

# Educator Guide

*French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*  
September 5, 2019–January 5, 2020

25<sup>YEARS</sup> Bard  
Graduate  
Center  
CHALLENGING THINGS, ADVANCING INQUIRY

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[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Cover image: Maurice-Louis Branger. Seamstresses from the Jenny couture house at 70, avenue des Champs Élysées on strike for their right to higher wages and time off on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, May 18, 1917. Silver gelatin print. © Maurice-Louis Branger / Roger-Viollet, RV-3831-8.

Left: Belle Jardinière. U.S. military nurse's uniform, ca. 1916. Wool twill. Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Gift of Margaret Larson, 84.55.1.

# How to use this Educator Guide

This educator guide is a toolkit for teachers to delve deeply into themes presented by our fall exhibition, *French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*. We invite you to use the images, information, and prompts we've prepared in this guide with your students in the classroom, so that they will look at unfamiliar objects closely, think critically about their context, and build personal connections to the issues that they raise. Feel free to take the questions and activities as points of departure, and adapt them to your needs. If you do use this guide, please share your experiences with us! Contact us at: [public.programs@bgc.bard.edu](mailto:public.programs@bgc.bard.edu).

We look forward to welcoming you and your students to Bard Graduate Center Gallery this fall.



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)  
Delivery woman for Printemps department store, Paris. "The new professions for women since the war," *Excelsior*, June 24, 1917. Silver gelatin print. © Excelsior-L'Équipe / Roger-Viollet, RV-72195-59.

# Gallery Education at Bard Graduate Center

## MISSION

Bard Graduate Center is a catalyst for deep reflection with objects; we build dialogue and imagine new ways of seeing.

## VISION

Bard Graduate Center is committed to forming the next generation of museum educators, curators, and historians, who see deeply, think critically, and build freely.

## VALUES

### See Deeply

We believe in the power of careful observation, deduction, and research. We also acknowledge that audiences bring a wealth of personal knowledge, history, and insight to their relationship to objects.

### Think Critically

We value serious, disciplined thinking that is clear, open-minded, and informed by evidence. We want audiences to feel confident about drawing meaning from objects, familiar and unfamiliar. We believe in open dialogue and big questions.

### Build Freely

We provide opportunities for people to build relationships and share insights. We hope to build an intergenerational movement of curators, scholars, historians, and visitors, in order to create democratic museums. We believe by reimagining the past we can build an equitable future.



# About the Exhibition

*French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*  
September 5, 2019–January 5, 2020

Explore themes of identity, stereotypes and the media, and changing social norms with your students in *French Fashion, Women, and the First World War*. Consider the connection between fashion and social upheaval, and consider what contemporary dress says about today's identities and priorities.

Between 1914 and 1918, women's fashion reflected the upheaval of French society. Women of all social classes adapted their garments to a new lifestyle and new roles. Dress acquired a new practicality with the introduction of pockets, skirt-suits, and "sportswear" textiles like jersey. French women displayed their patriotism and nationalism through their clothing, honoring soldiers on the war front and at home on leave. In mourning, women remained elegant despite their pain, in memory of those who had fallen in the line of duty.

At the same time, fashion was a lightning rod for wartime anxiety: soldiers took note of what women wore. Fashions were commented upon, judged, and caricatured from the trenches. Fashion was both a vanity for which the soldier was nostalgic and a frivolity deemed incompatible with the war. French women were heralded for contributing to the war effort, but the clothes they wore while doing so provoked debates, particularly when those clothes were seen as being too "masculine" or "militaristic."

This exhibition invites visitors to discover essential aspects of the "war culture," namely fashion, clothing, and textiles, as well as the systems for publicizing these industries. Objects on view, from advertising posters, fashion plates, and photographs, to articles of women's clothing and accessories, stand in conversation with military uniforms to reveal the close dialogue between the home front and the war front, between the feminine and the masculine.

Despite the social changes that occurred during the course of the First World War in France, French women did not win the right to vote until 1944. After presenting the extent to which women's fashions indicated seismic shifts in the country's social fabric, the exhibition asks, can fashion really help change society?

# Deepen the Conversation

Use these images from *French Fashion, Women and the First World War* and the following questions as entry points for students preparing for a visit to Bard Graduate Center, as a jumping off point for a new unit, or a follow-up conversation following your visit.

