

SUGAR & SPICE

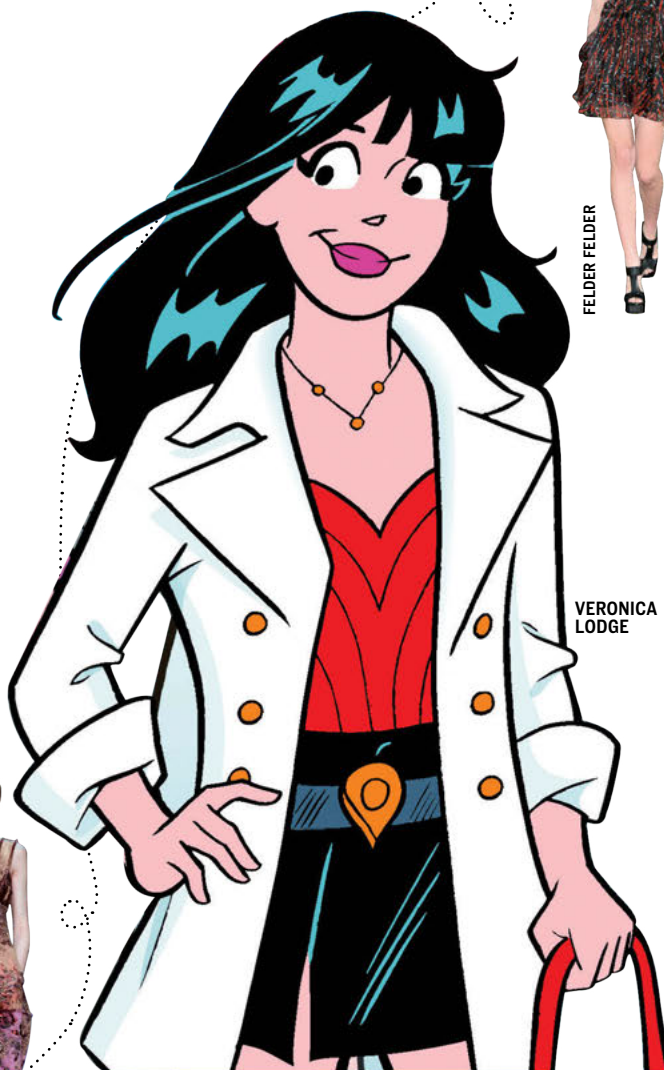
Somewhere between cute and coquettish, **Lolita** fashion is winter's breakaway hit, says **Kavita Mohandas Rao**

There's something about age that makes you want to defy it. As teens, we were restless to grow up, always folding in the waistbands of our uniform skirts to make the journey to adulthood two inches shorter; as adults (legally, if nothing else), we wish we'd stayed girls for just a little longer. Maybe that's what makes this season's Lolita trend so darn easy to love — it represents a young girl teetering on the brink of womanhood, a volatile mix of childish rebellion and newfound sensuality. She has the benefit of both, you see, because she commits to neither.

From a subculture limited to Japanese teens and cosplay conventions, the Lolita look went mainstream. And it's not one look, but an umbrella (parasol, if you will) term for different versions of juvenile juxtaposition. As girls who never get old, here's how the cartoon characters we grew up with would have worked the trend.

VERONICA LODGE = CLASSIC HOTTIE

As fickle about fashion as she is persistent about Archie, the envy of Riverdale was probably one of our first style icons. With an hourglass figure that's untouched by a daily diet of milkshakes at Pop Tate's, Miss Lodge would have helped herself to foolproof styles like dresses in suggestive silhouettes, high hemlines and a generous helping of pretty.



Go-to designers: Just Cavalli sent out schoolgirl dresses with floral patterns, while Erin Fetherston was partial to girly textures.

Hemant and Nandita won us over with nomadic numbers in dainty pastels and boho prints, while Erdem and Felder Felder raised eyebrows with their plunging necklines.

Accessories: Hairbands that have become a signature at Dolce & Gabbana, and the skinny neck scarf (tied in a bow) that is fall's 'It' piece.





