes through three stages. At first it is different; it may be new and exciting, shocking or surprising. Then it becomes popular, and the original idea is imitated. Finally it becomes boring and out of date as a new fashion starts.

Being fashionable says something about you. It means that you are up to date in other ways. Some changes in clothes have been practical and reflect the different way that we live. But fashion is about having fun and being up to date. Today fashion is a big industry. When fashion shocks, it is usually more than clothes that are changing. In the 1920s people were shocked when women cut their hair short and wore short skirts. People were shocked when women started to wear trousers to work in the early 1970s.

At the beginning of the twentieth century very young girls and boys all wore dresses and had long, sometimes curly, hair. The big change started in the late 1950s when teenagers adopted blue jeans and T-shirts. A whole range of clothes was made for young people in the 1960s and after. Fashion became colourful and exciting, changed fast and was designed for teenagers. Later in the 1970s many young people shocked and frightened the older generation. Their jeans were torn, they wore several earrings, put chains on their jackets and had spiky, coloured hair. They were seen rude and aggressive, so for many people such clothes meant "here is an ugly, rude person". They were punks.

Men's clothes have changed a lot. In the sixteenth century gentlemen's clothes were brightly coloured, and the cloth was patterned and embroidered. In the seventeenth century a wealthy man had silver buckles on his shoes and lace at the end of his sleeves. He could be fashionable because he was rich. However, not every fashion started with the wealthy. Trousers were worn by working men in the eighteenth century, but by the beginning of the nineteenth century they were also worn by fashionable men.

Before the twentieth century European women wore long skirts or dresses. Looking at these dresses, we notice that there is a lot of beautiful embroidery, lace and decorative work including gold thread and pearls.

After the First World War women's fashion changed much more than men's. In the 1920s in Europe many young women began to wear shorter skirts and very short hair. After the Second World War women's fashion has continued to change rapidly.

For most British people fashion is not very important. The British don't think about it very much. Even the richest and most important people often wear casual clothes. Only a very few can afford the clothes by Jean Muir or the Emanuels. Most people go down to the nearest shopping street and buy something from a chain store. The most popular of these stores, with a shop in every town in the country, is Marks & Spencer. Twenty per cent of all the clothes the British buy come from M & S.



Vocabulary

haute couture — от кутюр	generation — поколение
to afford — позволять себе	torn — поношенный
trends — тенденции	earrings — серьги
trendy — сверхмодный	spiky — торчащие в разные стороны
latest fashion — последняя мода	embroidery — вышивка
make-up — макияж	lace — кружево
personal ornaments — украшения	thread — нить
out of date — несовременный	pearl — жемчуг
to be up to date — быть современным	casual — повседневный
to shock — шокировать	chain store — однотипные магазины одной фирмы
curly — кудрявый	