## LESSON 1: IDENTITY

While so many French men were fighting in World War I, French women began working in jobs that had traditionally been exclusively men's work, like agriculture and factory work. They also became nurses and ambulance drivers on or near the front. Finding their prewar clothing too restrictive or sometimes even dangerous for their new environments, women began altering their clothes, and eventually were issued new uniforms by their employers. Fashion designers, or *couturiers*, incorporated functional adaptations like pocketed skirts and aprons into women's clothing, as well as military-inspired details like sailor collars and side caps. While women were applauded for contributing to the war effort there was anxiety that these new roles, represented by the new, more functional fashion styles, would empower women too much, threatening the social order.



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)  
Anor Marvel Bertuleit, U.S. Army Nurse  
Corps, ca. 1918. Silver gelatin print.  
Private collection.





[\[click image to enlarge\]](#) Factory workers on the rue de Tolbiac, Paris, March 1915. Silver gelatin print. © Préfecture de Police, Service de l'Identité judiciaire / BHVP / Roger-Viollet,



### See Deeply

- Look closely at the examples of women's pre-war and wartime clothing in this section.
- What details do you notice about the clothing each woman is wearing?
- How do they differ?

### Think Critically

- What might a person wearing these outfits be dressed to do?
- What kinds of movements or jobs might they be able, or unable, to do in these clothes?

### Build Freely

- How do you express yourself through your clothes?
- Do your clothes send a message about yourself to others? What does your appearance say about your identity?
- How might fashion be a form of self-care, self-defense, or self-determination?



LE SOLEIL DANS LE JARDIN  
Robe d'après-midi de Dœuillet

Gazette du Bon Ton. — N° 3



Mai 1914. — Pl. 51

[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

André-Edouard Marty, "The Sun in the Garden: Afternoon dress by Dœuillet," *La Gazette du Bon Ton*, May 1914. Pochoir. © Bibliothèque Forney / Roger-Viollet, RV-157813-10.



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Conductor for a trolley company, Paris. "The new professions for women since the war," *Excelsior*, June 24, 1917. Silver gelatin print. © Excelsior-L'Équipe / Roger-Viollet, RV-72195-56.



## LESSON 2: STEREOTYPES AND THE MEDIA

During World War I, social commentary in satirical French newspapers took aim at women's new roles through their clothing. Military-inspired dress was criticized for being too masculine, mocking self-sacrificing soldiers, or being too friendly to enemy countries' military uniforms. Meanwhile, more feminine fashions were denounced as extravagant and frivolous during a time of scarcity and sacrifice. Women's clothing and their wearers were caricatured throughout the duration of the war. As the role of women in French society was changing, satirical publications used fashion to highlight, and perhaps intensify, the anxieties of those defending the old social order.



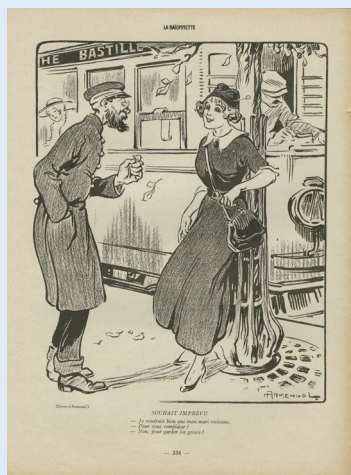
[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Translation: "Restrictions and Privations"

-- "And to think that the Government didn't think of creating a ration card for hats!"

-- "Don't be silly; they're already so small that it's like rationing."

Fabian Fabiano. "Restrictions, Shortages," *Le Rire Rouge*, May 26, 1917. Halftone. Private collection.



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Translation: "Unexpected Wish"

-- "I would like my husband to return."

-- "To replace you?"

-- "No, to babysit the kids!"

Henri Armengol. "Souhait Imprévu," a cartoon published in the satirical magazine *La Baïonnette*, which was founded during the war (1915-20) and published thematic issues. Women workers were often satirized for their supposedly masculine behavior, as in this example. *La Baïonnette*, November 18, 1915. Private collection.



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Fabian Fabiano. Caricature of a woman wearing German fashions. "Élégances Berlinoises," *La Baïonnette*, August 12, 1915. © Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand / Roger-Viollet RV-157096-1.

### See Deeply

Look closely at these cartoons from *La Baïonnette* and *Le Rire Rouge*, satirical magazines published in France during WWI.

- What's happening in these images?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What stands out to you about the women's clothes?

### Think Critically

- How do the cartoons' authors use clothing to convey their opinions and anxieties about women's roles?
- How do the captions and the images combine to express a sentiment?

### Build Freely

- Imagine you are the target of these cartoons. How might these commentaries make you feel?
- In what ways does our society, today, judge people based on the way they look or the clothes they wear?
- How might these preconceived notions or stereotypes affect the people they target? How might they affect the way others think about them?
- Has there been a time you felt you were judged based on your appearance? What was that experience like?





