

Stella McCartney calls for overhaul of ‘incredibly wasteful’ fashion industry

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

How do you pronounce *clothes*? Practise saying it correctly.

Talk about the newest and oldest items of clothing you own.

2 Key words

Find key words in the article and write them next to the definitions below.

1. said publicly that something was bad or wrong _____ (para 2)
2. affecting all of something _____ (para 2)
3. cloth _____ (para 5)
4. large holes in the ground where waste from people's homes or from industry is buried
_____ (para 5)
5. a piece of clothing – this word is used especially when talking about the production and sale of clothes
_____ (para 5)
6. gradually stop using something _____ (two words, para 7)
7. use _____ (para 7)
8. stop being unsuccessful and start being successful or to make something do this
_____ (two words, para 10)
9. clothes that become available at a particular time of year _____ (para 12)
10. If something is _____, there's not very much of it. (para 16)
11. expressing support for something, especially in public _____ (para 20)
12. made larger in size, amount etc than it used to be _____ (two words, para 22)

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UK fashion designer backs Ellen MacArthur Foundation campaign to stop the global fashion industry consuming a quarter of the world’s annual carbon budget by 2050

Sandra Laville

28 November, 2017

- 1 Clothes must be designed differently, worn for longer and recycled as much as possible to stop the global fashion industry consuming a quarter of the world’s annual carbon budget by 2050.
- 2 Fashion designer Stella McCartney condemned her industry as “incredibly wasteful and harmful to the environment” as she joined forces with round-the-world sailor and environmental campaigner Dame Ellen MacArthur to call for a systemic change to the way clothing is produced and used.
- 3 In a recent report, MacArthur’s foundation exposed the scale of the waste and how the throwaway nature of fashion has created a business that creates greenhouse emissions of 1.2bn tonnes a year – larger than that of international flights and shipping combined.
- 4 It warns that “if the industry continues on its current path, by 2050, it could use more than 26% of the carbon budget associated with a 2C pathway*.”
- 5 The report also reveals that:
 - less than 1% of material used to make clothing is recycled into new clothing;
 - the estimated cost to the UK economy of disposing of clothing and household textiles in landfills each year is about £82m;
 - a truckload of clothing is wasted every second across the world;
 - the average number of times a garment is worn before it ceases to be used has decreased by 36% in 15 years;
 - half a million tonnes of plastic microfibres are released per year from washed clothes – 16 times more than plastic microbeads from cosmetics – contributing to ocean pollution.
- 6 MacArthur who gained the support of industry leaders including the C&A Foundation, H&M and Nike for her report, is calling for a circular textile economy to be created to make fashion more sustainable.
- 7 The report calls for four actions to be taken:
 - to phase out substances of concern and microfibre release;
 - to increase clothing utilization, for example by the industry supporting and promoting short-term clothing rental businesses;
 - to radically improve recycling;
 - to move to renewable materials.
- 8 McCartney said the ideas in the report provided solutions for an industry that was incredibly wasteful and harmful to the environment.
- 9 “The report opens up the conversation that will allow us to find a way to work together to better our industry for the future of fashion and for the future of the planet,” she said.
- 10 MacArthur acknowledged the scale of the challenge to turn around the \$2.4tn industry.
- 11 “Today’s textile industry is built on an outdated linear, take–make–dispose model and is hugely wasteful and polluting,” said MacArthur. “We need a new textile economy in which clothes are designed differently, worn longer, and recycled and reused much more often.”
- 12 Figures in the report reveal the throwaway nature of today’s fashion industry, which is based on a faster turnaround model, with more new collections released per year, at lower prices.
- 13 The report said more than half of “fast” fashion produced is disposed of in less than a year. In the US, clothes are only worn for around a quarter of the global average. The same pattern is emerging in China, where clothing utilization has decreased by 70% over the last 15 years. Sixty per cent of German and Chinese citizens admit to owning more clothes than they need.
- 14 Globally, customers miss out on \$460bn of value each year by throwing away clothes that they could continue to wear.
- 15 The report said: “The textiles industry relies mostly on non-renewable resources – 98m tonnes in total per year – including oil to produce synthetic fibres, fertilizers to grow cotton and chemicals to produce, dye and finish fibres and textiles.
- 16 “Textiles production (including cotton farming) also uses around 93bn cubic metres of water annually, contributing to problems in some water-scarce regions.
- 17 “With its low rates of utilization and low levels of recycling, the current wasteful, linear system

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is the root cause of this massive and ever-expanding pressure on resources.”

18 Clothing production has nearly doubled in the last 15 years and the growth is not just confined to the West. “Demand for clothing is continuing to grow quickly, driven particularly by emerging markets, such as Asia and Africa,” the report said.

19 “Should growth continue as expected, total clothing sales would reach 160m tonnes in 2050 – more than three times today’s amount.”

