

Fast Fashion's Hidden Cost

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. **Fast fashion** (noun) /ˈfɑːst ˈfæʃən/: Inexpensive clothing produced rapidly by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends.
Example: The rise of fast fashion has led to an enormous amount of clothing waste ending up in landfills every year.
2. **Require** (verb) /rɪˈkwaɪər/: To need something, or to make something necessary.
Example: Transitioning to eco-friendly production methods will require significant financial investment from major clothing brands.
3. **Initiative** (noun) /ɪˈnɪʃ.ə.tɪv/: A new plan, strategy, or collective action intended to solve a specific problem.
Example: The school started a clothing-swap initiative to encourage students to recycle their old garments.
4. **Rely** (verb) /rɪˈlaɪ/: To depend on or trust someone or something to work correctly.
Example: Many environmental programs rely on volunteers to help clean up polluted local waterways.
5. **Shape** (verb) /ʃeɪp/: To strongly influence the development, character, or outcome of something.
Example: The daily choices we make as consumers will directly shape the future of the global environment.



The topic of **fast fashion** and its environmental footprint has never been more relevant than it is today. Around the world, consumers, governments, and manufacturers are grappling with its challenges and opportunities. As global garment waste grows and climate debates intensify, people are increasingly asking what can and should be done to reform retail — and who is responsible for doing it.

Why is the environmental impact of **fast fashion** highly relevant today?

The rise of mass-market retail has fundamentally transformed how the world consumes textiles, turning clothes into disposable items. Massive brands replicate internet trends at lightning speed, selling garments so cheaply that consumers rarely think twice before buying. Unfortunately, this constant loop of production **requires** massive environmental exploitation, depleting natural resources and polluting water systems worldwide.

What massive resources or costs does the rapid production of cheap clothing **require**?

A range of solutions has been proposed to fix this crisis, from text recycling laws to community-led **initiatives**. Some eco-conscious groups have launched clothing swaps and repair workshops, while others push for green technology in textile factories. The evidence suggests that the most successful approaches combine strict corporate accountability with genuine public engagement and behavioral changes in how we shop.

What types of community-led **initiatives** have been introduced to fight garment waste?

Looking ahead, the situation will **rely** heavily on a shift toward a circular economy where clothing is reused rather than thrown away. The choices made by Gen-Z consumers in the next decade will **shape** the retail industry's direction for generations to come. As sustainability experts note, the time to reject disposable trends is now — and the cost of maintaining current habits is far greater than the cost of meaningful environmental reform.

What must a successful future solution **rely** on according to the text?

How will the choices of modern consumers **shape** the future of the environment?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If a discarded piece of **fast fashion** clothing in a landfill could speak, what would it say to the person who bought it?
2. Imagine a fashion designer had to explain textile pollution to a group of five-year-olds—what analogies would they use?
3. If breaking the cycle of buying cheap clothes was turned into a board game, what would the rules be and how would players win?
4. If you could invent a machine that instantly recycled old clothes into fresh, high-quality outfits at home, what unexpected side effects might it have on the economy?
5. Do you think individual shoppers or multi-million dollar clothing brands bear more responsibility for reducing fashion waste? Explain your view.
6. Design an awareness campaign aimed at teenagers to encourage thrifting and vintage clothing—what format would it take and what would its slogan be?
7. Create a superhero whose special power directly targets global factory pollution and fast retail

waste—what is their name and ability?