Yinka Shonibare: The Three Graces

① Your impressions

➔ **Look at the artwork and note down your impressions**

- What do you see?
- What does it remind you of?
- What does it make you feel like?

YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE
The Three Graces, 2001
Three life-size mannequins, Dutch wax print cotton
Dimensions variable
Commissioned and produced by the British School of Rome
Collection of Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky
Purchased with the funds from Alice Speed Stoll Association Trust
Photo: Stephen White
Copyright the artist
Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York

② Mapping your thoughts

➔ **Work with a partner. Discuss and compare your ideas. Organize them in a mind map.**

▶ Have you also thought about the artist's name and the title of the artwork?

③ Questions to the Artwork

➔ **What do you find strange, interesting or puzzling? What makes you think? Come up with ten questions you would like to ask the artwork.**

④ Looking for Answers

➔ **Do these pictures correspond in any way with your questions?**

Foto: picture-alliance/dpa

Diary of a Victorian Dandy

➔ **Note down what you can see in these photographs.**
Then come up with some personal conclusions or write down questions.

Focus on these aspects

room / interior	clothes	time	people and their relation
activities	interaction	women	expression / posture

YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE
Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 11:00 hours, 1998

C Print
183 x 228.6 image size
130 x 191 x 4 cm framed size
Edition of 3 (1 AP)
Copyright the artist
Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York

YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE
Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 14:00 hours, 1998

C Print
183 x 228.6 image size
130 x 191 x 4 cm framed size
Edition of 3 (1 AP)
Copyright the artist
Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York

YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE
Diary of a Victorian Dandy: 21:00 hours, 1998

C Print
183 x 228.6 image size
130 x 191 x 4 cm framed size
Edition of 3 (1 AP)
Copyright the artist
Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York

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Background Information: Victorian Dandy

Diary of a Victorian Dandy is a series of five photographs by the artist Yinka Shonibare. They were first shown at poster sites in London underground stations in October 1998. Then they were presented in a touring exhibition at various British museums and galleries.

Yinka Shonibare is the artist who created the series of photographs. He also performed in them as the person in the centre of each picture.
→ Why did he play the main character himself?
→ What can we learn about him and his art?

Foto: Wikimedia Commons

Queen Victoria

The Victorian Age refers to the long reign of Queen Victoria. She ruled the Kingdom for more than sixty years, from 1837 – 1901. It was a period of prosperity, imperial expansion, and great political reform. By the beginning of the Victorian period, the Industrial Revolution had created profound economic and social changes, including a mass migration of workers to industrial towns, where they lived in new urban slums. A new middle class emerged, artistic styles, literary schools and new trends in fashion flourished.

A Victorian Dandy was a young man of great elegance, extremely fond of dress, leading an aristocratic style of life surrounded by many admirers, friends and servants.

Oscar Wilde, a typical Victorian Dandy

Foto: Wikimedia Commons

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Yinka Shonibare About Himself

→ **Study the information provided here and on the internet to find out more about Yinka Shonibare. Create your own fact file about the artist.**
Start from here:
- www.wikipedia.com
- www.tate.org.uk/britain/turnerprize/2004/shonibare.shtm

→ **Listen to the first half of an interview with Yinka Shonibare at www.ngv.vic.gov.au/crossingborders/interview/ yinka_interview.htm. Take notes.**

In his second year at college he …
One of his teachers asked him …
His teacher's question made him think about …
At Brixton market he …
Batik materials are made in …
They were sold in …

This is what Yinka Shonibare says about himself

I am a product of the post-colonial period. I was born in 1962 in England to Nigerian parents, two years after Nigeria gained its independence from Britain. Although I was born in Britain, I grew up in Lagos and later returned to Britain to complete my education. It is therefore normal for me to switch between cultures. I grew up speaking Yoruba at home and speaking English at school, as English is the language of office in Nigeria.

The experience of having a fixed identity, of belonging to one authentic culture is quite foreign to me.
In my work I want to challenge the fact that people have to insist on one identity. That would be a fallacy, because one's actual experience is not based on a single unified culture no longer.

In my own practice, I have used the fabrics as a metaphor to question people's ideas about what they believe to be authentic.

I want to show that behind excessive lifestyles there are people who have to provide the labour to make this kind of lifestyle happen.

Foto: picture-alliance/dpa
Yinka Shonibare

I wanted to push the work further and I went into the Victoria & Albert Museum in London. I was in the costume section and then of course I started to think about the question of class in relation to colonial history.

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Factsheet Yinka Shonibare

Foto: picture-alliance/dpa

Biographical notes

He was born in …

His parents were …

His father was …

As a child he lived in …

He often spent his summers in …

He is bilingual: he speaks …

He went to school in…

At the age of 16 …

Aged 19 he decided to …

The Victorian Age – what does he find interesting about that time?

Media he uses

Themes and issues

“African” Fabrics as a key material

He buys the fabrics …

They are not authentically African because …

For him they are a metaphor to express …

Is there such a thing as authentic African art?

Being bicultural

In what way is he bicultural?
What does it mean for him?
How does it show in his work?

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Your Idea of Beauty

Yinka Shonibare gave his work the title *The Three Graces.* With this title, he draws on a tradition of paintings and sculptures which all show the three sisters from ancient Greek myth. The Graces were goddesses and represented beauty, grace and joy.
Many painters and sculptors have created their versions of the Graces, and knowing about and copying earlier artworks they have created traditions of how to paint or sculpt them. By using the title Shonibare puts himself in this tradition and comments on it.

