

# FASHION STATEMENTS

Inspired by John Singer Sargent, *Mrs. Abbott Lawrence Rotch*, 1903, and Callot Souers, *Evening dress*, about 1900

Created by Carey Hernandez, artist/art educator at Joslyn Art Museum, [careyhernandez@yahoo.com](mailto:careyhernandez@yahoo.com)

Grade Level 6<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> grades (adaptable for lower elementary)

## OVERVIEW

This lesson explores how fashion is used to construct identity and how fashion is sometimes used as a means of communicating social status, cultural belonging, and personal statements. Students will create a monoprint of a famous celebrity making a fashion statement.

## ANTICIPATORY SET

What does making a fashion statement mean? What does fashion tell us about a person? What can you tell about the sitter in John Singer Sargent's painting *Mrs. Abbott Lawrence Rotch*? How has fashion changed over the years? Can you tell what job someone has by the way they dress or a uniform they wear? What would you wear to a football game? How would you know other people that are cheering for the same team? Is fashion the same in all countries or regions? How is it different? What factors affect these cultural differences. Do you wear the same thing to school and to a fancy party? How do you decide what to wear in the morning?



## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Students will learn about John Singer Sargent's portrait of Mrs. Abbott Lawrence Rotch and study her evening dress by the Parisian couturier Callot Soeurs.
- Students will use critical thinking and communication skills to discuss the role of fashion in society.
- Students will learn how to create a monoprint and the techniques involved.
- Students will create an original work of art featuring a celebrity making a fashion statement.

## RESOURCES:

- National Portrait Gallery <https://npg.si.edu>
- What is a Print? MoMA <https://mo.ma/2gtwf75>
- "Beyond Madame X: Portraits by John Singer Sargent," Alexandra Kiely, *Daily Art Magazine* <https://bit.ly/2knVKyV>
- "Met Gala 2019: Photographs from the Red Carpet" (slideshow), *The New York Times* <https://nyti.ms/2lTPm2t>
- Sargent Teaching Poster, Joslyn Art Museum\*
  - [www.joslyn.org](http://www.joslyn.org) > Education > Teachers > [LESSON PLANS](#)

\*available through the Nelson Teacher Resource Center at Joslyn Art Museum

- Preview all resources before sharing with students.

**VOCABULARY:**

- Couture
- Fashion
- Fashion statement
- Monoprint
- Portrait/portraiture
- Sitter

**MATERIALS:**

- plexiglass
- masking tape
- clear/transparent tape
- black and white photocopies of celebrities in fashionable attire
- Bristol board paper (smooth surface oak-tag)
- tempera paint
- paint brushes
- paper towels
- water cups (for rinsing in between colors)
- transparency sheets (Acetate or Mylar works also)
- black Sharpies
- black paper for frames (optional)
- spray cleaner (for wiping off plexiglas)

**LESSON OUTLINE**

Introduction:

Discuss at in small groups the roles of fashion in society. Use the discussion cards and reproductions of John Singer Sargent's portrait of Mrs. Abbott Lawrence Rotch as starting points. Ask for one person to be the secretary of the group to write down some of the discussion points and 1-2 people to share some of their table's discussion with the larger group.

- What is fashion? What makes something fashionable?
- What does fashion mean to you?
- How did you decide what to wear?
- Do you have a favorite color? How does it affect (or not affect) you clothing decisions?

After discussion, introduce the images of contemporary celebrities that you will use and ask students to think about the conversation they just had while they are selecting their celebrity. Students will reproduce the image they select with a monoprinting technique.

Demonstrate the monoprinting technique and have students follow along.

1. Place the photocopy under the plexiglass and secure it with tape on two sides.
2. Place a piece of Bristol board paper on top of the plexiglass and secure the top only with tape. The paper should be able to open and close with a hinge at the top.
3. Lift the paper open and begin painting small sections of the face on the plexiglass with tempera paint. It is important to work only in small sections so that the paint won't dry before you print.

4. Close the paper so that it covers the plexiglass and rub with the palm of your hand over the area you just painted. This will cause the paint to transfer from the plexiglass to the paper.
5. Continue painting in small sections of the face and repeat the above process until you have a complete image on your paper.

#### Final Details

1. While prints are drying, place a clear transparency sheet over the photocopy you used. Trace the face and add any details with black Sharpie.
2. Once the prints are dry, take the transparency outline and flip it over so the image lines up with the painted print. Secure with clear tape.
3. Optional step: Cut a black paper frame with a window cut slightly smaller than the print. Secure the print with the transparency with tape to the backside.

#### Closure:

Have students share their finished pieces with the class, in small groups, or by writing artist statements. Ask students to compare and contrast their artwork with that of John Singer Sargent. Ask students what they learned about fashion and roles it can play in society.

### **EXTENSIONS**

- Study the fashion of a particular time period in history, how do historical events affect fashion? Students could report their findings in a written report individually or a computer slide show presentation.
- Create a "fashion show" display with student prints.
- Use the monoprinting technique with photos of students to create self-portraits.
- Have students work in collaborative groups to design clothing and share their creations to the class. Each student could design an outfit for a different outing (sports, dance, casual, formal, etc.) or from a different culture.
- Have a cultural fashion show by encouraging students to dress in clothing that represents their heritage.
- Visit Joslyn Art Museum online or in person and study one portrait. Write about the clothing and accessories worn by the sitter.
- Visit the National Portrait Gallery online or in person. <https://npg.si.edu>

### **CONTENT STANDARDS**

[NEBRASKA CONTENT AREA STANDARDS](#)

[IOWA CORE STANDARDS](#)