



Chinese Clothing

In Ancient China, clothing was a symbol of status. The way that people dressed showed what kinds of lives they lived. Peasant's clothes were made of a material that came from the fibers of a plant called hemp. It was rough and durable. Pants and shirts were usually loose-fitting, allowing for the range of movement required by the hard work the peasants did every day. Hemp was the primary fabric of the peasants until the Mongols conquered China during the Yuan Dynasty and introduced cotton clothing. Cotton quickly replaced hemp because it was cheaper, warmer, and softer.

Wealthier people wore clothes made from silk. Silk comes from the cocoons of silkworms. It is smooth and light and comfortable. The Chinese invented silk fabric, which was unknown to the rest of the world for hundreds of years. Most silk clothing were long robes that were dyed with colors and fancy designs.

Only high-ranking government officials and members of the emperor's court were permitted to wear silk. A peasant could be punished for wearing silk clothing. There were also rules about what colors people could wear. Only the emperor could wear yellow. During the Sui Dynasty, peasants were restricted to wearing only blue or black. White clothing was for mourning, and red clothing indicated joy or happiness.

Who wore each type of clothing?

silk _____

cotton _____

yellow _____

hemp _____