

## **AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE HISTORY OF TRADITIONAL FASHION**

The **topic** of the project is traditional fashion and its impacts and meanings in the modern days. Specifically, how different cultures have similarities in fashion traditions and self-expression through clothing. This area of interaction is chosen for the project because people usually look and investigate the differences in cultures, but it is important to see their resemblances, especially from the days of the past.

This project is created for the international community specifically in our school to make everyone praise the diversities and similarities of our cultures and also to make us aware of them not only in hobbies or food preferences but the sameness within our communities that go way back in time.

The **goal** is to create a modern clothing piece that will combine two cultures that are somehow relatable to us. I chose Ukrainian and African cultures. Since I am Ukrainian and have more knowledge about my own culture, I decided to choose it to compare it with a culture that I don't know much about. African culture interested me because I like to learn how to dance all the different dances from African countries and I love the music. In order to achieve this I made a fashion piece that includes patterns and elements from traditional costumes. My global context is Personal and cultural expression because people used clothing to express themselves in any century at any time.

I have prior knowledge in this area as I have seen some images from Ukrainian history in literature books that show what people wore. I also used to do Ukrainian national dance for 6 years, which introduced me to the culture's authentic costumes. Prior knowledge for making clothing I got from art class and some members from my family who used to create different wear from a variety of materials and fabrics.

In Kiev, Ukraine, I visited an exhibition called “In Progress”. It was a fashion project of the Ukrainian dress-code during the independence times. The exhibition was a story of the community, country and people. It really inspired me and gave me a lot of knowledge and ideas for my product. The project was challenging for me because I’ve never designed clothing before and it was difficult to put two cultures that have so much in them in one small piece. One of the resources that I thought was really significant, was a book (Kara-Vasylyeva, Tetyana. *Ukrainska Vishivka: Albom. Mystectvo*, 1993.). It had a short history of the ornaments and examples of what they represented and why they were made. Other resources that I’ve used were internet web-sites in both Ukrainian and English languages.

The first stage of my project was to brainstorm the different options for designing the product and what patterns to use and what they would mean/represent for the audience. Then I started sketching the different options. I looked at patterns that meant something to me and could represent not only myself but my generation. When I was drawing, I saw what I liked best and decided on my final idea. The jacket has Ukrainian embroidery from Kiev’s region and two African patterns. One reflects the love of relatives and community, where the circle represents the household and the dot is the family. This pattern represents the unity. The other pattern represents a belt that was worn by warriors when they went to fight. It shows braveness and fearlessness. When deciding what colors will be used, I tried to find the ones that had similar meanings in both cultures to show the similarities of the community. For example, in both nations, red is a festive color that has a powerful effect to it. It is also one of the most popular colors that can be seen in the ornaments. After finalizing my idea, I started sewing on the embroidery. I used a machine. After I was done with the Ukrainian part of my product, I used fabric markers to paint on the jacket. I decided to add lace near the embroidery to make the jacket stand out more. The lace that I used was once part of a Ukrainian, old, traditional table cloth.

One of the self-management skills that I practiced quite a lot was overcoming distractions. The other important skill that I used was to plan out important assignments and deadlines.

My **final product** was a denim jacket that combined elements of Ukrainian and African cultures. In response to my goal I joined traditional fashion from very different places and found similarities in them. The patterns complimented each other and added an interesting meaning to the piece. I created an original product on history of traditional fashion which is one of my interests. The jacket has an embroidery pattern on both sides of the sleeves in red, white, grey and black colors and white lace on the top and the bottom of the embroidery. The African symbols are drawn also on the sleeves above the Ukrainian part of the jacket and at the back.

One of the **criteria** was to provide a viewer with an original, cultural but yet modern piece of clothing and 6 people that were asked, said that they would wear the product. Some were also able to understand what cultures were being incorporated. One of the other criteria was to make sure that the product is interesting to look at and visually appealing. The people who were asked had positive feedback on the way the product is presented and some said that they found it interesting how the two cultures are combined in one piece.

Completing this project extended my understanding of the topic in a significant way because now I know different traditional clothing pieces not only in different cultures but also regions and what all of them mean. The research helped me learn the differences and similarities of historical costumes and make my project more relatable to the audience because of combining completely different cultures in one thing.

**Inquirers** - the IB learner profile was used quite a lot throughout the whole project because research was one of the key elements to succeed. Throughout the project I investigated the history of cultural fashion and techniques of how to show it on the piece of clothing. It was important to learn not only independently but ask others who might have more experience at certain things. For example, when I started sewing, I asked for a bit of help from a person who is a professional sewer, at the beginning because I didn't have that much experience with it before, only the basics.

**Knowledgeable** - developing understanding of the topic throughout the past month was crucial to be able to understand what was worn earlier and what it meant

and how to do something. Without knowing what patterns there are in African culture, I wouldn't be able to paint something meaningful from Ukrainian culture on the jacket.

**Open-minded** - it is always good to stay open-minded especially to be able to understand different points of view and different types of information that is being found. Especially since my topic included two cultures it was useful to be able to appreciate their traditions and meanings.

**Risk-takers** - when learning about something new and then trying to create it it's good to challenge yourself and take risks to be able to achieve the set goal. For example, when I was sketching the ideas, they looked interesting, but it didn't mean that the jacket would look exactly the same and at the beginning. I was not sure what colors would correspond with each other. The risk here would be to create something that doesn't have a meaning and that doesn't look aesthetic. Also understanding of the purpose from the audience was important which was also one of my criteria specifications.

**Reflective** - when developing anything it's essential to reflect on what was done and how to improve it. Taking suggestions from others and their opinion and self-reflecting is a key to a good result.

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