**From Sandals to Sneakers—Shoes Step Forward**

Shoes—we wear them nearly every day. We walk, run, jump, climb, and stand in them for hours on end. Yet we hardly think about them because they are such an ordinary part of our daily lives. Shoes were not always an important part of people’s wardrobes. The ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Persians made and wore sandals, but actually went barefoot most of the time. These people lived in regions where the weather was temperate, and shoes were not needed to keep their feet warm. Archaeologists have found shoes in the ruins of these civilizations, but they seem to have been worn mainly by royalty, who could afford to employ tailors and shoemakers.

**Shoes in Early Civilizations**

As shoes became more common in ancient Egypt, the first ones were simple sandals created mainly to protect the soles of the feet from rough surfaces. The easiest way to make shoes in these ancient times was to use materials that were readily available, including tree bark, leaves, and grasses. In ancient Egypt, sandals were made of rushes, which are grassy plants with hollow stalks. Rushes are the same plants used today to make chair bottoms, mats, and baskets.

Among the ancient Greeks, sandals were woven of similar plant materials, but the Greeks also varied the process by tying small pieces of wood together with dried grass. In later years, they made sandals with leather from the hides of animals. The first Greek shoes were purely functional, but over time most were dyed and decorated to make fashion statements. Women began to wear soft, enclosed leather shoes, and these grew increasingly fancy in the later years of the Greek civilization.

The Romans wore sandals much like the Greeks did, but used more pieces of leather to make them. Some Roman sandals had straps that wrapped around the ankles. Shoemakers often dyed these sandals in bright colors that represented the different jobs held by the people wearing them. The patricians, or privileged classes, wore red sandals with moon-shaped ornaments on the back. Senators wore brown shoes with four black leather straps wound around the lower leg. Consuls, or legal officers, wore white shoes, and soldiers wore heavy leather sandals that were more like boots—but with bare toes!

Meanwhile, people who lived in cold northern climates were making their shoes from the hides of furry animals, such as polar bears and yaks. The soles and tops of these shoes were made from pieces of soft leather sewn together. This type of shoe—whether or not it used fur—was called a moccasin. Some Native American groups made and wore moccasins for thousands of years. Some moccasins were plain, and others were **adorned** with beadwork.

**The Shoemaking Process**

As the centuries passed, the primary material for shoes continued to be leather, and the process of making shoes did not change quickly. A wood and metal framework called a “last” was wrapped with pieces of leather that were then sewn together. As late as the mid-1800s, lasts were straight on both sides; this meant that there was no difference in shape between left and right shoes. It also meant that shoes were uncomfortable and that breaking them in was not easy. The lasts were made in different sizes, but for a long time only two widths were available—thin and stout.

For centuries, shoes were sewn by hand, just as they had been by the ancient Egyptians. Machines to assist shoemakers were not used until the rolling machine was invented in 1845. This device was used to pound pieces of leather into thin strips. About the same time, Elias Howe invented the sewing machine, and pieces of shoe leather could now be sewn together more quickly. Another inventor, Lyman Reed Blake, created a machine for sewing the soles of shoes to the upper parts. Because shoes could be made faster and more cheaply, people who had never owned shoes before could now afford to buy and wear them.

**New Trends, Materials, and Designs**

In Europe and North America during the seventeenth century, most people wore boots because they were practical. Even in many large cities, dirt roads were common, and people had to walk along muddy pathways and across streams. By the eighteenth century, however, more city streets were paved with cobblestones, and it was easier to keep shoes clean. Shoes became more decorative, and fancy buckles of gold and silver were often used. Most shoes worn in the United States throughout the nineteenth century were patterned after European styles.

The major change in shoes over the last century has been the use of materials other than leather. Humphrey O’Sullivan invented the first rubber heel for shoes in 1898. Rubber heels were popular because they lasted much longer than heels made of leather. The use of rubber soles came next. The first rubber- soled shoes were called plimsolls, and they were manufactured in the United States in the late 1800s.

The first American shoes made without leather were invented in 1917. The upper material was made of a flexible canvas. Those were the original “sneakers,” a word that was used because the rubber sole made the shoe very quiet, unlike most leather shoes, which often squeaked when people walked.

Many people today choose athletic shoes for casual wear, but not until the late 1970s were shoes designed with amateur athletes in mind. Shoes made of rubber and canvas were worn by tennis, volleyball, and basketball players. By the 1980s, companies began to design athletic shoes for specific sports, helping athletes perform better while protecting their feet and providing comfort.

Shoes have come a long way since the ancient Egyptians created their first sandals. Many more types of materials are used, and shoes have never been more comfortable or supportive for feet. Even so, it is interesting that the basic sandal, crafted by people more than four thousand years ago, still has many similarities to shoes we wear today.

1. What was the purpose of the first shoe?
2. comfortable B. fashionable C. functional D. popularity
3. Which event happened first in the history of shoes?
	1. the making and wearing of moccasins
	2. the making and wearing of sandals
	3. the making and wearing of boots
	4. the making and wearing of sneakers
4. Which civilization was the first to wear shoes to make a fashion statement?
5. Greek. B. Roman C. Egyptian D. Persian
6. What is the correct hyphenated word?

A. moon-shaped B. fur-was. C. shoe-whether D. available-thin

1. “Some moccasins were plain, and others were **adorned** with beadwork.” What type of context clue is used to help you define the word **adorned**?

A. antonym. B. synonym. C. example. D. explanation

1. What did people in ancient Egypt mainly use rushes for in making their sandals, as mentioned in the passage?

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1. Why were rubber heels popular when they were first introduced in 1898, according to the information in the passage?

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1. What material was used for the first American shoes made without leather in 1917?

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1. Why were the first rubber-soled shoes called "plimsolls"?

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1. According to the passage, what was the primary material for making shoes for many centuries?

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1. What significant change occurred in the mid-1800s that improved the efficiency of shoemaking?

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1. How did the practicality of boots in muddy conditions influence footwear choices during the seventeenth century?

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1. What term was used to describe the quietness of the first American shoes made without leather in 1917?

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1. Why did the ancient Greeks start decorating and dyeing their sandals over time?

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