

Coco Chanel (B2)

A - Before you start

Answer the questions with a partner.

1. Are you interested in fashion? Why (not)?
2. Do you mostly shop for clothes in the same place?
3. Do you have a favourite designer label?
4. What do you know about Coco Chanel?

B – Listen and answer

Listen to the introductory article (without reading) and complete this fact file.

Fact File: Coco Chanel

- Real name: ¹ _____ Chanel.
- Born: in Loire Valley, France, in ² _____.
- First jobs: shop assistant, café ³ _____.
- 1913: opened first boutique selling ⁴ _____ and simple ⁵ _____.
- 1920s: shocked society by introducing ⁶ _____ ⁷ _____ for women.
- Closed couture house in ⁸ _____.
- 1954: ⁸ _____ fashion house and designed her iconic suit.
- Continued working into her ⁹ _____.
- 1971: died in the ¹⁰ _____ ⁹ _____ in Paris.

C – Read and answer

Read the introductory article and the information box and answer the questions.

1. Where did Chanel get the name Coco from?
2. How did she open her millinery shop?
3. What kind of women was her sportswear popular with?
4. What other goods did she start producing during the 1920s?
5. What indications are there that her industries soon became very successful?
6. Which of her designs was praised by a famous fashion magazine?
7. Why did her reputation suffer after World War II?
8. Where can you go to see one of Chanel's earliest creations? What is it?

D – Listen to the interview (Optional)

N.B. This interview is graded as C1, so don't be discouraged if you find it difficult. Try to understand the main points.

Read these statements. Then listen to the interview with Tilar Mazzeo, without reading, and write T (true) or F (false).

1. Cultural historian Tilar Mazzeo has made a documentary about the perfume Chanel No.5.
2. The perfume was a new version of one created for the Russian Tsarina by Ernest Beaux.
3. The original perfume had been a great success in Russia.
4. Ernest Beaux made several versions of the perfume and chose the fifth version for Coco Chanel.
5. Chanel sold the perfume to a few important customers.

6. She decided to get another company to make the perfume but to separate the two businesses.
7. Later on, she introduced an almost identical perfume called Coco Mademoiselle.
8. She wanted to change the terms of the Chanel No.5 contract, but she never succeeded in doing so.

E – Listen, read and check your answers

Listen to the interview while reading the text. (If you did Exercise D, check your answers while reading.)

F – Learn it! Use it!

Complete these sentences with words from the glossary. (You may have to adapt the expression in some way; e.g. change the verb tense or change from plural to singular.)

1. Helen's gone to live in Normandy. She likes it there and says she's never _____ her decision.
2. You don't need a large dining table if you rarely _____.
3. When her father retired, Daisy _____ the family business and made a success of it.
4. Oh, no! A button's just come off my shirt and I haven't got time to _____ it on again.
5. This is a reply-paid envelope so you don't need to put a _____ on it.
6. Our Maths teacher's away today. It's a great _____! I haven't done my Maths homework yet.

G – Ready for the FIRST Certificate in English? (Reading and Use of English, Part 3)

Use the word in brackets to form a word that fits in the space given.

1. Chanel was born into _____ (POOR) in the Loire Valley in 1883.
2. She grew up in an _____ (ORPHAN) and learnt her dress-making skills there.
3. In 1913, she opened her first boutique in the French _____ (SEA) resort of Deauville.
4. One of her most famous designs was a chic but _____ (AFFORD) simple black dress.
5. Chanel closed her fashion house at the _____ (BREAK) of war in 1939.
6. She reopened it in 1954 because she said she was dying of _____ (BORE).
7. She gave up control of Chanel No.5 and then spent years trying to _____ (DO) the deal.
8. Over the years, the sales of Chanel No.5 made her incredibly _____ (WEALTH).

H – Write about it

Write about your favourite item of clothing. Mention:

- **what it's like (style/material/colour, etc.)**
- **how long you've had it;**
- **where you got it;**
- **when/where/how often you wear it;**
- **why you like it.**

Answers

B – Listen and answer

1. Gabrielle 2. 1883 3. singer 4. hats 5. simple sportswear 6. evening trousers
7. 1939 8. reopened 9. 80s/eighties 10. Ritz Hotel

C – Read and answer

1. She was called Coco by the soldiers in the audience at the café where she used to sing. 2. She was helped by her friend Arthur Capel. 3. It was popular with wealthy women who disliked the corseted styles of the time. 4. She started producing textiles, jewellery and perfumes. 5. By the late 1920s they were worth millions and employed more than two thousand people. 6. Her little black dress. 7. Because she had had a relationship with a Nazi officer. 8. You can go and see it at the Victoria and Albert Museum (in London). It's a silk blouse from 1916.

E – Listen, read and check your answers

1. F – She has written a book about it. 2. T 3. F – It had failed in Russia. 4. F – It was Coco Chanel who chose the fifth because it was her lucky number. 5. F – She gave it to them as a present. 6. T 7. T 8. F – In the end she managed to renegotiate the deal.

F – Learn it! Use it!

1. regretted 2. entertain 3. took over 4. sew 5. postage stamp 6. relief

G – Ready for the FIRST Certificate in English?

1. poverty 2. orphanage 3. seaside 4. affordable 5. outbreak 6. boredom 7. undo 8. wealthy