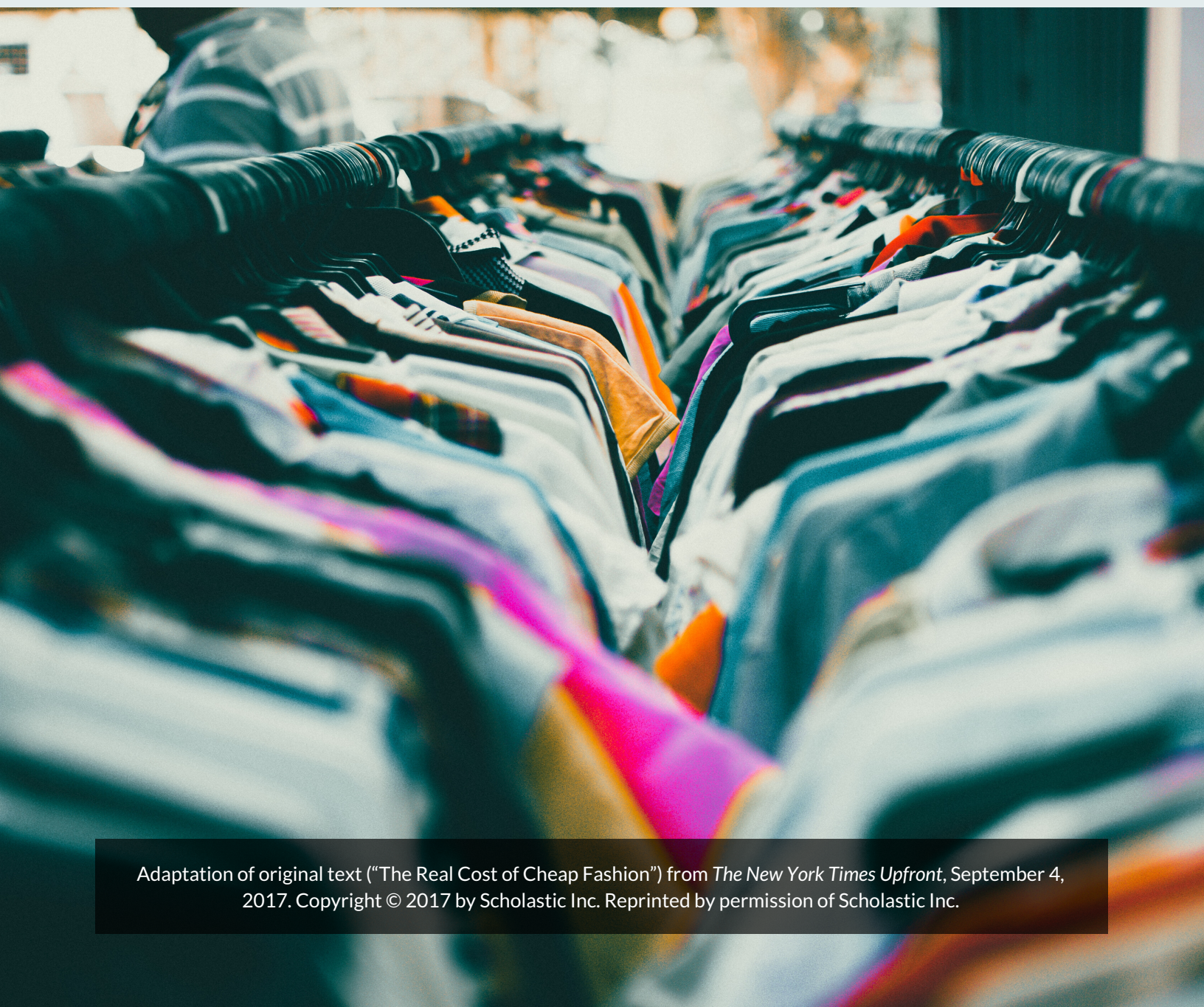


# THE REAL COST OF CHEAP FASHION

by Laura Anastasia



Adaptation of original text ("The Real Cost of Cheap Fashion") from *The New York Times Upfront*, September 4, 2017. Copyright © 2017 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.



