



COLLECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

TEACHERS GUIDE & RESOURCES

HAT TIP: Addressing the Past Through Millinery

PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL
AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Hat Tip: [Ad]dressing the Past Through Millinery

In recognition of the women's suffrage centennial, Hat Tip analyzes over a century of women's fashion. More specifically, this packet examines hats and headwear to better understand women's changing roles in Virginian and American society. From business owner to college student, Hat Tip uses primary sources such as photographs and objects to [ad]dress the past.

READING AND ANALYZING

This primary source packet is designed to help familiarize students with a variety of primary source materials from the Virginia Museum of History and Culture (VMHC). The sources will expose students to a variety of collection materials, including broadsides, postcards, political buttons, and protest signs. The source material in this packet, and the corresponding guidelines, will provide an avenue for integrating museum collections into the classroom.

BACKGROUND | *Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia*

Cultural institutions across the country are spending 2020 celebrating women's political activism since the passing of the 19th amendment in 1920. For their part, the VMHC is opening a new exhibit, *Agents of Change: Female Activism in Virginia from Women's Suffrage to Today*, in March 2020. The museum is also beginning collections campaigns to better represent female change makers, as well as introducing new education programs and resources about women's history.

BACKGROUND | Primary Source Material

Millinery refers to the designing and selling of women's hats. Easily overlooked as simple accessories, hats can reveal details about the political and social climate of specific periods of history. This packet analyzes a variety of hats from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. For example, students can compare fashionable hats worn by upper-class activists in the early 1900s with handmade knit-caps associated with contemporary activists. Primary sources like photographs, invoices, and hats themselves will aid students in their investigation of the past. Students will look at millinery from a variety of economic perspective as well. This packet encourages them to think about who made and bought specific hats. Students will overall understand each hat's importance to its respective moment in time.

LIST OF SOURCES

Invoice, Annie L. Stokes, 1905	Photographic print, Women in a Textile Factory, Frederick Bell, Early 20th century	Hat, Pink "Pussyhat," Ryan Norris, 2017
Glass plate negative, Nora Houston, Walter Washington Foster, Early 20th century	Winter WAVES hat, Marianna Fricke Worley, 1940s	Mortarboard, Ginai Seabron, 2018

OVERALL DISCUSSION AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

OBSERVE

1. What do you notice first?
2. Find something small but interesting.
3. What do you notice that you didn't expect? What do you notice that you can't explain?
What do you notice now that you didn't earlier?

REFLECT

1. Where do you think this came from?
2. Why do you think somebody made this? What do you think was happening when this was made?
3. Who do you think was the audience for this item?
4. What tool was used to create this?
5. Why do you think this item is important?
6. If someone made this today, what would be different?
7. What can you learn from examining this?

QUESTION

1. What do you wonder about...who? what? when? Where? Why? How?

CONTEXT AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EACH SOURCE

Invoice, Annie L. Stokes, 1905

VMHC Object Number: 2003.132.253

While women lacked the vote in the early 1900s, some women forged their autonomy through business. Mrs. Bourdett's millinery shop dates to at least 1886, where her hat-making business was featured in a copy of *Sketch Book of Portsmouth, Va: Its People and Its Trade*. By 1905, the business had been taken over by Annie L. Stokes, who advertised herself as successor to Mrs. Bourdett. Adjusted for inflation, the \$5.25 invoice for Mrs. Cassell in 1905 would cost over \$150 in 2020.

Many fashionable women in the Gilded Age wore large over-sized hats, such as those worn by Rose DeWitt Bukaterin the 1997 film *Titanic*. Only the most well-to-do women could afford ornate hats. Their position in society allowed them to wear the most *en vogue* designs, especially those that obstructed movement. Milliners frequently accessorized their products; as the invoice notes, Stokes's business specialized in feathers, flowers, and ribbons.

1. What types of technology do you think were used to make hats in the turn of the century?
2. How would that technology change in the 1920s and 1930s?
3. In what ways do you think it was difficult for women to open their own businesses? Why?

