

The true cost of clothes

- 1 Talk about the statistics with your partner. Is there anything you find surprising?
- 2a Read the text about cotton and cheap clothes. Which two clothing brands employ local people?

To make one cotton T-shirt, it takes ...

- 2,700 litres of water
- 8.5 g of pesticides
- 400 megajoules of energy
- thousands of miles.



Every year, people all over the world buy a total of two billion T-shirts. In many countries, cotton clothes are cheap, but what is the true cost of these T-shirts?

Is your T-shirt green?

Cotton is a natural fibre, but it has a terrible impact on the environment. Cotton production uses a lot of water and energy, as well as 25% of the world's pesticides. Even if your new T-shirt is cheap, the environmental cost can be high.

What is fast fashion?

Fast fashion is the term to describe how many of us buy cheap clothes that we wear for a short time, then throw away. Americans buy one billion garments from China every year, and a survey showed that most women in the UK wear a new item of clothing seven times.



What can I do?

- Don't buy too many cheap clothes. Buy good quality or second-hand clothes and look after them.
- Recycle your clothes: swap with friends or take them to a charity shop.
- Choose the companies you buy from carefully. Some don't pay their workers very much.

Here are some brands who are making clothes that won't cost the earth:

Tom Cridland

British designer Tom Cridland sells a T-shirt that can last for 30 years - guaranteed! The T-shirt is made in Portugal using traditional methods and top quality 100% organic cotton. It costs £35.

Edun

Edun wants to change African people's lives. Currently, the company makes 95% of its clothes in Africa. It employs local people and uses traditional designs and materials. It also invests in the local economy and helps communities in many African countries, including Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.



straw hats

Pachacuti

Pachacuti makes straw hats in Ecuador, using traditional materials from the Andes region. The workers are local women who make the hats from beginning to end and so get more of the profit. Pachacuti also works with the local community and provides medical aid, eye tests and glasses.



an Edun design

2b Read the article again and circle the correct alternative.

- 1 Cotton production uses a lot of pesticides/costs a lot of money.
- 2 Too many people are buying cheap clothes/are buying clothes quickly.
- 3 We need to pay the workers who make our clothes/keep our clothes for many years.
- 4 Tom Cridland's T-shirt will last for 30 years because it's organic cotton/it's good quality.
- 5 Edun's clothes use traditional/cheap materials.
- 6 Pachacuti helps people who buy Panama hats/live in the Andes.

2c Match the sentence halves.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1 Fast fashion is when people | |
| 2 People in America | |
| 3 We can recycle clothes | |
| 4 Tom Cridland's T-shirt | |
| 5 Edun helps people in Africa | |
| 6 Pachacuti's workers | |
-
- | | |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| a | buy a lot of cheap clothes from China. |
| b | live in Ecuador. |
| c | by using them as workers and helping local communities. |
| d | buy a lot of cheap clothes that they only wear a few times. |
| e | by swapping them with friends or giving them to charity shops. |
| f | is not fast fashion. |

Gateway to culture

3a Work with a partner and answer the questions.

- 1 Where do you get your clothes from?
- 2 Are there any clothes designers or clothes shops in your country like the ones in the article?
- 3 After reading the article, do you feel differently about buying cheap clothes?

PROJECT

3b You are going to work on a project about the true cost of some objects that people buy in your country and other countries in the world. Read the questions and prepare your project research.

- 1 Work in small groups. Choose one of the items in the box, and choose a country to compare and contrast with your own country.

a smartphone • a banana • a potato • a car
a pair of jeans • green beans

- 2 In your groups, do some research on the Internet to find information about the item you chose for your chosen country and your own country:
 - How many of the items do people buy every year?
 - How much does the item typically cost to buy?
 - Where does the item come from?
 - Is the way of growing/producing/transporting the item 'green'?
 - What is the environmental impact of getting the item to the customer?
 - Is there a 'greener' way of buying the item?
- 3 Work together and discuss what you found. Decide how to present your information to the class. This can be a slideshow, a presentation or a poster.

3c Present your information to the class. What were the main similarities and differences between your country and the country you chose?