District Writing Pre-Test Assessment - Senior High School
INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY PROMPT

Office of Academics and Transformation
Secondary English Language Arts
DISTRICT WRITING PRE-TEST ASSESSMENT

SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

INFORMATIVE/ EXPLANATORY PROMPT

NAME: ____________________________________________

TEACHER: _____________________ PER: _____
Writing Situation

Read the four sources to analyze ideas about standardizing women’s clothing. In pre-industrial America, most clothing was crafted at home or by professional tailors or dressmakers from individual measurements taken of each customer. In the early twentieth century, the growing urban middle class began to purchase affordable and fashionable ready-to-wear merchandise.

Write an explanatory essay about the relationship between clothing styles and advances in commercial clothing production. Your essay must be based on ideas and information that can be found in the “Standardization of Women’s Clothing” passage set.

Manage your time carefully so you can

- plan your essay;
- write your essay; and
- revise and edit your essay.

Do not over rely on one source. You may write or type your response.

Your writing should be in the form of a well-organized, multi paragraph essay.

You have 90 minutes to read, plan, write, revise, and edit your response.
**Short History of Ready-Made Clothing**

Before the American Civil War, ready-made (also called ready-to-wear) apparel existed but its variety was limited. Mainly coats and jackets (known as outerwear) and undergarments were purchased using predetermined sizes. Most clothing was made by tailors or by individuals or their family members at home.

The Civil War was a pivotal event in the historical development of men's ready-made clothing. At the outset of the Civil War, most uniforms were custom-made in workers' homes under government contract. As the war continued, however, manufacturers started to build factories that could quickly and efficiently meet the growing demands of the military. Mass production of uniforms necessitated the development of standard sizes. Measurements taken of the soldiers revealed that certain sets of measurements tended to recur with predictable regularity. After the war, these military measurements were used to create the first commercial sizing scales for men.

The mass production of women's clothing developed more slowly. Women's outfits generally continued to be custom-made well into the 1920s. In that decade, factors such as the development of industrial production techniques, the rise of the advertising industry, the growth of an urban professional class, and the development of national markets accessed through chain stores and mail order catalogs, contributed to the success of the women's ready-made apparel industry. Ready-made articles of clothing were portrayed as modern and fashionable during a time when the new consumer industries were rapidly redefining the way Americans viewed mass-manufactured goods. Instead of seeing the purchase of mass-produced clothing as entailing a loss of individuality, American women began to accept the pieces of ready-made merchandise as convenient, affordable, and up-to-date fashion items that could be replaced easily as styles changed.
However, the new ready-made clothing often fit poorly. Each manufacturer created its own unique and sometimes arbitrary sizing system based on inaccurate body data or no body data at all. Garments of widely different dimensions were frequently labeled the same size by different manufacturers. This situation resulted in additional costs for alterations and large volumes of returned merchandise. This, in turn, increased costs for the consumer of ready-to-wear clothing.

In 1937, the U.S. Department of Agriculture prepared to conduct a study of women's body measurements for the purpose of creating a sizing system which the entire industry could follow.

http://museum.nist.gov/exhibits/apparel/history.htm

NIST's Role

During 1939 and 1940, about 15,000 American women participated in a national survey conducted by the National Bureau of Home Economics of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It was the first large-scale scientific study of women's body measurements ever recorded. A technician took 59 measurements of each volunteer, who was dressed only in underwear. Volunteers were paid a small fee for participating. The results of the study were published in 1941 in USDA Miscellaneous Publication 454, Women's Measurements for Garment and Pattern Construction. The purpose of the survey was to discover key measurements of the female body - that is the important measurements from which other measurements could best be predicted - and then to propose a sizing system based on this discovery.

In the mid-1940s, the Mail-Order Association of America, a trade group representing catalog businesses such as Sears Roebuck and Spiegel, asked the Commodity Standards Division of the National Bureau of Standards (NBS, now NIST ) to conduct research to provide a reliable basis for industry sizing standards. NBS agreed, and punch cards holding the USDA survey results were transferred to NBS at its request for realanalysis. (While the women's apparel sizing standard is the focus of this exhibit, NBS also reanalyzed USDA data for teenage girls and children, resulting in other standards.) The USDA data was augmented by data received from the Research and Development Branch of the Army Quartermasters Corps during World War II when measurements were taken of 6,510 WAC personnel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A COMPARISON OF CLOTHING COSTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made at Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple gown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tweed Coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silk Gown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wool dress</td>
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Chart compares the cost of four articles of clothing made each at home, by a dressmaker, and ready-made. A simple gown cost $20 made at home, $35 by a dressmaker, and $30 ready-made. A tweed coat cost $24 made at home, $45 by a dressmaker, and $37.50 ready-made. A silk gown cost $37 made at home, $60 by a dressmaker, and $50 ready-made.
From January 1949 until April 1952, the NBS Statistical Engineering Division made analyses for the Commodity Standards Division. NBS statistical engineers conducted frequency and correlation analyses with the body measurement data so that they could devise the shortest possible, useful size notations for garments, which would accommodate the greatest number of female consumers without alterations. The resulting commercial standard was distributed by NBS to the industry for comment in 1953.

