

# Parent Guide



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word searches



## What is this resource and how do I use it?

Read about fashion designer Mary Quant and how she was influenced by history to create her iconic garments.

## What skills does this practise?

Key Vocabulary

Problem Solving

Communication

Reading Comprehension

## Further Activity Ideas and Suggestions

Why not find out more about the Swinging Sixties style and music influences?

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# Mary Quant

Born: 11<sup>th</sup> February 1934 in London, UK

**Quant** has been described as inventive, opinionated and business-minded. She is known as the most iconic fashion designer of the 1960s.

Mary Quant has been designing clothing since the 1950s. Before that, she grew up in the Blackheath area of London. Both of her parents were teachers. She studied illustration at Goldsmith College, after which she went on to earn an apprenticeship as a couture milliner.



Quant always had an eye for fashion. In 1955, she opened her own shop in London, which sold affordable clothing and accessories. They were modern and fit in well with the Chelsea look at the time.

Unlike many designers, Quant was the same age as those she was selling clothes to. This gave her an edge to knowing what the young fashion-loving customers were looking for. She was influenced by musicians, dancers and the bohemian chic of the 'Mods' and Chelsea set.

Her boutique started by selling clothing she had bought in from other designers. Initially, the best-selling garments included t-shirts, black leggings and white plastic collars to wear with a plain dress as an accessory.

Quant quickly became disheartened by selling other people's clothing so she decided to stock and sell her own collections. She focused on the growing youth market with its sharp tastes and desire to wear original, modern and affordable clothing.

**Her first collection aimed to be simple and wearable. She wanted clothes to be "relaxed" and "suited to the actions of normal life". She paired pinafore dresses with bright patterned tights, creating bold outfits for adults which were similar to those she had worn as a child in her dance classes.**

Once her first boutique was doing well, she opened a second to keep up with demand. She began exporting her clothing to America and mass producing her garments to satisfy her customer requests.

Quant was learning how to respond to the needs of her customers well. The introduction of the mini skirt is a prime example. Many consider Quant to be the originator of this now iconic garment, but she claims it was her customers who drove the need for such a design by asking for the hemline to be shorter and shorter! Its name comes from Quant's favourite make of car, the Mini.

By the mid-60s, Quant's name was everywhere in the fashion industry and her brand was known worldwide. She added more garments to her popular range, many of which became statement pieces of the Swinging Sixties; the shiny plastic raincoat, patterned tights and pinafore dresses. Quant also expanded into accessories and make-up kits. Her boutique would be a one-stop shop for high street fashion in the 1960s.

Just over 10 years after opening her first boutique, in 1966, **Mary Quant was awarded an OBE by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for her services to fashion.**





Quant continued to be creative with her garments. She notably designed and sold hot pants, which would become another 60s classic.

It has been estimated during the 60s, seven million women had at least one Quant item in their wardrobe at home. One of Quant's most famous admirers was 60s fashion model, Twiggy, who turned the mini skirt into an international trend.

In 2009, the Royal Mail launched a set of postage stamps dedicated to British Design Classics. Mary Quant appeared on one of the stamps wearing her classic mini skirt and zip-up top.

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## Quotes

"The fashionable woman wears clothes. Clothes don't wear her."

"A woman is as young as her knees."

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## Glossary

**milliner:** A milliner is a person who makes or sells women's hats.

**Swinging Sixties:** This phrase refers to the youth-driven culture in the mid- to late-1960s in the UK.

