

# YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR

*Lesson Plan for Grades 5-12 - 30-45 minutes*

*Prepared by [Climate Change Connection](#)*

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Please see the document titled “You Are What You Wear Learning Outcomes” for grade 5-12 curriculum outcomes.

## MATERIALS

Each student should have:

1. A copy of the You Are What You Wear worksheet
2. A pencil or pen

## BACKGROUND

Runway growth in consumption over the past 50 years is putting never before seen strains on the environment. Creating goods uses excessive levels of water, energy, and other resources. Transporting these items also contributes tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, polluting the environment and contributing to climate change.

**CONSUMERISM** is a term used to describe the effects of equating personal happiness with purchasing material possessions and consumption.

As Canadians, we consume a variety of resources and products. Consumption that is beyond minimal and basic needs may not necessarily be a bad thing in and of itself, and throughout history we have always sought to find ways to make our lives a bit easier to live. However, increasingly, there are important issues around consumerism that need to be understood.

## ACTIVITY

1. Discuss the concepts of consumerism and its social and environmental impacts.
2. Explain that students should check their clothing tags (friends/classmates can help) and write down where each garment was made. Using the chart on page two of the sheet, students can explore how many kilometres clothes had to travel to arrive in Manitoba.

1. Note: if a certain country is not on the chart, pick the nearest neighbouring country that is on the list, and use those designated points.
  2. Discounts: are applied to clothes that are older than 5 years, were bought second hand, or were previously worn by someone else (“hand-me-downs”). Simply divide the points by two for the required garment.
  3. Undergarments + jewelry: simply count the number of undergarments and jewelry worn, rather than checking for tags.
3. Work through all pieces of clothing, until students have totaled their points.
  4. Discuss with students what their totals were, and why they may be high or low. Use the following inquiry questions to help guide conversations regarding consumerism and climate change.
    1. What is the difference between a necessity (need) and a luxury (want)?
    2. How are our products and resources actually produced?
    3. What are the impacts of production processes on the environment, society, and individuals?
    4. How do consumption habits change as societies change?
    5. Businesses and advertisements contribute to how products are consumed. How much of what we consume is influenced by our needs versus our wants?
    6. How do material values influence our relationships with other people?