

THE FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Fact Sheet

The Ancient Greeks Clothing

The clothes worn by the Ancient Greeks were to a large extent determined by the size and shape of cloth that could be produced on the warp-weighted looms of this era. All the garments worn by men and women consisted of rectangles of material draped, pinned and sewn into various styles. The names given to these garments are now traditional but in ancient Greece the use of these was more fluid; a *peplos*, for example, was mentioned by Homer as being an article of dress, a shroud and a furnishing for a chariot.

The Peplos

The *peplos* was one of the simplest forms of Greek dress and was worn only by women. It consisted of a woollen rectangle, overfolded at the top edge and pinned to form a tube like dress. The back edges of the overfold were brought forward, over the shoulders and secured to the front by means of long pins. A girdle was sometimes tied round the waist and extra material was then pulled up over this.



The Chiton

The *chiton* was worn by both men and women and although it was also based on a rectangle of cloth it differed from the *peplos* in several ways. The *chiton* appears to have been made from lighter cloth which is thought to have been linen. The cloth was seamed up both of the side edges to form a tube which was then either sewn or buttoned at the shoulders and along the arms to the elbows to form loose sleeves. The cloth was not over folded as in the *peplos* and so less cloth was needed in the length, but more was needed in the width in order to form the sleeves. The *chiton* was put on over the head, usually worn with a girdle and often appears to have been pleated or very fully gathered. Men often wore a short knee-length *chiton* which gave greater freedom of movement.

Cloaks

Both men and women wore cloaks called *himations*. Women at certain times wore a short version of the cloak over a *chiton*; it was a narrow rectangle of cloth that passed under one arm and was pinned over the opposite shoulder and along that arm to the elbow, from where it fell in many folds. Men wore the full length *himation* folded in many ways, sometimes over an under garment but more often on its own. Another form of cloak, the *chlamys*, was most often worn by travellers and soldiers and was simply a long rectangle folded right round the body, draped to knee length, and pinned on one shoulder.

Terracotta woman with Pomegranate

Case 5, Object 8, Museum number Gr.74.1937

This veiled young woman is wearing a finely crinkled dress (chiton)