

## EXAMINE THIS ISSUE

### Adapting to new cultures.

Today, increasing numbers of people spend time living or working in countries outside their homeland. Some relocate permanently. In these situations the question of clothing arises. Some people continue to wear the traditional garments of their own culture wherever they go. They feel most comfortable in the clothing they have always worn and believe that others should respect that choice. Some prefer to wear the styles of the culture where they are living. They want to fit in well and eliminate potential barriers.

#### What do you think?

Do people need to adopt a culture's clothing styles in order to fit in? Are other behaviors more important for acceptance?

WITH EVERY PASSING YEAR, PEOPLE say the world grows smaller. Of course, that's not literally true, but what do they mean? They mean that people now communicate across continents and travel to other lands with greater ease. Places that once seemed far away and remotely different are now more familiar. As diverse people share ideas and products around the world, they become closer, which is changing the way people view other cultures.

### CLOTHING REFLECTS CULTURES

Each society has its own **culture**, the collected ideas, skills, beliefs, and institutions of a society at a particular time in history. Food, entertainment, art, religion, politics, and technology—all are elements of a society's culture. Cultural differences are what set one society apart from another.

Every culture has something special and unique about its clothing. The garments that

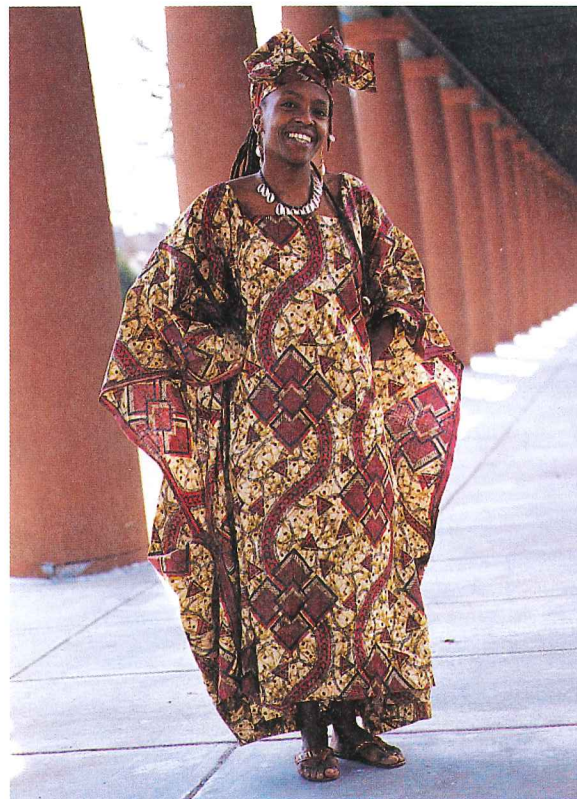
people wear—the fabrics, designs, and colors—tell so much about the way people think and live. They reveal part of that people's story, much as each piece in a puzzle contributes to the finished picture. See *Fig. 2-1*.

### National Costumes

Over the centuries, many cultures have developed their own distinctive clothing style, or national costume. Most national costumes had very practical beginnings.

Ancient Celts in the highlands of Scotland wove clan blankets with special plaid patterns to identify each clan. In the sixteenth century, they started wrapping these plaid blankets around the body to form a short, belted-on, all-purpose garment called a kilt. The extra fabric was pulled up over the shoulder from the back and pinned in

**2-1** Contemporary fashions can be inspired by traditional ethnic garments and fabrics. This garment reflects the African culture through the style, bright colors, and interesting pattern.





place. Today Scotsmen still wear plaid kilts for special occasions. See *Fig. 2-2*.

In Middle Eastern countries, where the desert is very hot during the day and very cold at night, the turban became a common clothing item. It absorbed sweat and also insulated from the cold. The turban continues to serve these practical functions in many cultures. See *Fig. 2-3*.

Over the years, some cultures developed garments with a similar shape, which was comfortable and easy to make. The Hawaiian muumuu, the North African caftan, and the Arabian kibr, a hooded robe with sleeves, are all loose-fitting garments that are still worn today.

