Illinois Extension







Illinois 4-H

COSTUME DESIGN PROJECT RESOURCES

WELCOME



Welcome to the world of costume design! In this project you'll unleash your creativity to create costumes for yourself or others! Whether you're interested in creating costumes to proclaim your fandom for something, wow your friends at Halloween or the local renaissance fair, help people on stage look the part, honor your heritage, or travel back in time, this project will help you make your dreams a reality.

Explore the resources available, from books, to videos, to websites, and choose the ones that are right for you!

We encourage you to identify an adult in your life that can help guide you in your learning. There are tools for this helper in the back of this resource guide!

You decide where you want to take your learning! At the end of your learning journey, you're invited to share something you created at your local 4-H show or fair.

We hope you enjoy your learning journey!

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GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR PROJECT

In this project, you'll create a costume for yourself or someone else! While this project may involve some construction skills like sewing or working with foam or other materials, the main focus is on the creative process of developing a character, and bringing it to life through costume creation.

You can use sewing or no-sew techniques to create your costume. And you can use or modify existing costume patterns, or create your own. You'll use our Costume Design Workbook, along with resources in this guide (and other resources you identify) to create your costume.

WHAT IS COSTUME DESIGN?

Costume design is creating outfits to help create characters and tell a story.[1] Historically, costume design started as a profession that created costumes for stage performances. As technology and society have advanced, costumes are now seen in film and TV, in everyday life on holidays like Halloween, and at events like renaissance festivals, fan conventions, cultural celebrations, and more.

Costumes help tell stories. People can look at a costume and guess some basic information about the character wearing it, like their age, status, occupation, background, or gender. Costumes also can tell a lot about the personality of the character, and what they've been through (their backstory).[2]

Today the hobby known as cosplay (short for "costume play") has grown in popularity and made costume design more popular with people of all ages and abilities. Cosplayers create costumes inspired by their favorite pop culture characters and then wear those outfits to public events like conventions. Cosplay originally became popular in Japan in the 1970s, and spread to the United States in the 1980s. As the internet and social media connected the world, cosplay went mainstream in the 2000s.[3]



TYPES OF COSTUMES

Costumes can generally be sorted into four different types.[4]

Historical
The first type is historical. These are costumes based on how people dressed in the past. Costumes worn at historical reenactments and events like renaissance fairs would fall into this category. So would 1970s bell bottoms, 1950s poodle skirts, and 1920s flapper dresses.

Cultural
The second type of costume is cultural. These are costumes that reflect a specific ethnic group or culture. The traditional dress and materials of different countries (like kilts, gran buba, kimono, and mantas) fall into this category. These costumes are

frequently used to celebrate one's own culture, or participate in a cultural event, such as a dance or musical performance.

Theatrical
The third type of costume is theatrical. These are costumes created for use in theatre, dance, film, and television productions. This type of costume is designed with specific characters in mind, and it helps tell those characters' stories.

Special Interest
The fourth type of costume is special interest. This includes any costume created for participation in an activity, like a Halloween party, festival, convention, or other special event. Cosplay and other "fandom" inspired costumes fit in this category.

In this project, youth can explore whatever category of costume they choose! Please be thoughtful when choosing to create historical or cultural costumes. It can be disrespectful to wear costumes inspired by cultures that you're not a member of.

STARTING YOUR PROJECT

To start working on your project, you'll decide what kind of costume you want to create and who you want to create it for! You can make a costume for yourself, or for others.



Once you have a costume idea in mind, download and use the Illinois 4-H Costume Design Workbook to guide your process (*go.illinois.edu/4HCostumeWorkbook*). Use the resources in this guide to help you with the skills you will need to complete your costume, from sewing, to pattern making, to specialized techniques.

In this project, youth are encouraged to create a complete outfit, including clothes and accessories. You can also choose to style hair and add makeup to add to your look.

