

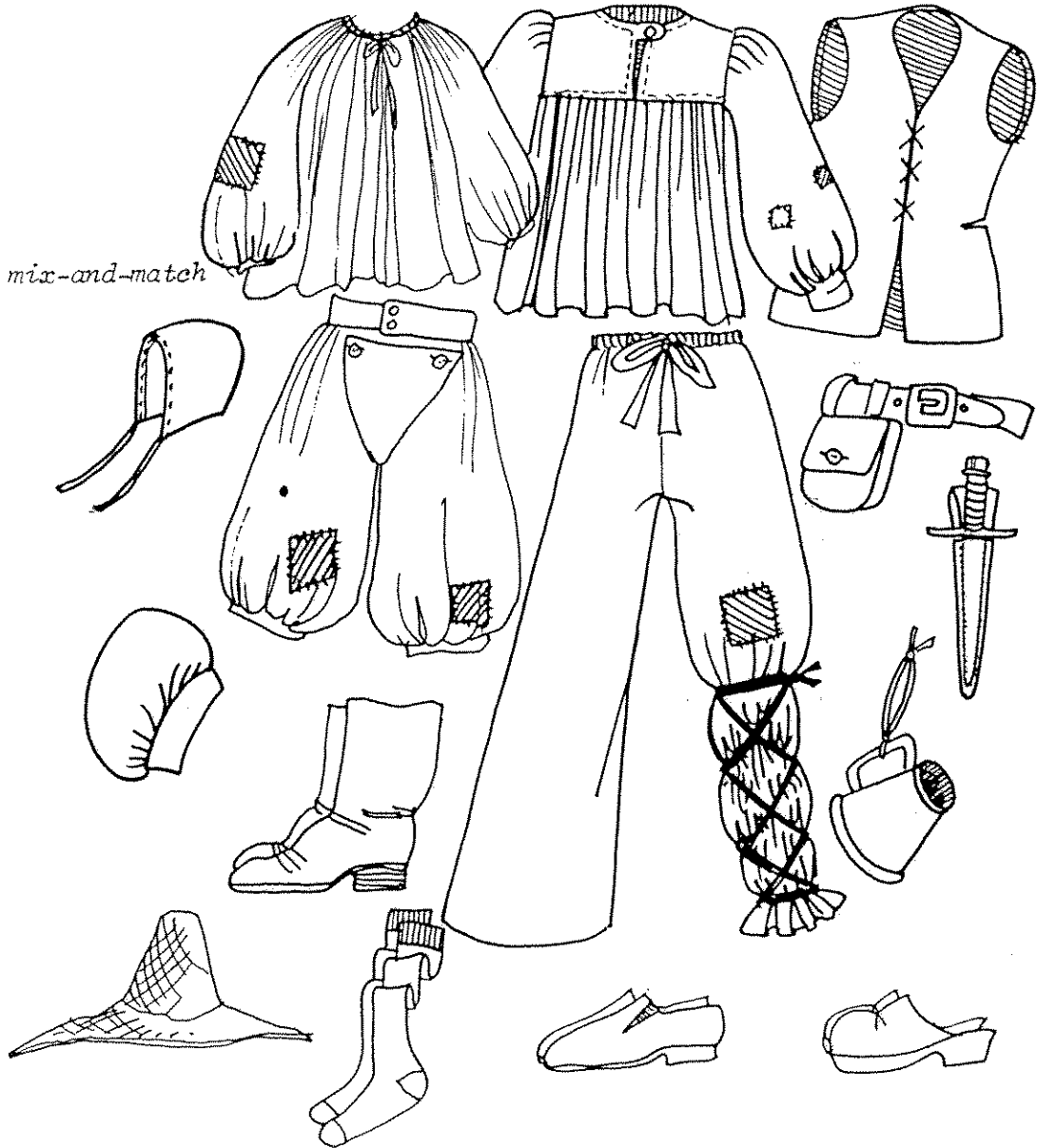
## SECTION II: MEN'S CLOTHING

### MEN'S FASHIONS: AN OVERVIEW

#### I. Lower Class

A peasant man would wear at least a shift or shirt, and breeches of some kind. He might wear a laced-up or buttoned jerkin (vest) with or without sleeves over this, and some kind of hat with a biggins (coif) underneath to keep his shaggy hair out of his eyes. All but the poorest would have cloth hosen (stockings) and shoes, or if he wore no hosen, he might have bare legs or long breeches similar to pajama pants, cross gartered from ankle to knee. Cross gartered breeches were commonly worn by the lower classes since before the Conquest 500 years before. He would have a cape in cold weather.

