

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Coco Chanel

Before reading

1 Guess

How much do you know about Coco Chanel? Choose the correct word to complete these sentences.

- Coco did most of her work in the *late 19th / early 20th* century.
 - Coco came from a *poor / wealthy* background.
 - Coco first became famous for designing women's *underwear / hats*.
 - Coco's designs were *comfortable / uncomfortable* to wear.
 - Coco *encouraged women to wear / discouraged women from wearing* black.
 - Coco spent most of her life in *France / America*.
- Scan the story and check your answers.

While reading

2 Comprehension

Are the sentences true (T), false (F) or not given (N)?

Correct any that are false.

- _____ Coco disliked living at the convent.
- _____ Coco fell in love with Étienne Balsan.
- _____ Coco's hats were popular among French actresses.
- _____ Coco's dress designs were shorter and simpler than previous designs.
- _____ Coco's first four perfumes were unpopular.
- _____ Coco preferred designing everyday clothes to stage costumes.
- _____ Coco closed her business during both World Wars.
- _____ Coco's last iconic fashion design was a jacket.

3 Comprehension and writing

Make notes on Coco's attitudes to the following topics.

- Growing up in poverty

- Living a life of luxury

- Relationships and marriage

- Clothing designs

4 Comprehension and writing

How was Coco affected by the following events?

- The First World War

- The Stock Market Crash

- The Second World War

After reading

5 Language

Complete the sentences with the words from the box.

comeback	catwalk	convent
aristocracy	brand	demand

- The nuns in the _____ were very strict.
- _____ for Coco's soft, elegant clothing was very high.
- Her designs were popular among both the _____ and ordinary people.
- People associate the Chanel _____ with quality and luxury.
- The new collection appeared on the _____ at the London Fashion show.
- Coco made a _____ in 1953 after an eight-year break.

6 Follow-up activity

Read the text and find three adjectives, three verbs and three nouns which are new to you. Check the meaning in a dictionary. Without using the story, write your own sentences using these words.

7 Research

Research one of the following topics:

- The Chanel LBD
- The Chanel Jacket
- Chanel N° 5 perfume

Find out what Coco's intentions were in creating the design, why the product was popular and how it changed over time. You can find use the 'Further Research' document to find some useful resources.

ANSWER KEY (STUDENT ACTIVITIES)

Coco Chanel

1 Guess

- 1 early 20th
- 2 poor
- 3 hats
- 4 comfortable
- 5 encouraged women to wear
- 6 France

2 Comprehension

- 1 F – The nuns cared for them and they were protected from the rough life they had been born into.
- 2 N
- 3 T
- 4 T
- 5 F – The first four perfumes weren't sold, she liked the fifth one she tried.
- 6 N
- 7 F – Coco closed her business during the Second World War.
- 8 T

3 Comprehension and writing

Answers will vary. Suggested answers:

- 1 Coco was ashamed of her poor background, especially the fact that her father abandoned her. However, her experience in the convent allowed her to learn useful skills. Possibly, her poverty gave her the drive to be successful.
- 2 Coco was introduced to the life of luxury by Étienne Balsan and seemed to like it! Once she was rich, she lived an expensive lifestyle, for example, she lived at the Ritz Hotel. She socialized with rich and famous people.
- 3 The text hints that she may have liked to marry Étienne Balsan or Arthur Capel but was unable to due to differences in social background. Later on, she chooses not to marry in order to carry on with her work.
- 4 Coco disliked designs that did not allow women to move freely. She disliked false silhouettes, gaudy colours and complex designs.

4 Comprehension and writing

Answers will vary. Suggested answers:

- 1 Although the First World War hit France hard, Coco kept working and opened her third shop, in Biarritz, during the war.
- 2 Reduced incomes meant people were less able to buy luxury goods. Coco's business was affected, but recovered.
- 3 Coco closed her business during the Second World War.

5 Language

- 1 convent
- 2 Demand
- 3 aristocracy
- 4 brand
- 5 catwalk
- 6 comeback

6 Follow-up activity

Answers will vary.

7 Research

Answers will vary.