Hands On Learning
with Reading Museum Service

FIFTEENTH CENTURY LORD AND LADY H43

The clothing of the upper classes in the fifteenth century was grand and sumptuous. Rich, colourful materials were used to make gowns, headdresses and accessories, which were often decorated with jewels and trimmed with fur.

Lady

This lady is wearing her hair in two buns over her ears and has a headdress covering the buns, which is called a Templer. These were beautifully decorated and made in various shapes such as boxes, cones and pyramids. A veil was sometimes worn like this one, which is pleated at the front and made to stick out at the sides with wire.



In the fifteenth century gowns for men and women were the same shape and gathered in at the waist with a belt decorated with jewels and beads. The gold coloured gown on this model is brocaded with gold thread. This means that a pattern has been sewn in to the material so that it looks raised.

Ideas of what was a fashionable body shape changed during different periods of time. In the fifteenth century gowns like this were designed to emphasise the stomach below the high-waisted belt. They would turn back their long, wide sleeves to the elbow so that they could show off the rich fabric of the lining.

It was also fashionable for women to wear pointed shoes. This woman has blue pointed shoes poking out from under her gown. The skirts were often so long that they needed to be lifted up so they didn't drag in the mud!

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Lord

This lord's gown is brocaded with a diamond pattern and is gathered at the waist with a belt decorated with green jewels. His gold undergarment has a high collar and contrasts with the dramatic black fur trim of the gown. Like the lady, his sleeves are turned back to show off the rich materials of the lining and the gold cuffs of his undergarment. The sleeves of the gown were often so long that they reached the ground.

His black velvet hat has a long tail, known as a liripipe, draped over one shoulder. Sometimes the liripipe would be wrapped around the head several times like a turban.

His boots are pointed and turn up slightly at the toe. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the fashion changed and shoes became more rounded at the toe.

