



# EDUCATOR GUIDE

## **THE POWER OF STYLE** **How Fashion and Beauty Are Being Used** **to Reclaim Cultures**

by Christian Allaire

Lesson plan by Jonelle St Aubyn

**GENRE:** middle grade non-fiction

**THEMES:** fashion, culture, cultural influences, diversity, customs, tradition, anthropology, identity, self-expression

**SUITABLE FOR:** Grades 7+, Ages 12+

**GUIDED READING LEVEL:** Fountas and Pinnell V

**LEXILE:** 1070L

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS:** CCSS.ELA-Literacy Strand-Reading literature:  
RI.6.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9  
SL.6.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,1e, 2,3,4,5,6  
W.6.1,1a,1b,1c,1d,1e,2,2a,2b,2c,2d,2e,2f,4,5,6,7,8,9b,10  
L.6.1,1a,2,2a,2b,3,3a,3b,4,4a,4b,4c,4d,5,5b,5c,6

**GENERAL CURRICULUM** Understanding Fashion - HNC 3C0

**CONNECTIONS:** B1. Cultural Influences  
B1.1 Identify and describe garments and styles of personal adornment typical of various cultures  
B1.2 Explain how various garments and styles of personal adornment express a person's cultural identity and heritage  
B1.3 Describe ways in which current fashion trends reflect aspects of garments and adornment associated with various cultures

## **SUMMARY:**

Style is not just the clothes on our backs—it is self-expression, representation, and transformation. As a fashion-obsessed Ojibwe teen, Christian Allaire rarely saw anyone that looked like him in the magazines or movies he sought out for inspiration. Now the fashion and style writer for *Vogue*, he is working to change that—because clothes are never just clothes. Men’s heels are a statement of pride in the face of LGBTQ+ discrimination, while ribbon shirts honor Indigenous ancestors and keep culture alive. Allaire takes the reader through additional topics like cosplay, make up, hijabs, and hair, probing the connections between fashion and history, culture, politics, and social justice.

**Please remember that the suggested questions and activities within this educator guide are meant to serve as a starting point. Educators are encouraged to select items from each part of the guided inquiry process that work best for their style of teaching and will help them meet their goals when covering the topics in this book. Activities and prompts should be tweaked and/or reformatted to best fit your students, context, and community to ensure equity and inclusion.**

# BEFORE READING THE BOOK

These activities build the context, introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

## PART A: ENGAGE

In order to effectively engage students with this book, it is important to introduce students to the topic in a way that will capture their prior knowledge, interest, and imagination. The following activities are designed to do just that!

### A HUMAN LIBRARY

One great way to engage students in this topic is to invite guest presenters to speak to students directly by hosting a Human Library. A Human Library is a way for people to reach out and connect with individuals in their community that they might not normally engage with. It has also been described as a learning platform where personal dialogues are used to challenge stigmas and stereotypes.

Visitors to a library have an opportunity during a planned event to borrow Human Books—volunteers who are willing to share their personal stories in a safe environment—and to engage in conversation with them. Human Libraries promote tolerance, celebrate differences, and encourage understanding of people who come from varied cultural or lifestyle backgrounds. You can host your Human Library in person or virtually. Potential “Human Books” could include:

- an Indigenous fashion designer
- a natural hair care professional
- a drag queen
- an Indigenous Elder
- a cosplay artist
- a hijab designer
- a shoe designer
- a makeup artist

You can choose to add to this list, depending on what areas of interest you want your students to focus on—the possibilities are endless. If you need help planning your own Human Library, check out this how-to guide created by the Ontario Library Association (OLA) [here](#).

Not enough time to host a full Human Library? Working with local fashion designers, hair stylists, and makeup artists to do in-person or online guest presentations is another option. Or you can try the [Digital Human Library](#) and see if they can find experts in the field for you!

## PART B: EXPLORE

Now that students are engaged in the material, it is important for them to have time to explore areas of personal interest. The following are some ideas that students might use to begin their personal exploration into the power that fashion and beauty can have:

1. Ask students to conduct research on a designer, hair stylist, or makeup artist from their own cultural background/heritage. What impact are these professionals having on the world of fashion and beauty?
2. Ask students to explore different hairstyles and their respective cultural significance.
3. Ask students to research brands that are promoting inclusivity, body positivity, and acceptance. How are these brands transforming the world of fashion and beauty?

## WHILE READING THE BOOK

The questions below are based on information presented in each chapter. Educators are encouraged to select and assign questions during chapter readings that best support information that they want to emphasize in their classes. Students can then share their information with their classmates in a variety of formats (i.e., think pair share, jigsaw, four corners, etc.)