→ **What do you think of as beautiful? When are women or men beautiful or handsome? List the things that come to your mind and create a mind-map.**

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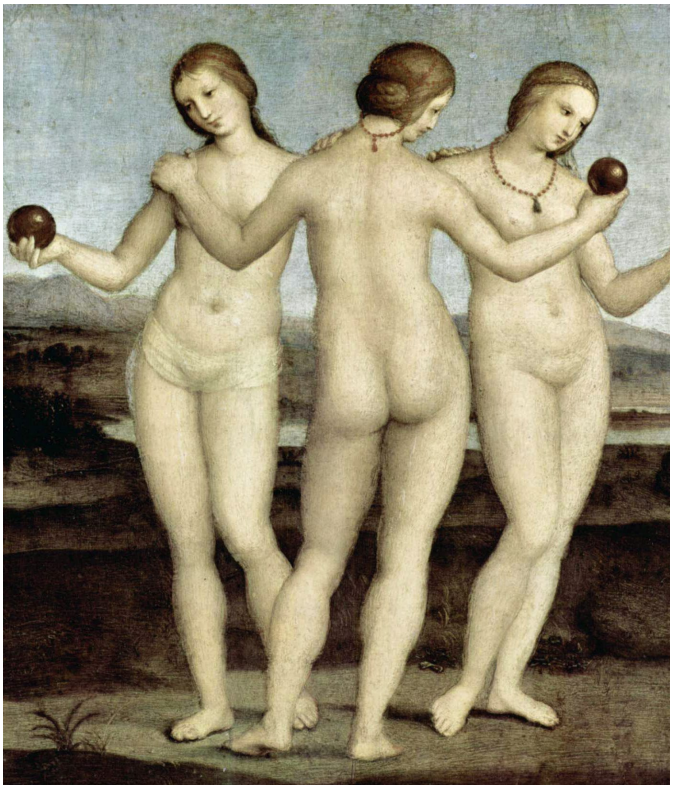
The Graces Through the Centuries

1



2

3

Key
image 1: Antonio Canova, 1814–18
image 2: Raffael, 1504
image 3: Sandro Botticelli, La Primavera, 1478

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A Closer Look

Find out about the differences of the versions of this same motif and imagine what the differences could mean.

→ **Choose two of the artworks and compare them to Shonibare's *Three Graces*. Fill in the table below.**

1

2

3

	Artwork no.	Artwork no.	Shonibare's Three Graces
Part of a larger group / stand for themselves?			
Position of figures / direction of gaze?			
Position of hands / touch?			
Naked / clothed?			
Faces, skin, bodies?			
Colour / material? Effect?			
How do figures feel?			
Story in the artwork? What is the story about?			

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Shonibare and the Graces

By giving his work the title *The Three Graces*, Yinka Shonibare refers to a classical tradition of painting and sculpture. In Greek mythology, the Graces were the daughters of Zeus. They served Aphrodite, the goddess of love. While early images of them show them in clothes, they are typically shown as nudes. There are three different ways in which they are represented as a group:

- All three stand beside each other, two of them facing the spectator, and the middle one turning her back to the viewer.
- They form a triangle or circle, linking their hands in the form of a dance. The sisters can look at each other or look outside the circle.
- They stand in a close embrace, looking at each other and touching.

➔ **In most paintings and sculptures, the three sisters seem to be equals. This is different in Shonibare's installation, where the Graces seems to be real women who …**

➔ **Other differences are …**

➔ **These differences could mean …**
By dressing the Graces, Shonibare …
By presenting them without heads, he …

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“African” Fabrics: Your Impression

Have a look at these samples of wax print textiles.
What do the colours and patterns remind you of? What impression is created?

→ **Choose three of these samples of fabric and note down what you think when looking at them for a while. Use a dictionary or use words from the box below if you need any help.**

Quelle: http://www.africanfabric.co.uk/wax_prints.php

floral	warm	powerful	abstract	bright	strong
vibrant	cold	calming	happy	vivid	
chaotic	pretty	moving	sunny	gloomy	
dazzling	aggressive	flowing	figurative	dark	

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“African” Wax Print Fabrics

→ **Are these wax print fabrics African, Asian, European or all three? Read what these people say about the textiles.**

I started to use ‘African’ fabric purchased from Brixton Market in my work. Batik, which is commonly known as ‘African’ fabric, has its origins in Indonesia and is industrially produced in Holland and Manchester for export to Africa where it is made into traditional dress. The adoption of the fabric, particularly in West Africa, has led to the development of local industries which also manufacture fabrics.

Yinka Shonibare, artist

Felicia, owner of an African clothes shop in Handsworth, England

Originally, African wax fabrics were imported from Holland but in the past years industries have grown in African countries that now manufacture these fabrics.

It is, in fact, printed fabric based on Indonesian batik, manufactured in the Netherlands, Britain, and other countries and then exported to West Africa.

