

Fast fashion part two



Ages: 14+



Time: 60 – 90 mins

Purpose:

Develop a deeper understanding of the complex global processes and people that are involved in the fashion industry.

Youth work outcomes:

Outcome 5: Young people consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control

Outcome 6: Young people express their voice and demonstrate social commitment

Outcome 7: Young people broaden their perspectives through new experiences and thinking

Sustainable development goals:



How it works:

In person:

Supply chain cards (cut out), world map, pens, [optional: Access to internet]

Online:

Google Jamboard would give you the functionality to create moveable cards. You could also use an image of a world map for participants to annotate. Being online would support the research element of the mapping activity. You could also use this as an opportunity to support young people's digital literacy.

Description:

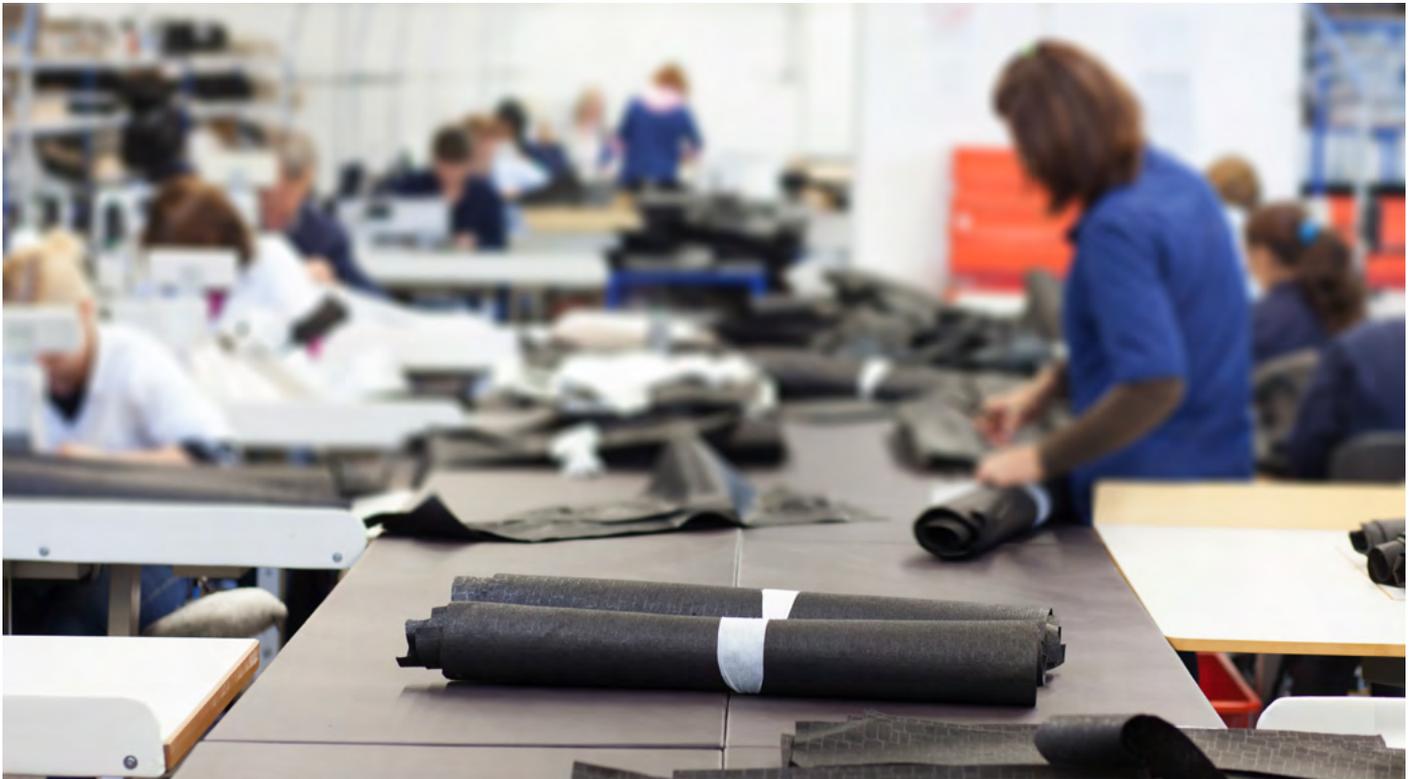
Please note: This activity describes poor worker conditions that participants may find upsetting. Please take time to familiarise yourself with the content before working with your group.

Get into small groups. Ask the groups to put the supply chain cards in chronological order. The focus here is understanding the complex processes and impacts involved in garment production, so don't spend too much time correcting the order of the cards.

