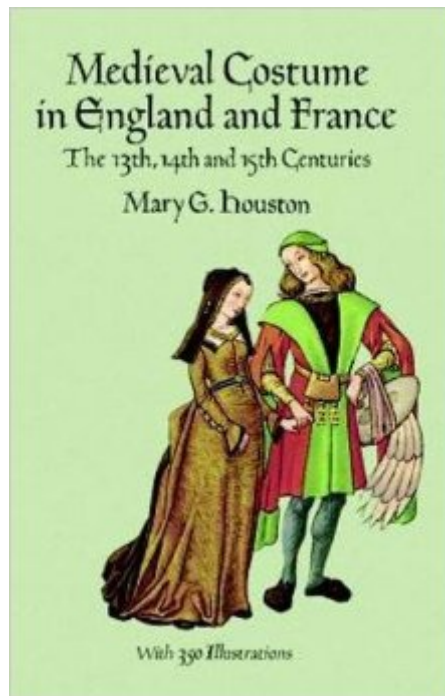


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# Medieval Costume In England And France: The 13th, 14th And 15th Centuries (Dover Fashion And Costumes)



## Synopsis

This carefully researched volume offers lovers of both costume and the medieval period a meticulously researched and accurately detailed study of the clothing of the Middle Ages. Following an illuminating discussion of the style and construction of costumes worn in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, noted costume historian Mary G. Houston provides detailed descriptions and illustrations of actual apparel worn by all classes and sectors of society. Included are elaborate royal, academic, and legal costumes; Eucharistic vestments and garments of religious orders; working class apparel; civilian dress; and more. Also examined is a wide variety of accessories and ornaments, jewelry, armor, textiles, embroidery, coiffures, and other items. The clear, succinct text is splendidly documented by 350 black-and-white line illustrations based on contemporary books and manuscripts as well as representations in paintings and sculpture. Indispensable for students of costume history, medievalists, illustrators, and fashion historians, *Medieval Costume in England and France* will delight anyone interested in the medieval period and its dress.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While this book may be a good place to start, it shouldn't be your only source. It includes no photos of primary sources, but instead only modern drawings of various sources. The "patterns" are highly simplified and are the author's guess as to a plausible construction of the garments, rather than a

Janet Arnold-style examination of extant pieces. Take these "patterns" with a large grain of salt! However, I did think the section describing religious vestments is detailed and informative, since I knew almost nothing about that subject. Unfortunately, the section of this book covering the 15th century is much less detailed than those covering the 13th and 14th centuries, and only shows a few examples of the complicated and rapidly evolving fashions of that century, with no detailed "patterns". The fancy women's hats from the 15th century (which include the pointy and double-horned styles most people think of as "medieval") are only described briefly, with no actual construction information. This book is fine as far as it goes, but anyone wanting to do historical costuming will need much more detailed and accurate information. In particular, look for books with photographs of the actual paintings, sculpture, or illuminated manuscripts that show the clothing. Be careful when using books that only show a modern artist's rendering, as this one does.

Houston's book seems to be an excellent overview of the costume of the late medieval period. While it doesn't delve much into the actual construction of the clothing (i.e. patterns, stitching, etc.), it's quite good at giving a solid visual representation of the changes that occurred during these centuries, and as such I think it's a great starting point for study. As other reviewers have mentioned, the illustrations in here are redrawn from primary sources, so serious students of costuming will want to look at the primary sources whenever possible. Most will also need to seek out other sources to find better information on the construction of the clothing as well. But even so, this book is so inexpensively priced that I can't find too much to quibble about. Anyone, especially beginners, can buy it as an introduction and then move on to more detailed sources later.

Don't let the tiny price fool you! This slim volume is worth its weight in gold for anyone seeking to study and/or replicate period costume. Clothing for the common folk, royalty and the clergy are meticulously examined and discussed. The only lack is any discussion of undergarments, the book focusing only on tunics, surcoats, cloaks, shoes and head coverings. We are left to wonder what sort of leggings, stockings, drawers, petticoats, corsets or chemises they might have worn. It is easy to follow the development of line and cut through the centuries. Many detailed line drawings, along with some coloured plates give a good indication of details of construction and trim. It is easy to create patterns of any size from these drawings. Many drawings of the effigies of deceased monarchs and their consorts give an especially typical illustration of their favoured clothing. We can assume that the folk of their period followed their royalty's tastes during the reign and for some time afterward. There is a very good section on embroidered trims and fabrics, and some treatment of

jewelry as well. The head coverings for women are especially well covered. Armor and chain mail, and some weaponry are well discussed and illustrated. A particularly interesting point is that the reigns of the monarchs of England, France and Germany are presented in table form for each century, complete w/ dates. Having this information compiled in this fashion is invaluable when one needs to be very accurate in construction of period garb, and may have not much more to go on than the name of the monarch of the time.

Easy to understand and with material suited for reenactors or makers of theatrical costume, the writer shows a sincerity for research in costume history that also makes this work suitable as a complementary book for serious studies. Illustrated with linedrawings and diagrams of construction. The diagrams are mostly based on conjecture and reconstruction work, as preserved items of clothing from this period is extremely rare. Also shows armour and heraldry. Normally I disapprove of illustrations that are drawn after an original instead of reproducing them, but as the book was first printed in 1939, when photographic illustrations was a technical and economical luxury, and the writer gives the exact sources of the originals for the drawings, this book is an exception for me. Normally I'm also sceptical towards reconstructions, but the writer is so straightforward about the fact that they are reconstructions, and by giving not only the result but the process of reasoning that led to them, she gives the reader an opportunity to agree or disagree with her. Personally I'm inclined to agree with her reasoning as to how garments may have been constructed and why it looked and was done in that way. As an example she points out that techniques to be considered must be viewed not from our present position but be based on what was done in the preceding period. What is a reasonable change? One may wish for a rewrite with all this sincerity and clear reasoning applied to more recent research material but until that has been done this is the book that provides many unusual and useful points of view on the subject.

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