[\[click image to enlarge\]](#) Agence Rol. Suffragette protest at the Tuileries, Paris. Notable writer and feminist Séverine (née Caroline Rémy de Guebhard) at the head of the procession, facing the statue of Condorcet, July 5, 1914. Silver gelatin print. © Agence Rol / Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand / Roger-Viollet RV-75494-25.



## LESSON 3: CHANGING SOCIAL NORMS

As their roles expanded beyond the home during World War I, French women demanded improved working conditions, shorter hours, and higher wages. From strikes by *midinettes* (couture workers) and *dactylos* (typists) to protests for suffrage, many women sought expanded rights and acknowledgement of their contributions to society. At the end of the war, however, the French government and press expected society to revert to pre-war social norms. Government-sponsored posters, like the one on the right, called for women to return to the home to help rebuild the French Republic by tending to their domestic and conjugal responsibilities. Newspaper cartoons disparaged fashionable, “independent” women, celebrating the conventional maternal role as women’s proper and natural place. While some change was achieved, women did not receive the right to vote in France until 1944.



[click image to enlarge]

Translation: New Era, New Suffrage  
Women Must Vote  
in order

- to avoid war
- protect childhood
- improve hygiene
- eliminate slums
- curb immorality
- reform the Civil Code
- increase the standard of living
- combat alcoholism and infectious diseases

Everyone should join a feminist group in order to demand voting rights for women.

Society for the Betterment of Women and the Defense of Women's Rights

Minimum dues  
5 francs per year

Maurice Barbey. Poster for the Society for the Improvement of the Status of Women and the Demand for Women's Rights, ca. 1925-28. © Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand / Roger-Viollet, RV-54759-5.



[click image to enlarge]

Translation: NATIONAL DAY FOR MOTHERS OF LARGE FAMILIES

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC

FRANCE NEEDS CHILDREN. WE MUST HONOR LARGE FAMILIES. WE MUST HELP THOSE IN NEED: IT IS OUR DUTY, IT IS OUR OBLIGATION. HENCEFORTH FRANCE WILL BE STRONG, PROSPEROUS, AND TRIUMPHANT. WE ALL MUST PROVIDE FOR THE CHILDREN OF FRANCE

Poster for the "National Day for Mothers of Large Families." ca. 1920. Lithograph. © BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-101749-2.

### See Deeply

- Look carefully at the posters and photos in this section. What do you notice?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can you find?

### Think Critically

- Despite the fact that women did not win the vote in France until 1944, these public efforts are signs of progress. Do you agree or disagree? Support your argument.

### Build Freely

- Who works towards social change?
- Why might people try to stop social change?
- What tools and strategies are used to work toward or against social change?
- How does social change come about? What are obstacles to it?
- What does equality mean to you?

# Activities

Clothing and fashion is great inspiration for creative thinking. Use these writing and art making activities as avenues of exploration of identity and social issues.

## CLOTHING POETRY (1-12 GRADE)

### Discuss

- Identify a favorite article of clothing.
- What do you like most about it?
- What do you do when you wear it?
- How do you feel when you wear it?
- If your clothing could talk, what would it say?

### Activity

- **1st–3rd grade:** Brainstorm words that come to mind when you think about your favorite clothing. Write each word on a different post-it. Share your words with your group, and together arrange the group's words into a list poem.
- **3rd–12th grade:** Think about your favorite piece of clothing and brainstorm a noun, a verb, and an adjective that you associate with that clothing. Write each word on its own post-it note. In groups of 3–6 students, write a poem by arranging all the words in a creative way. Challenge: you can't add or subtract any words!
- **5th–12th grade:** Using words from the questions above, [write a haiku](#) about your favorite clothing.
- **Allstudents:** Poetry Slam! Share your poems with your classmates. Invite the audience to share words of appreciation with the poets.



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Woman's boots stamped with a "National Fashion" ("Mode Nationale") label on the sole, 1914–18. Leather. Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 53 730B. © MAD, Paris / Christophe Dellière