Make a list of the different environmental and social impacts of making jeans. The facts of the cards will give you some ideas. The list could include:

- Water consumption
- Pollution (water, soil)
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Child labour
- Dangerous working conditions
- Unfair wages
- Loss of biodiversity
- Waste and landfill

Fast fashion - supply chains



Mapping our clothes:

Get young people to read the labels on the clothes and shoes they are wearing. Where were they made? The fabric is just one part. Zippers, buttons, thread and labels can come from different places. Some fashion brands publish supply chain information on their websites.

Using a large map, mark the countries where clothes were made.

Discussion questions

- Was there anything in this activity that surprised you? Why?
- Do you think this information would change people's minds about fast fashion? Has this activity made you reflect on your own habits and behaviours?
- How can we move away from fast fashion? What are the challenges of this?
- What action can we take to reduce the harmful impact of what we wear?

Action/Next steps:

There are lots of actions young people can take individually or as a group to tackle fast fashion:

- Pledge to buy no new clothes for a month or even a year.
- Plan a pre-loved clothes swap.
- Run a clothes repair and revamp workshop.
- Write to your favourite brands and ask them what they are doing to reduce their environmental impact and treat workers fairly.

Buy the jeans from a high street shop.

Fact: Retailers often receive more than half of the final retail price of cotton finished products (Source: Fairtrade Foundation)

Harvest the crop and separate fibres (known as lint) from the cottonseed.

Fact: In India many farmers are seriously indebted because of the high interest loans needed to purchase farm inputs such as machinery. (Source: Fairtrade Foundation)

Wear the jeans.

Fact: Wearing clothes for an extra nine months reduces the carbon and water footprint by 25-30% (Source: Fashion Revolution)

Distress the jeans using a potentially deadly process called sandblasting.

Fact: Although many brands now refuse to use sandblasting, journalists discovered that factories in Xintang, China were still using the process in 2015. A third of the jeans we buy come from Xintang. (Source: Fashion Revolution)

Throw jeans away after a year.

Fact: 85% of clothes go to landfill where it can take 40-200 years to decompose (Source: Fashion Revolution)

Transport the finished product.

Transport accounts for just under 10% of the overall carbon emissions for a pair of jeans. The total carbon footprint for a pair of jeans is 33.4kg CO₂e (Source: Levi Strauss & Co)

Weave the fabric.

Fact: 85% of workers in textile manufacturing are women (Source: Fashion Revolution)

Water cotton crops causing local water shortage.

Fact: It takes between 10,000 and 20,000 litres of water to grow and produce 1kg of cotton, enough to make 1 shirt and 1 pair of jeans (Source: Waste and Resources Action Programme)

Sew the jeans.

Fact: Workers regularly face verbal and physical abuse. (Source: Sustain Your Style)

Sell seed cotton to middlemen at prices below the cost of production.

Fact: Many cotton farmers live below the poverty line. (Fairtrade Foundation)

Apply fertiliser and pesticides to cotton bushes contaminating the water and destroying biodiversity in cotton growing areas.

Fact: Cotton is the world's single largest pesticide-consuming crop, using 24% of all insecticides and 11% of all pesticides globally (Source: Environmental Justice Foundation)

Travel by road to the high street to go shopping.

Fact: Driving 1 mile by car on average contributes 710g CO₂e (carbon dioxide equivalent).

Plant the cotton seeds using child labourers.

Fact: Over 400,000 child labourers have been reported as working in the cottonseed industry. (Source: Fairtrade Foundation)

Buy genetically modified (GM) cotton seeds.

Fact: Farmers are tied into buying expensive seeds from multinational companies that do not necessarily increase crop yields.

Cutting the fabric.

Fact: Garment workers are often forced to work 14-16 hours a day, 7 days a week and during peak season they may work until 3am to meet a fashion brand's deadline. (Source: Sustain Your Style)

Store clothes in a warehouse ready to be shipped to stores.

Fact: When the UK went into lockdown in March 2020, many brands cancelled their orders, including those that had already been made. An estimated \$1.44 billion was withheld or cancelled by brands in Bangladesh alone. (Source: Fashion Revolution)

Dye the fabric using harsh chemicals.

Fact: Out of 21 water samples in Xintang, China, 17 of these contained highly toxic heavy metals all coming from the chemicals used to dye jeans: mercury, cadmium, lead and copper. (Source: Fashion Revolution).

Wash the jeans in your washing machine after each use.

Fact: It has been estimated that around half a million tonnes of plastic microfibres shed during the washing of plastic-based textiles such as polyester, nylon, or acrylic end up in the ocean annually. (Source: Ellen Macarthur Foundation)