### VIDEOS

*The Power of Style* covers a wide variety of forms of fashion and creative expression and how they relate to the reclamation of culture. The following are a series of short videos and documentaries that students can watch to help them learn more about the topics that will be covered in the book. These videos can be shown before or after reading each chapter. **Please preview all videos that you plan to use with your students.** Some of these videos are better suited to a high school audience. Selection should be based on what would work best and be most appropriate for your students. Students are encouraged to share what they have learned and to engage in discussion with their peers about what they knew before watching, what they wanted to know while watching, and what they want to learn more about after watching. Providing students with a K-W-L chart prior to viewing will be helpful to get them to clarify their ideas. An copy of a K-W-L chart can be found [here](#).

### K-W-L Chart

Assess what you know about a particular topic before and after you have engaged with it. Fill the the columns below with what you **K**now about the topic, what you **W**ant to know, and what you've **L**earned.

What do you <b>K</b> now about the topic?	What do you <b>W</b> ant to know?	What did you <b>L</b> earn?

## CHAPTER 1: SEWING TRADITION

[How Fashion Designer Bethany Yellowtail Celebrates Her Native American Heritage](#) — Bethany Yellowtail left Montana’s Crow Indian Reservation at 17 to follow her dream of becoming a fashion designer. Since then, Bethany has overcome discrimination to create unique pieces deeply rooted in her heritage, with her work truly celebrating authentic voices from the Indigenous community. Watch Bethany explain why Indigenous representation is so vital and how to appreciate it without appropriating it.

[bYellowtail](#) — This is Bethany Yellowtail’s YouTube channel, featuring different lines from her collection, as well as other aspects of Indigenous contributions to fashion.

[Alter-NATIVE Episode 1](#) — Bethany pours her traditions and heartbreak into her B.Yellowtail company, including one of her most popular pieces, the Sun Road Woman dress. Along the way, she faces instances of cultural appropriation (including having designs plagiarized for a major fashion show) and finds her own voice as both designer and political activist. For Bethany, dressing is resistance.

[Jamie Okuna](#) — These videos showcase the skills behind the work of fashion artist Jamie Okuma (j.okuma). Learn more about her at her [website](#), her Facebook @Jamie Okuma, her Instagram @j.okuma, her Twitter @j.okuma, and her Snapchat @j.okuma.

[Anita Fields](#) — This is a short video about Anita Fields, a talented Indigenous artist focusing on contemporary pottery. Anita brings her family’s history, culture, and traditions with her in every piece of work she creates.

Ask students:

1. Why is ribbon work important to Indigenous cultures?
2. Explain the significance of the history of ribbon work and the impact that history has had on the future of ribbon work.
3. Why did the author consult his grandparents before deciding on the color selection for his ribbon shirt? What was the significance of the color choices?
4. “It’s more than just a shirt—it’s a family heirloom.” What does the author mean when he refers to the shirt as a family heirloom? What items of clothing would be considered family heirlooms in your family or culture?
5. Compare the fashion designs of Jamie Okuma, Anita Fields, and Bethany Yellowtail. What are some similarities and differences in their approaches to ribbon work?
6. What is the difference between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation?

## CHAPTER 2: MY HAIR, MY WAY

[Hair Love](#) — *Hair Love*, an Oscar®-winning animated short film from Matthew A. Cherry, tells the heartfelt story of an African American father learning to do his daughter’s hair for the first time.

[Nancy’s Workshop](#) — One Sunday a month, natural hair specialist Nancy Falaise closes the doors of her Montreal salon to lead a private workshop for young Black girls struggling to love their natural hair. Step-by-step, she teaches them how to wash, detangle, style, and care for their respective hair textures, while also creating a safe space for them to bond over their shared experiences and forge meaningful friendships. *Nancy’s Workshop* is an intimate and immersive exploration of this journey. It offers a vivid, almost tactile experience of manipulating various curl patterns and textures through the use of extreme close-ups and macro cinematography.

[Quannah Style](#) — *Quannah Style* is just one of the many fabulous subjects featured in *Canada’s a Drag*, a docu-series from CBC Arts that showcases drag artists from across the true North strong and fierce. **(mature content)**

[Braids and Appropriation in America](#) — Lupita Nyong’o, Young M.A, Ayana Bird, Lacy Redway, Vernon François, and more talk about braids and Black hair culture in America.

