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#### September 2021

#### Final version

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### Sustainable Clothing – the issue with fashion

#### Lesson notes

# HIAS MOODLE+ RESOURCE

## Overview

**This document contains…**

Lesson notes to use with the accompanying power point *Sustainable Clothing – the issue with fashion*

**Points to consider when using this resource**

Please feel free to add and amend where necessary.

**Lesson Notes**

Sustainable Clothing – the issue with fashion

Introduction

The textiles we use, and wear have many environmental impacts. Making the way we produce and use our textiles sustainable is vital to meet consumer needs, whilst protecting our environment. As a set, this group of resources covers the following important themes concerning clothing sustainability:

1 Where do our clothes come from?

2 Environmental impacts and waste production

3 How can we reduce our Fashion Environmental Impact?

4 Waste reduction project 1

5 Waste reduction project 2

6 Waste reduction project 3

Sustainable clothing – Key Learning Objectives

* Where do our clothes come from?
* What are the environmental impacts of producing textiles?
* What can we do to reduce these impacts?

Note to Teachers/Educators

These notes are intended to provide key information and facts to support teacher/educators delivering the topic. They are accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation with plenty of visuals to aid students’ learning (all slides are referred to in the notes). Please feel free to modify the presentation by adding your own slides or deleting those you do not need.

Sustainable clothing – Key words

Sustainable – ​able to last or continue for a long time.

Living wage - A living wage is defined as the minimum income necessary for a worker to meet their basic needs. Needs are defined to include food, housing, and other essential needs such as clothing.

Union - an organization of workers formed for the purpose of advancing its members' interests in respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions members of a labour union with job protection under a collective bargaining agreement with the employer

Child labour - Child labour refers to the exploitation of children through any form of work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful.

Forced labour - Forced labour is any work or service which people are forced to do against their will, under threat of punishment.

Slave labour - “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised” (UN Slavery Convention, art. 1(1)). Slavery is much more than forced labour. All slavery involves forced labour but not all forced labour involves slavery.

Fast fashion - Fast fashion is a contemporary term used by fashion retailers for designs that flow from the catwalk quickly to capture current fashion trends.

Mass production - Mass production, also known as flow production or continuous production, is the production of large amounts of standardized products in a constant flow, including and especially on assembly lines. Together with job production and batch production, it is one of the three main production methods.

Minimum wage - the lowest wage permitted by law or by a special agreement.

Overtime - Overtime is the amount of time someone works beyond normal working hours. The

term is also used for the pay received for this time.

Why do we need/wear clothing?

Slide 3 – students can discuss the question posed and feedback answers - Students will identify why we wear clothes (protection, adornment, identification, modesty, status)

Sides 4-8 – teacher to initiate further discussion on the 5 different areas – are they a want or a need?

Fast Fashion – is it bad?

Slide 9 - Fast fashion

It has become a challenge for most people to wear a garment more than five times. Why?

1) Garment quality is declining every year. As a result, our clothes immediately look faded, shapeless, or worn out.

2) Trends are changing so quickly that we cannot keep up. We continue to purchase just to stay up to date.

This is Fast Fashion: Mass-production of cheap, disposable clothing. Countless new collections per year make us feel constantly out of date and encourage us to keep buying more.

Thoughts on the fashion industry – fact or fiction?

Slide 11 -12 – What do we know about the fashion industry?

Working conditions in the fashion industry

Slide 13 – Most of our clothes are made in countries in which workers’ rights are limited or non-existent. In fact, production sites are regularly moving location, on the lookout for ever cheaper labour costs.

We often hear company owners saying that "for these workers, it is better than nothing”, “at least we give them a job”, and to a certain extent, they are right. But it is also right to say that they are exploiting the misery and taking advantage of poor populations who have no choice but to work for any salary, in any working conditions. Even the European Parliament is using the term “slave labour” to describe the current working conditions of garment workers in Asia.

We know that if working conditions improve in one country, companies will just move to another. We believe that we cannot expect much from the corporate world or from governments if consumers do not push for a change.

Wages in the fashion industry

Slide 14 – Many fashion brands assure their customers that the workers who made their clothing are paid "at least the minimum legal wage". But what exactly does that mean?

First of all, it means that many other brands do not even pay the minimum legal salary!

Furthermore, in most of the manufacturing countries (China, Bangladesh, India...), the minimum wage represents between half to a fifth of the living wage. A living wage represents the bare minimum that a family requires to fulfil its basic needs (food, rent, healthcare, education, etc). So, in summary, these brands are bragging about paying their employees 5 times less than what a person actually needs to live with dignity…

Working hours in the fashion industry

Slide 15 - Garment workers are often forced to work 14 to 16 hours a day, 7 days a week. During peak season, they may work until 2 or 3 am to meet the fashion brand's deadline. Their basic wages are so low that they cannot refuse overtime - aside from the fact that many would be fired if they refused to work overtime. In some cases, overtime is not even paid at all.

Health and safety conditions in the fashion industry

Slide 16 – the collapse of the Rana Plaza in 2013, killing 1134 garment workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, has revealed the unacceptable working conditions of the whole fashion industry to the world.

Employees usually work with no ventilation, breathing in toxic substances, inhaling fibre dust or blasted sand in unsafe buildings. Accidents, fires, injuries, and disease are very frequent occurrences on textile production sites.

On top of that, clothing workers regularly face verbal and physical abuse. In some cases, when they fail to meet their (unreachable) daily target, they are insulted, denied breaks, or not allowed to drink water.

Child labour in the fashion industry

Slide 17 – 168 million children in the world are forced to work.

Because the fashion industry requires low-skilled labour, child labour is particularly common in this industry.

In South India, for example, 250,000 girls work under the Sumangali scheme, a practice which involves sending young girls from poor families to work in a textile factory for three or five years in exchange for a basic wage and a lump sum payment at the end to pay for their dowry. Girls are overworked and live in appalling conditions that can be classified as modern slavery.

Forced labour in the fashion industry

Slide 18 - Many cases of forced labour have also been reported along the supply chain of the fashion industry.

The most infamous example takes place in Uzbekistan, one of the world’s largest cotton exporters. Every autumn, the government forces over one million people to leave their regular jobs and go pick cotton. Children are also mobilized and taken out of school to harvest cotton.

Union restrictions in the fashion industry

Slide 19 - In most of these factories, garment workers are not allowed to form unions to defend their rights collectively.

Governments law and specific regulations in export zones where factories are established often restrict the creation of unions, like in Bangladesh, where only 10% of the 4,500 garment factories have a registered union.

Factories also threaten and physically attack unions members or fire them with total impunity, which does not encourage employees to form unions.

Suggested activities:

Assembly

* Plan and deliver an assembly that explains what the issue with fast fashion is and the human impact and suggest ways they can have an impact on this.

Class debate

* Ethical clothing versus fast fashion

Research a fashion brand

Ask students to carry out a case study into a well know fashion brand. Areas to cover:

* The relationship between fast fashion - clothes that are “here today, gone tomorrow,” and sustainability
* Modern slavery

How much of your wardrobe do you wear?

Write a clothing report – how much of your wardrobe do you wear? Do you still have new items that have never been worn? Do you have items that are ‘out of fashion’? Look at the labels in your clothes – where were they produced? What do you do with your old clothes?

Additional Fast fashion resources: Websites

**Design and Technology**

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For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following details:

Tel: 01962 874820 or email: hias.enquiries@hants.gov.uk

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