



A Breakdown of Men's Fashion from 1550-1600

Description



Portrait of Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, oil on panel. Attributed to Steven van Herwijck. 1560s.

Western European fashion experienced quite a change from 1550-1600. The Renaissance brought in a wave of art and culture that swept over Europe and is visible in the fashion of both men and women. Our clearest and most useful tool into seeing into the fashion of the past is through art. More specifically, portraits showcase the opulent styles favored by society's elite.

Portraits were usually painted for prominent figures and on special occasions. For this reason, they may not depict "every day" fashion worn by most people. Which makes complete sense because if you are getting your portrait painted by an artist you probably want to wear your snazziest outfit! With this detail in mind, we can still study these beautifully intricate designs with an appreciative eye.

Western European fashion in the period of 1550-1600 is overall characterized by an increase in opulence. The rise of the ruff, a stiff ruffled neck piece, occurred during this time. The inexplicable codpiece fell out of style for men at this time, perhaps the best trend to be dropped in history.

We usually focus on dresses and gowns from the Renaissance period, so I thought we would shift our focus towards men this week. Although the attire worn by men may seem simple compared to a beaded and embroidered gown, a lot of attention to detail went into the mens' clothing.

Let's take a closer look at what was fashionable for men during this period!



Antoine de Bourbon, father of Henri IV, king of France. François Clouet. 1557

A Breakdown of Men's Fashion:

- A linen shirt with a *ruff* and matching wrist ruffs was the typical choice, until replaced by a collar and matching cuffs later.
- A *doublet* with long sleeves. This is a jacket that is fitted and shaped to snugly fit a man's body.
- A tight-fitting *jerkin* was sometimes worn over the doublet. These were usually sleeveless and made of leather.
- *Hose* made of wool to cover the legs. A variety of hose styles were worn during this period.
 - *Trunk* or *round* hose were short and padded. Especially short hose were worn over *cannions*, which were fitted hose that ended just above the knee. Trunk hose could be *paned* or *pansied* by sewing strips of fabric "panes" over a lining.

- Slops or galligaskins were loose hose that extended just below the knee and could also be panted.
- Pluderhosen are the Northern European version of panted slops that had a very full inner layer that stuck out loosely between the panting.
- *Venetians* are a style of semi-fitted hose that reach just below the knee.
- *Stocking* or *netherstocks* were often worn to cover the legs.
- Shoes were flat with rounded toes. They were fastened by slashes until ties over the instep were adopted.



John III of Sweden. Johan Baptista van Uther. in 1582.

For outerwear, short cloaks or capes were popular at the time. These were usually hip-length with sleeves. In colder weather, longer coats were sported. Military jackets, such as *mandilions*, were also fashionable. Gowns grew out of style and were considered old-fashioned by this point.

Hair was cut short and brushed back from the forehead. In the 1580s, longer styles became popular. Later, in the 1590s, the more fashionable young men wore a *lovelock*, a long section of hair hanging over one shoulder.

The styles of headgear worn during this period changed often. Through the 1570s, a soft fabric hat with a gathered crown was worn. A *capotain* or *copotain*, a conical felt hat with a rounded crown was the style in later years. These hats grew taller over the years and were decorated with a jewel or feather. Headgear was worn both indoors and outside.

Coifs or *biggins* were the close-fitting caps covering the ears and tied under ears. Children and older men wore these under their hats or alone when indoors. Coifs tended to be black in color.

Nightcaps, worn indoors, were conical shaped and made of linen that was embroidered.

Portraits help us to better understand what fashions were popular during this period. They also capture the amount of detail found in men's clothing.

Here is a style gallery of popular styles for men:



Portrait of Prospero Alessandri. Giovanni Battista Moroni. 1580.

Prospero Alessandri is dressed in a severe black jerkin with shorted bases over a light grey doublet with rows of parallel cuts between bands of gold braid. His rose-coloured puffed breeches are decorated with cuts and thin applied gold trim.



Henry III before his ascent or his younger brother the duke of Alençon
. Jean Decourt. 16th century.

The future Henry III of France is shown wearing a doublet and matching cape. He accompanies this with the high collar and figure-of-eight ruff of c. 1573–74.



Il sarto. Moroni, Giovanni Battista. c. 1570-1575.

An Italian tailor in a pinked doublet over a heavily padded hose. The shirt he is wearing features a small ruff.



Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh, Oval. Hilliard, Nicholas. c. 1585.

This miniature of Sir Walter Raleigh shows him wearing a linen cartwheel ruff with lace, or possibly reticella, edging. His small pointed beard was a stylish trend of 1585.



Sir Henry Unton. 1586.

The cartwheel ruff popular in England in the 1580s is worn around Sir Henry Unton's neck. A white satin doublet laced with a red-and-white cord at the neck is also shown. He fashionably drapes his a red cloak with gold trim over one shoulder. His tall black hat with a feather shows a popular style of this period.

**Mens' fashion was anything but boring! What do you think about these past styles? Leave us your comments and thoughts on our blog or [Facebook page!](#)*

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Date Created

August 11, 2011

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