

# High-Class Costumes

In Elizabethan England, what you wore defined who you were. Laws dictated the strict fashions of each social class.

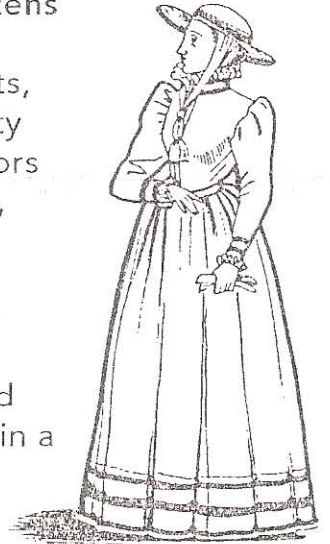
Queen Elizabeth wore a bum-roll (bustle), farthingale (hoop), and a tightly laced corset.

Together, they made her hips appear four-feet wide and her waist appear as thin as a wasp.

She also wore unrestrained jewelry, a bright red wig, a white, lead-based paste on her face, and fancy headpieces and collars.



Middle-class citizens included doctors, lawyers, merchants, and other property owners. Their colors were black, white, and bright, jewel-tones such as ruby-red. They could not wear purple, but copied other royal styles in a subdued way.



The noble class copied the Queen, but in more muted styles. Nobles wore imported fabrics—silk, lace, and velvet—in purple and other royal colors. Many ladies who used white paste to imitate Queen Elizabeth died from lead poisoning. Ladies generally did not corset their waists smaller than the Queen's.



Peasants wore leather, wool, and linen—all common, domestic products. Cotton, silk, or velvet were too expensive. Their colors were earth tones and pastels. They generally had one multilayer outfit, sometimes patched together from several worn-out outfits.

