



# Coco Chanel

*(1883-1971)*

*By: Kate Lucas*

# Before Coco..

- She was born in 1883 in Saumur of the Loire Valley in France, even though she will claim 1893 from Auvergne, France
- Her mother worked in a poorhouse and died when she was only 6 years old, she was one of five children
- Her real name was Gabrielle, she was not referenced as “Coco” until she was 20.

# Early life

- Her education came from the convent of the orphanage that she was raised in for 7 years after her father abandoned her and her four siblings to look for work.
- In the convent she was taught how to be a seamstress that gave her the foundation for her later simple styles that redefined the time period's fashions.
- Following her education in the convent, Gabrielle attended a boarding school in Moulins for 2 years

# Early Career

- When she was 18, Gabrielle left the orphanage and became a clerk at “Au Sans Pareil” hosiery until she was 20.
- Then began her singing career in a café in Moulins, France where she had two songs become hits that helped her gain her nickname “Coco”
- It was this same café that she would meet a man that would change life as she knew it forever..



# A turn towards a brighter future



- Etienne Balsan, a french playboy and millionaire, was first introduced to Gabrielle when she was just 20 years old, and she fell fast in love.



- He bought her the most lavish, expensive dresses and jewelry, and her symbolic pearls



- All of the money Balsan made available to Coco helped cushion her with enough free time to start designing her hat collection.

# Chanel's first business

- From 1908-1909 Gabrielle lived with Balsan and visited his Paris apartment where she met some of her very first clients
- Balsan helped Gabrielle open her first shop in the bottom floor of his apartment in Paris in 1909!

“In order to be *irreplaceable*, one must always be *different*.”

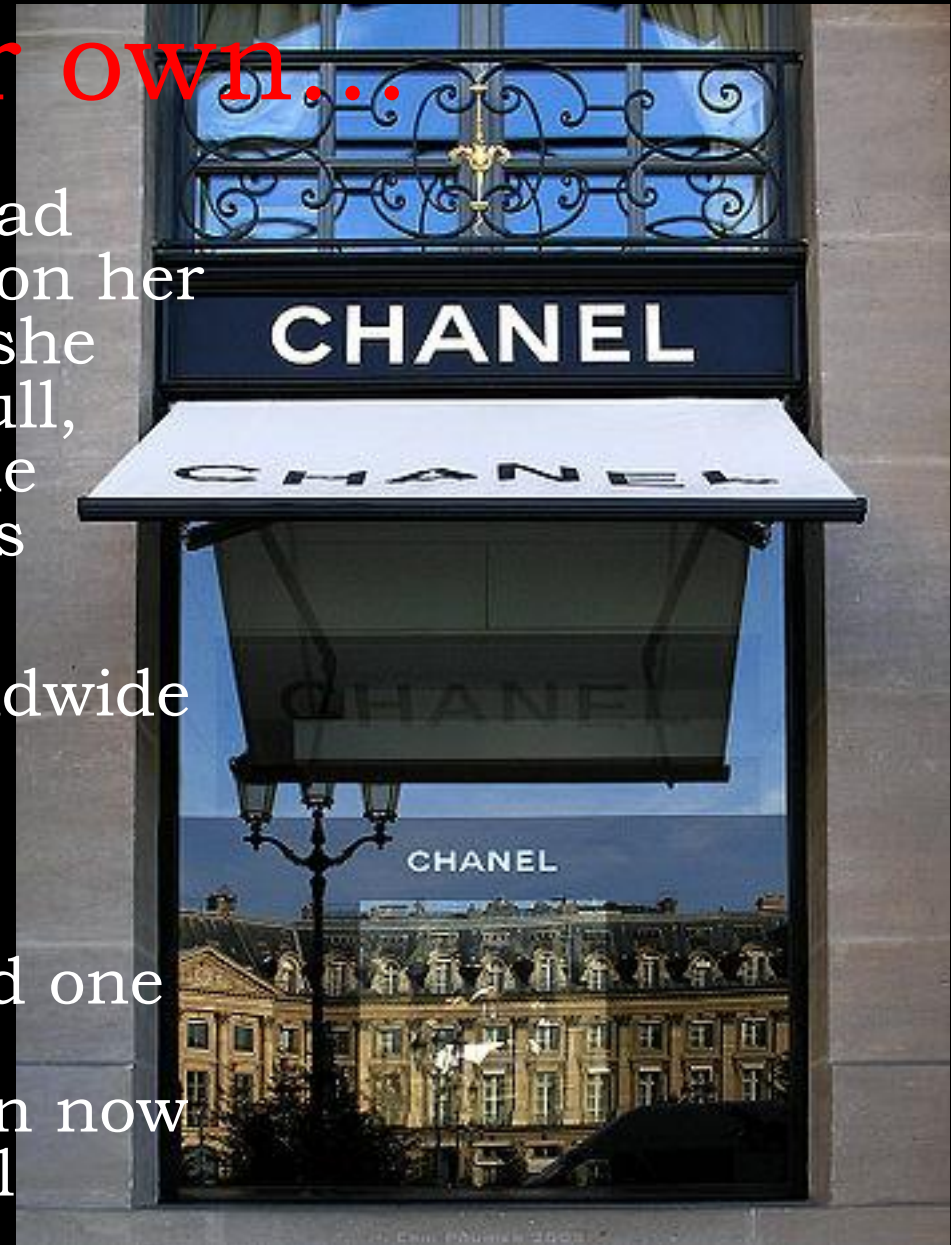


# Bye bye Balsan..

- In 1913 Gabrielle left Balsan for his best friend Arthur Cappel, the love of her life
- In their life together he helped her open a fashion house in Paris, Deauville, and Biarritz, France
- Their love ended shortly after Cappel was killed in a car wreck in 1919.

## On her own...

- By just 1915 Chanel had made so much money on her practical designs that she paid Cappel back, in full, just four years after she opened her three stores
- By 1919 she went worldwide with her business and clients!
- 1919 she also relocated one final time to 31, Rue Cambon.. Better known now as the House of Chanel





# We can thank Coco for..

- The little black dress
- Relaxed, comfortable clothing
- Simple hats
- Short skirts
- Turtleneck sweaters
- Tweed jackets

# The little black dress

- In 1926 Chanel's "little black dress" was pictured in Vogue being called "Chanel's Ford" like Model T.
- It was a dress that would redefine the color black that was usually only worn by those in mourning
- It was calf length and only had decorative diagonal lines
- It could be worn by all social classes



# Comfortable clothing & Short skirts



- Coco was known for her creating her shorter length skirts, 14-16 inches shorter, than the time period than had ever been seen before
- She used a jersey fabric that was originally only used for male underpants making clothes more comfortable for woman
- Her jersey fabrics did not require a corset or any kind of definition of the waist making them a new easy wear not heard of in this time period.