THE IMPACTS OF FAST FASHION

Exercise 1: Read the texts and answer the questions

Fashion is a popular style or practice, especially in clothing, footwear, accessories, makeup, body, or furniture. It is a distinctive and often constant trend in the style in which a person dresses. It is the prevailing styles in behavior in a certain area or region and the newest creations of textile designers. The more technical term 'costume' is regularly linked to the term 'fashion', and often refers to special styles like fancy dress or masquerade wear, while "fashion" generally means clothing, including the study of it. Although aspects of fashion can be feminine or masculine, some trends are androgynous. Fashion is full of seriousness, playfulness, a conception of distraction, entertainment and exhibition. Fashion is an individual's statement of self-expression.

1. What is the paragraph about?

Your answer:

To understand how Fast Fashion came to be, we need to rewind a tiny bit. Before the 1800s, fashion was slow. You had to source your own materials like wool or leather, prepare them, weave them and then make the clothes. The Industrial Revolution introduced new technology - like the sewing machine. Clothes became easier, quicker and cheaper to make. Dressmaking shops emerged to cater for the middle classes. By the 1960s and 70s, young people were creating new trends and clothing became a form of personal expression, but there was still a distinction between high fashion and high street. In the late 1990s and 2000s, low-cost fashion reached its zenith. Online shopping took off, and Fast Fashion retailers like H&M, Zara and Topshop took over the high street. These brands took the looks and design elements from the top fashion houses and reproduced them quickly and cheaply. With everyone now able to shop for on-trend clothes whenever they wanted, it's easy to understand how the phenomenon caught on.

2. Can you think of the heading for this paragraph?

Your answer:

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Exercise 2: Read the text and answer the questions

What's the impact of Fast Fashion?

Fast Fashion's impact on the planet is huge. The pressure to reduce costs and speed up production time means that environmental corners are more likely to be cut. Fast Fashion's negative impact includes its use of cheap, toxic textile dyes - with the fashion industry the second largest polluter of clean water globally after agriculture. That's why Greenpeace has been pressuring brands to remove dangerous chemicals from their supply chains through its Detox The Catwalk campaign.

Cheap textiles also increase Fast Fashion's impact. Polyester is one of the most popular fabrics. It's derived from fossil fuels, contributing to global warming, and can shed microfibres that add to the increasing levels of plastic in our oceans when it's put through a wash. But even 'natural fabrics' can be a problem at the scale fast fashion demands. Cotton requires enormous quantities of water and pesticides in developing countries. This results in risks of drought, creates huge amounts on stress on water basins and other environmental concerns biodiversity and soil quality, competition for resources between companies and local communities.

The speed at which garments are produced also means that more and more clothes are disposed of by consumers, creating a huge amount of textile waste. In the UK alone, 235 million pieces of clothing were thought to have been sent to landfill in spring 2017.

Fast Fashion impacts garment workers, who have been found to work in dangerous environments, for low wages and without basic human rights. Further down the supply chain, there are the farmers who may work with toxic chemicals that can have devastating impacts on their physical and mental health, a plight highlighted by the documentary *The True Cost*.

Animals are also impacted by Fast Fashion, as the toxic dyes that are released in waterways and microfibres that can be ingested by ocean life. When animal products such as leather and fur are used, animal welfare is put at risk. A recent scandal revealed that real fur, including cat fur, is actually being passed off as faux fur to unknowing shoppers in the UK. The truth is that there is so much real fur being produced under terrible conditions in fur farms, that it's actually become cheaper to produce and buy than faux fur.

Finally Fast Fashion can impact consumers themselves, encouraging the "throw-away" culture because of both the built-in obsolescence of the products and the speed at which trends are produced. Fast Fashion makes us believe we need to shop more and more to stay on top of trends, creating a constant sense of need and ultimate disatisfaction. The trend has also been criticized on intellectual property grounds, with some designers alleging that their designs have been illegally mass-produced by retailers.

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So what can we do to cut back on the environmental impact of fashion? One thing we can do is to donate more clothes to charity when we've finished with them and in turn be more willing to buy second hand. Another thing we can do is go back to repairing clothes just like our grandparents. Only 2 per cent of the total we spend on garments per year is used for repairs or lengthening their lifespan. Buying clothes which are more expensive also helps. One of the biggest problems is that the fall in prices has been accompanied by a corresponding fall in fabric quality meaning that cheap clothes don't last very long and need to be thrown away after a few washes.

Whether or not we choose to follow this advice, it is becoming increasingly evident that fast cheap fashion is not sustainable. Labour costs are increasing, cotton and polyester are becoming more expensive, as are the costs of shipping and airfreight from the countries where cheap clothes are made. Fast fashion will almost certainly slow down.

1. Why has Greenpeace has been pressuring brands to remove dangerous chemicals from their supply chain?

Your answer:

2. How does cheap textiles increase Fast Fashion's impact on the environment?

Your answer:

3. What is the example of 'natural fabrics' which can lead to a problem to fashion industry?

Your answer:

4. What is landfill site?

Your answer:

5. Who and what is directly impacted the production of Fast Fashion?

Your answer:

6. Due to the development of Fast Fashion, consumers may have tendency to shop more than they actually desire. True or False?

Your answer:

7. Why can buying expensive clothes help minimize the impact of Fast Fashion?

Your answer:

8. The author suggests that we should pay more attention to establish charity clothes shops and reuse old clothes in a different form. True or False?

Your answer:

9. According to the author, it is quite unlikely that Fast Fashion will be diminished. True or False?

Your answer:

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