

Footwear fashions

These questions will help you practise:

- ★ giving the meaning of words in context
- ★ retrieving and recording information
- ★ explaining how information contributes to meaning
- ★ making comparisons
- ★ summarising main ideas.

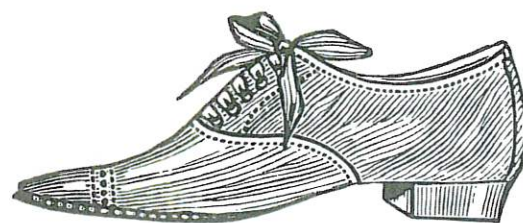
Fashion for the feet

Hunters were probably the first people to think of protecting their feet by wrapping them in animal skins – the earliest surviving examples date from the 2nd millennium BC. A Spanish cave painting of 13,000 BC depicted both a man and woman wearing boots of fur and animal skin. Gradually, however, boots became the essential footwear for men, while leisured women wore decorative but impractical shoes. Only in the 1830s did ankle boots – considered suitably modest – become fashionable for women.

In the 1820s the hero of Waterloo, the first Duke of Wellington, gave his name to a tall slim-cut leather boot. It reigned supreme until the 1860s, when it lost out to the elastic-sided boot, invented in 1837 by Queen Victoria's bootmaker, J Sparkes Hall, and reinvented in the 1950s as the Chelsea boot.

During the pre-Roman era, northern Europeans made shoes from a single piece of animal skin. They pierced the edges with holes, then threaded through a leather **thong**. This was pulled tight and tied on top of the foot. The Native American buckskin version, the *maxkeseni*, came to England in the 17th century as the moccasin and was briefly in vogue until it fell victim to an import tax.

The brogue, too, started out as a rough shoe of undressed leather tied on with thongs in 16th-century Ireland and Scotland. Holes allowed bog water to drain out while the



wearer was walking. The shoe proved so practical that British gamekeepers and their masters adopted it, and by the late 1800s the shoe was heavier and square-toed. It became more refined until, in the 1930s, the Prince of Wales shocked conservative society by wearing suede brogues with a lounge suit.

Heights of fashion

In the late 11th century, shoemakers began to stitch together the sole and upper: previously, shoes had been made in one piece. Silk and velvet began to be used, while buttons and buckles became alternatives to laces when fastening footwear.

From the early Middle Ages, wooden clogs or *pattens* protected feet from Europe's filthy streets. In the 1500s, the Venetian *chopine* had a wedged sole that raised its wearer as much as 50 cm (20 in). Later in the 16th century, a more practical solution was made by building up layers of leather to form a wedge at the end of the sole, but by 1600 shoes had recognisable heels. As a result, it became more economical to make 'straights', which were worn on either foot and left and right shoes disappeared until the late 18th century.

The Curious History of Everyday Things
Reader's Digest



- 1 *Gradually, however, boots became the essential footwear for men, while leisured women wore decorative but impractical shoes.*

1
(1 mark)

What does the word *leisured* mean in this sentence?

- 2 Match the footwear to the date it was invented.

ankle boots

Middle Ages

wellington boots

1830s

moccasins

16th century

brogues

17th century

wooden clogs

1820s

2
(1 mark)

- 3 Explain why the writer has used **italic font** for some of the words in this text.

3
(1 mark)

- 4 Give **one** thing that is different about clogs, compared to the other footwear.

4
(1 mark)

- 5 How did the fastenings for shoes change?

5
(1 mark)

- 6 Using information from the text, tick one box in each row to show whether each statement is **true** or **false**.

6
(1 mark)

	True	False
The Native American buckskin version was called a Chelsea boot.		
Silk and velvet were introduced in footwear in the 11th century.		
Heels were introduced in 1820.		
The Prince of Wales wore suede brogues with a lounge suit.		

/6

Total for this text