

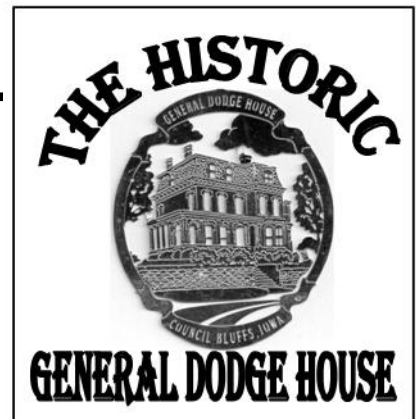
# A Teacher's Guide to The Meaning of Underwear



---

## The Historic General Dodge House

605 Third Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 322-2406  
[www.dodgehouse.org](http://www.dodgehouse.org)



# The Meaning of Underwear

## Activities and Discussion

### 2nd-3rd grade

- 1) Make a list or draw a picture of all the clothes that you currently have on. Label each piece of clothing. How many layers clothes do you have on? Now draw several different types of outfits and describe where you wear them. For example, to a special dinner or party, you might dress up, for football practice you would wear certain clothes, etc..
- 2) Research and discover using the Muse McCord website, what clothes were appropriate in Victorian times. Think about how the Dodge's might have dressed. How many layers of clothes do you think they wore everyday? How many different outfits?

After visiting the Dodge House

- 1) Remember what the clothes you saw were made out of? List the layers of dress as you remember them and what materials they were made out of, i.e. cotton, wool, silk, etc. Note which layers would have been washed weekly and which layers were never washed! (Use the layers of dress illustration for information)
- 2) Examine illustration #1. This was the height of the hoop skirt. Using the six traits of writing, write a story about a typical day in your life choosing one of the people pictured in the illustration.
- 3) Discuss why the Dodge family would have needed help to get dressed everyday! How does this contrast with getting dressed today? Would this have been true for everyone in the Dodge household? What about the servants?
- 4) Create two Venn diagrams comparing men's clothes from the Victorian era and today. How much have they changed?

### 4th-5th grade

Extension....

- 1) During the latter half of the 19th Century, the industrial revolution changed the way clothing was made. Before the sewing machine, most clothes were hand made. Research when the sewing machine was invented and write about three ways it changed how people dressed. You can illustrate your writing with picture examples.
- 2) Amelia Bloomer, a Council Bluffs resident, believed very strongly in the women's dress reform movement. What were the principal beliefs of this movement? Research Amelia's life and writings. How was Amelia treated differently when she changed the way she appeared?
- 3) Discuss how the roles of men and women and even children were defined by their clothing.

After visiting the Dodge House

- 1) Amelia Bloomer was one of the first women to write and publish her own journal. Research the suffrage movement and the "Lily". What social issues do you feel are not being addressed today? Create your own journal discussing these issues and present them to the class.
- 2) Research the negative effects of wearing a tight corset. What other fashion choices have adverse health effects? What about in other cultures? Think about the Chinese practice of foot binding, the Masai in Kenya stretching their necks with rings. What other cultures or items sacrifice health for fashion? Why do people choose to wear things that are unhealthy? Status and wealth? Fads? Why?
- 3) After doing your research, write a letter to a member of the Dodge Household telling them about the potential consequences of their clothing choices. OR
- 4) Create a poster board using advertisements from magazines and newspapers that are advertising status symbols today. Write a paragraph about why people believe owning these objects or wearing these clothes will make them important.
- 5) What will our clothes say about us in the future? Working in small groups, create a "look" for both girls and boys. Will they be the same or different, will the "look" be dependant on how much money they make, and why? Present your project to the class.

# Illustration #1



## Crinolines, ca. 1863

At this time in the Victorian era, the crinoline hoop skirt had grown to enormous proportions. This illustration is based on a photograph of a fashionable woman being helped into her

gown over the hoops by two assistants, poised on stepladders and using long poles to support the garment. The gown in the foreground is one of Charles Frederick Worth's creations.

# Getting Dressed!

**1 DROOPY DRAWERS**  
A lady would first put on a simple knee-length "skirt" or sleeveless shirt. She would wear stockings held up above the knee with a garter and long cotton drawers.



**2 BREATHE IN!**  
Next came the corset, whalebone or steel, it fastened at the front but was pulled in at the back.



**3 PUTTING ON THE CAGE**  
Most crinolines consisted of a framework of flexible steel hoops joined by vertical bands of tape. This enabled the wearer to step into her cage.



The flexible frame was collapsible.