## SOCIAL CHANGE FOUND POETRY (4-12 GRADE)

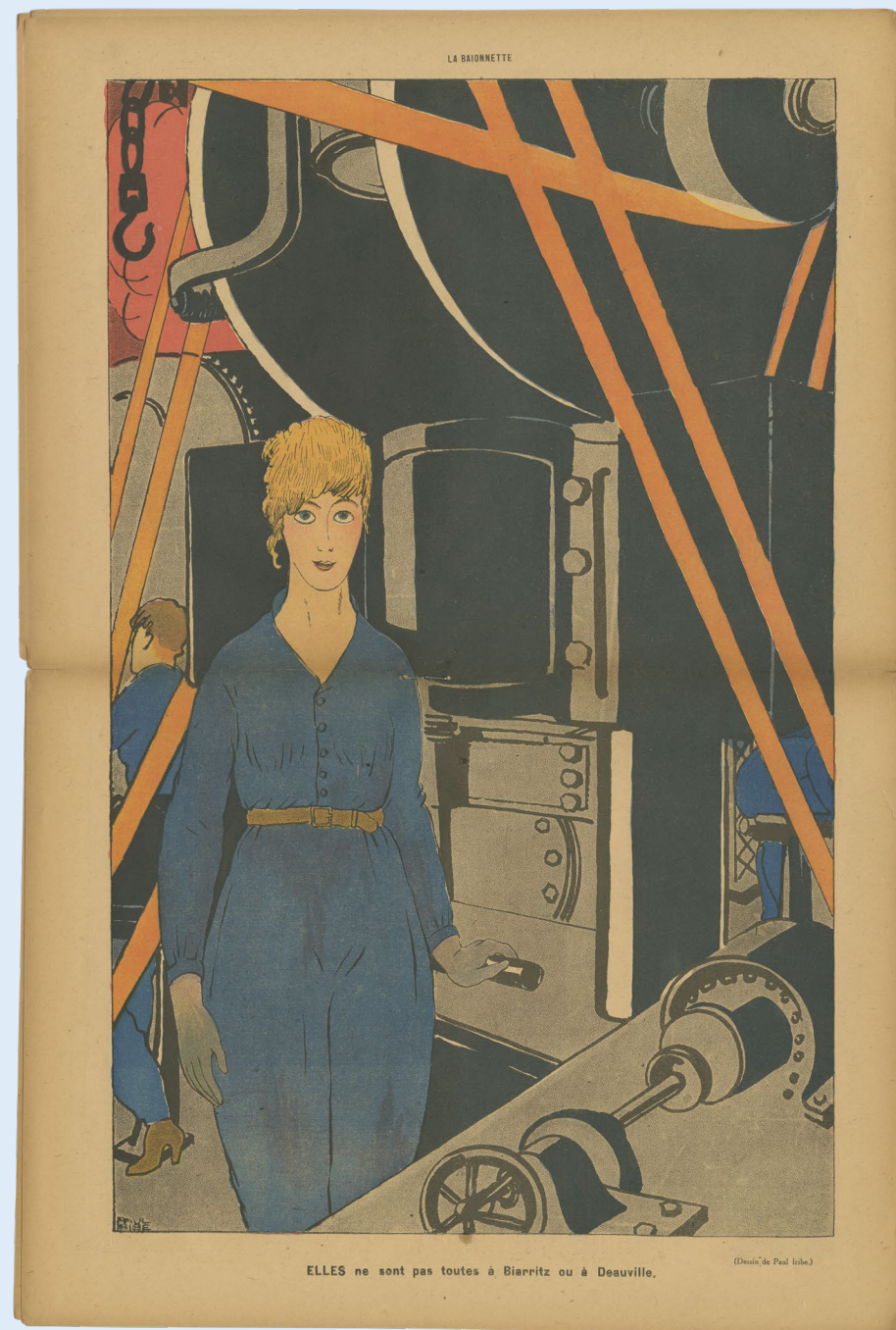
- Individually or in groups, students read an excerpt from [Elizabeth Cady Stanton's Seneca Falls Keynote Address](#), [Shirley Chisholm's The Black Woman in Contemporary America](#), or [Alicia Garza's Why Black Lives Matter speech](#).
- Choose words and phrases from the passage that stand out to you. Cut them out!
- Rearrange your cut-out words and phrases to compose your own poem that shares your thoughts on the original document's subject.
- Share out: Poetry Slam! Read your found poetry to your classmates and parents.

## INSIDE-OUT T-SHIRTS (K-12 GRADE)

- Think about an element of your identity that can't be seen from the outside - an ability, an interest, an inner strength. Do you love to play the piano? Are you passionate about climate change?
- Design a symbol of your chosen identity element and draw it on iron-on transfer paper. (See Art Materials for sources.)
- Bring in a light-colored t-shirt from home and iron your identity symbol onto your shirt!
- Fashion show! Share your identity element with your classmates in a show-and-tell style fashion show.

[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Paul Iribe. Illustration of a woman working in a factory, "Not all of them are in Biarritz or Deauville." *La Baionette*, October 4, 1917. Private collection.





## PROTEST POSTERS (K-12 GRADE)

Look at examples of protest posters of French women fighting for suffrage and better working conditions, and examples of contemporary protest posters.