Some national costumes, such as the Indian sari and Japanese kimono, feature beautiful fabric designs in colorful silks. Other national costumes have unique forms of ornamentation. Traditional Hungarian clothes, for example, are decorated with leather. Colorful, embroidered designs

**2-2** In its original form, the kilt needed no tailoring and didn't need to be replaced as often as breeches. Today the kilt is worn proudly and considered the national dress of Scotland.



**2-3** Turbans are common in many parts of the world, from North Africa, across the Middle East, and into Central Asia. The narrow cloth that creates a turban can be as long as 12 feet.

accent Scandinavian clothing. Native American garments feature colored beads, arranged in special patterns and sewn to soft leather. See *Fig. 2-4*.

In some parts of the world, people still wear distinctive national costumes as part of their everyday dress. The African tribal robe and Indian sari, for example, have changed little over the centuries.

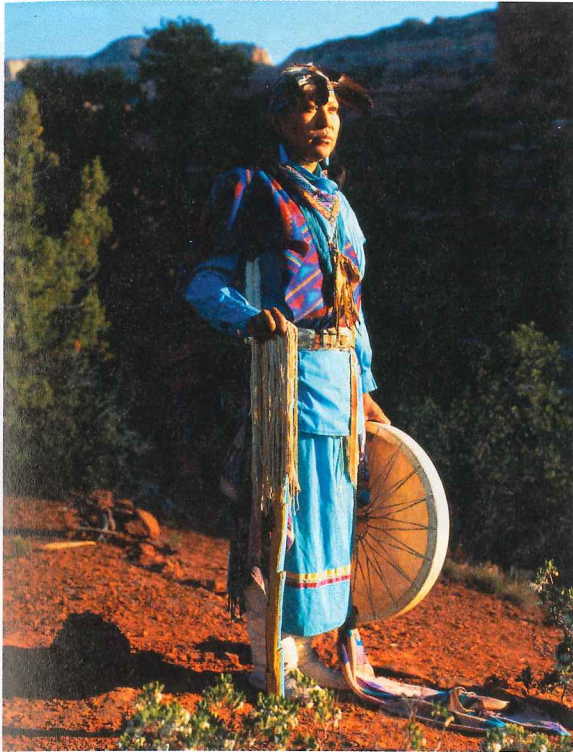
## Global Trends

In your school, how similar are the clothes students wear? How do these styles compare to those worn across the country? What about teens in China, Italy, Ghana, Brazil, India, or Australia? If you could travel the world, you would probably see many teens dressed like you.

Today, many people wear similar clothing styles in countries around the world. The Chinese businessman in Beijing wears the same type of suit as the American businessman in New York City. Mass communication and global distribution of the latest fashions have produced this effect.

There are exceptions, however. People who live in countries with very hot or cold climates may





**2-4** Beautiful woven fabrics and designs are typical of Native American costumes. Handcrafted beads, belts, and other adornments add to the beauty of the costume.

find greater comfort in their traditional clothing. Others, such as those in developing countries, may not have the means or the desire to wear Western styles.

In many cultures, national costumes are now worn only for festive occasions, such as holidays, parades, weddings, and dances. Wedding guests in Germany, Korea, or Mexico may celebrate by wearing traditional outfits that have been worn for generations. See Fig. 2-5. This is one way for people to reflect their cultural pride in a modern world.

