

## GLOSSARY OF COSTUME TERMS

We have created this glossary as a companion to our costume plots, to clarify terms that may not be familiar to the reader. It is not intended to be a comprehensive set of definitions, but rather to explain what we mean when we use these terms.

**ascot tie** - from 1876 on - a made-up scarf with tabs crossed & held with tie-pin. Neckband fastens behind (4)

**baldrick** - or baldric - 13th century to 1700 - man's belt or sash worn over right shoulder diagonally across chest to support sword, dagger, bugle, or pouch - also seen in modern ceremonial dress (2) (4) (5)

**band** - a collar of white linen surrounding the neck, sometimes stiffened. Still worn by some clergy (5)

**basque** - 19th century - very short overskirt sewn to bodice (3)

**bertha** or berthe (French) - from 1839 on - large cape-like collar for women, usually of lace, covering their very low neckline, introduced in the nineteenth century (1)

**bicorne** - early 19th century - man's hat with wide brim turned up on the sides - usually worn with peaks worn front and back (5)

**biretta** - clerical square hat with three ridges & pompom - color denotes rank - Cardinal - red, bishop - purple, priest -

black, cannon - white (5)

**bloomers** - underpants with loose legs gathered at the bottom, around knee length. In 1851, Amelia Bloomer designed them to promote dress reform for women, but they gained little acceptance. bloomers became popular as specialized clothing worn for athletics and bicycle riding in the 1880's. Later, they were commonly worn as gym clothes for girls (1)

**boa** - late 19th century, periodically revived - made of swans-down, feathers or fur, women's long scarf or neckpiece, usually about 2 yards long, worn draped over the shoulders (4) (5)

**boater** - 19th century man's stiff straw hat with moderately deep, flat-topped crown and straight narrow brim (4)

**boot covers** - leather or faux leather boot upper with elastic strap under the instep worn with shoes of matching color - a costume short-cut to simulate boots without having to fit the sole (4)

**bowler** - 1850 on - man's hard felt hat with domed crown and narrow brim rolled up at the sides - designed by an English hatter, William Bowler - worn by the earl of darby to the races & became known as the derby by Americans (4)

**brassart** or brassard - medieval band of armor for the arm - today, an arm band of black for mourning (5)

**breeches** - see also knee breeches -

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short man's trousers fastened below knee, used especially for riding or court costume (5)

**bullet helmet** - medieval helmet rising to a point at the crown, in the shape of a bullet. May have an elongated portion covering the ears and back of head (7)

**busker** - see also costermonger - an English entertainer who dances, sings, or recites on the street or in a public place (6)

**bustle** - pad or arrangement of steel springs worn under a skirt to create a projecting derriere, popular in various forms in the latter half of the nineteenth century (1)

**caftan** or kaftan - male and female long coat-like garment worn in the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea (Levant) 14 & 1500's - modern adaptations for casual & leisure wear (5)

**camisole** - 1820's on - short sleeved or sleeveless underbodice (usually white) worn over stays to protect the tight fitting dress (4)

**capote** - or capot - long military overcoat from Levant, cloak worn in medieval time, used in Jewish rituals (5)

**cassock** - originally an outer coat of foot soldiers and horsemen, buttoned in front, knee length & slightly flared. 17th century clerical full length garment has standing collar. worn under a surplice - still contemporary (5)

**chainmail** - a mesh of interlaced metal links - used to make the first protective armour (5) a simulation for stage wear is knitted of a coarse yarn and gilt with a metallic finish on the purl side (7)

**chapeau bras** - tiny tricorn hat or a bicorne which folded flat, carried under the arm when wigs and headdresses were very large (3) (5)

**chemise** - from early medieval to end of 19th century - the forerunner of lingerie - the undermost garment, usually of linen, worn by both sexes - often voluminous & knee length or longer - replaced in the 1890's by combinations (4) (5)

**chiton** - basic male & female garment of Ancient Greece, made from a rectangle of linen or wool (5)

**cloak** - a loose outer garment of varying length falling from the neck over the shoulders (4)

**coronet** - small crown, denoting noble rank below that of a sovereign (2)

**corset** - end of 14th century on - an undergarment with whalebone or steel ribs embracing the chest and natural waist level - fell out of fashion in the 1920's (4)

**cote-hardie** - 14th to mid 15th century - outer garment (3) - female - garment worn over the kirtle (underdress)- low neck, sleeves with tippets, with or without buttons down the front (4)

