



Little Black Dress: From Mourning to Night

Shannon Meyer

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What's the most important garment in a woman's closet? More often than not, the answer is "the little black dress." For decades, fashion magazines have touted the LBD as the perfect solution to almost every fashion crisis. Dressed up or down, with flats or heels, statement jewelry or a subdued jacket, the little black dress can be worn anywhere, for any occasion. Where did the little black dress come from? And how did black become the color of choice for every occasion?

In *Little Black Dress*, Shannon Meyer answers these questions by offering a visual history of the black dress, illustrating its transformation from a traditional mourning garment to the fashion staple it is today. Beginning with the Victorian era, Meyer describes how widows were required to wear plain black clothing with no decoration for one year and a day, as a symbol of full mourning. This gave way to concepts such as "ordinary" and "half" mourning that allowed for different fabrics and embellishments. Then, in the early twentieth century, women began to slowly adopt black into their everyday wardrobe, and, in the 1920s, Coco Chanel launched her revolutionary first line of black dresses, advertising them as versatile, affordable, and fashionable choices for women. As Meyer shows, other designers quickly followed suit, and black has since prevailed as a universal, ever appropriate, always fashionable choice.

Richly illustrated with seventy-five full-color photos of dresses and accessories spanning 150 years, and including information about the designer, original owner, and historical context for each, readers will find *Little Black Dress* a stylish guide to this wardrobe essential. Designed to accompany an exhibit by the same name at the Missouri History Museum, the book will impress historians and fashionistas alike.

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