**5 PRETTY PETTICOAT**  
The crinoline cage was then covered with a petticoat, which could be quite simple or elaborately trimmed with tucks, embroidery, and lace. Most petticoats were made of white cotton.



**6 MORE PETTICOATS**  
The number of petticoats worn with a crinoline depended on the size of the cage and the dress, but it was usually two.



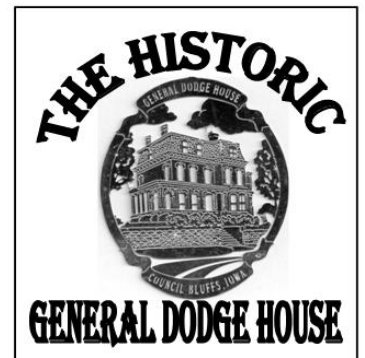
And here, suspended through tapes.



**4 CAGES IN**  
The cage was then pulled up and tied to the waist.

## 7 THE FINISHED LOOK

This mid-19th-century dress completes the dressing. It is strange to think that this demure look was achieved by such a mass of cotton, lace, whalebone, and steel. Imagine having to put all this on in the morning when you are running late!



**Bibliography:**

Beeton, Isabella Mary Mayson, 1836-1865. *Book of household management. Mrs. Beeton's cookery and household management.* [New ed.] London, Ward Lock [c1960]

Hill, Thomas E. 1832-1915. *Manual of social and business forms. Selections. Never give a lady a restive horse; a 19th century handbook of etiquette.* Berkeley [Calif.] Diablo Press, 1967.

Houghton, Walter R. et al. *Rules of etiquette and home culture or what to do and how to do it.* Chicago, 1886. Rand, McNally & Co.

Martine, Arthur, *Martine's handbook of etiquette and guide to true politeness; a complete manual for those who desire to understand the rules of good breeding, the customs of good society, and to avoid incorrect and vulgar habits.* New York, Dick & Fitzgerald, 1866--As republished in Civil War Era Etiquette, R.L. Shep editor and publisher, 1988.

Trollope, Fanny & Pamela Neville-Sington *Domestic Manners of the Americans* Originally published 1842. Paperback - 416 pages (29 May, 1997) Penguin Books

Young, John H.. *Our deportment: or, The manners, conduct and dress of the most refined society /*, compiled by John H. Young. Harrisburg, PA : Pennsylvania Publishing Co, 1880, c1879. 415 p

<http://www.lahacal.org/gentleman/behavior.html>

A good site for all of the Manners content from a Gentleman's Perspective

<http://www.literary-liaisons.com/article008.html>

Good source for all things Flowers, Tussie-Mussies

<http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Language-and-Meaning-of-Flowers&id=10289>

Also for the Language of Flowers

<http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/>

A site with amazing information and interactive. Good for student research and extensions.

<http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/19thcentury1860.htm>

An overview with many links about the changes in American life and cultural in the 19th Century.

[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=422](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=422)

This has information and lesson plans about the Industrial Revolution from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

<http://historywired.si.edu/detail.cfm?ID=502>

This site explores the history of the sewing machine.

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/bloomer/#documents>

This is the petition that Amelia Bloomer wrote to Congress about taxes. Also information about Amelia Bloomer and her roles in the dress reform and women's suffrage movements.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era)

*Illustrations used in this lesson plan were taken from:*

Tierney, Tom. *Late Victorian and Edwardian Fashion* . Dover Publications Mineola, New York:2005

Tierney, Tom. *Abraham Lincoln and his Family*. Dover Publications: New York:1989

Tierney, Tom. *American Family of the Civil War Era*. Dover Publications: New York:1985

## **“The Meaning of Underwear” lesson objectives:**

Students will:

- 1) understand the impact of the Industrial Revolution on clothing.
- 2) understand the Dodge family’s impact on life in Council Bluffs and their place in the Nation.
- 3) be able to contrast and compare life and culture in Victorian America to that of current day.
- 4) be able to contrast and compare employment in Victorian times and today.
- 5) analyze and understand the activities of women in Victorian society as is typified by the Dodge’s.
- 6) compare the experience of women and their various roles in Victorian society and be introduced to the concept of the dress reform movement and feminism through the person of Amelia Bloomer.
- 7) contrast and compare the expectations of dress and clothing styles in Victorian times and today.

For more information, please contact :

Patricia LaBounty  
Outreach Coordinator  
200 Pearl Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503

402-501-3841  
plabount@upcontractor.up.com

---

### **The Historic General Dodge House**

605 Third Street  
Council Bluffs, IA 51503  
(712) 322-2406  
[www.dodgehouse.org](http://www.dodgehouse.org)