## CLOTHING AS SYMBOLS

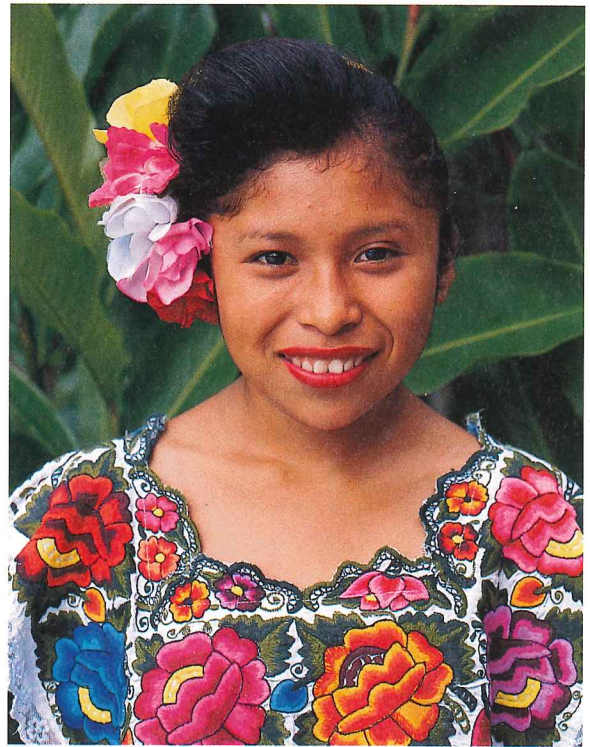
Why does a bride in the U.S. traditionally wear a white gown? In the American culture, the color white symbolizes innocence, faith, and purity. By contrast, brides in China wear red garments because red symbolizes joy and permanence. Throughout the cultures of the world, clothing

has many symbolic meanings. Clothing can tell you about a person's heritage, occupation, role, gender, and values.

## Heritage

Every person has a special **heritage**, the cultural background and ethnic traditions handed down from ancestors. Heritage defines identity and produces pride. To celebrate heritage, people participate in ethnic festivals and holidays, often wearing colorful costumes. On Chinese New Year, people don new clothes in "lucky" orange or red, as brilliant as the fireworks that mark the day. At the Navajo Nation Fair, Native Americans display stunning traditional garments, worn with feathered headdress, beaded bracelets, and leather moccasins.

**2-5** National costumes worn for special occasions in Mexico are bright and colorful. Although the bride at a Mexican wedding usually wears white, red is a popular color among the guests. Colorful flowers in the hair complement the dress this woman wears.

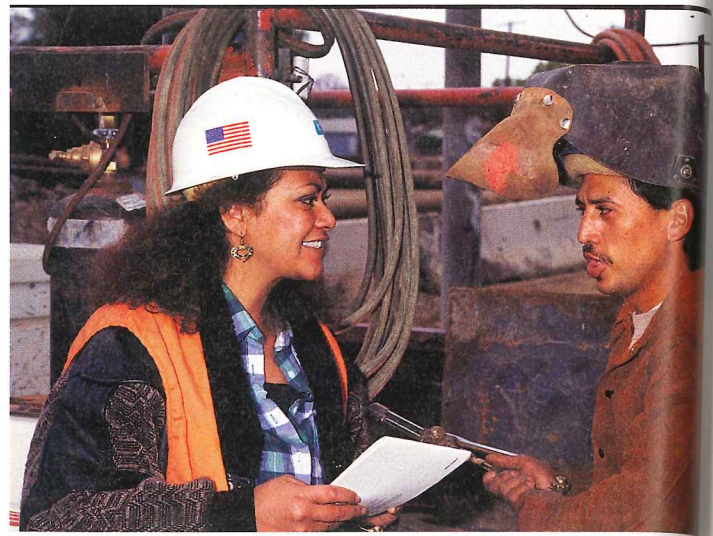




Many clothing styles have come to symbolize a particular cultural background. A kimono is associated with Japan, a sari with India, and leather lederhosen with Germany. See Fig. 2-6. Colorful fabrics wrap the heads of African women. South Americans wear distinctive striped ponchos.

Because the United States is a culturally diverse society, no single clothing style symbolizes heritage. Although basic clothing styles were inherited from Europe, many cultures have contributed special items. The mandarin collar comes from China, for example, and the caftan

**2-6** Although the classic Indian sari is made with six yards of fabric, a nine-yard version can be draped to form pants rather than a flowing gown. The graceful, feminine sari can be made from shimmering silk or gauzy cotton in beautiful pastels. Some have bright floral prints.



**2-7** People often wear clothing that symbolizes their occupation. Even in a different setting, you would probably know what work these people do. How can you tell?

comes from Africa. Native Americans have contributed highly prized turquoise and silver jewelry.

Within the United States, regional differences show. A Texan may wear cowboy boots with his business suit. People in Hawaii and Florida usually wear brighter colors than those worn in Minnesota. Can you think of reasons for these regional differences in clothing?