[The History of Black Women’s Hair](#) — Black women’s hair has played an important role in their survival. Watch freelance makeup artist Zainab Jay recreate some methods of hairstyling that were essential for the survival of African people, including an African braiding technique that was created by Black Ancestors to prevent hunger during slavery. Many African women braided gold, rice, or seeds into their hair sustain them and support them in building a new life.

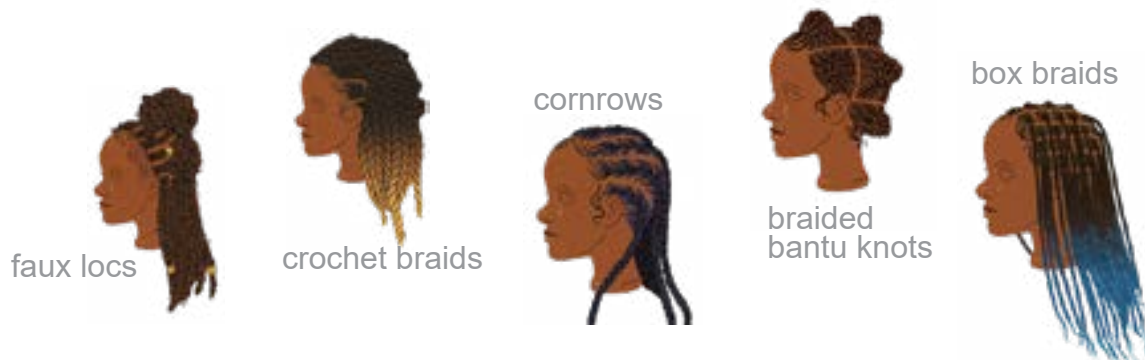
[The Evolution of Natural Hair On Screen | MANE | NowThis](#) — Here’s how movies and shows like *Black Panther* and *Insecure* are changing the norm when it comes to natural hair in Hollywood.

[Black Women Share Their Hair Stories](#) — From wearing it natural to chemically altering it, every Black woman has a hair story (or seven). *Teen Vogue*’s cover star and *The Hunger Games* actress Amandla Stenberg shares her story.

[The Cultural Importance of Native Hair](#) — Professor of Ojibwe and Indigenous author, trainer, and speaker Dr. Anton Treuer discusses the spiritual importance of hair in Native culture and how others have used cutting hair as a weapon against Native people.

Ask students:

1. Why is wearing one's hair naturally considered to be a power move in the Black community? Why do some Black women feel pressure to straighten and/or relax their natural hair?
2. Do you think how you wear your hair (i.e., natural, straight, wigs, etc.) changes how people perceive you? Why or why not?
3. Can you identify some celebrities who are choosing to wear their hair naturally?
4. What significance does wearing their hair long hold for some Indigenous men?
5. What are some examples of braided hairstyles?



### CHAPTER 3: LEVEL UP

[Cosplay: Beyond the Fantasy | ET Documentary](#) — In this documentary, EOnline producer Jesse Goddard follows four cosplayers—Meisha Mock, Saya, Angi Viper, and Tita Ghanjanasak—as they prepare for the Comic-Con Revolution in Ontario, California. Along the way, the women share how cosplay has evolved with the rise of social media and the debate within the community about art versus attention and what comes out on top.

[Costume Culture | A Cosplay Documentary](#) — Presented by Ji-nie Cosplay, *Costume Culture* follows two cosplayers from the Greater Toronto Area and their lives juggling work and school alongside their demanding hobby. Each cosplayer has their own niche within the hobby, and so we explore facets of the craft in separate parts, including sewing and prop making (MugiMoo), and wigs and armour (Tempest Cosplay), as well as the overall joy the hobby brings.

[I'm a Body Positive Cosplayer of Color](#) — How does it feel to be included in a list of bad cosplayers simply because you're a plus size person of color? GeishaVi, a cosplayer and makeup artist, takes us through her creative process as she makes her costume for the New York Comic Con and talks about online bullying, race, and weight issues.

**BTS with Tranquil Ashes Interview with a Cosplayer** — On this episode, Anja sits down with cosplayer and makeup artist Tranquil Ashes to discuss cosplay, Michael B Jordan, building confidence and dealing with trolls online.

Ask students:

1. Why do some people enjoy cosplay and why has it grown in popularity?
2. Who is participating in cosplay?
3. Does cosplay help or hurt body positivity? Explain.
4. Where did cosplay originate from?
5. How has cosplay expanded to become more inclusive and diverse?
6. What is Comic Con and how has it had an influence on cosplay?
7. What is the difference between gender-bend and crossplay?
8. What are some tools that would be useful in creating a cosplay outfit?