*Peasant mix-and-match*



Peasant men



At his belt would be a pouch to carry oddments and a small knife for eating purposes. He would be carrying on or about his person, objects pertaining to his profession, whatever it might be. His clothing would probably have dirt and holes or patches on it, and his body was seldom clean, combed or freshly shaven.

Fabrics were coarsely woven, or at least had that appearance. The lower classes mostly spun their own yarn and wove their own cloth, and just because they had to do it does not mean that they were good at it. They wore wool, linen and combinations of the two fibers, such as linsey-woolsey. They also wore leather when they could get it from hunting, and they lined their winter clothes and capes with the skins of rabbits and squirrels.

Colors for dyeing the fabrics were obtained from vegetable sources available in the vicinity, and consisted of mainly earth colors and muted tones. Blue was done with woad and indigo, yellow with saffron or onion skins, red from madder or cochineal, orange from the safflower, brown from weld. Rust

color was gotten by soaking rusting iron in water and green was made by dyeing yellow over blue. Shifts and shirts were left undyed because they were likely to be washed more often.

Trim on peasant clothes was kept simple and usually consisted of embroidery or plain strips of contrasting fabric sewn to the edges of things to set them off. More often, there was no trim or edge decoration at all.

Since there was seldom enough money or time to buy or make a lot of cloth at one time, the color of one garment hardly ever matched the color of another. Also, since a peasant usually only had one outfit, it didn't get washed very often, so it would be well worn, dirty, and patched. These were working clothes, so not very much time could be given to upkeep.

Worn out clothes were not thrown away, but combined with others and recycled in one form or another until the fibers fell apart. Even then, the remains might have been shredded and carded with fresh wool to fill it out and be rewoven into a whole new piece of fabric.

## II. Lower Middle Class

A man of this class would be wearing the same basic garments described in the section on peasants, but they would be somewhat cleaner, neater and less well worn. He would own more than one set of clothes, so they could be cleaned and mended more often.

He would have more than one shirt or shift and might even have a little neck ruffle on the collar. His jerkin or doublet would fit less like a sack and might be made of the same material as his breeches. His hosen would not have great gaping holes in them, but be mended or patched if old, and he definitely owned at least one pair of shoes or boots.

His hair and whiskers would be better trimmed and perhaps recently combed. He would wear a coif with a flat hat or straw hat over that. His hat might sport a feather or two in imitation of his betters.

He would have about him, like the peasant, something pertaining to his profession, as well as the usual belt pouch and eating knife. When the weather was cold, he had a nice warm fur trimmed cape, or maybe the whole cape would be fur lined, with a contrasting fur trim.

The fabrics of his clothes were less coarse than the peasant's rough woven stuff, but they were still highly textured. They were sometimes purchased from professional weavers, so would be finer and more closely woven. They were still mostly made of wool and linen, plus the usual blends, but this does not mean that the cloth all looked alike. There was a great variety in textural and color contrasts, and the possible combinations were almost endless.

Colors of fabrics might be more intense than for peasants, but the nature of the vegetable dyestuffs was such that colors would still be fairly subdued. And they all faded with time and washing. Servants and apprentices were usually dressed in indigo blue clothing because it was a cheap and plentiful dye,

*Middle-class men*



so anybody with pretensions to social standing would avoid that color. The darkest and most intense colors were for formal wear, even back then, but true black was a difficult color to obtain and maintain, and therefore was restricted to the well to do people who had the money to spare for formal clothes.

Trims were simple. Plain colored bands, such as ribbon or rows of embroidery were used on the edges of garments to set them off. These were always colored, never gold or silver metallic threads or trim because of the cost and the sumptuary laws. A person of this class would not wear lace. Hand made lace (and that was the only kind) was prohibitively expensive.

If any jewelry was worn, it would be very simple in design, consisting of glass or flat cut semi-precious stones in settings of brass or pewter. Pins would be the most common type of ornament, with buttons also made as ornaments rather than just plain fastenings. Non-functional jewelry was for the upper classes.

### III. Upper Middle Class

The upper middle class man would quite often be gentry or petty nobility, with his own house and lands. He might also be

a high-ranking servant in a nobleman's household, a rich merchant or highly skilled craftsman of some kind. He would have his own servants, among whom would be a valet, a personal body servant whose sole task was to see to his master's clothing and personal appearance. Therefore, the upper middle class man would dress quite well, if he could afford it. He might choose to pay the sumptuary tax on some item of his apparel so that he could be even more richly dressed.

His shirts were made of fine linen or cotton with neck and wrist ruffles, and perhaps a touch of blackwork embroidery on the collar and cuffs or edging the ruffles. Or he might have some lace on it if he could afford it.

