

What do People from Other Countries/Cultures Wear?

4-H Clothing and Textiles Project

Part of the Family and Consumer Sciences 4-H Project Series

Understanding Textiles (Fabric)



Project Outcome: Global/ Ethnic- Identify various fabric as belonging to specific ethnic cultures.

Project Indicator: Completed exploration of specific items worn in identified countries/cultures, the clothes worn during festivals/celebrations, and fabrics used.

Do you know someone from another country? Or have you ever seen, in person or on TV, a festival or celebration from another country? Have you noticed that they wear clothes that are different from what you and I wear? While some of their celebrations are the same as ours, the clothes they wear may be different. It is fun and interesting to learn about what people from other countries wear during their festivals and celebrations. In learning this, you can also learn about the fabrics that they use to make their garments for these festivals.

For this activity, you will learn about four different cultures, what they wear, especially for their festivals/celebrations or based on their religion, and what fabrics they make and use for clothing worn. Then you will be asked to do your own research to discover more about the clothing of these and other cultures. First, let's define the word culture. **Culture means:** the beliefs and customs of a particular group of people which guides their interaction among themselves and others. A country can contain people from more than one cultural background. They may or may not observe the same celebrations or traditions in the same way. As you learn about the clothes of different cultures and the fabrics used, you will better understand this concept.

TIPPS Outcomes:

- Understand the meaning of information.
- Use the senses to gain new information or find new ways to use information.
- Make the needed effort to complete a task or a plan.

Mexico - Clothing for Festivals

Mexico is made up of 31 different states. The clothing worn for festivals differ from state-to-state. But there are several items that are very similar.

Here are the similarities:

1. One thing that you will find about most garments is that they are made using bright colors.
2. The fabric most commonly used for outerwear is made of wool for warmth, while other clothing is made of cotton or a cotton blend.
3. Clothes also tend to be somewhat loose fitting.

Now let's look at some specific garments.



1. The Serape (suh-rah-pe) is a long blanket-type shawl, often brightly colored and fringed at the ends, worn especially by men. It is made of wool for warmth. Modern variations of some serapes are made with matching hoods for head covering. The length varies, but front and back normally reach knee height on an average person.
2. The huipil (wee-peel) is a loose fitting dress made of white cotton fabric. You will notice from the picture that there is bright colored embroidery. If the embroidery is elaborate, it is more likely to be worn during festivals.



Otherwise it is an everyday garment. In different states in Mexico, the huipil is worn for different occasions. In the state of Oaxaca it is worn as a wedding dress. The embroidery is different on huipils in different states with some using floral designs and others using animal symbols.

The huipil is often worn with a bright colored full wrap skirt and belt for festivals.

To explore: A very special occasion in Mexico is the Quinceanera (keen-sey-ah-nyair-uh). Find out what this is and what is worn by girls, color of outfit, fabric it is made from and what happens on this occasion. (Use the Chart at the end of this activity to complete your exploration.)

The Dress of Women in India

A **sari** (sahr-ee) is a garment worn by women in India. It consists of a length of fabric from five to nine yards in length and two to four feet wide. It is typically wrapped around the waist, forming pleats, with one end draped over the shoulder. The sari is worn with a fitted bodice commonly called a choli (choh-lee).

Saris are made of different patterns, fabrics and colors depending on the occasion. Red is the most favored color for wedding saris. Women traditionally wear various types of regional hand-woven saris made of silk or cotton using various embroidery and dyeing techniques. One of the most sought after saris is the brocade silk sari which is traditionally worn for festive and formal occasions. Different regions of the country prefer different designs and fabric for their saris. Less elaborate saris, often made of cotton or even polyester are used for everyday wear.



To Explore: For special occasions in India men also wear special garments. Explore what men's garments are like and the fabric used to make their garments.

Kenya – Dress of the Maasai

In Kenya, which is in East Africa, there are many different cultures or people of different beliefs and life-styles. The Maasi (Mah-sahy) is one culture that can be described as a semi-nomadic people who travel from place-to-place to find food and water for their cattle. They do not have a big closet full of clothes as we do. The traditional dress worn by the Maasai is the shuka (shoo-kah). The shuka is typically made of a cotton plaid fabric that is a length of fabric that is wrapped around the body.

The traditional colors of a shuka are bright red and blue. The fabric of a shuka is durable and protects the Maasai against the terrain (bushes, etc.) of the Savanna where they live.



To Explore: The Maasai are also known for the jewelry they wear. Explore this aspect of their outfits, including what their jewelry is made from and any special meaning of the jewelry.

Saudi Arabia - Women's Traditional Clothing

Women in Saudi Arabia wear a long dress, an outer cloak called abaya (uh-bey-yuh), and a scarf called Shayla (shah-lah). They always cover their body, sometimes leaving only their face and wrists uncovered. Some women show only their eyes and wrists.

The abaya is black and made from silk or synthetic material such as polyester. It is worn over a dress which can be either traditional, or of modern style. Traditional dress is usually bright and embellished with coins, sequins, patterns on fabric and other decorative elements. But Saudi women often use Western style dresses of various designs, with the abaya worn on top.



To Explore: Men of Saudi Arabia have traditional dress and headwear that is conservative as well as protecting them from the environment. Explore the dress of men in Saudi Arabia, including the type of fabric used to make their garments.

Exploring about the Dress of These and Other Cultures

Now that you have learned about a few different cultures, what they wear for special occasions and what fabrics are used to make their garments, explore the following to learn more about these cultures. (Resources you may want to use include: library books, people you know from these cultures and information on the Internet.)

<p>The Quinceanera of Mexico</p>	<p>What is this special occasion and what happens during the special event:</p>	<p>What is worn by the girls that are being honored:</p>	<p>What is the color of their outfits and what type of material is used to create their outfits (cotton, polyester.....):</p>
---	---	--	---

Garments worn by men in <u>India</u> for special occasions	What are some of the special occasions where the men wear special garments?	Describe the outfits they wear:	What is the color of their outfits and what type of material is used to create their outfits (cotton, polyester.....):
Jewelry worn by the Maasai of <u>Kenya</u>	Describe the jewelry the Maasai wear:	Is there special meaning behind the jewelry worn? If so, what is the meaning?	What is the jewelry made out of?
The traditional dress and head- wear of men of <u>Saudi Arabia</u>	Describe the main garment worn by men and the headwear:	What is the purpose for wearing the clothing and headwear?	What is the fabric used for the garment and headwear?
Select one of the following cultures and explore their traditional dress: <u>Korea</u>, <u>Japan</u>	Describe the clothing worn during one of their festivals or special occasions:	Describe the festival or special occasion and what happens during it:	What kinds of fabrics or materials do they use in their costumes? (Examples: silk, cotton, embroidery, bright colors.)

Now that you have learned about the clothing of another cultures, share this with your classmates, family or fellow 4-Hers.

Here are some ideas.

- Make copies of pictures and make a poster to display.
- Create a PowerPoint and present to younger 4-H members or to a project group.
- Ask adults you know if they know anyone from another country/culture; gather information from them and share with them what you have learned.
- Lead a project group in a computer laboratory and have each member of the group take a different country/culture to explore. Have the group make a collage of pictures of countries they explore and display the poster in your school or library.

Sources of information used: Personal Interviews, Observations when visiting other cultures, Internet Sites:
<https://www.countriestogo.com/20-cultures-countries-wear-traditional-clothing-daily/>
<https://artsandculture.google.com/theme/-gLSnpTzzdkwJw>

By: Sue Byrd, Professor Emeritus
 The University of Tennessee at Martin

Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development.
 University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating.
 UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.