

Sustainable Clothes

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8th grade project

Upcoming 8th grade graduate puts a sustainable spin on fast fashion during this pandemic. You probably think you know all the causes of our planet's slow destruction: wildfires, fracking, pollution, and corrupt politicians but, did you know your weekly trip to the mall is also on that list? Our environment is deteriorating because of all of our waste. We can help with this by being more sensitive and aware when it comes to shopping and getting stuff we don't need.

Fast fashion has been around for decades and it's rapidly getting worse. Fast fashion is where the latest trends translate into retail stores for cheap prices persuading people to buy items of clothing and accessories. This has been happening for such a long time now that people don't even notice what the effects are on our environment. In the words of former fashion professional Nancy Luscombe, "The goal of fast fashion is to design, create and produce a new collection every month. In order to sell this many collections, they use their marketing campaigns to tap into our desire to wear the latest fashion – to keep up with the trends. Often the clothes are very cheap, so we can justify buying the clothes. Our closets fill up with clothes". Most people find it exciting that there is a 5 dollar shirt at Forever 21 and buy it because it's cheap and easy to get. They just don't put much thought into the story behind that 5 dollar shirt. According to Andrew Morgan's documentary *The True Cost*, it takes over two thousand liters of water just to

make one shirt. Think about all the shirts in your closet that you don't wear and how much wasted water that is. Clothing industries know exactly what they are doing, and also know that most people are addicted to shopping or are just doing it to hop on trends, which can be called over consumption.

Consumption is a problem. Some people think that what they consume defines who they are, so they buy more than they need. We as a society over consume. In his TED talk about fast fashion, Patrick Woodward says that the price of everything we consume as a whole has gone up 70% since the 90s. The fashion industry is worth 3 trillion dollars. That's the most it's ever been! Our fashion industry is responsible for 10% of our earth's carbon footprint. Next time you want to impulsively buy something, think about where it's from and how it was made because we could all work on less impulsive consumption and less need for material items.

Many of our closets are filled with unworn clothing. In her book, *The Sustainable Fashion Handbook*, Sandy Black states that 82% of the clothes in our closets the average American doesn't wear (178). Either they are too small, but we think we'll lose weight, or maybe the clothes have sentimental value, or maybe we are just hoarders. Black also states: Once we are sick of the clothing we don't wear, we often take them to our local Goodwill, but the truth is our Goodwills don't have enough outlets or stores for all our clothes so most of it goes in the landfill. Do we really think about what happens to them after that? The average US consumer disposes of 50-85 pounds of textile waste each year (201). Our textile waste is the second largest polluter behind oil. Four billion

pounds of textile waste gets dumped on islands or put in other landfills each year (Woodward).

When it comes to solving the problem of our industries, there is a lot we can do. Slow fashion is almost the exact opposite of fast fashion: it's where you commit to spending less, make what you have last longer, and think about whether you really want it when you buy it. Invest in quality over quantity when you shop, and dispose of old clothes mindfully and responsibly. Support sustainably-minded designers. My aunt Danielle Luscombe uses textile waste from her own job as a fashion designer to make home decor items such as pillows, wall tapestries, decorations, and clothing. She and her partner also paint on second hand clothing to give it new life and looks. Together we can try to come up with solutions.

According to Black, Most of the clothes we wear are being made in third world countries. Garment workers in these countries are not being treated properly. The working conditions are very bad. They work long hours. They are not being paid a reasonable salary. For example, think about your 30-200 dollar shoes: some of the people making them only get 20 cents an hour (71). In the documentary The True Cost, it was stated by Andrew Morgan: Bangladesh is a very work heavy country which means there are a lot of factories. 98% of the workers there don't even receive a living wage. They are exposed to chemicals. Sometimes the buildings are so poorly made that they crumble and hundreds of workers die. It is time to acknowledge who is really making the things we wear. When we see a cheap price tag, we have to realize that the person who made that garment is not being treated fairly. We have the power to say NO

and take action to make a change. No change can happen if we aren't doing anything, but there is lots we can do to help. If you don't want to change the amount you're consuming, then shop from 2nd hand shops such as Goodwill, Depop, Etsy, Thred Up, Poshmark, and many others. Some companies have taken huge steps to help this crisis. A lot of companies started using fake furs and leather, which is good because that means they are not killing or hurting animals but could also be seen as bad because for substitute fabrics they could be using polyester. *Vogue Values 2020 said*, Gucci declared that they would be going fur free in 2017 as well as Chanel, Prada, Versace, and many other companies have also gone fur free (Vogue).

Do you ever think about what fabrics your clothes are made of? 60% of all clothing is made out of polyester (Woodward). Polyester is a man-made fabric made out of tiny micro plastics, which means every piece of clothing that's made out of polyester still exists. Polyester is also commonly used so you can imagine how much old polyester fabric is still on this planet, in our oceans and landfills (Woodward). In some places all of the dyed fabrics get washed in the rivers and whole rivers run with different artificial colors. Some fabric chemicals go through our fresh water system and pollute them and we don't even notice (Morgan).

Over the past few months while studying this project, I have learned more and more about fast fashion, slow fashion and the effects the industry has on our climate and environmental system. I know most people my age don't think about this, and I understand it's hard to hear and stressful to learn about, but we can't fix the problem if we don't learn about it, get to understand it, and face it. In 2020 our world figured out

something disturbing and sad: there was a deadly virus going around called the coronavirus, also known as covid-19. Many if not all peoples' lives were affected. For my artistic project I was making a dress, but then decided to start making masks for people on the front lines to help slow down the spread of the covid-19. Since my project is all about sustainability, what we can do to help, and no waste, I used all sustainable products and fabrics from leftover previous projects.

We buy things that we do not need, also known as impulse buying. This results in our world being polluted and slowly destroyed. In my opinion, that's unnecessary. Why pollute when you could easily not, just by changing the amount you consume, or consuming in a different way, making in a different way, and designing in a different way.

Works Cited

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