

Attribute Accessories

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Specialized tools/technology used:	Experience level required:
Sewing machine	Beginner/ intermediate

Grade Level (of this example): 6-12

Topic/Content Standards (for this example): Humanities: ELA - understanding of character and theme development; Social Studies – US History, World History, colonization

Summary of Project:

Students are reading novels set at a particular time in history, learning about life in the society at that time (politics, roles in society, resources, etc.) as well as studying the books as literature. They focus on a character from the novel and will create an item of clothing or an accessory that is representative of 1 or more key attributes (traits, virtues, failings) of that character.

This sample item represents the Puritan upbringing and lifestyle of The Scarlet Letter's main character, Hester Prynne. Plain, unadorned cloth was sewn into a simple sack by machine. The letter A, marking the character's adultery, was not hidden, nor was it fanciful, to show the character's acceptance of the mark as merited.



When students present the item to the class they will explain how their design choices reflect their character and share the texts from the reading that back up their opinions. Since the product will be a personal accessory (not very big), students should work individually or in pairs.

The accessories can be hats, scarves, ties, gloves, handbags, belts, ties, even socks. Various fabrics and other materials such as fasteners (buttons, snaps, Velcro, buckles) and threads, flosses, and appliqués can help students generate ideas and make unique projects. Items may be hand- or machine-sewn. Staples are a convenient way to hold pieces together while sewing.



Suggested resources

Common clothing trends from the timeframe and culture indicated in the reading material can be researched online or in additional texts. Theater department faculty can be engaged to reveal their process in designing period-specific costumes.

Extensions:

ELA

- Create a **reversible item** where the opposing attribute (trait, virtue, failing) is highlighted on the reverse side of the object.

For example: the outside of the handbag was marked with an A but otherwise puritanically plain. The inside, however, sports all of the dress code no-no's from *The Scarlet Letter* - ribbons, showy patterns, lacework – the habits not espoused by Hester.

- Create **multiple versions** of the same item that highlight how the characters develop and interact over the course of a text. The similarities and differences of the characters can be represented through design, fabric, decorations, etc.



This flowery, be-ribboned lining, with golden details is on the reverse of the plain exterior view of the bag.

Social Studies

Ideas for advanced builders and high school students

- Create a series of historically accurate items of clothing, shoes, hats, outerwear, to show the changing political trends within a timeframe/ community/ country/ government.
- World History - Create clothing or accessories that demonstrate how a colonized group has adapted that item from an originating culture to fit within their new living system.