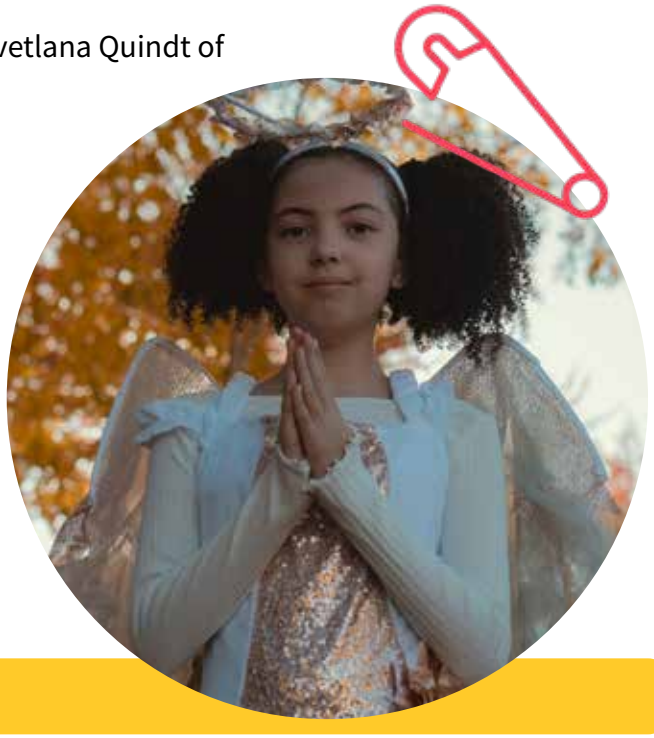
The highlighted resources are just a starting point for members. You can explore beyond these recommendations. Please be sure to have parental permission and supervision when browsing internet resources related to this topic. We encourage you to work with a parent or adult helper on your project journey!

PRINT RESOURCES

Print resources, like books, can be great tools to learn about costume design and construction techniques! Explore some options below that can help teach you about how to take your costume from idea to reality. Some of these resources may need to be purchased, but many may be available from your local library. Don't feel limited by our list of suggestions. You can find other resources from your local bookstore or library.

GENERAL COSTUME CREATION & CONSTRUCTION

- **The Hero's Closet - Sewing for Cosplay & Costuming** (by Gillian Conahan): Step-by-step guide that covers the basics of sewing costumes, along with patterns, and tips for creating original designs.
- **Epic Cosplay Costumes** (by Kristie Good): How-to information to create original costumes using sewing and other construction techniques.
- **The Book of Cosplay Sewing – Starting from Zero** (by Svetlana Quindt of KamuiCosplay): Introductory guide for people new to cosplay on how to sew using a machine or by hand.
- **Maker Comics: Create a Costume!** (by Sarah Myer): Comic format guide to creating fun, easy, budget-friendly costumes, including transforming thrift shop finds into costumes.
- **Creative Cosplay: Selecting & Sewing Costumes Way Beyond Basic** (by Amanda Haas): Step-by-step guide to designing your own cosplay.
- **Make, Sew and Mend: Traditional Techniques to Sustainably Maintain and Refashion Your Clothes** (by Bernadette Banner): Book on getting started with sewing your own clothes and how to alter clothing.



SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES & MATERIALS

- **Cosplay Foundations: Your Guide to Constructing Bodysuits, Corsets, Hoop Skirts, Petticoats & More** (by Casey Welch): A visual guide construct special pieces, including step-by-step photos and patterns.
- **Leathercrafting - A Step by Step, Beginners Guide to Creating Leather Armour, Costume & Accessories for Ren Events, SCA, LARP, Cosplay, Film & Theatre (**by Alex Agricola): Leathercrafting beginner's manual focusing on costumes and accessories.
- **Cosplayer's Ultimate Guide to EVA Foam: Design, Pattern & Create; Level Up Your Costumes & Props** (by Beverly Downen): Guide on how to pattern, design, and create with EVA foam.
- **Handwear Handbook: Make Gloves, Cuffs & Vambraces for Cosplay & Beyond** (by Gillian Conahan): Guide to creating things like gloves, cuffs, and vambraces for costumes.

- **Smocking Stencils: Foolproof Templates to Create Amazing Texture for Cosplay, Garment & Home Dec Sewing** (by Maggie Hofmann): Templates to create smocking grid to add texture to costumes.
- **Smocking Secrets: 20 Stitch Patterns to Create Unforgettable Texture; Cosplay, Garment, Home Dec & More** (by Maggie Hofmann): Step-by-step instructions to create 3D effects in your fabric.
- **Fabulous Cosplay Footwear: Create Easy Boot Covers, Shoes & Tights for Any Costume** (by Regan Cerato): How-to guide for boot covers, thigh highs, tights, and other footwear for your costume.
- **Level Up! Creative Cosplay: Costume Design & Creation, SFX Makeup, LED Basics & More** (by Amanda Haas): Guide to LED work, SFX makeup, bodypainting, and more to level up your costumes.
- **The Art of Extreme Wig Styling** (by Regan Cerato): How to create extravagant wigs to go with your costume.

HISTORIC COSTUMING



- **19th Century Fashion in Detail** (by Lucy Johnston): Introduction to the history of 19th century fashion.
- **Embellishments: Constructing Victorian Detail** (by Astrida Schaeffer): Pictures and construction guide based on Victorian garments.
- **Couture Sewing Techniques** (by Claire B Shaeffer): Describes couture techniques for sewing.
- **The American Duchess Guide to 18th Century Dressmaking: How to Hand Sew Georgian Gowns and Wear Them With Style** (by Lauren Stowell): Guide to 18th century dressmaking.
- **Patterns of Fashion Series** (by Janet Arnold): Guide series covering the content, cut, construction and context of historic dress in different periods from 1540 to 1950.
- **Historic Pattern Vendors:** A variety of vendors sell patterns for historic costuming, including Burnley & Trowbridge (*https://burnleyandtrowbridge.com*), Folkware (*https://www.folkwear.com*), J.P. Ryan (*https://www.jpryan.com*) and Laughing Moon Mercantile (*https://www.laughingmoonmercantile.com*) among others.

Note: If you are looking for resources about costumes of an era not listed above, it is best to consult primary sources. A primary source would include photographs, sketches, art, and writings from that actual time period, created by people of that time period. Primary sources can be accessed through places like libraries, museums, and universities. If primary sources are not available, you can consult secondary sources written by people who have studied those eras or locations.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Websites and internet videos can be a great source of information on costume design and construction! Look for info at the websites below, or explore on your own. Remember to have parental permission and supervision when looking for resources on the internet!

WEBSITES

- **Cosplay Tutorial**: Website featuring an extensive tutorial list focused on various cosplay techniques, including a variety of sewing techniques for costumes, as well as tips on working with non-fabric materials, and on making various accessories. Online at: *https://www.cosplaytutorial.com/*.
- **Cosplay Tutorials**: Tutorials on costume creation from "And Sewing Is Half the Battle". Online at *https://www.andsewingishalfthebattle.com/cosplay-tutorials/*.
- **Kamui Cosplay**: Website featuring tips getting started with cosplay, how-to's, supplies, techniques, and more. Online at *https://www.kamuicosplay.com/*.
- **Matrices**: Tutorials for getting started with mascot/fursuit building. Online at *http://www.matrices.net/tutorials.htm.*
- **Arda Wigs**: Website featuring extensive tutorials regarding wig styling and care, including multiple tutorials for different characters. Online at: *https://arda-wigs.com/blogs/tutorials/tutorial-master-list.*
- **SKS Props**: Patterns and videos on how to build armor, props, and costume pieces from EVA foam. Online at *https://www.sksprops.com/templates*.
- **Adobe Color**: Website that can help you pick color palettes using color theory and harmony. Online at *https://color.adobe.com/create/color-wheel*.
- **The Met Costume Institute:** Searchable collection of 7 centuries of fashionable dress and accessories, great for historic costume research. Online at *https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search?department=8.*



VIDEOS

- **4 Tips for Young Cosplayers and Their Parents/Guardians** (Kirilee Cosplay): Tips for families getting started with cosplay. Online at *https://youtu.be/Dh9TN1DBNbk?si=NpbITzevkY-t91nU*.
- **10 Tips How YOU can Start with Cosplay!** (KamuiCosplay): Tips for getting started with cosplay from an influencer in the cosplay community. Online at *https://youtu.be/Apel6UpqJok?si=uw2myas_uCmI6PV9*.

- **10 Tips and Tricks for EVA Foam** (Kinpatsu Cosplay): Tips on using foam for costumes. Online at *https://youtu.be/kSppMZAr0Hw?si=8rB8bGyjswj9hBhc*.

LESSONS & ACTIVITIES

- **What Does a Costume Designer Do?** (PBS Learning Media): Video and activities around the costume design process for a historical theater production. Online at *https://illinois.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/annie.arts.theater.pro.costume/annie-on-broadway-what-does-a-costume-designer-do/*.
- **Costume Design Challenge Info** (San Luis Obispo Reperatory Theatre): Costume design challenge resources, as well as a worksheet for planning a costume design. Online at *https://www.slorep.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Costume-Design-Challenge-Instructions.pdf*.
- **Creative Costume Design** (Dayton Art Institute): Lesson on creative costume design. Online at *https://www.daytonartinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DAI-Online-Learning-Creative-Costume-Design.pdf.*
- **Costume Design Lesson Plan** (Burt's Drama): Lesson on costume design in theater with activities. Online at *https://burtsdrama.com/stage-designers-lesson-6-costume-design/*.
- **Costume Design: Designing Character** (The Oscars): Activity guide that discusses costume design in film and media and includes activities to help build skills in using costume design to tell and enrich stories. Online at *https://www.oscars.org/sites/oscars/files/teachersguide-costumedesign-2015.pdf*.
- **Creativity Coming to Life: The Art of Costume Construction** (PBS Learning Media): Video and activity series focused on costume design for Broadway. Online at *https://illinois.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/creativity-coming-to-life-costume-media-gallery/steam-on-stage-and-screen/.*

WEB RESOURCE GUIDES

- **Cosplay Resources** (San Antonio Public Library): Online at *https://guides.mysapl.org/cosplay*.
- **Cosplay Resources** (Multnomah County Library): Online at *https://multcolib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/119372641/1951477069*.
- **Costume Designs, Historic Patterns & Cosplay** (Kent State University): Online at *https://libguides.library.kent.edu/costuming*.
- **Costume History Resources** (Ohio University Library): Online at *https://libguides.library.ohio.edu/costumehistory/starthere.*
- **Costume & Fashion History: A Guide to Resources** (New York Public Library): Online at *https://www.nypl.org/node/5652.*



4-H DRESS CODE CONSIDERATIONS

These guidelines aim to help you ensure your costume will meet dress code guidelines for attending a 4-H event, like a local fair or show.

Certain body parts must be covered for all youth:

- Clothes must be worn in a way such that private parts are covered with opaque material.

Members must wear:

- Shirt/top
- Bottom: pants/shorts/skirt/dress/leggings
- Shoes/footwear (no bare feet)



Members cannot wear:

- Violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity) or use of the same
- Hate speech, profanity, or pornography
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class
- Visible underwear (waistbands and straps excluded)
- Helmets or headgear that obscures the face (except as a religious observance or temporarily for judging purposes)

Notes on props:

If you create any prop weapons as part of your costume (e.g. swords, firearms, bows, etc.) do not bring them to your local fair or show. You may include those props in the photographs you include of your completed look in the Illinois 4-H Costume Design Workbook.

RESPECTING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

These guidelines aim to guide youth creating costumes in the Costume Design project to promote creativity while respecting intellectual property laws. Costumes in this class may be made from a purchased or historical pattern, designed from scratch, created by significantly modifying existing clothing items, or a combination of any of these methods.

You are creating/recreating functional clothing - clothes that could be worn in everyday life in an appropriate setting/era (example would be one of Wednesday Adam's dress from the show *Wednesday*, or dress of a princess in a live action Disney movie):



- You may not use trademarked designs or prints in your clothing (an example would be the Piet Mondrian dress print. The cut and style are not protected, but the print is).
- Do not use trademarked logos such as the Superman logo on a cape as a part of your design.

You are creating/recreating non-functional clothing (example would be a full Spiderman suit and mask):

- All props such as swords and shields are protected by copyright and may not be recreated. Original designs of props are acceptable.
- You may maintain the overall piecing and structure but consider transformations like different color schemes along with logo removal.

You are creating/recreating non-functional character garb (example would be Pikachu from Pokémon):

- You may not create a full costume that replicates a non-human character exactly.
- You may create a human costume of functional clothing inspired by a character (example would be that replicating Pikachu exactly is not acceptable, but envisioning a human outfit inspired by Pikachu is acceptable.)

Note: Licensed sewing patterns are sometimes available for a copyrighted character (such as the Dorothy Wizard of Oz dress pictured above). A licensed pattern means the character copyright holder has allowed the sale of that pattern and receives monetary compensation for that sale. If you purchase a licensed pattern, you are able to create an outfit using the pattern. You must bring a copy of the pattern with you to judging. Use caution when looking for licensed patterns. Individuals may try to sell unlicensed patterns on the internet. Stick to established pattern brands (such as but not limited to Butterick, McCall's, Vogue, Simplicity, and New Look) to ensure the pattern is in fact licensed.

CONNECTING TO OTHER 4-H PROJECTS

A variety of other 4-H projects may complement your learning in this project. Consider taking some of these projects to help build skills you can apply when making your costume.

SEWING 1-3

In the sewing projects you'll learn sewing skills, like working with patterns, using different sewing machine functions, using zippers and buttons, and more. Level one starts with basic sewing skills, and as the levels advance, members build more advanced skills. In addition to learning about sewing, these projects also include lessons on color, body types, and fabrics. Learn more about this project at *go.illinois.edu/4HSewing*.

CLOTHING EMBELLISHMENT

In the clothing embellishment project youth explore techniques to add flair to clothing, such as dyeing, embroidery, painting, beading, and more. This project can help you remix existing pieces and add style to your costume pieces. Learn more about this project at *go.illinois.edu/4HClothingEmbelllishment*.

THEATRE ARTS

In the theatre arts project youth explore the world of theatre with activities in communication, improvisation, pantomime, script writing, cultural and historicl influences, stage design, and costume design. Lear Learnmore about this project at *go.illinois.edu/4HTheaterArts*.

VISUAL ARTS HERITAGE ARTS

In the visual arts heritage project you can learn techniques like crochet, weaving, and knitting that can be used for costume and costume accessories. Learn more about this project at *go.illinois.edu/4HHeritageArts.*



VISUAL ARTS LEATHER

In the visual arts leather project you can learn to cut, braid, and decorate leather. This can be a great tool for your costume making toolkit! Explore stamping, carving, stitching, lacing, and other techniques in this project. Learn more about this project at *go.illinois.edu/4HLeather*.

SHOWING YOUR LEARNING



4-Hers are encouraged to demonstrate their learning in this project by showing off their created costume and accompanying Illinois 4-H Costume Design Workbook in their local 4-H fair or show. View your county fair or show book for specific details on exhibit requirements for this project.

4-H club members can design a costume for themselves or another person. Only one costume may be entered each year, though you are free to create more. You must bring your completed Illinois 4-H Costume Design Workbook to judging, along with your costume. Workbooks may be supplemented with additional information and pages, but all sections should be complete. As part of the workbook, you'll be asked to provide one or more photos of the completed costume on whoever it was created for (complete with all accessories and styling). For judging you'll bring the costume on hangers for the judge to examine, and then be asked to try the costume on (if it was made for yourself) so they can observe the fit and motion.

Projects will be judged on a variety of factors, including creativity, the planning process, and the overall look. See the scoresheet for more information. Scoresheets are available on the Illinois State 4-H Show website at *https://4h.extension.illinois.edu/events/state-events/illinois-state-fair*.

Note: If you are looking to be judged primarily on the sewing construction techniques and fit of your costume, you should consider entering the Clothing project instead of this project.

LEADER OR PROJECT HELPER RESOURCES

Having a trusted adult to guide learning can help youth take their projects to the next level. Thanks for being that helper! The resources below can be used by volunteers to teach costume design lessons with groups of youth, or can be used as guides to help supplement learning by a single member. A number of these resources are repeated from the Lessons & Activities section on page 8, as they can be completed by a youth alone, but are more effectively taught in partnership with an adult helper.

WHAT DOES A COSTUME DESIGNER DO?

Video and activities from PBS Learning Media around the costume design process for a historical theater production of Annie. Online at *https://illinois.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/annie.arts.theater.pro.costume/annie-on-broadway-what-does-a-costume-designer-do/*.



COSTUME DESIGN CHALLENGE INFO

Costume design challenge resources from San Luis Obispo Repertory Theatre, as well as a worksheet for planning a costume design. Online at *https://www.slorep.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Costume-Design-Challenge-Instructions.pdf.*

CREATIVE COSTUME DESIGN

Lesson on creative costume design from the Dayton Art Institute. Online at *https://www.daytonartinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/DAI-Online-Learning-Creative-Costume-Design.pdf.*

COSTUME DESIGN LESSON PLAN

Lesson on costume design in theatre with activities from Burt's Drama. Online at *https://burtsdrama.com/stage-designers-lesson-6-costume-design/*.

COSTUME DESIGN: DESIGNING CHARACTER

Activity guide from The Oscars that discusses costume design in film and media and includes activities to help build skills in using costume design to tell and enrich stories. Online at *https://www.oscars.org/sites/oscars/files/teachersguide-costumedesign-2015.pdf*.