Nancy Hynes, writer and art critic

Matt Steinglass, writer

Vlisco was founded in 1846 by a famous Dutch merchant family called the van Vlissingens. One of the van Vlissingen sons had been in Indonesia, where he discovered the batik method of dying cloth. He had the idea that maybe this method could be industrialized in Europe. By the late 1800s Dutch factories were supplying the bulk of the Indonesian batik market, and as Dutch freighters stopped at various African ports on their way over, the fabrics began to gain an African clientele. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when measures were taken to protect domestic Indonesian batik production, the market for imports there slumped. Africa gradually became the exclusive market for Dutch batik, and by the 1960s Vlisco, having merged with all its rivals, had become the exclusive supplier.

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African Fabrics: A Journey Round the World

→ **Dutch Wax – is it African, Asian, European or all three? Prepare fact files on these issues:**

- Java, Indonesia
- European industrialisation
- Dutch merchants
- Export to Indonesia / Indonesian industry
- Freighters stopping in Africa
- African industries
- Export to Africa

Foto: flickr/Calzean

A contemporary Indonesian artist preparing a batik

→ **Arrange the fact files on a large piece of paper and indicate any connections you can see by drawing arrows.**

→ **What is specific about that fabric so that Shonibare used it for his artwork? Note down some ideas.**

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How to Make Wax Print Fabrics

Wax print fabrics are also known as batiks.
Batik is a technique that uses wax to create patterns on textile.
Here you can find out how to make your own batik.

Melting the wax

Designing the pattern

Foto: flickr/ calzean, Stell Wool,

Washing the batik

This is what you need

- plain white cotton cloth, e. g. a white T-shirt (100 % cotton!)
- dye
- wax (melted crayon ends or paraffin in sticks)
- paintbrushes
- an iron

Preparation

① Follow the instructions on the dye to make up the dye.
② Melt the wax or crayons by putting it in a metal can.
Put the can in a saucepan full of water, then heat the water on a stove.

Creating a Batik

③ Dip the paintbrush in the melted wax and paint designs on your cloth.
Make sure the wax is pretty thick so it will block the dye.
Remember, the dye will color wherever you do not put wax.
④ Dip the cloth in the dye according to the directions on the dye.
If you are going to use more than one color, do the lightest color first (usually yellow).
⑤ Now let the cloth dry (on a line, not in a dryer! It will get dye all over your dryer).
⑥ When it is dry, put the cloth on a section of newspaper, with some paper towels between the cloth and the newspaper, and iron the cloth until the wax melts and comes out.
⑦ If you want more colors, you will need to paint on more wax and dye the cloth again now.
When you are done, iron the wax out again.
Make sure to fix the dye according to the directions before you wash it, or the dye will run.

Choose one of the options below:

→ **Summarize the process by drawing a series of pictures.**
Label the pictures and write captions so that someone else would know how to do it.

→ **Collect information about traditional and industrial wax print techniques. Use the internet or other sources.**
Make a poster introducing the different processes.

→ **Make your own batik. Think about what you would like to express and what patterns and colours would best convey your message.**
Make a sketch and then create your batik according to the instructions above.
Record the process with photographs and put them into your folder.

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Your Africa: Ideas on Clothing

In Shonibare's installation *The Three Graces* three headless shop mannequins wear brightly coloured dresses. The fabrics of these dresses are frequently associated with Africa.
Do you think clothes made of similar fabrics are still being worn today?
What do you imagine present-day African fashion to be like?

→ **Write a short comment about African fashion today. State what you know about clothing in Africa or what you would imagine it is like. Consider some of the aspects given below.**

useful phrases
I think I have seen / heard …
It might be that …
As far as I know …
One should not forget that …
I cannot imagine …
I suppose …

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Trends and Traditions in African Clothing

Today clothing in Africa is as varied as the continent itself. Here is what some people say about clothing in Africa.

➔ **First, have a look at the pictures.**
Then read the texts with the help of a dictionary. Underline important information.

Dreams of Trespass

Mother always insisted on dressing me in the latest Western fashions: short lace dresses with ribbons and shiny black shoes. The only problem was that she would go mad if I dirtied the dress and so I would often beg her to let me wear my comfortable little *sarwal* [= full-length and loose-fitting pants], or any traditional outfit, which didn't need so much attention. But only on religious festival days, when father insisted, would she let me wear my *caftan* [= a full-length, loose-fitting garment]. She was so anxious to see me escape tradition. "Dress says so much about a woman's plans," she said. "If you plan to be modern, express it through what you wear, otherwise they will shove you behind the gates. Caftans may be of incomparable beauty, but Western dress is about paid work." (Fatima Mernissi, from her autobiography. She writes about growing up in Tunisia in the 1950s.)

flickr/bijouxdejais

The Clothes People Wear in Durban

Durban is a large and very multicultural city in South Africa. It has a variety of cultures, each having different traditional wear. But when you look at everyday clothing they all share the same casual lifestyles. Western-style clothes are very fashionable. The clothes people wear for work at an office for instance is mainly Western. But because of the ethnic mix in Durban, it is completely acceptable for Eastern or African people to wear more traditional wear in the workplace.
Township clothing is no different to that which is worn in the city. The youth like to wear *takkies*, especially well-known brand names. They generally dress casually in jeans and t-shirts. The young people, rich and poor alike are very inspirational and brand names are big. (www.durban.gov.za/)

Traditional Clothing

Clothing traditions vary with each ethnic group. Each society has its own name for different types of clothing. But you will also find a lot of similarities. Traditional clothes often include tops, bottoms, gowns and hats. A *buba* is a very common piece of clothing, especially in Nigeria. It is a loose blouse that goes down little below the waist. When it is longer and more like a dress, it is called *kaba*. The bottom part of clothing, called *ira*, is a rectangular piece of cloth that is wrapped around the waist. Women wear a piece of cloth draped around the head (*gele*), men wear a cap (*fila*). The Buba style clothing is very cool to wear and allows you to move about freely. (Maps of worlds on Nigerian clothing)

flickr/eric Lafforgue

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Trends and Traditions in African Clothing

flickr/eric Lafforgue

Western Influence

Whether new or second-hand, Western clothing is considered fashionable in present-day Africa.

