

Animals and the clothing industry

1 Talk about the statistics with your partner. Do you find any of the information surprising?

2a Read the article. What could be a reason to consider it acceptable to wear clothes and accessories made from animal products?

CLOTHING INDUSTRY FACTS AND FIGURES

- The world's clothing and footwear industry is worth nearly \$3,000 trillion.
- China produces and exports more textiles than any other country, with 54% of the world's total production.
- In the USA, the average household spends about \$2,000 on clothing and footwear a year.
- In the UK alone, there is about \$47 billion worth of clothes in people's wardrobes that have never been worn.



The clothing industry today is a global industry, and a lot of the textiles used to make the clothes that we wear are manufactured in China. The most common textiles for clothing come from three main sources:

1 animal (fur, leather, wool)

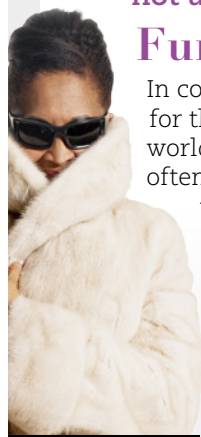
2 plant (cotton, bamboo)

3 synthetic (nylon, polyester)

Animal products have been used to make clothes for centuries, but it is now not as acceptable as in the past to use animal products for clothing.

Fur

In cold climates, people originally hunted animals for their fur. This still happens in some parts of the world, and in places like Russia and Canada people often wear fur coats to keep warm. But some people wear fur clothing for fashion, too. Fur farming is big business around the world, and 85% of the global industry uses the fur of animals who live and die on fur farms in unpleasant conditions. Fur farms aren't illegal in many places, and in Europe there are 6,000 of them, mainly in Denmark, Finland and Norway. The UK banned fur farming in 2003, but it can still import fur from other countries, like China, which is the largest exporter of fur in the world. To protect animals, however, the fake



Fake fur can look like real fur

fur industry has grown rapidly in recent years and is now worth more than \$250 million. This is a much more ethical product, and the fur looks real, too.

Leather

We wear many accessories made of leather, such as shoes, belts, jewellery and handbags. The leather is usually from animals such as cows, and it is a secondary product of the meat industry. For this reason, some people think that this is acceptable. But in some parts of the world the skins of some exotic and endangered animals, such as crocodiles, snakes and tortoises, are used to make these accessories.

This is both cruel and careless, and often illegal. Despite this, a crocodile farm in South Africa



sends about 5,000 crocodile skins to Europe each year to use in the clothing industry. Fortunately, there are many fashion brands who choose not to use animal skins to make leather products, and use fake skins instead which are made from synthetic materials.

Wool

Most of the woollen clothes we wear come from sheep, and this is generally harmless to the animal as sheep need to be sheared each spring to remove their thick winter coats. There are some vegans, however, who choose not to wear wool as it is a product that comes from an animal. Australia and New Zealand are large producers of wool, with about 36% of the global wool production and more than 100 million sheep in total in the two countries.



As long as we are careful in choosing the clothes and accessories we wear, we can avoid buying products that harm animals.



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

- 1 It is culturally acceptable for countries with cold climates to wear clothes made from leather/fur.
- 2 Some European countries like Denmark/the UK have a large fur farming industry.
- 3 The clothing industry sometimes uses sheep/crocodile skin to make leather accessories like belts.
- 4 Fake clothing products are made from synthetic/plant materials.
- 5 About a third/More than half of the world's wool comes from Australia and New Zealand.
- 6 It is important to think about the production/protection of animals when buying clothes and accessories.

2c Complete the sentences with the correct country or statistic.

- 1 exports more fur than any other country in the world.
- 2 Fur farming hasn't been allowed in for more than ten years.
- 3 There are legal fur farms in Europe.
- 4 Many clothes are now made using fake fur and this industry has a value of globally.
- 5 Europe receives a large number of crocodile skins from each year to make accessories.
- 6 Australia and New Zealand are very popular for wool production because they have over sheep.

Gateway to culture

3a Work with a partner and discuss the questions.

- 1 What textiles are the clothes and accessories you usually wear made of?
- 2 Do you know of any textiles for clothes and accessories that your country produces? Are any of them made from animal products?

PROJECT

3b Read the notes and prepare for a classroom debate.

- 1 Work with a partner. Look at the statement on the debate card. Do you agree or disagree?
- 2 Look at the points for and against the statement and add two more of your own in each column.

'Using animal products for clothes is unnecessary and cruel.'

FOR

- We should respect animals, not exploit them.
- There are lots of other materials we can use for clothes and accessories, such as polyester, cotton, etc.

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AGAINST

- People have farmed animals for thousands of years.
- Some materials would be wasted, e.g. leather, which is a by-product of the meat industry.

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3c Have a debate. Use your preparation from 3b to help you.

- 1 Work with another pair. Decide which pair will argue for and which against the debate card statement.
- 2 Have your debate. When you have argued your points, swap roles and debate again.