

## Featured Artifact: Hattie Carnegie Original Two Piece Dress

<http://www.historyexplorer.si.edu/resource/?key=1766>

Era 9: Postwar United States (1945 to early 1970s)



Look at the artifact presented to you. In a few sentences, respond to the following questions:

**Describe:** Objectively describe the artifact. What do you think it is made of? What does it look like? Does it look old or new? Is it intact, or is it damaged in some way?

**Analyze:** When, where or how do you think this item was used? What kind of person may have created or used this item? What significance do you think the object held, either for the creator or the user? Do you see words or images on the artifact that connect it to others (besides the creator and user)?

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Share your conclusions with a partner, then discuss the following:

**Evaluate :** Justify why you came to those conclusions about the artifact. What further questions do you have about the object? Of those questions, which could you solve by observing the object in person and which would you need to solve with research?

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## Background Information

Hattie Carnegie, one of a few female entrepreneurs in the early to mid-20th century, was born Henrietta Kanengeiser in Vienna, Austria, in 1886. She came to the United States in 1892. Her first job was as a messenger, sometime milliner, and model in Macy's department store. She decided to change her name and chose the surname of the richest man in the country, Andrew Carnegie, to reflect her ambitions. With determination and an innate sense for style and business, she became a symbol of taste and high fashion to many Americans.

From the very beginning her wholesale and retail establishments attracted the wealthy. She opened her first shop, "Carnegie—Ladies' Hatter" in 1909, making and selling custom-made dresses and hats. As her business grew, she established her own wholesale house, which manufactured clothing with her label and sold in select stores. Well-known designers such as Claire McCardell and Norman Norell began their careers designing for her. By 1945, her shop on 49th Street in New York had added more departments, including American and French designs and accessories for "smart" dressing.

**After reading and considering the background information, compose a response to the following:**

**Analyze:** Address the following object-specific questions:

- Do you think a similar style of dress might be in style today? Why?
- Could someone like Hattie Carnegie be as successful today? Why do you think this is the case?

**Synthesize:** What does this object tell us about the era in which it was created, or the American experience as a whole? How would you describe the social, economic, or political climate of America during this time? What connections can you make between this object and other things that you have seen, read, or experienced?

**Analyze:** Address the following era-specific questions:

- How did the postwar era change the political, social, and economic climate of the United States?