Over the shirt, he wore a close-fitting doublet with long or short skirting that ended somewhere between his upper thigh and the knee, depending on his age and respectability. He wore breeches or slops, also called trunk-hose or upper-stocks on his lower half and they were decorated to some degree.

His hosen, also called nether-stocks now reached all the way up his legs and were sometimes knitted instead of sewn from bias cut fabric, as was most commonly done. Knitted hosen, however, were fabulously expensive, because they were always hand knitted, usually out of silk, and cost upwards of five pounds a pair. That was a princely sum for those days, perhaps equivalent to \$200 nowadays. That's a lot to pay for pantyhose, even silk ones! His fine shoes were decorated with buckles or ribbon shoe-roses and his garter ties were sometimes embroidered or fringed on the ends.

He wore either a flat cap or a tall crowned, small brimmed hat with feathers and a fancy hatband. His hair was worn short and older men and conservative types covered their heads with a coif or biggins under their hats. Men of this class were likely to go clean shaven, or if they had whiskers, they were well trimmed.

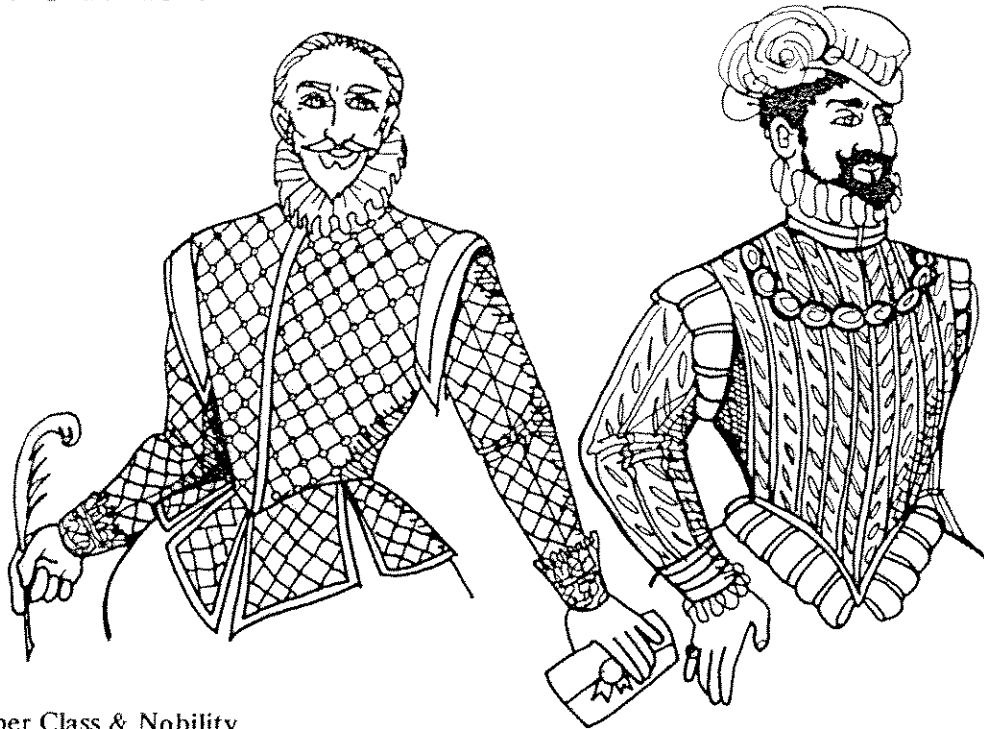
Many of the older or more conservative gentlemen wore knee-length coats called Schaubes, after the German, or if worn long, were called Gowns. These coats were worn over doublets and slops as an outer garment, instead of a cape. The Schaubes resembled modern choir robes with a deep collar and revers of black velvet or fur. For winter wear, outer garments would be completely lined with fur.

Pouch and dagger hung from his belt and he might have a fine gold chain around his neck to denote wealth, rank or position. His clothes were trimmed, embroidered, and jeweled as much as he could afford, and the sumptuary laws would allow, and his appearance was sometimes little different from that of a noble gentleman.

Fabrics were still the practical wool and linen, but they were much finer quality than before. Added to this were cottons for undergarments, and silk satins and velvets in modest quantities. Those who could afford to dress especially well were always skirting the edges of the sumptuary laws, trying to get away with just a little bit more than their neighbors.

Colors were brighter jewel tones, but not in shocking shades and black was the color for the most formal of occasions.

Trim was more ornate, but still mostly restricted to geometric forms or bands of plain colored embroidery or ribbon. The richest paid their sumptuary taxes and wore gold and silver trim, and were richly decorated, beaded, pearled, or bejeweled, just like the nobles.



