How are the clothes we wear harming the environment?

Do you like to keep up with the latest trends or do you prefer casual clothes and trainers? Whatever your style you may not realise that the fashion industry is having a shocking effect on our planet!

Producing the clothes we wear is a major source of the green house gases that are causing the climate to heat up. The fashion and textiles sector is also one of the most polluting and wasteful industries in the world.

Fast fashion sees new trends changing quickly, encouraging people to buy more items than they need, wear them for a short period of time and then throw them away. A massive 300,000 tonnes of clothing are sent to landfill each year. That's equivalent to the weight of 3,000 blue whales!

The pressure for companies to make big profits often means that the workers who produce the clothes are not treated well and no care is taken to prevent pollution.

Did you know it takes, on average, 2,700 litres of water to make a cotton t-shirt? Enough to fill about 30 bathtubs.

Lots of clothes are made from synthetic (man-made) materials which don't biodegrade. When these synthetic clothes are washed they 'shed' micro-fibres (tiny plastics) which are then flushed into our water. This creates a massive problem for wildlife. **The fashion industry needs to change!**

Activity 1

Find out how a T shirt gets from the field to your wardrobe by watching this video:
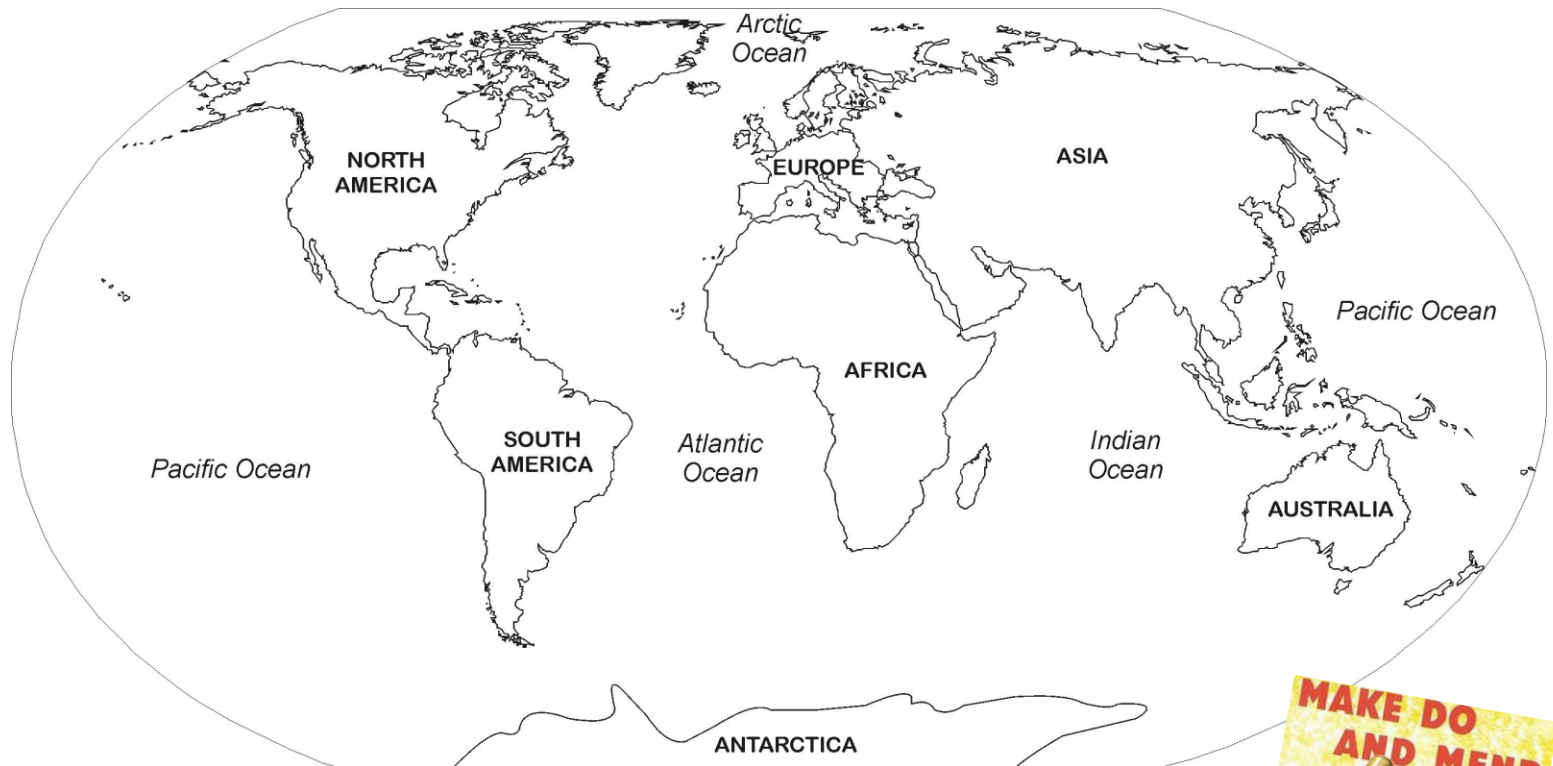https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c8q-55w-ww

Activity 2

Find out about your favourite clothing. Choose 3 items and draw them here. Check the label to find out where they were made and from what material and write that down next to each item.

Activity 3

Show the journey your clothes have made on this map by drawing a line from where your clothes were made to where you live.

Arctic Ocean

NORTH AMERICA

EUROPE

ASIA

Pacific Ocean

AFRICA

Pacific Ocean

SOUTH AMERICA

Atlantic Ocean

Indian Ocean

AUSTRALIA

ANTARCTICA

Adapted from fashionrevolution.org

MAKE DO AND MEND

WW2 Slogan

How can you help?

There is a lot we can do to reduce the negative environmental impact of the clothes we wear. Here are a few ideas of how you can help:

- embrace slow fashion - make sure you only buy items you really want or need and that you will wear for a long time
- buy 2nd hand, it's the new cool!
- try swapping clothes with friends if you get bored with your own clothes – this is called 'swishing'. Some people even organise swishing parties
- save water and energy by washing your clothes less and hang them out to dry instead of using a tumble dryer
- improve your sewing skills and mend damaged or worn items
- upcycle your clothes – Can you jazz up an old pair of jeans with some fun patches?
- always give away unwanted clothing to friends, neighbours or charity shops
- Try to buy organic cotton

Find out more

How your love of fashion could be harming the environment

https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/45756754

Introduction to Fashion Revolution PowerPoint AGES 6-10

https://www.fashionrevolution.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/FashRev_Education_6-10.pptx

DJ Swarzy on the environmental impact of your trainers

https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/51070031

WWF: How your T shirt can make a difference.

https://youtu.be/10ypcpbWIFo

Find out who made your clothes by checking on retailers' websites