

Topic: Write about the effects of low-cost clothing and “fast fashion.”

Directions:

- 1. Gather:** Read and watch the videos for this assignment to gather information on the topic. As you research, take notes on important information to include in your essay. Remember to have the title of the article, the author(s), and a list of information and quotes taken directly from each source.
- 2. Plan:** Use the 5 Paragraph Essay Organizer to plan your essay. You should have a thesis statement, the three supporting details and evidence. If time permits, write down a hook for the opening sentence and restate your thesis statement for your conclusion.



Tip: Your thesis statement should answer the topic question in a brief sentence. It is a summary of your essay’s main idea.

Tip: The hook can be:

1. An interesting fact you learned from doing research.
2. Some background information on the topic.
3. A **question** for the reader (make sure your question is compelling!)

- 3. Write:** Practice writing under a time limit! Do not forget to proofread, use transition words, and quote evidence throughout your essay.

5 Paragraph Essay Organizer

Topic

Opener/"Hook"

Thesis

Point #1

Point #2

Point #3

Support/Examples

Support/Examples

Support/Examples

Conclusion

These videos are here to show a glimpse of what the articles will be covering. Use these to gain background information on the topic beforehand.

Video Sources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhkBfbwCzxc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQhNv1MAETw>

The true cost of your cheap clothes: slave wages for Bangladesh factory workers

By Simon Parry

"Ten years ago, you could only buy a T-shirt for US\$5. Now you can buy a sweater for US\$6, and for US\$9 you can buy a jacket," says Mandarin Lui Wing-har, managing director of the low-profile but highly influential Top Grade International Enterprise. "Of course, at the high end of the market, people will still pay US\$500 for a T-shirt. They don't care about the price, only the brand, and maybe only 50 T-shirts will be made in that style. But we are making maybe 50,000 T-shirts in each style - and that is why we can sell them for US\$3 or US\$4."

More than four million people work in Bangladesh's garment industry, which now accounts for about 80 per cent of the country's foreign trade. It has the potential to lift the nation out of poverty in the same way manufacturing transformed the lives of tens of millions of migrant workers in China in the 1980s and 90s. But the relentless demand for ever-cheaper clothes from high-street stores and supermarket chains in the West is keeping workers' wages at levels as low as US\$68 a month - an amount that pressure groups, unions and even some employers admit is barely enough to support the people whose sweat and hard work the industry relies on.

The Rana Plaza disaster in 2013, in which 1,130 people died and 2,500 were injured when a run-down eight-story factory complex making clothes for Primark, Benetton, Walmart and other Western brands collapsed, highlighted the dangers of the industry in Bangladesh. Critics say that while fire and building safety conditions have improved since the tragedy, worker conditions remain bleak, particularly as the pressure increases on factories to produce ever cheaper clothes.

"Since the disaster, employees have to work harder," says former child factory worker Nazma Akter, founder of the 37,000-member Awaj Foundation,

which fights for labour rights in Bangladesh. "They have higher production targets. If they cannot fulfil them they have to work extra hours but with no overtime. It is very tough; they cannot go for toilet breaks or to drink water. They become sick. They are getting the minimum wage as per legal requirements but they are not getting a living wage."

"The cost of cheap clothes is people living in poverty and factories cutting corners on health and safety, and that's not right," she says. "We can ask companies to put a label on their clothing saying this is the factory where it was made. That way, we get civil society engaging in where our clothes come from and who really made this."

Reports about poor working conditions and suggestions about how to improve them are nothing new, of course, but there is no sign of consumers forcing an improvement in the living standards for garment workers any time soon. If anything, the switch to production in more freewheeling Bangladesh is being accelerated by the global slowdown, which has sharpened shoppers' appetite for bargains.

LITTLE FINGERS: CHILD LABOUR IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

By the publisher *Trusted Clothes*

When we see light glittering off of sequins, sparkles and other embellishments, it belies the darkness of how many such garments are produced. Because the machinery used to do this type of work is too costly for many manufacturers in the developing world, most of this so-called finishing work is done by hand and by children. The idea is that their tiny fingers are particularly good at it.

The UN defines child labor as, *“work for which the child is either too young – work done below the required minimum age – or work which, because of its detrimental nature or conditions, is altogether considered unacceptable for children and is prohibited”*

Finishing work is often detailed and time consuming. In many cases it is done in informal garment factories or is contracted out to individual families in their homes. In countries like Bangladesh it is even regulated and controlled industries routinely make use of child labor. In the unregulated informal market, the problem is even graver.

Many children are forced to abandon school in order to help support their families. While this calls out to us from a humanistic point of view, after all we want these children to enjoy their childhood and be out playing with their friends not worrying about putting the next meal on the table – the real problem is even graver. The minute these kids are denied an education the opportunities available for them in the future becomes much more limited. Often damning them to a life of subsistence work and continuing the cycle of poverty for another generation. Often damning them to a life of subsistence work and continuing the cycle of poverty for another generation.

Some children are even removed from their parents or villages and become bonded to employers. This is simply a modern form of slavery where the worker is indebted to the factory owner and are forced to work long hours for no pay in order to repay the 'debt'. Of course, the owner often charges the child for food and accommodations at a higher rate than the worker is paid meaning that the debt can never be paid off and the child will remain perpetually enslaved.

Girls and women from rural villages are especially vulnerable to this type of enslavement. Often they are recruited from the village by someone from the city who promises them steady employment and income if they travel to the city. Faced with few opportunities at home this seems like a dream come true. Of course, from the outside we find their belief naïve, but as with many of these issues people in desperate situations make desperate choices.

Children are often recruited preferentially into factories because they are seen as compliant and easy to manage. In particular, children who have been removed from their parents are often afraid to question the authority of the factory owners and are unaware of where they can turn to for help or protection.

Additionally, very harsh discipline methods are often used to ensure compliance, including the verbal, emotional, physical and even sexual abuse of the children. Factories often set quotas which are impossibly high and the children often end up working 19-20 hour workdays, 7 days/week in an attempt to meet them. Most of these workers rarely if ever leave the factory and are forced to sleep, eat and bathe there.

Style that's sustainable: A new fast-fashion formula

By Nathalie Remy, Eveline Speelman, and Steven Swartz

The early 21st century has been good to the apparel industry. Thanks to falling costs, streamlined operations, and rising consumer spending, clothing production doubled from 2000 to 2014, and the number of garments purchased each year by the average consumer increased by 60 percent. Fast fashion has been a particularly hot segment and a source of desirable growth for some clothing companies. By compressing production cycles and turning out up-to-the-minute designs, these businesses have enabled shoppers not only to expand their wardrobes but also to refresh them quickly. Across nearly every apparel category, consumers keep clothing items about half as long as they did 15 years ago. Some estimates suggest that consumers treat the lowest-priced garments as nearly disposable, discarding them after just seven or eight wears.

The fact remains, however, that innovation in the way clothes are made has not kept pace with the acceleration of how they are designed and marketed. Fast fashion is now a large, sophisticated business fed by a fragmented and relatively low-tech production system. This system has outside environmental effects: making clothes typically requires using a lot of water and chemicals and producing significant amounts of greenhouse gases. Reports also continue to emerge about clothing-factory workers being underpaid and exposed to unsafe—even deadly—workplace conditions, particularly when handling materials like cotton and leather that require extensive processing. Without improvements in how clothing is made, these issues will grow proportionally as more clothes are produced.

So far, sales increases suggest that most shoppers either overlook or tolerate the social and environmental costs of fast fashion. But some companies aren't waiting for a consumer backlash. They have begun to remedy the largely unseen impact of the fast-fashion business.