“New traditional” clothes are very fashionable, too. They mix traditional fabrics and styles with synthetic materials and Western designs. African fashion these days likes mixing African with Western designs. This is very popular especially with Africans who do not live in Africa. They want to look African in their fashion but still have a bit of European influence.

(Felicia Nwokedi, who owns a boutique in Handsworth, Britain)

flickr/NIMBA

flickr/m. rosenberg

Second-hand Clothes

Economic conditions and changing technologies are also influencing African clothing styles. Imported materials and clothing have become more expensive, but markets for used clothing remain consistently strong. A significant proportion of the used Western clothing sold in Africa was originally donated to charities in the United States and Europe.

(Muhonjia Khaminwa on African Clothing)

Symbols of Independence

Growing up in Guinea in the late fifties, at the threshold of African independence, I remember my father always being against my mother wearing the Dutch Wax material with the print of two specific, political motifs. Politics and fashion were often combined in those days of independence euphoria – and still today – to advertise and support political movements in Africa.

(Manthia Diawara on growing up in Guinea)

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Clothes and Their Symbolic Meaning

Do you think fashion makes a statement? Have a look at these photographs.

- **First note down what kind of clothes the people in the pictures are wearing.**
- **Then think about what kind of statement people's clothes make.**
  - What do you think they say about the people wearing it?
  - What do people want to express?

Quelle: flickr/mr.rosenberg

Quelle: flickr/ NIMBA

Quelle: flickr/pjoterr05

- **Now think about yourself. Choose a photo of yourself, and describe what you are wearing and what impression you wanted to create. Write a short text and put it in your folder.**

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A T-Shirt's Travels

If you have been to Africa, you know that one of the most unique experiences you can have is to go to an open-air market. Often these markets will cover several square miles, they are crowded, colourful, and dynamic, filled with overwhelming sights and smells. The sights you will see include groups of women selling fruit, cheap jewellery, nail polish, perfume and bright, patterned fabric. One of the most unusual sights is the rows and rows of piled-up used western clothing and shoes. It is not uncommon to see African people wearing hand-me-down clothes from the west, sporting brand names such as Nike and Adidas and figures such as Bart Simpson and Mickey Mouse. Where do they get these clothes, especially so many of them?

http://stephvanderlugt.wordpress.com/2007/11/30/t-shirt-travels/

Foto: flickr/Christo Doherty

A second-hand clothes market in Johannesburg, South Africa

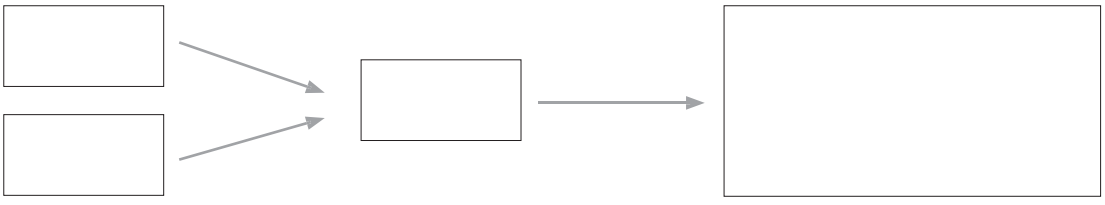
Foto: flickr/dbjorgen

African boy wearing Western clothes

➔ **Find out more about the trade of second-hand clothes in Africa.**
Search the internet or contact a charity and collect information on these questions:

- How do second hand clothes get to Africa?
- Where and who are they from?
- Why are they sold on a market?
- Is it a good idea to donate clothes?

➔ **Present your results in a diagram using boxes and arrows like that.**
Write a short text to answer the last question.



What about fashion in your country? Do you know traditional German clothing?
What about yourself, what do you like to wear?

➔ **Create a poster (or a wiki) about fashion trends and traditions in Germany.**
Write short descriptions of the different styles.
Include pictures, find headings and add extra information.

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The Graces: Dress, Context and Meaning

➔ **Have a closer look at the fabrics and cut of the dresses in Shonibare's artwork. Would you say they are African or European? Collect some arguments below.**

African

European

Quelle: YINKA SHONIBARE,MBE, *The Three Graces*, 2001. Photo: Stephen White
Copyright the Artist
Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York

➔ **What would a woman want to express if she were dressed like that?**

In a Victorian cut in Africa	In "African" fabrics in Europe

➔ **Why do you think does Shonibare mix African and European elements in his artwork?**

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An Ideal Woman: Your Ideas

By giving his work the title *The Three Graces*, Yinka Shonibare plays with the question of what ideal women should be like. He dresses his Graces in historic costumes that come from a specific time, the Victorian Age.

