One of the most significant events marking the turn from the 18th to the 19th Century was the French Revolution.

Supporters of the Revolution adopted elements of dress that symbolized their political views.

- The Red Cap of Liberty
- Trousers of the working man replaced the knee breeches of the aristocratic old regime
- The Revolutionary Cockade

Supporters of the Revolution adopted elements of dress that symbolized their political views.
By the end of the revolution and the installation of a government consisting of a Directory (Directoire) of three men, styles had altered.

Female fashion extremists were called *Merveilleuses* (The Marvelous Ones) and the men were called *Incroyables* (The Incredible Ones).

Fashion echoed the excesses of the Revolution in styles such as the *Haircut a la Victime*, cut short like women going to the guillotine, or red velvet ribbons worn around the neck.
As the rest of the western world followed the new styles, women wore these layers. Closest to the skin some women wore long drawers, called pantalettes, with lace, ruffles or pleats at the edges that showed at the hem of dresses. This style did not persist throughout the period, except as a style for children.

Over the pantalettes, the chemise, which had a low neck and narrowed silhouette.

The corset, like the dresses, was straight in line.
The next layer was a petticoat.

The high waisted, relatively straight silhouette of c.1800 to 1820 came to be known as the Empire Line. It was named for the new French ruler, the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

While the empire silhouette continued to dominate, a variety of sleeve and neckline styles could be seen.
Out of doors women wore these garments.

A coat-like garment, the pelisse, with an Empire silhouette.

A shawl, often with the typical Kashmir pattern.
A Spencer, a short jacket cut to just below the bustline.

When compared to the 18th Century, men’s dress of the Empire Period was subdued in color and lacked decoration. Gradually trousers replaced knee breeches for day and evening. Exceptions were garments worn at the courts of France or England.
Underdrawers and undershirts did not change much.

The visible elements of men’s dress were his trousers, also called pantaloons, shirt, vest and coat.

Trousers, called pantaloons when very tightly fitted, often had straps that fit under the instep to keep them from riding up.
Shirts were cut full and had high, standing collars around which were wrapped cravats or stocks.

Over the shirt, a man wore a vest, also called a waistcoat.

Coat fronts generally ended at the waist, either curving gradually back from the waist into two tails that ended slightly above the knee, or with a cut-in, a rounded or square space at the front where no skirt was attached. The tails began where the cut-in ended.
For outdoors men wore capes or overcoats.

Dressing gowns or banyans continued to be worn at home.

A variety of accessories were worn.

- Hats
- Spats or Gaiters
- Boots
- Cravat worn with shirt and with ruffled front shirt.
Little girls’ dresses were very similar to those of adult women. Small boys wore skeleton suits. Both styles carried over from the end of the 1700s.

Empire period style lines are revived periodically.

For Further Study
Illustrations Of Actual Costumes Or Illustrations From Contemporary Sources
http://locutus.ucr.edu/~cathy/dress/mourn.html
http://www.costumes.org/history/100pages/timelinepages/1800to1825a.htm
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Accessories
http://www.costumes.org/history/100pages/1800to1817/costumesparisiens.htm
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Books With Drawings Showing Construction Of Historic Clothing

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