## Occupation

In a courtroom drama on television, how do you identify the judge? You probably notice the traditional black robe. In the same way, clothing identifies many professions. Ministers, priests, and other clergy members usually wear special robes or shawls when conducting religious services. Uniforms clearly symbolize the police force, fire department, and military. Many people in service occupations, including restaurant workers, delivery people, and postal workers, also wear special uniforms for quick identification.

Clues to professions are all around you. Examples are a doctor's white coat, a priest's collar, and a chef's hat. What other clothing symbols are linked to careers? See Fig. 2-7.



## Roles

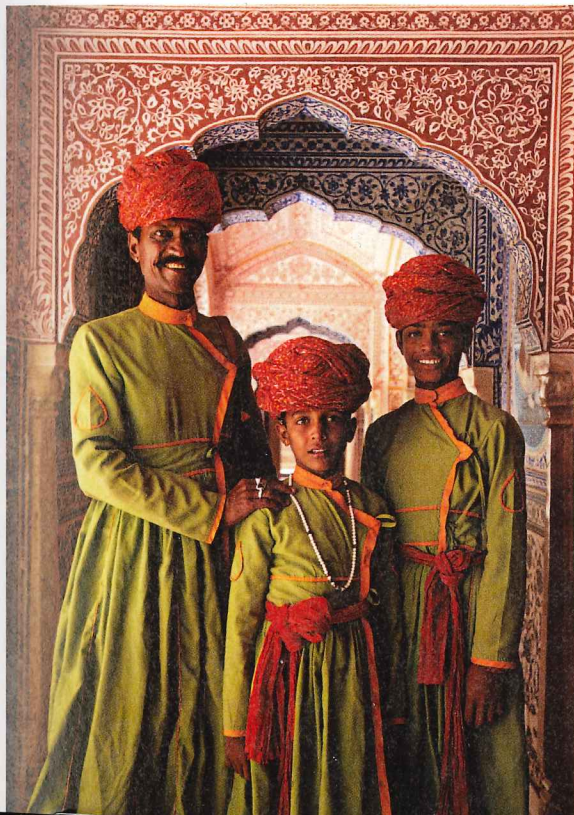
For high school graduation, you'll probably wear a long robe and mortarboard hat. These symbolize your role as a graduate. Clothing identifies many **roles**, the different positions people have in society.

A bride is distinguished from her attendants by the wedding gown, veil, and special dresses worn. A baby's heirloom gown, passed down through generations, symbolizes baptism. Athletes and members of marching bands wear distinctive uniforms. Many high school athletes wear special "letter" jackets that show participation in sports, as well as positions and honors. Roles are easily identifiable because of the many special garments that act as symbols.

## Gender

For many years in Western society, clothing symbolized gender. Women wore skirts and men

**2-8** In other parts of the world, males may wear skirts or long robes just as females do. Designs, colors, fabrics, and styles have been modified to suit the culture and the purpose for the garment.



wore pants. Since pants are accepted clothing for both genders today, slight differences in design now make distinctions. Compare the buttons on men's and women's shirts. What difference do you notice?

In other cultures, clothing styles worn by males and females have evolved quite differently. For centuries in some parts of the world, pants have been worn by both genders. In Lapland, north of the Arctic Circle, both men and women wear pants to protect against subzero temperatures. In Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam and Thailand, men and women wear pants for work and leisure activities.

In other parts of the world, males wear skirts or long robes just as females do. Men in the South Pacific wear a wrapped skirt called a sarong. Arab men wear long, flowing robes. In many African societies, males wear colorful, wrapped skirts of various lengths. Chinese and Japanese men have worn silk robes for centuries. See *Fig. 2-8*.

## Values

Clothing and accessories can reflect the values of a culture or specific group. A few examples show how.

Membership in a particular religious group might be symbolized by jewelry with crosses, stars, or other religious symbols. Through dark-colored clothing in simple styles, the Amish show regard for their ancestor's way of living. See *Fig. 2-9* on page 42. Some Jewish men wear a cap called a yarmulka (YAH-muh-kuh) at all times; others wear it only for special occasions and religious services. Followers of Hasidism (HA-suh-dih-zum) stand out from others in the Jewish community with their long coats and dark hats. Seik men, who don't cut their hair, wrap their heads in a turban. Many Muslim women wear a long, scarf-like cloth, called a hijab, to cover the hair and frame the face.

