

Transcript for **How has the hoodie become so fashionable?**

Presenter: Let's talk about the hoodie. The hoodie is a symbol of comfort, something that I throw on because I'm feeling lazy that day. For something that started as a really basic piece of sportswear, the hoodie is everywhere: college campuses, the workplace, concerts, protests. How'd that happen? The hoodie is an example of how fashion can contain important different social contexts.

Hoods have been around forever. If we were just talking about the origin of hoods, you'd probably have to travel back in time. But the hooded sweatshirt is much more recent. It was developed in the 1920s by Champion sports apparel. Athletes would complain about their heads feeling cold. It probably contributed to that myth that 50 to 70 per cent of body heat is lost out of your head. That's been debunked. You see, Mom, I told you! So Champion added a hood to their cotton sweatshirts, but they weren't able to patent the hood, making it open season for other designers to explore.

This new sweatshirt caught on immediately, especially on college campuses. One thing the hoodie works really well for is custom graphic printing. It's like this blank canvas that you can plaster with your sorority, university name or team mascot – pretty much anything that you want.

The popularity of this sporty casual item even caught the eye of designers like Coco Chanel, who began using textiles like jersey to make more sportswear-inspired clothing in the 1920s. Sportswear got another fashion push in the '80s from designers like Norma Kamali and continues today. Just look at the current 'athleisure' trend. Hoodies stopped showing up exclusively on athletes and started showing up on everyone – myself included. That's the thing about the hoodie. It wasn't designed to be flashy, just comfortable.

It's a very democratic piece of clothing. That universal appeal is also probably why the hoodie occasionally has such different cultural connotations. For example, a hood provides a degree of anonymity, a feature that comes in handy when you're trying to duck authorities. Say you were a skateboarder trying to find a cool spot to skate, or a graffiti artist trying to avoid being ID'd. The hoodie was a useful tool in exploring these artistic expressions that occasionally required bending the law.

Man: Hey!

Presenter: So at the same time you have models wearing hoodies down a runway, you have people calling to outlaw hoodies in public places. And this dichotomy between casual sportswear and banned clothing can clash in a big way.

That's what happened when a call to the police reported Trayvon Martin, an unarmed teen, as a suspicious character based merely on the combination of his skin colour and a hoodie. Trayvon's hoodie acted as a blank canvas that his killer used to project his suspicion. Millions have pointed out that only two months after the Trayvon incident, Mark Zuckerberg made news by wearing a hoodie to a big meeting with Wall Street investors. There's no reason why Mark Zuckerberg or I should be able to wear a hoodie, but someone else can't.

The hoodie provides this really unique look at the flexibility of fashion, how society can take an item of clothing and can apply different cultural meanings. For me, the hoodie represents comfort and a unique slice of fashion available to everybody.