Glass plate negative, Nora Houston, Walter Washington Foster, Early 20th century

VMHC Object Number: 1991.1.14184

Nora Houston is perhaps best known for her contributions to the women's suffrage movement in Virginia. She, along with friend and fellow artist Adèle Clark, helped form the Equal Suffrage League of Virginia. Both women also advocated for African American's right to vote. This is notable in a time of blatant racism and Jim Crow laws in the South, even within the women's suffrage movement. Despite this, Houston and Clark helped register African Americans to vote. Houston continued to work towards racial equality through the Richmond Commission on Interracial Cooperation.

The VMHC has a large collection of glass plate negatives from the Foster Collection, most taken in the early 20th century. Houston's picture reflects changing styles of headwear. While large, opulent hats were popular in the turn of the century, smaller hats with flat brims became more popular in the 1910s. Her dark hat with feathers and hat pin is a fashionable reminder of Houston's connections to Richmond's wealthier and well-connected families.

1. Why would it be helpful for Suffragists like Houston to be connected to wealthy families in Richmond?
2. Consider the social structure in the South. Why would some Suffragists work against African American women's suffrage?
3. What kinds of obstacles to voting would African American women face after getting the right to vote in 1920?

Photographic print, *Women in a Textile Factory*, Frederick Bell, Early 20th century

VMHC Object Number: 2000.186.269

The 1920 census revealed that, for the first time, more Americans were living in urban areas than rural ones. In Virginia, however, this historic transition did not occur for another thirty years; it was not until 1950 that the census recorded that most Virginians lived in cities and towns. But the process of urbanization had been occurring for centuries. Petersburg saw a growth of cotton factories in the 1830s. By 1860, Richmond, Petersburg, Norfolk, Alexandria, and Wheeling all had populations greater than 30,000. After the Civil War, city populations started to grow. Freedmen migrated to urban areas looking for greater opportunity. Tobacco manufacturing, flour and textile milling, and the processing of agricultural products remained the most important urban activities.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels co-wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 to address how capitalism and industrialization worked together to exploit workers. This schism between those who labored and those who profited from labor increased in the twentieth century. During the Industrial Revolution, workers across the country were often separated from the products of their labor; that is, many could not afford the items they manufactured. The Industrial Revolution also saw a rise in women and children working in factories, like these women operating machines in a Petersburg factory, despite unsafe working conditions. Social activists sought labor reforms such as eliminating child labor and mandating safety precautions and procedures. In fact, many Suffragists began their activism careers with labor reforms.

1. Why did factories in the Industrialization Revolution have unsafe working conditions?
2. What about Virginia's geography and history would support a large amount of cotton factories?
3. Describe the hazards to women and children who worked in factories. Hint: pay attention to the clothing of women in the photograph.

Winter WAVES hat, Marianna Fricke Worley, 1940s

VMHC Object Number: 1999.126.1.4

American women throughout WWII stepped into roles typically held by men, like in manufacturing and military service. First established in July 1942, WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) was the women's branch of the United States Naval Reserve. President Theodore Roosevelt helped create WAVES to send more able-bodied men to fight in the Navy. Women were intended to replace them on the home front— women in WAVES did not fight on the front lines. Initially, only white women between the ages of 20 and 40 could enlist. African American women could join WAVES after 1944.

Like their male counterparts, women in WAVES wore uniforms during their service. The WAVES uniforms were created by influential *haute couture* designer Mainbocher. He wanted women to look both professional and feminine. His clothing reflects the traditions of the Navy, like in their dress blue uniforms, along with flattering silhouettes. One of the WAVES outfits consisted of a navy-blue skirt and jacket combination, along with heeled shoes. Winter uniforms were made from wool and consisted of a hat like this one. The US Navy first wore garrison caps, or covers, during WWII. This was worn by Richmond resident Marianna Fricke Worley from November 1944 to June 1946.