### Discuss

- What issues do these posters address? What makes an issue important enough to protest?
- How do the design, language, and graphics of these posters effectively convey the intended message?
- What issues are you passionate about?

### Activity

- Identify an issue you'd like to bring attention to. Write a list of words, phrases, and images related to the issue.
- Design a poster that conveys your stance on your chosen issue.
- Share out: in groups, present your poster to your classmates. Share your reasons for including the words and images in your poster.

## CLOTHING WITH A MESSAGE (5-12 GRADE)

- Look at examples of *French Fashion* women's work clothes, American woman's suffrage clothing past and present (see Resources for links), [southern African textile design](#), contemporary clothing, and [jumpsuits from The Rational Dress Society](#). Discuss what each says about the people who wear it. How does clothing set us apart from each other? How can clothing be something that helps us identify each other? What is the purpose of a uniform?
- With a partner, choose an issue or cause that's important to you. Write a short list of words that you associate with it. Discuss how those associations might be represented visually through shapes, colors, etc.
- Use fabric, notions like ribbons and buttons, tissue paper, butcher paper, markers, and pipe cleaners to create an article of clothing you can wear that would make your cause known to others.
- Together, write a short paragraph explaining your design.
- Share out: create a "Clothing with a Message" fashion show! One student models their creation while their partner reads the paragraph explaining the intention and details of the wearable while they're on the catwalk!

[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Jeanne Lanvin. "Feuille Morte" dress, summer 1914. Silk. © Patrimoine Lanvin, Paris.

# Resources

Deepen your students' knowledge with these resources on topics including fashion, women's suffrage, and civil rights.

- [\*Illustrated Chronology, 1914-20\* by Maude Bass-Krueger & Sophie Kurkdjian](#)
- Books on [women's history](#), [voting rights](#), [civil rights](#), and [other social justice topics](#)
- The Museum of the City of New York's [lesson plans](#) for its past exhibition, *Beyond Suffrage*
- Smithsonian on [US suffragette clothing](#)
- New York Historical Society, Women and the American Story, [Exercise and Functional Fashion](#) lesson plan and resources:
- New York Historical Society, Women and the American Story, [Woman Suffrage lesson plan and resources](#)
- Imagery and information on American women's suffrage clothing, past and present:
  - ["How White Became the Color of Suffrage,"](#) *The Conversation*, February 15, 2019
  - [Woman Suffrage Votes Sash](#), National Museum of American History
  - [Why Hillary Wore White](#), *New York Times*, July 29, 2016
  - [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Wore Suffragette White to Be Sworn Into Congress](#), *Teen Vogue*, January 3, 2019
  - [Why did women in Congress wear white for Trump's State of the Union Address?](#) *The Washington Post*, February 6, 2019



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Charles Lansiaux. "At the Tuilleries. The convalescent father walks with his wife and baby," Paris, April 1915. Silver gelatin print. © Charles Lansiaux / BHVP / Roger-Viollet, RV-73732-30.



# Art Materials

Our art making activities can be done using a range of materials you may already have in your classroom, but here are some materials, shops, and resources we've found and liked.

- [Iron-on transfer paper](#) (print images or draw with crayons, colored pencil, or permanent marker)
- [Drawing on iron-on transfer paper demo](#)
- Fabric and notions can be found online and in local shops. Try the following for a start:
  - [Materials for the Arts](#)
  - Mood Fabrics ([online](#) and [in NYC](#))
  - [Joann Fabric](#)
  - B&J Fabrics ([online](#) and [in NYC](#))



[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

Étienne-Adrien Drian. Fare collector of the Metropolitan subway from *La Femme et La Guerre*, 1920. Lithograph. © Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand / Roger-Viollet, RV-157633-9. © 2019 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.





Historical information is sourced from *French Fashion, Women, & The First World War*, edited by Maude Bass-Kreuger and Sophie Kurkdjian, 2019.

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Special thanks to Emma Cormack (Curatorial Assistant), Kristen Owens (Coordinator of Public Programs, Education and Engagement), and Alexis Mucha (Manager of Rights & Reproductions).

Support for the *French Fashion, Women, and the First World War* is generously provided by The Coby Foundation, LTD. with additional support from Mission du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale, the Selz Foundation, and other donors to Bard Graduate Center.



THE COBY FOUNDATION, LTD.

[\[click image to enlarge\]](#)

John Shannon & Son, Ltd. Woman's ambulance driver uniform, 1915. Wool, silk lining. Palais Galliera – musée de la Mode de la Ville de Paris, Gift of Mme Munaut d'Auras, 1986.118.1. © Françoise Cochenne/Galliera/Roger-Viollet RV-101359-6.