This station discusses the ideas the Victorians had about ideal women. It also discusses where the materials of the Victorian dresses came from: the textile factories of Northern England. What were working and living conditions like for the people who worked in these factories?

→ **Imagine travelling through time back to the year 1840! Meet Mr Jeremy Parker, his wife Caroline, and the poor factory worker Polly Hill, who all live in different parts of Manchester – in very different circumstances …**

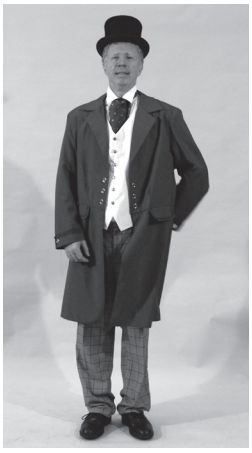

Foto: costumestoreonline.co.uk

Mr Parker

Foto: costumestoreonline.co.uk

wife Caroline

Foto: Cinetext

worker Polly

Mr Parker (38) has just started his own cotton factory after he had earned a fortune as a co-owner of a factory in Manchester. When he wanted to get married, he found the ideal wife in Caroline (20), his former partner‘s daughter, and they moved into a suburb outside Manchester. Imagine what kind of woman he was looking for.
Mr Parker employs many women in his factory. One of them is Polly Hill, who is also 20 years old. She lives in a slum near the factory. More than one hundred people share one toilet, and many of them live in wet cellars! Mr Parker’s ideas about Polly as a worker are very different from what he was looking for in his wife. What kind of person should she ideally be in order to be a good female worker?

→ **Find five adjectives or phrases that could describe the worker / the wife.**

an ideal worker	an ideal wife

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Female Qualities

Here are some words people of the time would have used to describe women and their qualities.

→ **Which qualities would Mr Parker have thought to be very important (5) or unimportant (1) in his wife or his worker? Tick as appropriate.**

wife						factory worker				
1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
					sensible					
					religious					
					healthy					
					gives his/her opinions					
					speaks French					
					well-read					
					easy with people					
					good at maths and writing					
					good at managing a household					
					good at singing and dancing					
					clever					
					beautiful					
					sexy, attractive					
					a good mother					
					from a good family					
					well-behaved, modest					
					quick					
					active					

→ **Use the words/phrases for writing two adverts – in one Mr Parker is looking for a wife, in the other he is looking for a female factory worker**

Think of

- What is Mr Parker looking for?
- What experience should the person have? What should she be able to do/be good at?
- What can Mr Parker offer? What kind of job? What kind of life?
- What would be the working hours for the factory workers?
- How should Mr Parker and the woman get in contact?
- How and where do the women apply, or how can they arrange to meet Mr Parker?

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People in 1840 – A Quiz

Can you imagine life in 1840? To be sure it was different depending on who you were.

→ **Choose to work on one of the three people: Mr Parker, Mrs Parker or Polly Hill. Guess the right answers. Sometimes several answers can be right.**
The information sheets will help you to get the answers right.

Foto: costumestoreonline.co.uk

Mr Jeremy Parker (38)

1 What would be the typical family background of a man like Mr Parker?

He could be

a	the son of a country gentleman
b	the son of a rich trader or manufacturer
c	a craftsman or trader expanding his business
d	a former worker

2 What would a textile producer in 1840 consider as the important factors for the success of his cotton factory? Guess how important these factors were (very important: 1, not important: 5).

	1	2	3	4	5
good roads					
good train connections					
a nearby harbour for import/export					
cheap workers					
water power					
a plant producing electricity					
cheap coal to produce steam					
good telecommunications					
a nearby market					
well-trained workers					
a connection to the canal system					

3 Is it good to employ children under ten?
List arguments two of the following people would have for and against child labour.

- Mr Parker
- The local pastor, Reverend Honeydew
- Polly's parents, who have six younger children
- The reformer, Mr Henry Wishwell
- The local doctor, Arthur Jones, MD

Discuss with a partner.

▶ **Useful phrases**
From his/her/their point of view…
If we think of/if we consider that…
On the one hand…/on the other hand…
For the children, factory work would mean that…
If they stayed at home, they would/could…

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People in 1840 – A Quiz

Foto: costumestoreonline.co.uk

Mrs Caroline Parker (20)

1 Guess how many dresses Mrs Parker would wear in the course of a week:

a	four
b	eight
c	fourteen
d	twenty or more

2 How many minutes per day would she need to get dressed?

a	Roughly thirty minutes in the morning.
b	For every change of dress at least fifteen minutes.
c	At least three times a day at least thirty minutes.
d	With usually five changes three hours and more.

3 How many people would be involved in this procedure?

a	Easily done by the lady herself.
b	One of the servants could help when she is dressing for the evening.
c	There would be one person who would help all the family members dress.
d	A proper household would include one servant per adult who would help him/her to get dressed. Others would be responsible for ironing and washing the clothes.

4 What would Mrs Parker be allowed to do at home/in public? What activities would be 1. *easy* 2. *possible* 3. *difficult* 4. *impossible* 5. *unacceptable* for her to do on her own?