**You might think cheap clothes are a good thing, but they have a dark side.**

*As you read, take notes on how making cheap clothes can hurt workers and the environment.*

Imagine this. In a hot, windowless room, young women are working side by side. They are workers in a factory in Bangladesh. <sup>1</sup> Today they are making jackets. Together, they must sew hundreds of jackets every hour. That's more than 1,000 a day. Each of these women will take home less than \$3 for a whole day of work.



One week later, these same jackets will arrive in the United States. They will show up in stores, where you can buy one for \$14.99.

These jackets are one example of fast fashion.

<sup>1</sup> a country in South Asia

# WHAT IS FAST FASHION?

When we say “fast fashion,” we are talking about clothes that are made quickly and then sold at very cheap prices.

These clothes cost so little that many people can buy new outfits whenever they want — and then throw them away when they go out of style.

More than 150 billion new pieces of clothing are made every year!

## WHO MAKES YOUR CLOTHES?

Fast fashion may be cheap, but it has a dark side.

Today, millions of people work in clothing factories called sweatshops. Many of these people live in China, Bangladesh, and other developing countries. These garment <sup>2</sup> workers earn just a few dollars a day. And many of them are children or teenagers!



In these factories, it is easy to get sick and to get hurt. Garment workers use dangerous chemicals to create and dye clothes. If they dare miss a day because they are sick, they might lose their job.

## A DEADLY ACCIDENT

Many people did not think about how their clothing was made until April 24, 2013. That is the day the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh collapsed. The factory had too many floors, too many workers, and too many machines.



"Dhaka Savar Building Collapse" by rijans is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

This accident killed and injured thousands of workers. After the accident, many big clothing companies promised to do things differently.

They trained two million workers on how to work safely. They brought in engineers **3** to check their factories.



**3** people who design buildings



## FAST FASHION ALSO HARMS 4 THE ENVIRONMENT

The fashion industry is the world's second-largest polluter! 5 Here are a few reasons why:

1. Clothes are made using toxic 6 chemicals. Dangerous gases are released into the air when certain materials (such as polyester) are created.



2. In the United States, 25% of all pesticides 7 are used on cotton farms. Some of these pesticides can cause asthma and other health problems. Chemicals from these farms pollute fresh water!

3. The average American throws away more than 70 pounds of clothes every year. Most of this clothing is burned or left in a landfill, where it can take hundreds of years to break down.



The industry uses up a lot of natural resources. For example, it takes 1,800 gallons of water to make enough cotton for one pair of jeans. That is the same as 105 showers!

4 **Harm** (verb) : hurt

5 something that makes the world less clean and less safe

6 **Toxic** (adjective) : poisonous

7 chemicals used to keep bugs away

## WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

People are starting to see the ugly side of fast fashion. They are learning more about how their clothes are made.

And the clothing industry is starting to respond. In the United States, many small companies are creating clothes out of recycled or organic fabrics. Other larger companies are encouraging customers to recycle unwanted clothing.



Everyone must play a role.

Learn more about how your clothes are made and think carefully about what you buy. It can make a real difference.





Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which sentence describes the main idea of the text?
  - A. Cheap clothes are made in sweatshops.
  - B. Cheap clothes allow people to be stylish all the time.
  - C. Making cheap clothes is bad for workers and the environment.
  - D. Making cheap clothes is a job that many people around the world want to do.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "One week later, these same jackets will arrive in the United States." (Paragraph 2)
  - B. "many people can buy new outfits whenever they want" (Paragraph 5)
  - C. "More than 150 billion new pieces of clothing are made every year!" (Paragraph 6)
  - D. "Garment workers use dangerous chemicals to create and dye clothes." (Paragraph 9)
  
3. What is the purpose of the section, "A deadly accident"?
  - A. It tells readers where to shop for clothes.
  - B. It gives an example of a factory that was dangerous for workers.
  - C. It describes three ways that making clothes hurts the environment.
  - D. It helps readers understand why some people become garment workers.
  
4. What is the meaning of the word "sweatshop" as it is used in paragraph 8?
  - A. clothing factories that are also shops
  - B. clothing factories that are crowded and dangerous
  - C. clothing factories where people make clothes for sports
  - D. clothing factories where people make clothes from recycled fabrics



# COMMONLIT

## Discussion Questions

**Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.**

1. Think about how making cheap clothes puts people and the environment in danger. Does this make you want to change how you and your parents shop? If so, how?
2. The author says that everyone must play a role to create change in this situation. What role can you play? How can you teach other people to help make a difference?