The sizing designations recommended in the published standard combined a bust size number (in even sizes from 8 to 38) with one of three letters - tall (T), regular (R), or short (S) - indicating height, and with a symbol to indicate hip girth: either slender (-), average (no symbol), or full (+). For example, a tall woman with a size 14 bust who was slender in the hips would be considered size 14T-. This combination of signifiers would place the consumer into one of four trade classifications: either misses', women's, half-sizes (shorter women), or juniors'.

Adjustment in the size scales were made to compensate for the effect of what were referred to in the standard as "foundation garments," meaning support bras and girdles.

http://museum.nist.gov/exhibits/apparel/role.htm

Source # 3

Vanity

Since commercial standard CS215-58 was published, its importance has been debated time and again. At first, the industry was eager to adopt the new standard, and major companies such as Sears, Roebuck and Montgomery Ward began labeling their products with the new government sizes. In September 1971, the recommendation in CS215-58 was updated and republished with the new designation Voluntary Product Standard.

However, with the passage of time, the standard became outdated. Both American men and women were becoming heavier. Whereas the average woman's figure once came a little closer to approaching the hourglass shape of the fashion magazines, she was now becoming more pear-shaped, with a thicker waist and fuller hips. At the same time that the average woman's body was changing shape, manufacturers discovered the advantage of appealing to women's vanity. They began selling bigger clothes labeled with smaller size numbers.

The Department of Commerce officially withdrew the commercial standard for the sizing of women's apparel on January 20, 1983. Currently, only pattern companies continue to use the traditional sizing standards.
Clothes before the Industrial Revolution were made and worn very differently than they are now. For the most part, families made their own clothing by hand from fabric they made or purchased locally. Fabric was intricate and time-consuming to make. As a result it was a highly prized commodity. Merchants made their wealth in transporting fine fabrics and threads. In places like Scotland, fabrics called tartans showed clan affiliation. Polynesians spent hours beating plant fibers and tree bark into tapa cloth. For Hawaiians, part of this practice took on religious significance and was conducted in sacred spaces. Before mass production, fabric itself—the finished product as well as the process—could be very meaningful. While time, effort, and money were put into making or obtaining fabric, creating a garment was much less complicated. Almost every culture had some version of a tied robe or tunic—essentially, a loose fabric that draped and was secured by a belt, pin, or sash. In the Middle Ages such ties and belts helped Europeans to keep improperly fitted clothes secure on their bodies. Most clothes, especially those of the lower and middle classes, would be considered very oversized by modern standards. They were generally made out of one or two pieces of cloth to minimize waste.

With the Renaissance’s changes in art and society came more fitted clothes. These garments were made by sewing several pieces of fabric together. The wealthy had clothes made by tailors, who often customized their own patterns. But without closures like zippers and buttons, people often had to be sewn into their clothes! Laces and corsets eventually solved some of these problems, but it was still incredibly difficult to get dressed back then. By the 17th century, crafting and tailoring of Western clothing required more and more skill as designs became more complex. Intricate scenes of animals or flowers were embroidered by hand. They took hours to complete and were a sign of the wearer’s wealth. Gemstones might be sewn onto the collar or sleeve of a very fine garment. A fine cloth was only as good as its cut and decoration and a man or woman could make their fortune on the strength of these designs. At the height of the 18th century, French fashion garments were truly works of art. They took days and dozens of hands to complete, with each person contributing hours of specialized skill. The materials themselves came from miles away; some (like silk) even came from other countries!

Eventually political and social movements led to much more restrained and practical clothing. As embellishments and flashy fabrics fell out of use even among aristocrats, fit became increasingly more important in the 19th and 20th centuries. Instead of voluminous tunics or pants that tied, men began to wear suits. While suspenders were used for many years, pants had to fit accurately. Women wore trimmer dresses with buttons that allowed for more fitted looks. They put aside petticoats meant to give skirts more volume and many favored flowing looks over corsested ones. Clothing became a natural extension of the body rather than its decoration or disguise. Countries like England became renowned for their tailors and the wealthy traveled to have their clothes made. Tailoring was still expensive and not an option for all. Making a single coat might require several trips to the tailor, difficult for those who lived far away. The wealthy could travel into town or across provinces to attend several fittings a month. It was much less expensive to make
clothing in the home and, if you could afford it, have a tailor help with the more complicated portions. Most often family members were each other’s tailors, pinning and hemming in the home. While simple fabrics were much less expensive than before, clothes were still altered, mended, and handed down as children grew. Clothing was still not seen as replaceable or disposable. Eventually ready-made clothing would be available, but that brought its own set of problems. It would be several decades until fitted, comfortable clothing was truly affordable.

“Tailoring” written for the Utah State Office of Education.