	1	2	3	4	5
Cooking/preparing dinner, setting the dinner table					
Decorating the house					
Mending clothes, darning socks					
Writing letters					
Taking a stroll in a nearby park					
Going on a walking tour along the coast/a river					
Riding a horse – riding a bicycle					
Playing tennis					
Going to a café to meet some friends					
Taking a cab into the city and going shopping					
Visiting acquaintances in the neighbourhood					
Discussing the latest news from the newspapers					
Inviting friends to a game of cards					

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People in 1840 – A Quiz

1 At what age would Polly have begun to work in the factory?

a	at the age of six
b	at the age of ten
c	at the age of fourteen
d	at the age of twenty

Foto: Cnetext

Polly Hill (20), factory worker

2 How many hours would twenty-year old Polly work per week in 1840?

a	eight hours five days a week
b	ten hours six days a week
c	thirteen hours six days a week
d	up to eighteen hours seven days a week

3 How many dresses would Polly call her own?

a	one dress
b	one Sunday dress and one weekday dress
c	four or five dresses (winter, summer, Sunday and weekday dresses)
d	about ten dresses

4 Would Polly continue to work after getting married?

a	Yes, she would like to continue her career.
b	No, her husband would earn enough to support the whole family and would ask her to give up her job.
c	She would continue her work until she had her first child, then she would stay at home to care for the child.
d	She would have to continue working as the earning of one person would not be enough for a family, and often one partner would be out of work.

5 How would Polly live?

a	In her parents' house. After she got married, she and her husband would move into a house of their own.
b	In a flat of her own, until she got married.
c	Sharing a room with her family, later on with her husband and her family.
d	Sharing a room with several families.

6 What would Polly do if she had a free day?

a	go to the local pub on her own
b	visit her family
c	go to the seaside or countryside
d	listen to a lecture by a travelling academic

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Answer Key

Mr Jeremy Parker

1. b or c. A son of a gentleman would usually become a lawyer, doctor, or work as a banker. Most industrialists were sons of tradesmen or manufacturers. If the fathers came from a working background, they had usually gone on to become overseers or engineers. Examples: Richard Arkwright, Robert Owen.
2. Good roads were less important, as raw cotton and finished textiles would be transported by water. A harbour was needed for the import of the raw cotton and the export of the clothes. The railway age only started in the 1830s; this would be the transportation of the future. The workers in the new factories did not need any special skills, but they had to be cheap. Sometimes industrialists advertised for workers and built special villages for them. The power used in 1840 was steam power (using coal as fuel) and water power. Modern telecommunication did not yet exist; messages were sent by letter. A market in the neighbourhood was not absolutely necessary because of cheap transport, but it gave some extra profit.

Mrs Caroline Parker

1. Mrs Parker would often change dress three times a day (morning, afternoon, evening). She would have special clothes when staying at home, to receive guests during the day, to have dinner with the family, or with guests, to walk in the park or to go to a concert. A wardrobe of fourteen dresses would not be too large; being the wife of an important person would actually mean at least twenty dresses in use (not taking into account the seasons of the year, or the changes of fashion).
2. **and 3.** Dressing in the crinolines, and putting on the corsets took a long time (at least thirty minutes per change), and needed the help of at least one person, who often only took care of the mistress of the house. The washing, mending, ironing and preparing of the clothes was done by housemaids, below-stairs maids or help from outside.
4. Reading novels and idly doing handicraft were popular. Most of the other activities would have to be accepted by Mr Parker. Taking longer walks, going shopping, meeting friends in cafés and riding horses were seen as inappropriate by some husbands. Discussing political or scientific issues was not counted as suitable for women. Cycling only became popular in the late 19th century and the sport was regarded as unladylike. The same goes for any serious housework, and for doing sports in general.

Polly Hill

1. a (more rarely, b). The first law forbidding labour for very young children is from 1833, but it had little effect on the reality in the factories.
2. c, see 1.
3. a or b. Often the dresses would be second-hand or hand-me-downs or made from coarse cotton. A big shawl would often be used as a coat.
4. d. The ideal that women should not work was strictly middle-class.
5. d.
6. If Polly had any free days at all – which was rather unusual before 1870 – each option was open to her. Going to the pub was very common, although many employers supported teetotalism, and fought popular drinking habits. The family would live close by and would be visited during the week. The countryside would be visited to help harvesting, which meant fresh and healthy food. Going to the seaside at Blackpool was a popular pastime from the late 18th century on. Listening to lectures would be more unusual for working women, although the Working Men's Associations started to offer opportunities even for illiterate people.

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Dressing the Graces

In *The Three Graces*, Shonibare uses dresses cut in the fashion of the Victorian Age. In that age, well-to-do women had to follow a clear dress code. In order to make their waists slim, they used corsets. To make their skirts very voluminous, they supported them by crinolines or bustles. This fashion meant that women could not be very active at home or outside. Their role was to be nice and supportive, an "Angel in the House". The real housework was to be done by domestic servants. Shonibare raises the question of whether we agree with this image of women as beautiful beings, or as Graces.

The fabric used by Shonibare is produced from cotton. In the 19th century, the raw material was imported first from India, then from the slave plantations of the southern states of the USA. As calico and muslin, cotton textiles had been popular with rich people throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. With the building of textile factories in Northern England in the beginning of the 19th century, cotton fabrics became cheap mass products. The town of Manchester became the centre of the cotton textile industry, earning the nickname Cottonopolis. The textile factories employed many women and children, who were paid less and who were more dependent on the jobs. Living conditions for the urban workers were very bad, so they sometimes were called 'white slaves'.
Manchester factories printed cheap cotton textiles which were sold to the poor in Britain or exported to markets in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The textiles were sold much more cheaply than the fabric produced locally in Africa, but the British industry still made large profits from these sales.

