



Fast Fashion

How can clothes be so cheap?

A five-dollar T-shirt looks like a bargain — but someone, or something, pays the difference.



Listen to the article

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Cheap clothes are quickly worn out and thrown onto growing textile waste piles.

WARM-UP

Discuss the questions with a partner.

1. How many items of clothing do you own? Do you wear them all?
2. What matters more to you when buying clothes — price, quality, or style?

A brand-new T-shirt for the price of a coffee sounds like a bargain. In fast-fashion stores, shelves are refilled with cheap new **garments** almost every week, and shoppers are encouraged to buy far more than they need. But behind that five-dollar price tag lies a hidden cost that never appears on the receipt.

Fast fashion means clothing designed, made, and sold at astonishing speed. To keep prices low, factories use cheap **textiles** and rushed labour, often where wages are small. The clothes are rarely **durable**; a shirt worn a few times may lose its shape and be thrown out within a single season.

The numbers are staggering. Making a single cotton T-shirt can use around 2,700 litres of water — enough for one person to drink for years. Around the world, a rubbish truck full of clothing is burned or buried every second. This constant **consumption** has made fashion one of the most polluting industries on Earth.

Change, though, is within reach. A growing number of shoppers now **dispose** of far less by buying second-hand, repairing what they own, or simply choosing fewer, better-made pieces. Owning ten quality items you love may bring more satisfaction than a hundred that fall apart.

If a T-shirt costs only five dollars, who — or what — is paying the difference?

VOCABULARY

A. Match the words (1–5) with their meanings (A–E).

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. garment ____ | A. tough and long-lasting |
| 2. textile ____ | B. to get rid of or throw away |
| 3. durable ____ | C. a piece of clothing |
| 4. consumption ____ | D. cloth or woven fabric |
| 5. dispose (of) ____ | E. the buying and using of goods |

TRUE OR FALSE

Read the statements and circle T (True) or F (False).

- | | | |
|--|----------|----------|
| 1. Fast-fashion clothes are usually made to last for many years. | T | F |
| 2. Making one cotton T-shirt can use around 2,700 litres of water. | T | F |
| 3. Fast fashion is one of the world's cleanest industries. | T | F |
| 4. A truckload of clothing is thrown away or burned every second. | T | F |
| 5. Buying second-hand is one way to waste less. | T | F |

DISCUSSION

- 1 Do you buy clothes often? What makes you decide to buy something new?
- 2 How has the way you shop for clothes changed over your life?
- 3 Why do you think people keep buying clothes they don't really need?
- 4 Is it fair to blame shoppers for the problems of fast fashion?
- 5 Is it better to own ten good items or a hundred cheap ones? Why?



01 CRITICAL THINKING

ETHICAL DILEMMA

A clothing company has 100,000 unsold T-shirts. It can only choose **ONE** option. As a group, decide what the company should do — and be ready to defend your choice.

- ☐ Burn them to protect the brand's image.
- ☐ Send them to developing countries.
- ☐ Recycle the material into new clothes.
- ☐ Sell them for almost nothing.
- ☐ Donate them to charities.

DISCUSS Which option is best? · Which is worst? · Who benefits? · Who loses?

02 LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

USE THE LANGUAGE

Complete each line so you can use it in the discussion.
Change the form if you need to.

dispose garment consumption durable textile

- 1 A well-made _____ can last for many years.
- 2 Cheap _____ often wear out very quickly.
- 3 Our _____ of new clothes keeps rising every year.
- 4 This coat is so _____ that I have worn it for ten years.
- 5 Please _____ of old clothes responsibly.

04 WRITING

YOUR OPINION

Is it better to own a few good clothes or many cheap ones?

Write 150–200 words, using ideas and vocabulary from the article.

03 SPEAKING CHALLENGE

ROLE • TASK • PRESENT

In small groups, work through the three steps below.

ROLE You design clothes for a popular fashion brand.

TASK Agree on three changes to make your brand less wasteful.

PRESENT Share your plan and explain how it helps people and the planet.