## **CHAPTER 4: HEAD STRONG**

**Headdress** — J.J. Neepin is a female Indigenous filmmaker. With the help of photographer Nadya Kwandibens, J.J. plans to recreate her great-grandfather's portrait. The headdress is a powerful symbol with great meaning in First Nations communities. Headdress is the start of an ongoing conversation about tradition and cultural appropriation.

**Haute Hijab | Melanie Elturk** — Melanie of Haute Hijab posts easy-to-follow hijab tutorials, lifestyle vids, and travel vlogs for all things Haute Hijab. Learn more about Melanie here: SHOP - [www.hautehijab.com](http://www.hautehijab.com), Snapchat @hautehijab, Instagram @hautehijab, Facebook Haute Hijab.

**Leah Vernon** — Get to know Leah Vernon and her life as a Muslim fashion influencer.

**Halima Aden** — We know Halima Aden as the first high-fashion hijab-wearing model. She has graced Yeezy's runway and the cover of British *Vogue*. Halima was born in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya, after her mother fled conflict in their native Somalia. At age 7, Halima and her mom re-settled in the U.S. In June 2018, *Teen Vogue* followed Halima's journey as she returned to Kakuma for the first time to meet with young people and give the first ever TEDX Talk in the camp.



Ask students:

1. What is a hijab and how is it a part of modest fashion?
2. What changes are being made to hijabs to make them more of a tool of self-expression in addition to being a part of modest fashion?
3. Who are some influential designers of hijabs and what impact are their designs having on the world of fashion?
4. What are some examples of traditional headwear worn by various cultures? What meanings do these headwear pieces have?
5. Explain how Leah Vernon is redefining modest fashion and expanding it to be more inclusive.
6. Which fashion brands have added hijabs to their runway fashion? Why is this important?
7. Why is Somali-American model Halima Aden a trailblazer? What has she accomplished in her career?
8. Some fashion brands have started to include sport hijabs. Why is this significant?



## CHAPTER 5: STANDING TALL

**Billy Porter** — Billy Porter talks about his favorite red-carpet moment, breaking societal norms and expectations and learning self-compassion.

**Why Don't More Men Wear Heels? | Between The Lines** — While high heels have become iconic in women's fashion, they were originally designed for men as an equestrian riding tool. So why don't more men wear heels today? Elizabeth Semmelhack, senior curator of the Bata Shoe Museum, discusses the history of the heel, while Henry Bae and Shaobo Han, the founders of Syro, a company that designs heels for men, talk about how the LGBTQ community is challenging gender norms around heels.

**How heels started as a men's shoe** — From their origins as an equestrian tool to the halls of Versailles and a KISS wardrobe staple, the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto explores how heels started as a men's shoe and their progression from function to fashion.

Ask students:

1. What is the importance of men wearing heels to the LGBTQ+ community?  
How are they being used as a form of self expression?
2. Explain the evolution of heels from a men's shoe to a women's shoe.  
Why did this change occur?
3. Who are some famous male celebrities who have been known to wear high heels?
4. How has wearing high heels made a difference for trailblazers like Billy Porter?
5. What are some tips for walking in heels?



## CHAPTER 6: MIGHTY MAKEUP

[Is Acne the Final Frontier of Body Positivity? | i-D](#) — When it comes to beauty, there's no one size that fits all. Thanks to the rise of the skin and body positive movements, more and more people are standing up to normative standards of beauty by embracing their true, natural, and authentic selves both online and in real life. Photographer Sophie Harris-Taylor explores skin, the final frontier to be embraced by the body positive movement.

[She's the QUEEN of HENNA Tattoos](#) — This is the story of Sara, a Pakistani-born Hong Kong resident creates elaborate henna tattoo art. Henna is a temporary body art and a common wedding tradition throughout South Asia and the Middle East. Check out her work on IG @sarashenna.

[This Is What You Need To Know Before Getting A Henna Tattoo](#) — Henna tattoos have been described as a must-try beauty trend this festival season. However, women have adorned their bodies with this plant-based dye for centuries, across several cultures. Hannah Bronfman speaks with henna tattoo artist Zahra Virji to learn why this international practice has exploded in popularity all over the U.S. and find out what you need to know before incorporating the intricate process into your beauty routine.

[Nyma Tang](#) — Nyma is an American beauty vlogger and activist against discrimination based on skin color well known for her YouTube series, "The Darkest Shade."