Clothing also reflects cultural views of modesty. In some cultures of the world, wearing very little clothing is acceptable, perhaps only a loincloth for men. In others, women must wear a long veil that completely covers them in public. In





**2-9** In an Amish or Mennonite household, the mother usually sews clothing for the family. She makes bonnets, dresses, aprons, and capes, as well as pants and shirts for the males in the family.

Europe, men of all ages swim in very brief bathing suits, and some women don't wear tops. In the United States, most swimwear is less revealing. On the other hand, Americans are more likely to wear shorts in public, while many Europeans don't believe that shorts are proper street attire.

## CLOTHING CUSTOMS

Every society has certain **customs**, long-established practices that regulate social life. See *Fig. 2-10*. While some customs cover etiquette, others relate to clothing. A clothing custom is

**2-10** The clothing people choose for a date or to wear to a restaurant is influenced by the customs in a society. How would you dress for such occasions?

born when people adopt a way of dressing for a specific situation. Wearing shorts to a rock concert may be one custom, while wearing dress-up clothes to a symphony concert is another. Knowing the clothing customs in society can help you make decisions about what to wear for different occasions.

## Understanding Expectations and Standards

Many people have certain clothing **expectations**, or thoughts about what is reasonable or justified for people to wear. Custom in American society says that males don't wear skirts. Business suits are out of place on a construction site, just as jeans are out of place in many offices. Swimsuits belong on the beach, but not in school classrooms.

Teens often become aware of what others expect of them. A parent's ideas about clothing, hairstyle, and makeup may differ from what the teen likes. An employer, friend, or team members may have certain expectations about how you should dress. An employer expects a well-groomed appearance. See *Fig. 2-11*. As a team leader you might be expected to set an example that shows other members how to dress.





When the majority of people share the same expectations in a society, standards form. **Standards** are the guidelines and principles that set forth what's **appropriate**, or suitable, to wear. Standards may be written or unwritten, and they can change over time.

### Dress Codes

On the doors of businesses, you've probably seen signs that warn, "No shirt, no shoes, no service." This statement is a simple **dress code**, a set of rules that describe acceptable or required clothing. Most restaurants require customers to wear shoes and shirts because of health laws. If you don't follow these rules, the restaurant can refuse to serve you.

Many schools and offices have dress codes for students and employees. A general list of clothing items tells what may not be worn, such as no torn jeans, no bared midribs, no low-cut tops, no hats, and no T-shirts with inappropriate images or messages. Most schools have formal dress codes, which are written. Informal codes are unwritten,

**2-11** What does an employer expect concerning clothing and appearance? Here, a clean uniform, confined hair, and personal cleanliness are all likely expectations. Following them contributes to job success.



**COLLAR COLORS.** In the late 1800s, a starched white collar was part of the professional Englishman's business attire. Taking a deep breath was difficult in these high, tight collars, almost ensuring that the wearer could do no physical labor. The manual laborer's shirt typically was blue, including a loose-fitting collar. To this day, the term **white collar** describes professional "office" jobs, while **blue collar** refers to technical trades.

but people are still expected to understand and follow them. When a business has an informal dress code, an employee can usually determine what it is by noting how supervisors dress.

### Differing Standards

If you've ever moved from one part of the country to another, you may have noticed that clothing standards differ among communities and regions. Ideas of appropriateness are not always the same.

In an urban area a man might need to wear suits and ties more often than someone who lives in a small community. For women, dresses and pantsuits may be the standard for social events in some communities, while casual sportswear can be worn in others. In resort areas, both men and women may wear brightly colored casual wear for all types of activities.

### Choosing Appropriate Styles

Matching clothing to the occasion can be to your advantage. When you need acceptance and approval, the "right" clothing makes a difference. It can make you feel comfortable, relaxed, and self-assured, especially in new situations. By following standards in dress, people feel that they fit in better and the group or community accepts them.