

## Face masks pick perilous path from health protector to fashion accessory

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

- When did you last wear a face mask?
- Where were you?
- What kind of mask was it? For example, medical, home-made, fashionable, colourful ...

#### 2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

quirky	retooled	bespoke	devastating	embrace	branded
fringed	longevity	mesh	accessory	ornate	trivialize

1. decorated with complicated patterns or shapes \_\_\_\_\_ (para 1)
2. completely accept something such as a new belief, idea or way of life \_\_\_\_\_ (para 2)
3. decorated with rows of thin pieces of cloth that hang down \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
4. a piece of material like a net, made from a lot of closely connected wires, strings etc \_\_\_\_\_ (para 5)
5. a small thing such as a piece of jewellery or a pair of shoes that you wear with clothes to give them more style \_\_\_\_\_ (para 6)
6. make something seem less important or serious than it really is \_\_\_\_\_ (para 7)
7. designed and produced for a particular customer \_\_\_\_\_ (para 8)
8. causing a lot of harm or damage \_\_\_\_\_ (para 9)
9. slightly strange and interesting \_\_\_\_\_ (para 10)
10. when equipment and machines in a factory are replaced by different or updated ones \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)
11. goods made by well-known companies, that have the company name on their label \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)
12. the fact of having a long life or existence \_\_\_\_\_ (para 11)

#### 3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

1. four awards ceremonies and music festivals
2. two actors
3. three singers
4. six well-known fashion houses (companies)

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10 September, 2020

- 1 At the Venice Film Festival, the actor Tilda Swinton wore an ornate, gold, designer face mask on the red carpet. On Instagram, the designer James Merry said the mask was inspired by “stingray skeletons, seaweed and orchids”.
- 2 The mask was not useful against coronavirus, but it is part of a bigger change: the world of high fashion is finally allowing itself to embrace the coronavirus face mask.
- 3 At the recent VMA awards show, Lady Gaga wore many highly fashion-conscious masks. There was the bubble-gum pink one from Cecilio Castrillo, a horned one from Lance Victor Moore, a futuristic one designed by Smooth Technology, and then, when accepting an award, she wore one in metallics by Maison Met.
- 4 Lady Gaga’s multiple masks prompted a 43% increase in searches for “bold” and “colourful” mask styles. “I was wearing face shields before it was a thing,” she wrote later on Instagram.
- 5 From Scout Willis’s fringed face covering to Lana Del Rey’s delicate pale pink mesh mask on the cover of *Interview* magazine’s September issue, it feels like the mask is finally being embraced for more than health reasons.
- 6 “It is the new fashion accessory,” Patricia Field told the *New York Post*. “I have several masks, and I wear them the way I wear my other accessories, whatever goes best with my outfit,” the designer said.
- 7 The fashion industry has not wanted to trivialize the pandemic or reduce it to a fashion show, so they have struggled for a long time with this issue: should masks make a fashion statement or are they just an essential medical item?
- 8 In January, 2020, when Billie Eilish wore a bespoke black and gold Gucci face mask to the Grammys, people thought it was a continuation of the cool style she demonstrated at Glastonbury. Even when Off-White released eight masks as part of a collection in March, most people still did not see “protective wear” as fashion.
- 9 But as the months went on and the pandemic spread across the world with devastating effects, the attitude to masks has changed.
- 10 Some people want unique and quirky masks. In April, the e-commerce website Etsy sold 12m face masks. In the same month, Off-White’s \$95 masks became the biggest menswear accessory online.
- 11 But while Prada and Louis Vuitton retooled to start manufacturing surgical face masks because there was a medical shortage caused by the pandemic, fashion labels were not producing their own branded masks. Maybe they were not sure of the mask’s longevity.
- 12 “I’ve noticed a lack of masks in the latest collections,” said designer Thomas Finney. He says about his own masks, which look like birds: “I wanted to create something bright and colourful. The beginning of the pandemic was an especially uncertain and dark time,” he said. “Since everyone was inside, I took themes and colours from nature to create the Birds of Paradise collection.”
- 13 In August, Burberry were the first big fashion house to announce their own range of masks, and with demand increasing by 441%, it feels like a taste of things to come. “If the mask is here to stay for the foreseeable future,” said Finney, “I would be surprised if fashion houses didn’t take the opportunity to put their mark on the new accessory.”

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#### 4 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. The world of high fashion is still reluctant to include face masks in their new collections.
2. Lady Gaga wore a total of 43 different face masks at a recent awards show.
3. In March, 2020, Off-White were the first fashion house to make fashionable face masks for the stars.
4. People who don't want to spend money on a designer mask but would like an original and interesting one have been buying them from the e-commerce site Etsy.
5. So far, none of the big fashion houses have started to produce surgical face masks on a larger scale.
6. Thomas Finney hasn't seen many masks in recent fashion collections.
7. Finney thinks that fashion houses will not bother with face masks as they are still not sure about how long masks will be necessary.

#### 5 Phrases

a. Find and underline the phrases in the text. Then match them to the definitions.

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1. the foreseeable future    | a. a long, narrow piece of cloth laid on the ground for a special guest to walk along when they arrive at an event |
| 2. red carpet                | b. very interested in clothing and people's appearance   |
| 3. fashion-conscious         | c. an idea, product or activity that is generally known or recognized  |
| 4. a thing                   | d. the first example of something that you can expect more of in the future  |
| 5. a taste of things to come | e. a time that is not very distant and that can be at least partly guessed from present conditions                 |

b. Now use the phrases to complete these sentences.

1. Apparently, eco-friendly underwear is \_\_\_\_\_ now.
2. Damien is the most \_\_\_\_\_ person I know.
3. There probably won't be a cure for this disease in \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The first raindrops were just \_\_\_\_\_. It rained all day.
5. Scarlet paused on the \_\_\_\_\_ to allow the paparazzi to take photos.

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### 6 Discussion

- How many face masks do you own?
  - o Where did you get them from?
  - o Describe them.
  - o Are you satisfied with their fit, quality and design?
  - o Did you buy any of them to match a specific outfit?
- Look at photos of some of the face masks from the article here:  
[www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/sep/10/face-mask-fashion-accessory-coronavirus](http://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/sep/10/face-mask-fashion-accessory-coronavirus). What is your reaction to each one?

### 7 Research and presentation

Choose something or someone from task 3. Find out more about it or them and give a two-minute presentation on your chosen subject.