

CLASS EXPERIENCE

# SPORTS ARMOR DESIGN

WITH EXTENSIONS INTO SUPERHERO ART AND FASHION DESIGN  
ART AND MEDIEVAL EUROPEAN HISTORY

GRADES: 6-12

## BASED ON



Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), Flanders  
*Man in Armor*, ca. 1621-1627  
Oil on canvas  
Gift of Mary M. Emery, 1927.393



Unknown artist, Japan  
*Child's Suit of Armor*, early 19<sup>th</sup>-century  
Metal, doeskin, fabric  
Lent by Gary Grose

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will design protective apparel for an athlete that combines modern day armor with a uniform.
- Students will learn about the proportions of the human body while creating art based on fashion design.

## CONCEPT

The art of arms and armor has evolved greatly from medieval times. Today, protective clothing is still being made to defend and shield modern-day soldiers. For our middle school and secondary students, these inspired art items can be the basis for modern day sports equipment and uniform design, or even fashion design.

## MATERIALS

Examples of athletic and military protective gear  
Sports magazines  
Leftover laminate or transparency sheets (or tracing paper)  
Fine line permanent markers  
Tape  
Tag board trimmed to 8.5"x11"  
Pencils  
Erasers  
Colored pencils  
Metallic paint pens  
Optional: India ink, fabric samples, mat board, glue, metal tooling

## VOCABULARY

**Contour:** a line that shows or describes edges, ridges, or the outline of a shape or form  
**Fashion design:** the professional art field of designing clothing and accessories for people to wear  
**Pattern:** a design element that features repeated shapes, lines or colors  
**Proportion:** how objects in an artwork relate to each other in size.  
**Texture:** the condition of the surface of an artwork, and how it feels (smooth, rough, dimpled, grooved etc.)

## PERCEPTION AND ANALYSIS

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (FOR A *MAN IN ARMOR*)

Questions are in boldface, and answers that students may give follow in italic.

**How can you tell from the painting and armor that the wearer is a noble person or someone with a very high rank?**

*The pose of the man is very proud. His age and body language make him seem distinguished and established. The armor has decorative elements that suggest that it was custom made and expensive, beyond a basic piece of body armor. The weapon makes him look powerful.*

**What elements of the armor have a practical purpose and which are decorative?**

*The bodice is made of metal for strength and durability. It has a lot of detailed etching, metal ridges, and accents. These elements are not required to make the armor safer but are purely decorative. All of the red trim also gives the armor a fashionable feeling (form to go with function).*

**Do you think that pieces of armor belong in an art museum? Why or why not?**

*Students may think it does belong in an art museum because of the time and skill that it takes to create a piece of armor. Some armor is gilded and has decorative etching to make it stylish in addition to being protective.*

**Do you think that this armor would be comfortable?**

*It was custom designed for a person, so it would fit pretty well. However, it would be heavy and limit movement.*

**How is our modern day protective sports gear similar to a suit of armor?**

*They are both designed to be protective and allow movement. Modern day uniforms and helmets have logos, patterns and designs just as the armor has patterns and etchings.*

**For Comparison**

Students may also compare the armor in the painting to armor in the CAM's current exhibition *Dressed to Kill: Japanese Arms and Armor*.

**PROCEDURE**

**Day 1 (based on 45-minute classes)**

- Show students examples of athletic and military protective gear (lacrosse gear provides great examples), including shoulder pads, helmets and gloves. Discuss how these items relate to armor, and how upgrades have been made to allow the athletes to be more comfortable (lightweight, wicking material, more flexibility).
- Explain to students what a fashion designer does, and tell them that they will be designing modern day sports armor.
- Distribute pictures of sports magazines, and have students select a picture of an athlete in a pose where the viewer can see their whole body – OR – have students stand on tables and pose in athletic stances with sport equipment,
- If using magazine pictures, have students trace the contours of the figure on tracing paper or leftover sheets of clear laminate. They should not go into too much detail. Before the next class, feed a copy machine with trimmed tag board, and copy student outline drawings on a lighter setting so the images are copied with light grey lines.

**Days 2 & 3**

- Hand back drawings, and have students design armor on their figure using pencils and erasers.
- Students should design armor that serves as a uniform as well, choosing team colors and patterns. Demonstrate how to use drawing techniques to simulate textures (stippling, crosshatching, etc.).
- Remind students how the original armor they looked at was etched with intricate lines and patterns.
- Require that they include protection for the athlete's torso and head, and tell students they can also design gloves, footwear, etc. Encourage students to draw armor with proper proportions to their figures. When the pencil drawing is finished, have them go over all their lines with a fine line permanent marker.

**Day 4**

- Have students color in designs with colored pencil, and add details with metallic paint pens.

**Project Modification**

There are many different directions to go with this project. Designs can be completed with pen and ink and left uncolored, or students may make a collage with decorated papers or fabrics. Metal tooling could be used and etched. Superheroes are extremely popular, and students may

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also design their own persona. Projects may also lean more toward fashion design versus sports themed drawings.

### ASSESSMENT

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student will choose an athlete in a pose and trace the contours.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student will create protective armor considering correct human proportions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student will use patterns and lines to simulate textures in their designs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Overall craftsmanship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL

### NATIONAL STANDARDS

HS Proficient VA: Cr1.2.1a : Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies  
European History

### RESOURCES

*Medieval Costume, Armor & Weapons* by E. Wagner, Z. Drobna and J. Durdik. Dover Press  
*Fashion Sketchbook: Essentials Fashion Sketchbook, A Designer's Companion*



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Examples of student work:

