

Chokers

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Textiles: Term Project

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In my paper I chose to write about the style of the choker accessory. Starting with the time period of pre 1980s garments and pointing out key facts about the evolution of the choker necklace. Who wore this garment? What was the purpose behind them wearing the garment? The textile choice that reflected the time and more. Comparing that information to someone present that wears the same garment, and the changes that took place post 1980. The choker necklace goes back centuries from Indians to Native American and Egyptians. These chokers would be made of material like Faience, which is composed of sand and crushed quartz, Bronze and Gold. Other historical events where you can find women sporting a choker necklace would be 1798: Political dress during the French Revolution, 1860s: The famous painting “Olympia” where you find a naked prostitute wearing a black ribbon around her neck, and the late 1800s: Royalty; Queen Alexandra who would wear thick rows of pearls diamonds and velvet.

The style of Queen Alexandra chokers stood out from many other queens that have been in the royal family before Alexander's arrival and so Alexandra was named a fashion Icon of her time. Princess Alexandra married Prince Albert Edward at a young age around the year of 1863. Prince Albert Edward is the son of Queen Victoria. “Alexandra was born December 1, 1844, in Yellow Palace, Copenhagen, Denmark”, According to *Mullen, R. (1981). THE LAST MARRIAGE OF A PRINCE OF WALES, 1863. History Today, 31(6), 10.* Her father was Christian the ninth of Denmark and mother Louise of Hesse-Kassel. She was born into a royal Danish family because her father was chosen with the consent of great powers to succeed a distant cousin, Frederick the seventh of the Danish throne. Although Alexandra was married at a young age, she was chosen a year before her marriage at age sixteen to be Prince Edward’s future wife. After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, her son Albert became the king with Alexandra as his queen. Alexandra and Albert became popular in the public eye of Britain and Alexandra style was copied by fashion mindful women who wanted so badly to emulate her ideas towards clothes and jewelry. As a wedding gift from her husband she received pearl earrings and brooch along with a pearl necklace. The pearl necklace she wore as a gift from her husband. It wasn't considered so much a

choker but hugged her neck close enough. This necklace was designed in a Byzantine style adorned with alternating diamonds and pearls that were draped, connecting with diamond and pearl medallions.



Image 1: (*January 01, 1970, Queen Alexandra's Wedding Parure, From Her Majesty's Jewel Vault*). Historical events that have had an impact on the textile choice in Queen Alexandra's necklaces was The Gold Rush of 1849. The Gold Rush was discovered by James Wilson Marshall and became an important and historical event to the history of American jewelry. During the nineteenth century diamond jewelry also became

very popular and supplies increased overseas.

Besides the memorable pearl necklace she wore, Queen Alexandra also wore a necklace in the style of a choker during the Coronation of the King and her. After the death of Queen Victoria, Edward and Alexandra had their Coronation which is a ceremony of crowning a sovereign's consort. She wore a necklace layered from the top of her neck all the way down to her gown. It was made from approximately 118 mother of pearls and approximately 2000



diamonds with gold and enamel cross. Due to Alexandra wearing more than 7 different necklaces layered within one another it is hard to say the exact amount of pearls and diamonds recorded in her necklace. Along with the many necklaces she wore together that day, she also wore Queen Victoria's necklace that was set with 26 stones, 25 of the diamonds formed the necklace and the 26th piece was attached to the necklace as a pendant, a 22.48 carat Lahore Diamond. This necklace is now passed down to other Queens that have also worn them to

their Coronation ceremony of crowning. Image 2: (Jones, B. ((2015, January 22)). *The Enchanted Manor*.) Other times you can find Queen Alexandra wearing her chokers would be in photographs. One with her wearing the Kokoshnik tiara and also at a costume ball, (both photos). All of Alexandra's necklaces were set with Diamonds, Gemstones, Gold and attachments of velvet material which is produced from silk.

Why did Alexandra wear her chokers? well it is said but could not be proven from the research I collected that she wore her necklaces in the style of a choker because she had a scar on her neck possibly from surgery she had when she was just a child. This is something that has not been proven although the theory behind her style could still be questionable. Nevertheless, the rumors did not stop women from being inspired and aspiring to imitate the look. I believe that she may have also worn her necklaces to royal's events or balls as a way to show her value. Going back to the Gold Rush that took place in 1849, and the high popularity of diamonds in the 19th century, what other way for a queen to show off her sense of value or wealth rather to be decked out in diamonds and gold. The historical event of both the Gold Rush and the increase of popularity for diamonds made it a must have for people around the world and if you were women that attended such events like a ball and weren't wearing, diamonds, gold, or at least gemstone it would be very clear to everyone else in the room that person's social ranking in society. Queen Alexandra was no longer considered a princess of Denmark but now she was the queen of Britain. She was considered high class royalty and it would only be right for her to dress the part especially because people were coming out of times which had Sumptuary Laws. Sumptuary Laws restricted classes from dressing out of their ranking. If you were of a lower class you would be wearing a plain strip of leather which could of been made of anything from a domesticated animals like horses, cattle, goats, pigs or sheep vs. a princess of a higher class wearing the same leather strap necklace but with a few diamonds and some gold embroidered into it. Compared to a Queen who would wear multiple necklaces set with hundreds of diamonds, gems and gold. An English proclamation of 1559 specified that, "None shall wear in his apparel any cloth of gold, silver, or tinsel; satin, silk, or cloth mixed with gold or silver, nor any sables; except earls and all of superior degrees." ("*Sumptuary Laws.*" *Europe, 1450 to 1789: Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World.* . Retrieved November 17, 2017 from *Encyclopedia.com*). Although these laws ended before Queen Alexandra was born, you can tell these laws were still practice because the cost of the material was still unaffordable to for lower

class citizens. Her choker necklaces represented her value, status, and her ranking of society all together and very effortlessly. The title Queen Alexandra was given as a fashion Icon very much relates to pop star Rihanna in a more present time.



1902: Queen Alexandra, (1844 - 1925), queen-consort of British monarch Edward VII, (1841 - 1910), whom she married as Prince of Wales in 1863, after her coronation in London. (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images).



Circa 1890: Queen Alexandra (1844 - 1925), queen consort of British monarch Edward VII, (1841 - 1910), whom she married as Prince of Wales in 1863. (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images).



1902: Queen Alexandra, (1844 - 1925), queen-consort of British monarch Edward VII, (1841 - 1910), whom she married as Prince of Wales in 1863, at her coronation in London. (Photo by Hulton Archive/Getty Images).

Post 1980's, pop star Rihanna has been spotted many times wearing a choker and it is said from many articles like Daily Mail that Rihanna was in fact the one to popularize the garment piece of the choker again. Rihanna as many fans may know was born Robyn Rihanna Fenty, February 20, 1988. She was born in Saint Michael, Barbados not too far from where I was born in Bridgetown, Barbados. In the year of 2003, she recorded demo tapes and was signed with Def Jam Recordings. From 2005 her fame began with the release of her debut studio album Music of the Sun and went further. Today Rihanna; 29 years old, American singer, songwriter, fashion designer, and actress. She is a very known celebrity with a net worth of US \$230 million and is associated with other popular and famous celebrities like Jay z, Drake, Nicki Minaj, and Kanye West.

Rihanna's first reported appearance of her wearing a choker necklace in 2012, February 19th. She attended Stella McCartney's dinner one night as part of London's Fashion Week. Her dress designed by top designer Giorgio Armani with sandals by Tom Ford. Her choker was a vintage piece from Susan Caplan. Susan is known for selling vintage high end designed jewelry and also contemporary pieces. The



designer of the choker necklace Rihanna wore was not stated but the material of the necklace was gold plated. Image 6: (*Wischhover, C. (2012, February 18). Kate Moss, Rihanna, and More Attend Stella McCartney's London Dinner Show--Oh, and Alexa Chung Levitated on Swords*).

Another event Rihanna was spotted wearing a choker was at a surprise performance with artist Eminem at Lollapalooza in Chicago Aug. 3, 2014. She wore a one of a kind pearled necklace that had a cross medallion also embroidered with pearls. Very much like Queen Alexandra style and the choker she wore at her wedding, gift from her husband. The textile of the pearl necklace Rihanna wore was glass pearl, in other words it is made from glass, plastic and actual mollusc shell. Some of these glass pearls would be covered with a pearlescent substance in order to imitate a natural pearl. In additional to those events Rihanna continued to wear her chokers even

in this year 2017. Dior fall/winter 2017 show in March, Rihanna sat front row and being very



supportive by wearing pieces from Dior's spring and fall 2017 collection. She wore two different chokers one of them being Dio(r)evolution choker that showed the Dior logo on it. The textile of the necklace is aged palladium finished metal, white crystals and a black velvet ribbon which is made of silk. Image 7:

(Necklaces. (n.d.). Retrieved November 20, 2017, from <https://www.dior.com>). Velvet being made from silk

entirely is not common and because of that it has a market price of several hundred US dollars per yard. This goes to show although I stated twice Rihanna has worn customs jewelry, she also wears textile choices from a more extravagant and luxurious prospective. There are also many other events where she has worn real diamonds, gemstones and gold material which were most likely red carpet events where you will find celebrities depending on their ranking amongst one another wear the most luxurious pieces of textiles and layers of them to others still wear luxury pieces just not too many pieces together.

Rihanna's reasons for wearing the pieces of textiles she wore in her chokers vary differently from the reasons why Queen Alexandra chose to wear the piece of textiles she would wear. In the case of who followed Queen Alexandra's look were for the most part the higher class or wealthier, because of the value of the materials in her necklaces. These were made of real pearls, gold and hundreds of diamonds, only a wealthy woman would be able to imitate her



look successfully. In the case of artist Rihanna, she wore raw materials for the most part of everyone's knowledge but in this time, it isn't hard to imitate a look whether it is made of real gold, diamonds etc. With that being said a larger group of women are able to follow Rihanna's choker look because it is less about the material and more about to look. Which leads me to my next point, the fabric choice. Rihanna's fabric choice did not dictate whether she would wear the necklace or not, mainly because it's more so about

the designer then the material in these times. This is not to say material does not play an important part but top designers like Coco Chanel or Dior also use costume jewelry. All in which the material used to process the product is inexpensive. Rihanna would more so wear a necklace for the popularity of the designer rather than the choice of material. One example of Rihanna wearing a choker more so for the name rather than the choice of textiles would be when she wore a Versace metal plated choker colored green with V-E-R-S-A-C-E logoed as the main feature of the choker. She was caught wearing the choker at an iHeartRadio Music Awards Performance in 2015 of July 14th and another time out on a casual day. Image 8: (*Hoo, F. S.,(2015, July 15), What Rihanna Wears To A Tattoo Parlor. www.refinery29.com*). The main textile of the necklace is metal which isn't worth anything because it is sold for \$10 every 100 pounds. But the name on the choker and the person that designed it is what may bring value to the necklace.

In conclusion my topic inspired me to choose the who rather than the who of my paper, Queen Alexandra and artist Rihanna, inspiring me to choose my topic. I knew nothing about Queen Alexandra and her history but as I did my research, I learned that Alexandra like Rihanna was viewed as a fashion icon for many women in her time. The detailing of her choker necklaces stood out. The fact that she'd have 2000 pieces of diamond around her neck is a very outspoken statement even if she wasn't trying. As for Rihanna I wouldn't say I'm a fan, but I can agree on her being a fashion icon and her style is very inspirational. Most people have said Rihanna was the person who brought back the choker look so that put her in the tunnel vision of my research. As I have pointed out, the textile choice of both Queen Alexandra and Rihanna are reflected upon each person's time period. Queen Alexandra lived in a time period where gold was new and because of the Gold Rush in 1849 it was desired by everyone. Diamonds and Gems were no different, they were highly popular and only the wealthy owned diamonds and gemstones. Textiles post 1980's on the other hand, had a different reflection on the choices Rihanna made. Owning diamonds were cool but owning a designer name product was cooler. In addition, Women would not be able to move around comfortably with a heavy gold choker or may even look out of their element based on the setting, like grocery shopping with a necklace set with hundreds of diamonds. Gems are still very much worn in the chokers but not the genuine kind more so imitation. This is mainly because the cost of an gemstones can be as costly as the price

of diamonds. In this time people are more popularized for the designer they're wearing rather than the textile it is made of, and as for choker they will reign forever more no matter the choice of textile, no matter the designer, no matter the occasion.

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