20 Greg Stanton, the mayor of Phoenix, Arizona, who is endorsing the report, said his city was attempting to create a circular economy out of textile waste: “Each year, more than 18,000 tonnes of textiles find their way into waste and recycling streams. Our city is working on creative solutions to redirect textiles from the waste stream as a valuable resource, to ultimately stimulate the local economy.”

21 In east London, Cyndi Rhoades, founder of WornAgain, is working on the development of a new technology to separate and recapture polyester and cotton from textiles to be reintroduced back into the supply chain as new, raw materials.

22 She said: “We already have enough clothing and textiles in existence today to satisfy our annual demand for new raw materials for new clothing – all we have to do is make sure it doesn’t end up in the bin and that processes like ours are scaled up as rapidly as possible.”

*2C pathway – a long-term goal to limit global warming to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, agreed by governments in Cancun in 2016

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3 Comprehension check

Answer the questions with information from the article.

1. What have you found out about the fashion industry’s carbon footprint from reading the article?
2. What actions does the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s report demand?
3. How does the business model most commonly used in the fashion industry affect the environment?
4. What does the report say about current habits and trends in the utilization of clothes?
5. What does it say about the fashion industry and the way it uses non-renewable resources?
6. If radical systemic changes are not made within the fashion industry, what is likely to happen by the middle of the century?

4 Expressions

a. Underline these expressions in the article.

1. join forces with
2. continue on its current path
3. substances of concern
4. the throwaway nature of
5. not just confined to
6. find their way into
7. stimulate the local economy
8. satisfy our annual demand

b. Talk about what they mean in the context of the article and think of other ways to express the same sentiments.

c. Use the expressions in sentences of your own (not related to the article).

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5 Small group task

- a. Refer back to the newest item of clothing you talked about in task 1. Talk about ...
 1. the people who might have been involved in producing and selling it;
 2. the route it took to get to you, from its raw materials to its place of production, to the storage facilities, points of sale, to your wardrobe;
 3. the (non-renewable) resources that were probably used in its production, transport and packaging. What will you do with it when you no longer want it?
- b. Decide what you could do to ensure this item becomes part of a circular textile economy when you no longer want or need it.

6 Discussion

- What do you do with your old or unwanted clothes?
- What could you do to actively reduce your own clothing carbon footprint?
- What information would you like the fashion industry to provide to help you to do this?
- What personal preferences do you have regarding ...
 - where you buy your clothes;
 - which brand of clothing you buy;
 - what your clothes are made of;
 - where they were made?

7 Webquest

Find out more about the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the circular economy by visiting the link.

www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy

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KEY

1 Warmer

clothes – /kləʊðz/

Teacher’s tip: *Oldest* may be understood as something bought many years ago and kept for sentimental reasons or because it’s a favourite item. But it could also be vintage clothing bought second-hand or something inherited from a family member, e.g. a grandmother’s wedding dress.

2 Key words

1. condemned
2. systemic
3. textiles
4. landfill
5. garment
6. phase out
7. utilization
8. turn around
9. collections
10. scarce
11. endorsing
12. scaled up

3 Comprehension check

1. The fashion industry is in danger of consuming a quarter of the world’s annual carbon budget by 2050. The throwaway nature of fashion creates greenhouse emissions of 1.2bn tonnes a year.
2. to phase out substances of concern and microfibre release; increase clothing utilization, for example by the industry supporting and promoting short-term clothing rental businesses; to radically improve recycling; to move to renewable materials
3. Today’s textile industry is built on an outdated linear, take–make–dispose model and is hugely wasteful and polluting. Clothes are not designed with sustainability in mind, worn for long enough or recycled/reused often enough.

4. More than half of ‘fast’ fashion produced is disposed of in less than a year. In the US, clothes are only worn for around a quarter of the global average. The same pattern is emerging in China, where clothing utilization has decreased by 70% over the last 15 years. Sixty per cent of German and Chinese citizens admit to owning more clothes than they need. Globally, customers miss out on \$460bn of value each year by throwing away clothes that they could continue to wear.
5. It uses non-renewable resources – 98m tonnes in total per year – including oil to produce synthetic fibres, fertilizers to grow cotton and chemicals to produce, dye and finish fibres and textiles.
6. The global fashion industry will consume a quarter of the world’s annual carbon budget and total clothing sales will reach 160m tonnes – more than three times today’s amount – by 2050.

4 Expressions

1. work together with someone to achieve the same aim
2. carry on into the future in the same way as it is now
3. materials and resources that are damaging
4. the way that something is made to last for only a very short time before it is disposed of and replaced by something else
5. not only happening in the named place but also elsewhere
6. enter; become part of
7. encourage businesses and services in a town and its surrounding area to develop
8. provide the amount of something that we need in a whole year

5 Small group task

Teacher’s tip: Have the students do this task in small groups of three or so. Set a time limit of 15–20 minutes, then hold a short whole-class feedback session in which the students talk about what they noted, whether they had thought about this in such detail before and how it made them feel.