GAURI & NAINIKA

DOLCE & GABBANA

VALENTINO

SLEEPING BEAUTY = SUGAR PLUM

The patron saint of beauty sleep, Aurora nudged all of us to dream a little. As a purveyor of all things pink, she'd swoon prettily over sweet looks in pastel shades, dollops of lace and sheer fabric. Think classic Lolita on an estrogen overdrive, with babydoll dresses, frills and OTT embellishments inspired by Victorian costume jewellery. Pretty much anything that's delightfully, and unapologetically, girly.

Go-to designers: Valentino and Reem Acra piled on the lace and tulle, while Dolce & Gabbana and Gauri & Nainika served up sweet pastel confections. Bows and ruffles got an outing at shows by Delpozo and Giambattista Valli, in avatars that were far from prudish.

Accessories: The bow is a standout piece that echoed across runways. Prada brought elbow-length gloves out of stuffy old ballrooms and made them chic (as only Prada can). Want to add a finishing touch with a nod to Victorian England? Just dust off grandma's pearl chains, pendants and brooches for a night on the town.

SLEEPING BEAUTY



GIAMBA

SANCHITA

RAJESH PRATAP SINGH

EMILIO PUCCI

WEDNESDAY ADDAMS = DARK ANGEL

The Addams Family's resident sociopath and closet ballerina showed us that 'deadpan' isn't always followed by 'humour'. With a black fixation and sartorial consistency rivalled only by Steve Jobs, Wednesday would have veered towards the goth version of the Lolita trend, giving an almost imperceptible nod to its all-noir palette, heavy boots and minimal lace detailing.

WEDNESDAY ADDAMS

Go-to designers: In his farewell collection for Emilio Pucci, Peter Dundas rendered thigh-grazing dresses, velvet shorts and sheer panelled blouses in black. Rajesh Pratap Singh's stark ikat dresses, leather skirts with ragged hems and checked jackets were showcased on a runway inspired by a hospital ward. We're sure woeful Wednesday would approve.

Accessories: The buckled, over-the-knee boots seen at Marc by Marc Jacobs. If you're feeling adventurous, try the leather harness from Giamba, or the feathered headpiece from Sanchita's show. If you'd like to scale it back, black stockings paired with black brogues should do the trick.



ALEXANDER WANG

ALEXANDER MCQUEEN

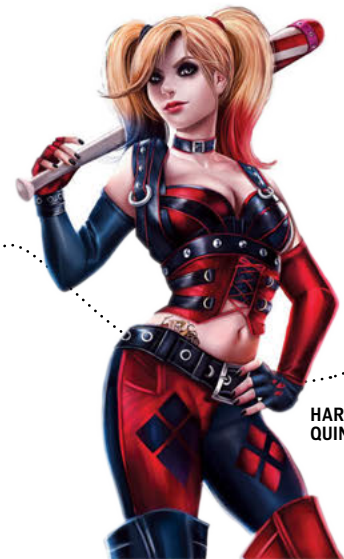
PERO BY ANEETH ARORA

HARLEY QUINN = TOUGH COOKIE

With her delicious wickedness and unnerving smarts, Harley Quinn — the Joker's partner-in-crime — transformed what was supposed to be a one-time appearance into a full-time gig as one of Batman's most persistent nemeses. The former psychiatrist traded in her doctor's coat for a look that screams steampunk — babydoll dresses roughed up with leather accents, fishnet stockings and tough boots. Earth tones are a signature; throw on a corset and the only accessory you'll need is a joke or two.

Go-to designer: At Fausto Puglisi, sharp metal accents were layered, tartan checks were ticked off the list and monochrome prints got psychedelic. Closer home, péro's take was more quaint than sexy, pairing plaid and pinstripes with florals to inspire wanderlust.

Accessories: Fishnet stockings, knee-length white socks and brass embellishments like clock parts. Stick to wide belts instead of corsets and ubiquitous pocket-watch pendants for an everyday take. ●



HARLEY QUINN

FAUSTO PUGLISI