CREATIVITY COMING TO LIFE: THE ART OF COSTUME CONSTRUCTION

Video and activity series from PBS Learning Media focused on costume design for Broadway. Online at *https://illinois.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/creativity-coming-to-life-costume-media-gallery/steam-on-stage-and-screen/*.

BASIC COSTUME DESIGN LESSON PLAN

This lesson plan, targeted at youth in grades 3 and 4, goes through the costume design process from visioning to rendering. Online at *https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c897a93c-ceb4-4823-9271-ded9dc215166/TH%20517%20Final%20Project%20A%20Sample%20Lesson%20Plan%20-%20Ba.pdf.*

COSTUME DESIGNER ACTIVITY

This activity from the Arden Theatre Company covers the basics of costume design and has actual examples of costumes from sketch to final product. Online at *https://ardentheatre.org/programs/arden-online/education/education-kids/let-s-create/theatrical-design/.*

BLOOMSBURY FASHION CENTRAL

This collection of lesson plans about costume design and cosplay lessons is targeted at college age students, but can be adapted for younger kids. They also have subject guides on specific areas of fashion. Online at *https://www.bloomsburyfashioncentral.com/teaching-and-learning-resources*.

CULTURAL APPRECIATION VERSUS APPROPRIATION

Resource from University of Idaho 4-H that helps provide context on cultural appreciation versus appropriation in the visual arts. Big ideas and resources shared in this document can help adult helpers guide youth who include cultural influences in their project work. Online at *go.illinois.edu/CulturalAppreciation.*



CREDITS

This resource was compiled by Amy Henschen, with content contributions by Amy Zepp, Barbara Dubravec, Danielle Gapinski, Elaine Kaple, Heather Sievers, Kristi Smith, and Shelby Carlson. It was originally published in June 2024. Please note that while all links were working at time of publication, links may become inactive or move over time. If you encounter a broken link, try searching for the name of the resource, and report the broken link to your local 4-H staff.

SOURCES

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3 Kopf, R. L. (2023, April 28). *The history of cosplay: From fan culture to mainstream popularity*. Medium. https://medium.com/cosplayers/the-history-of-cosplay-from-fan-culture-to-mainstream-popularity-95188770168a

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PHOTOS & IMAGES



- *All icons throughout from Flaticon.com:* scissors by PIXARTIST; sketch, sewing machine, pin cushion, zipper & theatre masks by Freepik; needle & thread by Good Ware; fabric roll by Smashicons; button by Daniel ceha; safety pin by afif fudin; helmet by Ains; dress form & pattern by iconixar; leather tools by Eucalyp; workbook by Vector Squad.
- *Cover:* girl with white ears and bow, photo by Aung Khant Maung on Unsplash; girl in historic dress with fur, photo by Nick Karvounis on Unsplash; two girls dressed like Moana, photo by Jennifer Kaye Photography
- *Page 2*: kid in dinosaur costume, photo by Linoleum Creative Collective on Unsplash
- *Page 3:* two women in dresses, photo by Gunnar Ridderstrom on Unsplash
- *Page 4:* girl with umbrella, photo by Pascal Bernardon on Unsplash
- *Page 5:* girl in angel costume, photo by Nice M Nshuti on Unsplash
- *Page 6:* kid in yellow felt poncho and historic hat, photo by Gunnar Ridderström on Unsplash
- *Page 7:* woman in black dress with tea cup, photo by Evelyn Cosplay on Unsplash
- *Page 8:* Man in historical costume holding shield, photo by Joseph Ogbonnaya on Unsplash
- *Page 9:* woman in Carnaval costume, photo by Juup Schram on Unsplash
- *Page 10:* kid Dorothy costume from Wizard of Oz, photo by Kristen Janes
- *Page 11:* baby in little red riding hood costume, photo by Jennifer Kaye Photography
- *Page 12 :* girl in costume inspired by Mei from My Neighbor Totoro, photo by Jennifer Kaye Photography
- *Page 13:* girl in costume inspired by Rey from Star Wars, photo by Jennifer Kaye Photography
- *Page 14:* woman in superhero inspired outfit, photo by Michelle Cassar on Unsplash
- *Page 15:* group of dancers on stage in costumes, photo by Jorge Daniel Lopez Lagarreta on Unsplash
- *Back Cover:* woman in Mardi Gras jester outfit, photo by Thomas Park on Unsplash



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