

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Unmentionables

What are unmentionables? That's an old fashioned term for ... um ... snicker ... underwear. For whatever reason, for centuries people have considered underwear as something unmentionable, not to be talked about in polite or public



conversation. In fact, before the days of clothes driers, when American women hung the family's laundry out to dry they made sure to put the underwear in the middle of the clothes hanger and hide it with shirts or sheets on the outside. This way no one passing by the house could see the family's underwear. Many modern Americans still feel embarrassed at talking about underwear but lots of people today wear clothing styles that let their underwear be seen.

The forerunner to modern underpants for both men and women was the loincloth. Humans have worn loincloths for thousands of years. Surprisingly enough, humans in civilizations around the world all invented similar loincloths. A loincloth is simply leather or cloth held by some form of string



Name \_\_\_\_\_

tied around the waist. People in very warm climates used grasses or leaves for making loincloths. Underpants evolved when people joined the two pieces of loincloth together between the legs. We know that ancient Egyptians, Incas, Romans and others from around the world wore this form of clothing. Egyptian King Tutankhamen was buried with 145 sets of underwear for his journey through the underworld.

Early underwear was worn for warmth and to protect more expensive outer garments from sweat and body odors.

Underwear was usually made from coarse linen or cotton or scratchy woolen cloth. Only wealthy individuals could afford comfortable underwear made from fine linen or silk. Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Europeans and Americans did not bathe or wash their hair frequently. Clothing wasn't washed very often either. Often underwear was infested fleas, lice and mites.

In the 1800s American men wore union suits or long johns made from red flannel. This garment covered arms, legs and torso. One-piece and two-piece union suits can still be bought today in ladies as well as men's styles.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Multiple Choice Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. Unmentionable means
  - a. Don't listen
  - b. Don't watch
  - c. Don't talk about
  - d. Don't touch
  
2. Where did American women place underwear on the clothesline?
  - a. Anywhere
  - b. Hidden inside
  - c. On the outer lines
  - d. They didn't hang underwear on the clothesline
  
3. A loincloth
  - a. Has been worn by humans for thousands of years
  - b. Is the forerunner to underpants
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
  
4. Early underwear was worn
  - a. For warmth
  - b. To protect more expensive outer garments
  - c. Both a. and b. above
  - d. None of the above
  
5. Usually underwear was made from
  - a. Cotton
  - b. Linen
  - c. Wool
  - d. All of the above
  
6. A union suit covered
  - a. Torso
  - b. Arms
  - c. Legs
  - d. All of the above



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Short Answer Questions

1. Do some research about outdoor clotheslines. What advantages are there to drying clothes on a clothesline versus using a gas or electric dryer?
2. Do some research on the Internet and find patterns for a clothespin dolls. Make your own clothespin doll.
3. With a team of your classmates, do some research on the Internet and create a PowerPoint presentation or notebook that contains pictures of different early cultures wearing some form of loincloth.
4. Find a picture of a union suit or long johns. Draw your own picture of a pioneer man wearing a union suit.
5. Long johns are another name for union suit. Long johns are named for famous boxer John L. Sullivan. Do some research and write a short biography about John L. Sullivan.
6. In previous times infestations with lice were common. Today many kids get head lice. Explain what head lice are and how to get rid of them.
7. Would you wear long johns? Explain why or why not.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key

### Multiple Choice

1. c.
2. b.
3. c.
4. c.
5. d.
6. d.

### Short Answer

1. Individual response
2. Individual response
3. Individual response
4. Individual response
5. Individual response
6. Individual response
7. Individual response