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**crinoline** (French) - from 1829 - a petticoat made to produce skirts of extraordinary volume in the mid-nineteenth century. Crinoline was the term for a petticoat made of a fabric woven from horsehair (crin) and linen (lin). During the 1850's, the cage frame crinoline, made of steel hoops or whale bones, was introduced (1)

**cummerbund** - a wide sash worn at the waist - usually with horizontal pleats worn by men with a tuxedo for evening wear (6)

**cutaway coat** - 1838 - man's day time tail coat with front edges sloping away from above the waist level and often worn open to side seam. By 1850 it was generally called a cutaway, and by 1870 it was merging into the morning coat (4)

**dalmatic gown** - wide sleeved, long tunic of simple style originally from Dalmatia - adopted by Romans (5)

**derby** - 1860's on - American name for the bowler hat (4)

**doublet** - 14th century to circa 1670 - short, fitted jacket with sleeves - usually close-fitting and ending at waist, or with short petals below (3) (4)

**drawers** - from 16th century on - male and female underpants usually made of linen (4)

**farthingale** - structure that expands the skirt from underneath by hoops of bone,

wood, or other material (3)

**fedora** - soft man's hat with fairly high, tapering, crown with front to back crease in top (3) and pinched dimples at the center front of the crown. Brim may be wide or narrow, but is usually soft & turned down in front. (7) Named after Sardou's heroine in the drama Feodora in Paris 1883. Similar to the homburg (5)

**fez** - a brimless, cone-shaped, flat crowned hat with little knob or long tassel from the center of the crown - worn by men in Egypt & some mid-eastern countries (2)

**fichu** - woman's scarf usually made of muslin, worn in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1) triangular piece of material draped over low neckline (3)

**flashes** - garters that hold up a Scotsman's high socks to just below the knee; have ribbons which show at the side, just below the turnover at the top of each sock. (7)

**frock coat** - end of 18th to end of 19th century - man's single or double-breasted, lapelled, waisted coat with full skirt to or below the knee (4)

**gauntlet** - from mid 15th century to the abandonment of armor in the 17th century - a glove-like defense of the hand; subsequently a glove with a cuff spreading up the wrist (4)

**gingham** - cotton fabric usually with a

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check pattern - often printed (5)

**glengarry** - 1860's - a soft, front-to-back hat higher in the front than in the back - generally decorated with a small feather and pendant ribbons behind - (4)  
traditionally worn with the kilt outfit

**great coat** - term used from 18th century on - male & female outdoor overcoat varying in style according to the fashion of the day (4)

**greaves** - band of armor for leg between knee & ankle (6)

**homburg** - 1870 on - man's felt hat with a dent from front to back in the crown. The brim was curved up at the sides. worn by Edward VII who visited Homburg - the town where the style originated. (5)

**jabot** (French) - 19th century - cloth or lace ornament worn at the neck and over the chest. Originally for men; became popular from the mid-nineteenth century (1)

**jerkin** - 1450's to 1630's - jacket worn over the doublet, often without sleeves, sometimes with hanging sleeves (4)

**jodhpurs** - riding breeches cut very full over the hips and tapering at the knees to become tight fitting from the knees to ankles (2)

**kaftan** see caftan

**khaki** - from the Urdu meaning dust - a

dull yellow, dust color used in uniforms of soldiers fighting in the desert (5)

**kilt** - a wrap-around, pleated garment worn only by men, which covers the body from waist to knees, made of fabric woven in the tartan of the clan to which the man belongs

**knee breeches** (culottes - French) - typical knee-length pants worn by men in the eighteenth century, made to fit the leg (1) the normal legwear of the 18th century (4)

**leggings** - a looser fitting version of tights - worn with tunic for medieval and fairy tale looks (7)

**Levant** - the lands bordering the east shores of the Mediterranean Sea (2)

**long johns** - a one-piece undergarment for men with long sleeves and legs, button front from neck to crotch and horizontal or vertical back opening below the waist. 19th century on - often knitted of fine wool for warmth (7)

**lorgnette** - female eyeglasses held on a long folding handle, used for examining objects at a distance or as a fashion accessory at social functions when spectacles would appear heavy. Fashionable from 1893 to early 1900's (5)

**middy** - a loose hip-length pullover blouse with a sailor collar - mid 1800's for sailors, became popular for women in early 1900's (6) (7)

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**monocle** - an eyeglass for one eye - in general use from late 19th century on (5)

**Morion helmet** - open helmet without visor introduced by Spanish; copied from Moors (5)

**morning coat** - see cutaway coat

**mortarboard** - academic cap with square flat top attached to round cap, adorned with projecting long silk tassel. Still worn at educational functions (5)