1. Why would Mainbocher want women to look feminine while working in a male-dominated field like the armed forces?

2. This WAVES hat is like the one worn by men in the Navy. What does this say about the traditions of the Navy, in terms of expectations and professionalism?
3. Why would WAVES want to have a well-known designer for their uniforms?

Hat, Pink "Pussyhat," Ryan Norris, 2017

VMHC Object Number: 2017.22

The 2017 Women's March, held in Washington, D.C., as well as similar marches across the world, was largely seen as a response to the 2016 election of President Donald Trump. So-called "pussyhats" were worn at the 2017 march and are largely symbolic of the contemporary feminist movement. It is estimated that over 4.6 million people attended women's marches across the United States alone. The knitting pattern was created by screenwriter Krista Suh and design architect Jayna Zweiman. They wanted a design that could be replicated by knitters across a variety of skill levels. The pink cat-ear hat design was created in reference to a vulgar comment made by Trump in 2005. The creators wanted to empower women to reclaim a crude word and gain empowerment from it. Both women wanted a visible way for protestors to show support for socially progressive issues. The free pattern was published online and widely shared across the world. This hat was hand-knit by Ryan Norris and worn by Alyssa Murray.

1. Why do you think Suh and Zweiman chose pink yarn for their hats?
2. Describe the impact that the internet had on both the Women's Marches and the "pussyhats."
3. Why do you think the pattern creators chose to share their pattern for free? Why didn't they sell hats for a profit?

Mortarboard, Ginai Seabron, 2018

VMHC Object Number: 2019.3.1

In 2018, Ginai Seabron became the first African American woman to graduate college with a degree in Nanoscience. She attended Virginia Tech from 2014 to 2018. Seabron grew up in Richmond, Virginia, and attended Community High School, a college preparatory alternative high school. She was one of 20 graduating seniors in the nanoscience major. She held a variety of leadership positions at Tech, including being the president of the Black Organizations Council, a resident advisor, and a teaching assistant.

The tradition of wearing mortarboards and graduation robes ("caps and gowns") dates back Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Originally, universities were focused around religion, and their graduates' regalia was a nod to the clergy. Today, college students often embellish their caps to show off their creativity. Many will illustrate their majors, desired careers, or other defining features from their college experience. Seabron decorated hers with the periodic table, glitter stickers, and her face with black pompoms as hair.

1. What barriers have traditionally kept African American women and other women of color from STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields?
2. Why would museums like the VMHC want to collect a mortarboard like this?
3. Besides demonstrating their creativity, why would students want to decorate their graduation caps? What does it show about the value of a higher education?

PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIAL

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Invoice, Annie L. Stokes, 1905

VMHC Object Number: 2003.132.253

Portsmouth, Va., May 12 1905	
Mrs Cassell	
Bought of ANNIE L. STOKES,	
SUCCESSOR TO MRS. E. BOURDETT.	
FASHIONABLE • MILLINER.	
Dealer in Notions, Feathers, Flowers, Ribbons, &c., &c.	
NO. 406 CRAWFORD STREET.	
Amt of bill	5.25
Paid	
Annie L Stokes	

Portsmouth, Va., May 12 1905

Mrs. Cassell

Bought of Annie L.Stokes,
Successor to Mrs. E Bourdett

Fashionable Milliner,
Dealer in Notions, Feathers, Flowers, Ribbons, &c., &c.

No. 406 Crawford Street

Amt of bill

5.25

Paid

Annie L. Stokes

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Glass plate negative, Nora Houston, Walter Washington Foster, Early 20th century

VMHC Object Number: 1991.1.14184



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Photographic print, Women in a Textile Factory, Frederick Bell, Early 20th century

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Winter WAVE hat, Marianna Fricke Worley, 1940s

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Hat, Pink "Pussyhat," Ryan Norris, 2017

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Mortarboard, Ginai Seabron, 2018

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CREDITS

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IMAGE CREDITS

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