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Mr. Greco

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### Fashion Inspirations

Thank you to everyone for the help I received on this project. Thank you to my teachers, Ms. Parkinson and Mr. Greco, for helping me through writing and designing my book. Another big thank you to Vamp and Daniella for allowing me to interview them and being able to get to know them on a deeper level.

This book is dedicated to those who want to find themselves through fashion but don't know how or where to start.

When I first heard about the Freestyle Documentary, I knew exactly what I wanted to do. One of my biggest passions in life is fashion. For as long as I can remember, I have loved to express myself through clothing, accessories, and hair styles. For this project, I interviewed high school students to uncover how style is important to them and what inspires them to dress the way they do. Though the process was difficult and tedious at times, I loved it because I was able to understand and learn about what inspires other people to express themselves through fashion.

High school is arguably one of the most turbulent and meaningful times of our lives. We learn, we grow physically and emotionally, make friends, and prepare for life after school. This can be a very stressful period for some. One thing that may help get adolescents through this time is finding the ability to express oneself—one's identity, interests, and passions—through fashion and personal style. Connecting to one's inner self and then expressing that deeper identity through fashion and self-expression can help us find ourselves in the sea of people that is high

school. As I did my research for this project, I encountered Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. This hierarchy identifies 5 levels of human needs, starting with the most basic—physiological (food and clothing)—and moving up through safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization. In general, the needs must be satisfied in order; in other words, it would be very difficult for a human to reach full self-actualization if their basic needs were not met.

I found this hierarchy to be very interesting when applied to fashion. On our way to full self-actualization, clothing and fashion applies in each tier of Maslow's pyramid. Starting with the most basic, humans need clothing to meet the physiological need of covering their bodies to protect against the elements. As our needs move up the pyramid, however, for some, clothing and fashion continue to play an important role. We are attracted to those who have similar ideas and beliefs. These physiological needs for friendships and connection are a lot of the times aided by how we show ourselves to the world. For many, finding themselves through self-expression bolsters their self-esteem and confidence. Teens commonly strive towards finding an identity and making sense of their position in society and ultimately the world. From basic human needs to self-actualization, fashion plays a role in everyone's lives, whether you notice it or not.

Conforming to mainstream fashion is an act that most, if not all of us, do at some point in our lives. There are many reasons why people stick to fitting in compared to standing out. From insecurity to judgment, most people stick to what feels safe and many of us stay in that zone of safety. For many, feeling safe with one's clothing choices is often the easiest and most preferable route. However, some people have developed the courage to break free from the mainstream fashion and pursue their own identity through their clothes. Two examples of people who choose not to conform to simply fitting in are Daniella and Vamp.

As a kid, Daniella dressed to fit in and hide among the crowd. Throughout elementary school and middle school, she only focused on sticking with mainstream fashions and trends. Being an athletic kid, it was easy for her to develop a safe “uniform” - athletic shorts and sporty T-shirts. However, as she began highschool and then continued through quarantine, she grew as a person and started communicating through her clothes. Daniella began to stray away from the trends and started to find her own identity.

Vamp’s story starts in a similar way. Like Daniella, Vamp also dressed to fit in at first. However, inspired and supported by their friends and relatives, they were introduced to different and alternative options from the common style. After Vamp was introduced to different forms of self-expression, they started to find themselves with their clothes, hair, and accessories.

Daniella is a junior attending Los Altos High School. Over the course of her three years in high school, she has started developing her own unique identity through self-expression that is still growing today. One thing that inspires Daniella and makes her more confident is breaking gender norms. Gender norms and gender stereotypes are pervasive in our society. From dictating what colors are appropriate for which gender, to whether dresses or jewelry can only be worn by one and not the other gender, these antiquated norms seep into our daily lives. Emotions, sports, fashion, and more are all seen through a miopic lens of stereotypes and who fits in what box. Daniella's unique sense of style challenges the boxes that society has built by wearing what many would refer to as “men’s clothing.” When Daniella was growing up, all she wanted to do was fit in, follow the crowd, and camouflage among other students and friends. This changed during the recent pandemic. Quarantine changed and affected everyone differently. During quarantine, Daniella found time to reflect and grow and as a result, found ways to connect with her inner identity more fully. Presently, she strives “to show people that I wasn't like the same person.

And I feel like I was able to express that in my fashion just because I grew a lot as a person through quarantine” (Sayar). Her clothing choices reveal her personal growth on a deeper level. To further her advances towards self-actualization, Daniella plans to experiment within the bounds of college and explore in a more independent environment.

Vamp is a high school senior attending courses at both Mountain View High School and Freestyle Academy. As Vamp would describe it, their style is alt or alternative. Vamp at first followed the fashion norms. Over time they were introduced to clothing brands, such as Hot Topic, which showed them that there are far more options on how to dress and how to express oneself. After they were introduced to these new and unique options of self-expression, they were able to use fashion in a way that made them happier and far more confident. This type of experimentation was not without conflict, however. As Vamp explored new forms of fashion expression, they were met with backlash from their community on what they should and shouldn't wear. This made it difficult at first for them to find their individuality. In spite of that, Vamp's friends helped them push back and supported them on their road to finding themselves. Vamp's style led to more confidence and self-esteem. With this confidence, Vamp was able to do things that were out of their comfort zone, such as meeting new friends online and complimenting a stranger. Something that heavily influences Vamps style today is music. To Vamp, being able to connect to music on another level is very important. Finding ways to link the expressing themselves outwardly through fashion to the inner and personal connection they feel to music just adds to their confidence and security in self. This connection also offers Vamp a sense of belonging which in turn bolsters their self-esteem as seen in the hierarchy. As they continue on their path to self-actualization, Vamp plans to delve further in their form of self expression by enhancing their appearance with tattoos and additional piercings.

Making decisions of how we present ourselves to the world, especially during our often rocky high school years, can be both rewarding and difficult. On the one hand, feeling comfortable enough to express yourself in a way that makes you happy is extremely important and rewarding. However, if these modes of self expression are met with judgment or derision, an individual will be challenged and will have to persist in their self confidence to not bend to the will of the crowd. There are many reasons why people dress the way they do. Whether it's a basic need for protection or finding your own identity, fashion impacts everyone. Daniella and Vamp's self-expression surpasses the basic needs of clothing and instead explores various forms of self expression and identity on their individual paths toward self actualization. Their confidence in finding community and breaking free from the social norm of fashion is influential and inspiring to others. Not only are they finding a different way to express themselves, and a way of existing in this world that feels good to them, but they are also giving others the courage to do the same.

Sarah Starkey is a junior at Los Altos High School and Freestyle Academy in Mountain View, California. She enjoys picking up hobbies and hanging out with friends. In the future, Sarah hopes to pursue a career in the arts.

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