Ask students:

1. How is makeup used as a form of self-expression and pride?
2. What is acne positivity?
3. Why have many makeup brands started to offer wider shade selections?
4. What is henna and how can it be used?
5. What are some occasions that henna art is applied for?
6. Who are some beauty vloggers that are creating a more diverse and inclusive community when it comes to makeup? Why do you think they have so many followers?
7. How can makeup be used to celebrate and express someone's culture/heritage?

# AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

## PART C: EXPLAIN

Using evidence provided in the book, ask students to explain their responses to the following questions:

- Why is representation in fashion and beauty from people of diverse backgrounds so important?
- How has increased representation had a positive impact on the fashion industry?
- How are cosplay and Comic-Con connected?
- Research and explain the cultural and/or religious importance of the head coverings in the book (i.e., hijabs, turbans, headdresses, rastacaps, kufis, ayams, etc.).
- How has makeup been used as more than just a beauty enhancement?

## PART D: APPLY AND SHARE

Ask students to create a poster, video, infographic, or podcast and based on what they have learned reading the book, to respond to only one of the following personal connection questions:

- How do you use fashion, hairstyles, and/or makeup to express or reclaim your culture?
- How have fashion, hairstyles and/or makeup played a role in social justice movements?

Ask students to include details provided from the reading as well as further research from reputable sources.

## PART E: REFLECT

Students should take some time to reflect on their learning and to determine what impact this book has had on their lives. Here are some questions to ask them:

1. Have you engaged in cultural appropriation or appreciation in your own life? If you have appropriated cultures, what would you do differently now?
2. Laws have been enacted in California and New York to protect the rights of people to wear their natural hair. Learn more [here](#). Why were these laws needed? What other laws need to be put in place to protect people's rights to be who they are?
3. Many sports have not allowed women wearing hijabs to participate. Learn more about Bilqis Abdul-Quaadir's story on her fight to wear a hijab in NCAA basketball [here](#). What are some reasons as to why things have changed? What barriers continue to exist in sport for women and their right to wear clothing that is a part of their cultural and/or religious heritage?

Teachers can purchase the film [Life Without Basketball](#) if they want to show Bilqis' story to their students.

4. Are societal norms changing positively in terms of fashion, hairstyles, and makeup to be more inclusive or do we still have a long way to go?
5. Why have brands such as Fenty, Cheekbone Beauty, and MAC cosmetics seen an increase in their supporters? What is it about what they are doing that makes them so popular?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the book and their own creativity.

Here are some activities that students can engage in as an extension of their learning:

### **Start your own fashion or beauty line**

Although improvements have been made, there are still areas of fashion and beauty in which certain groups are poorly represented. Design your own fashion line or beauty line (skin care, make up, fragrances) that helps to fill the gaps in those industries. Creating a marketing strategy or commercial to help promote your line.

### **Create an online tutorial**

Create a how-to video on a particular area of fashion, hairstyling, or makeup that is unique to your culture. Help someone else learn more about you and your culture. Please do not create a tutorial that is not about your culture. That would be cultural appropriation.

### **Create a podcast**

Create a podcast that could be used to educate other students about the importance of using fashion and beauty to reclaim specific cultures. It does not have to focus on your own culture but could include one that you would like to learn more about. This podcast might include an interview with someone currently in the field or include additional research from other reputable sources. The podcast could be made using the [Anchor app](#).

### **Design and create a cosplay outfit**

Pretend that you are going to be participating in Comic-Con this year. Design an outfit based on your favourite character either by putting together clothing that has already been made or by designing something from scratch to sew and create yourself.

### **Write a blog or create a vlog**

Bloggers and vloggers are influential in the world of fashion, hair styling and make up. Write a blog or create a vlog about an area of interest that you have learned about in the book. You can create your blog using [Blogger](#).

### **Visit the Bata Shoe Museum in person or online**

The Bata Shoe Museum is a great place to learn about the history of shoes and the cultural significance of particular styles. If you live close to Toronto, an in-person visit might be possible. If not, learn more about the Bata Shoe Museum on their website: [The Bata Shoe Museum](#)

### **Learn about the author**

Learn more about Christian J. Allaire and his reasons for writing this book and the impact that he is having on the fashion industry through his work with *Vogue*.

### **Share your voice**

Young people like [Theland Kicknosway](#) and [Nightsong Wapass](#) are sharing their voices to preserve their cultural heritage through self expression. Look at these examples and find a way that you can share your voice as well.