10 Minutes For The Planet

Sustainable fashion: do you like wearing green?©

by Sarah Heath and Catherine Balter-Kendall

Stressed syllables are underlined and in **bold**.*

Hello! I'm Sarah Heath and you're listening to 10 Minutes for the Planet on EnglishWaves.

The term "fast fashion" has become fa**mi**liar to the **high streets** as **retailers** produce new clothing lines in rapid suc**ce**ssion to **keep up with** latest **trends** coming off the **catwalk**. The main **emphasis** being on "quick manu**fac**turing at an **affordable** price". But as this **disposable** era in which consumers de**mand** new products as soon as possible, what are the impacts on the global en**vi**ronment?

For every one of the 7 billion people a**live** on the planet today, twenty pieces of clothing are manufactured every year. These billions of **i**tems are being **churned out** of factories in **third-world countries** such as Bangladesh, the Philippines, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka, in ever greater quantities. There has been a 400% increase in the past 20 years as con**su**mers purchase 60% more items of clothing wi**thin** the same **time frame**. However, they also keep these clothes for half the **length** of time than **pre**viously.

The **predicament** for the environment is **twofold**: firstly, there is the negative effects created by the pro**duc**tion of clothes and secondly, the amount of textile **waste** being thrown out every year. The fashion **in**dustry **ranks** only second to the oil industry as the world's biggest polluter.

Cotton **accounts for** the highest level of **na**tural fibres used in the clothing industry, found in around 33% of clothes. And it is an **exceedingly thirsty crop** to grow, needing over 2,500 litres of water to make one simple shirt. As much pro**duc**tion takes place in countries which suffer frequent water **shortages**, there ends up being major **shortfalls** for human con**sump**tion. A Guardian reporter **uncovered figures** showing that 100 million people in India do not have **ac**cess to drinking water while up to 85% of the en**tire** country's needs is used up to water cotton crops.

high street (exp.) main shopping street in a town
retailer (n.) shop
to keep up with (phrasal vb.) to follow
trend (n.) fashion
catwalk (n.) fashion show
emphasis (n.) important factor
affordable (adj.) inexpensive
disposable (adj.) sth.that is thrown away after use
to churn out (phrasal vb.) to produce in large quantities
third-world country (exp.) developing country
time frame (exp.) time period
predicament (n.) difficult situation
twofold (adj.) multiplied by two
waste (n.) what is thrown away, not used
to rank (vb.) to position itself
to account for (phrasal vb.) to represent, to make up
exceedingly (adv.) extremely
thirsty (adj.) requiring a lot of water
crop (n.) commercial plant
shortage (n.) lack, insufficiency
shortfall (n.) not enough of sth. which is necessary
to uncover (vb.) to reveal
figures (n.) statistics

The Aral Sea has almost **dried up** as a re**sult** of cotton farmers **draining** two rivers which **feed into** it. And these statistics do not include the thousands of litres required ad**di**tionally in the **dyeing** and finishing processes.

These techniques release **che**micals into the **waterways** and **substantial** spraying of cotton crops with **pes**ticides is **leading to birth defects** in those born to cotton farmers in India, as **highlighted** in a documentary called "The True Cost", who reveal that cotton farming makes up 25% of global in**sec**ticide use.

Syn**the**tic material such as polyester has less need for huge quantities of water but per kilogram produced, they emit far higher levels of greenhouse gases. In 2015, the production of polyester for the clothing industry released 706 billion kilograms of gases **assessed** to have a **ne**gative impact on the environment. This **equates to** the emissions of 185 coal-fired **power plants**.

The second main issue with fast fashion is the waste it produces: the United States, for example, disposes of 14 million tons of textile waste each year, much of which ends up being in**ci**nerated, adding to greenhouse gas levels. And **upper-price-bracket** brands like Burberry, have admitted to burning unsold stock rather than selling it cheaply in order to protect the brand's exclu**si**vity!

to dry up (phrasal vb.) to contain no more water
to drain (vb.) to use the water from
to feed into (phrasal vb.) to flow into
waterway (n.) river, canal etc.
substantial (adj.) on a large scale
to lead to (phrasal vb.) to cause
birth defect (n.) abnormality present from when a baby is born
to assess (vb.) to evaluate
to equate to (vb.) to be equal to
power plant (n.) energy factory
upper-price-bracket (exp.) expensive

 *Tips!

Commonly mispronounced words:
The "u" in the following words is pronounced like the "u" in "but" or "fun".
production, industry, consumption, result.
In the word "item" the letter "i" is pronounced as a long vowel sound as in the words "like" or "time".
In the words "insecticide" and "pesticide" the second "i" is also a long vowel- hence "cide" is pronounced like "side"
The "g" in the word "length" is pronounced like a "k" (lenkth). Similarly "strength" (strenkth)