

STEAM Education Pack 5

Dressing Up Tips

Look in books and on the internet to get some ideas of how boys and girls dressed during WW2.

The Background

There were many shortages. Factories had closed because men working in them had gone to fight in the war or had been moved into more important war work. Factories were not allowed to make anything that was not essential for the war effort e.g. they were converted to production of armaments and weapons. Metal and wood were used for war supplies, not for toys and fancy stuff. Food shortages became a big issue by 1941 as enemy u-boats were sinking merchant vessels. Things coming from other countries weren't getting here.

Enemy bomb raids targeted docks, factories and warehouses. Clothes and food ration books were issued to everyone so that even if people had lots of money they could only buy their fair share. So clothes, toys, luxuries (like make up) and household items were increasingly unavailable in shops. The concept of 'Making do and Mending' became a government headed policy and many posters and leaflets were produced to help people re-use and repair. Nothing was to be wasted and ingenuity and creativity was encouraged.

Unlike today, people would have had many practical skills. Boys were taught woodwork and metalwork in school so they could make and repair basic household objects. Girls would be taught sewing, knitting, crocheting, darning and embroidery in school so would be undaunted at the prospect of making clothes. The average family would not have much spare money anyway and it would have been far cheaper to make clothes than buy them. There were no cheap Primark or Tesco superstores to buy clothes!

Lots of clothes would have been handknitted. Old knitted garments were unravelled and reknitted (one reason there were so many striped and fairisle garments during the War). Mothers would have been busy sewing, embroidering, lace making, crocheting and tatting; clothes would not have been thrown away, but darned and patched and finally made into

something else e.g. rag rugs and dusters. 'Hand me downs' passed through the family from older to younger children, so children's clothes seldom fitted them properly.

Some Ideas

Girls

- Buckled or lace up shoes in black or brown
- White knee or ankle socks
- Knee length cotton dress – patterned or plain
- White or patterned blouse buttoned up to the neck
- Knee length skirt in grey, black, navy, flowered print or a kilt
- Cardigan (girls would not have worn jumpers)
- Beret or woolly hat
- Hair worn in two bunches or two plaits (secured with ribbon) or ribbon worn around the head 'Alice band' style or hair slides with a ribbon bow attached

Boys

- Buckled or lace up shoes in black or brown
- Grey or black knee socks
- Grey, black or brown knee length shorts with braces
- Grey, black or brown trousers with braces
- White, light grey or light blue, striped or checked long sleeved shirt buttoned up to the neck
- A tie, plain, checked or striped
- V necked long sleeve or sleeveless pullover or cardigan
- Blazer in brown, burgundy, navy, black, stripes or checked
- School or cricket style cap or flat cap

Try to avoid

- Modern fabrics and fastenings like denim, Lycra and Velcro
- Modern logos and images
- Sportswear of any kind, including trainers and baseball caps
- T shirts and sweat shirts
- Watches, jewellery including rings and earrings, scrunchies and other modern hair accessories