By using this particular kind of dress together with the specific fabric, the artist Shonibare comments on the relationship between Europe and Africa.

→ **What are your ideas when thinking of this relationship? Take notes.**

By dressing figures of classical European mythology in fabrics produced for mass export to the Third World, Shonibare …

By dressing the Graces in dresses with a Victorian cut, he …

In contrast to / Like Victorian Women, Shonibare's Graces …

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Victorian Britain

The 19th century was the time of industrialisation, of urbanisation, and of the rule of the middle class. Although the British economy boomed, it was also a time of political protest, as the poor and working people lived under terrible conditions.

Foto: flickr/Mme. du Jard

Worker working at a so-called Spinning Jenny, a machine used to produce yarn

At the end of the 18th century, the industrialisation of Britain had started to change the nation, and the textile industry was at the centre of this process. Successful traders and businessmen invested their money into new machines. Inventors and self-made men became their partners. Britain's position as the "first industrial nation" built on the success of these new factory owners.
Right from its beginnings, the cotton industry was global. With money made for example in the West Indies, cheap raw cotton could be imported from India (or the slave plantations of the United States). In the factories in Northern England the raw material would be processed, that is, woven into cloth and dyed or printed; then the textiles would be sold at a profit in Africa, Asia or America. The Great Industrial Exhibition of 1851 correctly showed Britain as the "workshop of the world".

Many poor people moved from the countryside to the fast-growing cities where they looked for jobs in the new industries. Well-paid specialists lost their work, while unskilled men, women and children found low-paid factory jobs. Working conditions in the factories and mines were very bad, and the housing the new workers found in the slums was crowded and unhealthy.

The growing contrast between rich and poor made reformers and politicians talk about the "Two Nations" of Britain. At first, this contrast was regarded as natural. Little was done to help the poor, old, sick and unemployed, and people unfit to work were put in workhouses which were like prisons. Strikes and workers' organisations were seen as criminal. Most people thought that the government should not intervene in business and social issues (*laissez-faire* policy). Little by little, however, people understood that reform laws were needed to help the workers and poor people. It took several decades to stop the employment of young children and to introduce safety regulations and humane working hours in the factories. Other reforms improved the living conditions in the towns, where workers' families often lived in one room, sometimes in wet cellars. The fight for political reform, that is, giving the workers the right of vote, took even longer (Second Reform Act in 1867).

British industrialisation and its commercial and social success depended on Britain's international power. While other European nations lost their colonies, Britain gained new territories and opened new markets in Africa, Asia, America and Australia/New Zealand. By controlling most of the transcontinental sea trade, Britain could protect its trade interest: it supported free trade to sell its industrial and luxury goods, while its textile industry was protected by putting a ban on the export of industrial machines.

→ **For an interactive game presenting the factors an early industrialist had to consider, see "Who Wants to be a Cotton Millionaire?" at www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/launch_gms_cotton_millionaire.shtml**

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Victorian Fashion and the Role of Women

Although Britain was ruled by a female monarch for most of the 19th century, women were seen as second-class human beings. Most were dependent on their fathers or husbands and had no voice in public. Their education was neglected. In married life, their role was to be a beautiful ornament and to create a nice home for the family. The ideal wife was an "angel in the house": beautiful, naïve, modest, well-mannered and able to dance, sing and speak French. Good wives were not physically active, sexually attractive, with strong opinions, clever or interested in politics or science. From the middle of the century onwards rich husbands moved their families to the suburbs and commuted by train to their city offices. Now women were effectively cut off from their husbands' working lives.

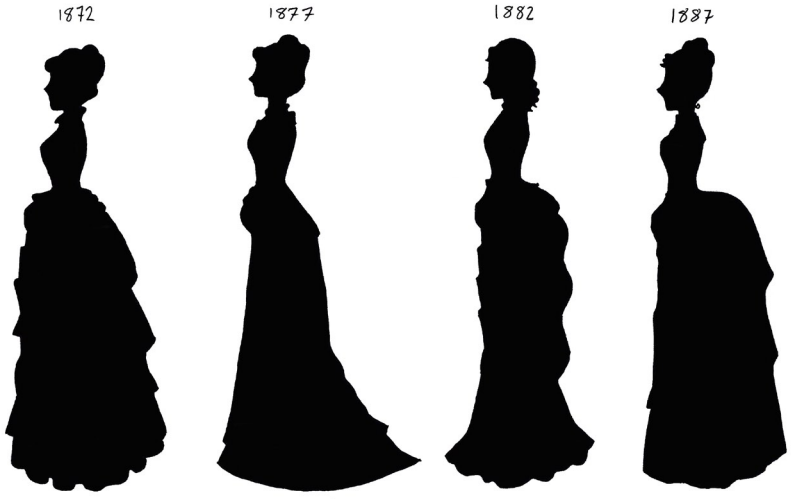
For Victorian middle-class women, there were few opportunities to live on their own, as they could only work as governesses or seamstresses. In contrast, most working-class women had to work to feed their families. They were lucky to find work in factories, as the pay and the working conditions were better than in private households (maids were on duty for almost twenty-four hours a day). Alternatives for married women were to take in extra work or to work in local sweatshops. Many poor women stole or entered the sex trade in order to survive.