#### IV. Upper Class & Nobility

The Nobleman was the peacock and fashion setter of the land. He had money, property and titles. He wielded all the political power in England, although he needed help to get dressed. Without his personal servant, he was helpless.

Many noblemen wore their fortunes on their backs, quite literally, with clothing heavily pearled, jeweled and embroidered. The courtier had to make a brave show to attract the attention of the spinster Queen. Her favor would more than make up for the sometimes ruinous expense, as she dispensed valuable monopolies to her favorites. If a gentleman could impress the Queen and keep her favor, his fortune was made. So his clothes had to be ornate.

His shirt was made of fine linen, cotton, or silk, with lace-edged neck and wrist ruffs. If he wore a very large ruff, it was separate from the shirt. A smaller ruff would be sewn to the shirt as part of the collar. It might be stitched with black-work embroidery with gold thread accents and had fine ribbon ties with gold or silver tips on them. If he was pot-bellied or stout, he probably wore a corset to give himself a more slender waistline.

His doublet was close fitting and might have either a peacock belly (after 1575), or perhaps a more natural line down the front. The waist was pointed at the center front and had a short skirting or tabs at the bottom. The shoulders had epaulets or wings, padded rolls, or tabs to make the shoulders look wider

and also to help conceal the points that tied the sleeves on. His sleeves would be very ornate and usually, but not always matched the fabric of the doublet. A noble gentleman might wear a sleeveless jerkin over his doublet, fastening it only at the bottom to create a V-shape in front, further slenderizing his waistline.

Below the waist, he wore slops that came to mid-thigh, padded Venetian breeches that reached the knees, or he wore pansied slops which were little more than a padded hip roll over cannons, a kind of tight-fitting knee length pair of breeches. Pansied slops showed off the legs and buttocks to advantage if the man had a good figure. It was an age of appreciation of men's legs.

His hosen were hand knitted of the finest silk and cost upwards of five pounds a pair. His garters were tied or buckled and were embroidered with gold or silver thread. His court shoes were made of velvet or soft leather, beautifully decorated with jeweled buckles or shoe roses.

His hair was short and whiskers, if any, were neatly trimmed and pomaded. His hat might be a flat cap, or a high crowned, narrow brimmed creation. Small fortunes were lavished on the decoration of the hatband. He spent slightly less on the feathers that were pinned into the hatband.

His cape was heavily decorated and quite often lined with the fur of some rare animal. He would have a pouch, sword and dagger hanging from his belt, and the dandy would also carry a pomander and fan. The nobleman often wore gloves, and they were scented and embroidered as well.

If the gentleman had any money left after clothing himself, he spent the remainder on jewelry to adorn his person. Many courtiers wore a pear-shaped pearl in one pierced ear. Hands glittered with rings and gloves were often slit at the knuckle to better display them. They wore gold chains, and jeweled buttons and brooches. They glistened and gleamed like stars in the sky and were the light of the Queen's court.

When he rode to the hunt, the courtier wore a leather doublet or sleeveless jerkin over his shirt; sturdy fabric or leather breeches; and leather riding boots and gloves. Capes were tied on behind the saddle in case of bad weather, but they were seldom needed unless it rained. The vigorous activity was sufficient to keep the rider quite warm enough.

Fabrics were glorious. Cost was no object and skilled weavers could seemingly work miracles. Velvet could have as many as five separate heights in the weave and some designs took on a three-dimensional look. The weavers of the Renaissance could produce cloth with their simple looms, tools and immense patience that modern computer-run looms cannot duplicate. Silks, satins, damask brocades and velvets were in great demand, along with the usual wools, linens, and a small amount of fine Indian and Egyptian cotton. Fabrics for everyday wear or hunting were less fancy and more practical than ceremonial garb. Most garments were decorated with edging of gold or silver embroidery, richly beaded and bejeweled. Small objects, such as hats, purses, nightcaps, partlet or shirt collar and cuffs, as well as handkerchiefs were heavily stitched with bright silks and metallic threads of precious metal.



Colors were brilliant, but not loud. Black was still most proper for formal wear, but it was a difficult color to achieve and maintain, as it was not color-fast and the color needed renewing often. Early in her reign, Elizabeth preferred a shade of orangey-gold called Tawney, but later in her life, she preferred virginal white for herself and the ladies closest to her.

An important fact to keep in mind is that all their lovely colors came from vegetable or mineral sources, and as such, the intensity of hue available to them was much less than modern dyes. To estimate what their dyes were like, think more in terms of the tones found in the hearts of jewels.

The men and women of Gloriana's court could afford to dress as they liked, so long as no one tried to out-shine the Queen. She reserved for herself the right to outdress them all for her own pleasure.