

Sewing is fun!

Shortly before her 18th birthday, Gabrielle had to leave the convent because she was too old. She moved to the Notre-Dame boarding school in Moulins, in the Auvergne region, where her aunt Adrienne also lived.



Gabrielle dreamt of freedom, but she also wanted to finish her education. Her passion was sewing, and there was so much to learn: cutting, stitching, embroidering, ironing, unpicking and then starting off all over again. Gabrielle plugged away and never gave up. It made her happy when she could finish a dress, an apron or a jacket—and Aunt Adrienne tried on everything!



Applause! Applause!

Many French army officers were stationed in the garrison town of Moulins. They were nicknamed 'mustachios' and liked to have fun in their free time. They often invited Adrienne and Gabrielle to the Rotonde, which was a popular venue with a variety theater. There they would sit at small marble tables and sip beer, lemonade squash or champagne while musicians performed.



Gabrielle was always getting new ideas, and she decided in 1904 to try her luck on the stage. Her sassy song about a missing dog named Coco became especially popular!

In an enthusiastic chorus, the audience chanted ‘Coco, Coco!’, as if that were Gabrielle’s name. And because she liked the name, that was what she called herself from then on. Coco Chanel—it was the name of a young woman full of courage and energy!



Sailor look



Coco Chanel's creations around 1914 were simple, yet elegant. She was inspired by the clothing of fishermen and sailors on the coast.



Striped sailor blouses could be worn with wide slacks and flowing skirts.





Cardigans and berets: in Coco's day, these were clothes worn by country folk. Coco turned them into timeless and ultra-modern fashion items.



All the ladies loved Chanel's light tunic dresses.

Among friends

Dmitri Pavlovich

Grand Duke and
champagne seller

*Serge
Diaghilev*

Art critic

Coco Chanel

Igor Stravinsky

Composer

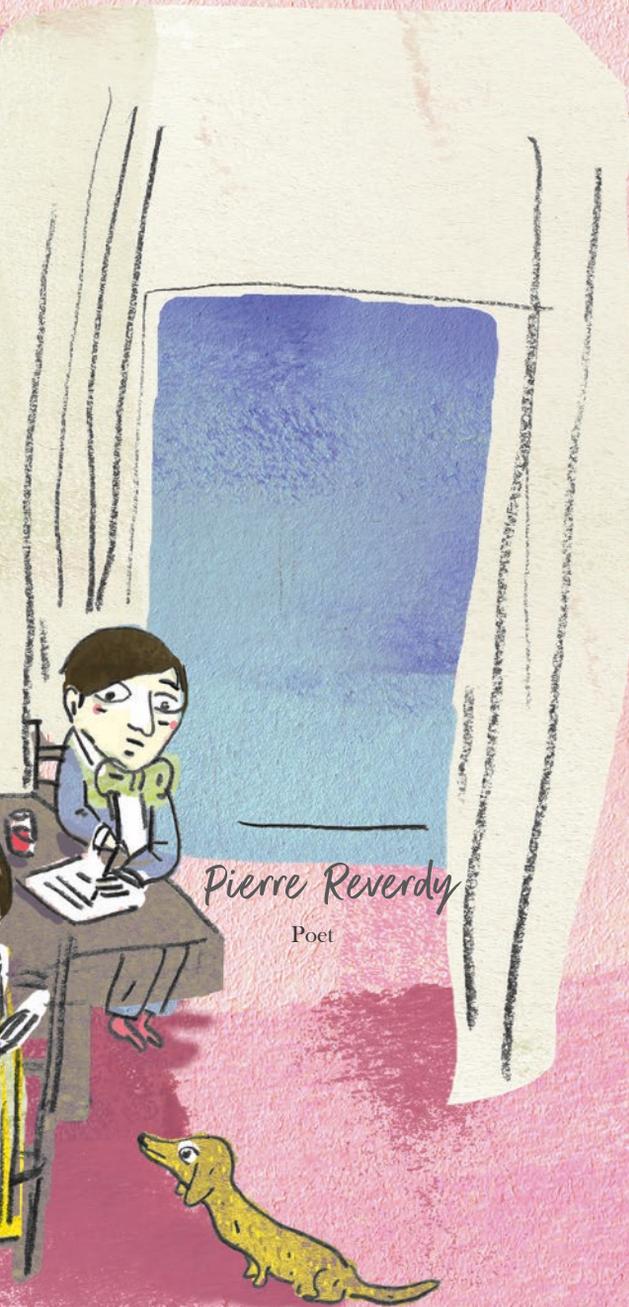


Pablo Picasso

Painter and sculptor

Jean Cocteau

Writer



Pierre Reverdy

Poet

Back in Paris, Misia introduced her friend Coco to well-known writers and artists from all over the world. Paris was the center of art at that time. Any new idea was welcome! It was a lively era that the French called “the crazy years”—*les années folles!*

Artists were experimenting in every field: in theatre and ballet, in literature and painting, and in the art of sculpture. Coco generously supported her artist friends with money.