When Victoria came to the throne in 1837, the fashion for women changed: before, women had worn loose Regency gowns, in which women could move without constraints. From 1830 onwards, female dresses became more formal, with corsets giving women a slim waist (*Taille*), and crinolines (*Reifröcke*) or bustles (*Hüftpolster*) making the skirts very voluminous.

This fashion made physical activity very difficult and even dangerous. Women fainted when they could not breathe because of the corsets, and some developed stomach problems. In some cases women were blown off seaside piers when taking a walk, or received serious burns when their skirts caught fire while moving about the house.

By 1830 cotton textiles had become mass products. They were used for household furnishing, as working clothes and as daily dresses. While the poor owned one or two dresses of bad quality, second-hand clothes or rags, the rich had many dresses which they changed several times during the day for different occasions. Patterns could be lively and colourful, but the fashion also wanted to show women's modesty and therefore stressed darker or less brilliant colours.
For men, fashion was less varied. Victorian men dressed in black frock coats and top hats with white starched linen shirts. Only few men, the dandies, did not follow this rule.

→ **For further information on the lives of Victorian Women, see Lynn Abrams, "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain" at www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml**



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Cotton – the First Industry

Quelle: flickr

At a cotton mill

Cotton is a plant that does not grow in Europe. The finished fabric had been imported since antiquity, but for a long time Europeans were not able to produce the colourful textiles imported from India. This changed in the late 17th and 18th centuries, when the Dutch and the British learned to print cotton cloth. For the needs of the developing British cotton industry, raw cotton was imported first from India, then from the West Indies and the USA, where it was grown on slave plantations.

After picking cotton is processed in several steps:

- Ginning: the white fibres are separated from the seeds.
- Baling: the fibres are pressed into large "bales" (*Ballen*) for long-distance transport. At the factory, the bales are opened and the pressed cotton fibres are untangled.
- Carding: the fibres are straightened out (*kardieren*).
- Spinning: a yarn is produced by twisting the fibres.
- Weaving: the yarn is used for the making of fabric or cloth.
- Dying and/or Printing: the white products are given colour and patterns.

During the second half of the 18th century, several machines were invented which made the processing of cotton easier and faster. They were driven by water power and later by steam power. The introduction of machines meant a major change in employment: Before, highly skilled male weavers had worked at home, and their family members had prepared the yarn for the weaving. Now, several of the expensive machines would be set up by a rich mill owner in a factory, and a few unskilled men or poorly-paid women could produce many times more fabric than one weaver. Working hours were long, often thirteen to twenty hours per day, six days a week (the Sunday was seen as a holy day, in which people should go to church). It was hot and noisy in the factory, the rooms were crowded and the air was full of unhealthy cotton dust. Young children were employed because they were small enough to crawl under the machines, had nimble fingers to repair the yarn, and were quick and flexible. When they became tired and did not pay attention, they were beaten by the overseers. Many became ill and died of lung diseases, were killed or lost fingers, arms or legs in accidents, or their clothes caught fire. Life expectancy for these workers or "white slaves" was low, and they often were sick and crippled before they reached the age of twenty.

The fight for factory reform started with the establishment of factories, but for a long time nothing happened. The 1833 Factory Law, which forbade work for very young children and reduced working hours for young people to twelve hours a day, was not effective. In 1850, all textile factory workers were supposed to work no longer than ten and a half hours a day, but there were many exceptions. Other laws were passed, making the factory work safer and less damaging to health.

Even with these laws, the industrial cotton textiles were much cheaper than any other textiles in the world. A large part of the cotton textiles produced in Manchester and the surrounding area was re-exported, often to India and the African countries. In India, the commercial production of Indian textiles was even forbidden in order to support British industry. In Africa, the British industrial mass product became more common and more prestigious than the traditional African materials.

→ **If you want to see some pictures and learn more about children in Victorian Britain, see www.bbc.co.uk/schools/victorians/standard/work/learning/slideshow/**

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Transformation: Staging the Graces

1 What about you?

→ **Get together in groups.**
Have a look at each other's folders and discuss the process of working on the project.
- What was your favourite task or your favourite station?
- What did you not understand?
- What do you think about the artwork now?

2 Staging the Graces

YINKA SHONIBARE, MBE
The Three Graces, 2001
Three life-size mannequins, Dutch wax print cotton
Dimensions variable
Commissioned and produced by the British School of Rome
Collection of Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky
Purchased with the funds from Alice Speed Stoll Association Trust
Photo: Stephen White
Copyright the artist
Courtesy James Cohan Gallery, New York

→ **In your group discuss how you could stage *The Three Graces*:**
produce a short play, record a conversation or enact an interview with the Graces.
Think about
- Who you are: persons that are mentioned in the project / an African or European woman / man / people from the past or the present
- Where you are: … at the museum / … on a journey / … in a specific situation
- What you are thinking about: your destination / your memories / your surroundings
- How will you present it: as a play / performance / as a recorded conversation / as a short film

3 Reflection

→ **Watch the presentations of the other groups.**
Discuss: what did you like about each presentation?
In what way did they comment on Shonibare's *Three Graces*?
What do you think was their intention?

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