**Norfolk jacket** - 1880 on - belted jacket with two box pleats from the shoulders to the hem in front and back. Worn by men for sports and travel in the latter half of the nineteenth century (1)

**pannier**, or panier (French) - hoop made of reed or whalebone to support a wide skirt; it was bell-shaped during the early eighteenth century but sometimes divided into two side basket shapes after the middle of the century (1)

**pantalettes** - leg coverings with ruffles that extend to or below the hem of the dress

**pantaloon**s - long, tight-fitting men's trousers (3)

**Pearly** - casual name for costermonger - a London seller of produce, fish, etc from a barrow - characteristic male & female garments covered with pearl buttons arranged in complex designs - worn now only for special occasions (6)

**picture hat** - 1890's - a large wide-brimmed hat of straw or light material, brightly coloured trim. Named from Gainsborough's portrait of the Dutchess of Devonshire (4)

**plaidiee** - originally the blanket each Scotsman carried with him into battle folded on his shoulder, much as a modern soldier carries his own sleeping bag. It has now evolved into a sash worn primarily for ceremonial occasions by both the men and women of a clan, draped from right shoulder to left hip

**plus-fours** - 1920's & 30's - easy fitting men's tweed or worsted knickerbockers (loose breeches gathered in below the knee into a band) worn for sports and walking (5)

**reticule** - (French) - woman's small handbag; appeared in the late eighteenth century to take the place of a pocket (1)

**ruff** - 1560's to 1640's male & female - pleated or convoluted collar - often of a stiff, sheer material - varying widths & styles (4)

**scapular** - men's sleeveless coat with front and back panels, worn by certain monks (5)

**shawl** - term used from 2nd half of 18th century - square or oblong wrap to cover the shoulders & upper parts of the body made in various sizes & materials. Used by women chiefly as an indoor

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accessory, by men as protection in travelling by coach (4)

**shako** - military cap in the form of a cylinder or truncated cone, often with a visor and plume (2)

**sideless surcoat** - 14th to 16th century - women's sleeveless, low necked, long overgarment (5)

**sporran** - leather pouch worn in front of the kilt, by a Scottish Highlander; may be all leather, or decorated with animal hair tassels, fur, or tooled silver (5)

**surplice** - from 17th century - white clerical vestment of lawn or linen with flowing wide sleeves worn over a cassock (5)

**tabard** - late 13th and 14th century overgarment - may be clerical or heraldic - loose outer garment, sleeveless or with short sleeves - may be emblazoned with the arms of the master (2) (4)

**tail coat** - appeared 1790 - man's coat cut straight across front at waist level, descending to tails at the rear. Fundamental style endures as modern evening dress (5)

**Tam o'Shanter** 1880's - a round, flat, brimless soft hat having a bobble in the centre of the crown - may be worn with the kilt outfit - the name derived from the poem by Robert Burns (4)

**taupe** - from the French for mole - a moderate to dark brownish grey (6)

**teddy** - a woman's undergarment combining a chemise with drawers. First introduced in the 1920's (1)

**tippet** - a long, narrow, pendent part of a sleeve or hood (6)

**toga** - outer dress of Roman people - a single piece of undyed woolen cloth, cut in a near semi-circle (5)

**top hat** - from early 1800's - a tall, high crowned hat with a narrow brim usually slightly rolled up at the sides. Shape of brim and height of crown varies with era - might be worn by women riders from the 1830's (4)

**truncheon** - the club carried by a police officer (6)

**trunks** - an underpant made of a dense, opaque fabric or knit worn over an undergarment to preserve modesty when dancing (7)

**tunic** - 9th to early 14th century - man's loose body garment of varying length - many styles (4)

**turban** - 1760's on - a head-dress of material folded round the head or made up in that design - (4)

**tutu** - usually short, full skirt made of several layers of tulle (netting) worn by ballerinas (6)

**tux** or tuxedo jacket - also called dinner jacket - 20th century man's semiformal

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evening dress jacket (6)

**wimple** - from late 12th century - fabric draped over the front of the neck & under the chin, worn with a veil over the head (4)

HAVE WE MISSED SOMETHING?  
PLEASE LET US KNOW IF THERE ARE  
OTHER TERMS THAT MIGHT BE  
INCLUDED HERE.

**wing shirt** - man's formal shirt with a wing tip collar - usually reserved for the most formal of occasions (7)

**yarmulke** - skullcap worn by Jewish Orthodox or conservative males (2)

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