

# Buying clothes

## Teacher manual

1 lesson, 40 minutes, age 14-15

Part of a lesson series about sustainability competences



Utrecht University

## Global lesson plan

During this lesson, students talk about the fashion industry. The lesson is designed to raise questions around this topic. As preparatory homework, students search **online** for an item of clothing and then, during the lesson, look at *how okay this clothing is* from different perspectives. Three videos are available for this purpose, offered as **intermezzos**. The first video shows working conditions in Asian clothing factories, the second looks at the fate of clothes that are returned and the third explores alternatives to animal products in the fashion industry.

After talking about their chosen garments, students formulate a **statement**. What do they think should change about the fashion industry in the future? These statements serve as input for the final activity: **arguments in motion**. Here, students are encouraged to take a stand by choosing a spot in the classroom. Your task as a teacher is then to provide insight into the different positions and how pupils arrived at them (rational or emotional). Finally, there are some **reflective questions**.


*This lesson is the first lesson in a series about sustainability competences developed by teachers and science education researchers from the region of Utrecht, the Netherlands. There is also a lesson about collecting smartphones for recycling and a lesson series about a sustainable school canteen.*

## Learning aims

The student booklet starts with the following information.

**Learning aims**

These lessons are about sustainability. We work on the following learning aims.



For sustainability, you can:

- recognise and map complexity
- **think of future scenarios**
- **look from multiple perspectives**
- think of ways to intervene
- collectively come to decisions

So the learning objectives for this lesson consist of thinking about the **future** of the sustainability issue at hand (the fashion industry): what should that future look like? What should we keep and what should we change? The module is also about looking at this issue from different **perspectives**: what does the situation look like from the point of view of factory workers? How do people interact with fashion? What initiatives are there from business and science to change the fashion industry? These learning objectives align with two key sustainability competences formulated by Wiek et al. (2011): anticipatory competence and normative competence.

## **Lesson elements, step by step**

### ***Homework (done in advance)***

The [homework sheet](#) shows the homework assignment. Students search for a piece of clothing online. This can be done, for example, in a normal web shop, in a second-hand web shop, or by designing their own garment online.

Students can bring a screenshot of their selected garment to the lesson in several ways. You could have them upload it to a digital learning environment such as MS Teams or a website such as Mural. Use whatever works in your context.

### ***Introduction (5 minutes)***

Start this lesson with a brief **introduction**. The lesson series, of which this lesson is the first, deals with general learning objectives associated with making decisions about sustainability. There are five main learning objectives throughout the series, which have to do with complexity, the future, perspectives, intervention and collaboration. These are goals that apply to any sustainability issue, so they fit any sustainability topic you can think of.

This lesson we will work on two of those goals: imagining future scenarios and looking from different perspectives. Here, we look at sustainability issues in the fashion industry.

### ***Discussion and intermezzos (15 minutes)***

Now begins the part where students work together in groups (3-4 students).

Students talk about their chosen garment in [question 1](#). The key question here is:

*“Is this garment okay?”*

This wording was chosen because it keeps many options for input open. Pupils can then think from their own perspective, we direct them as little as possible in advance.

When you think the students are done discussing, show the class [Intermezzo 1](#). This is available on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/Im2gR-g0dUU> , link available in student booklet). The video is about

working conditions in garment factories in Asia. Both sound (in Dutch) and subtitles (in English) are available. The images and most of the text come from the 2015 documentary *The True Cost*.

In the booklet, an image of this interlude is also accompanied by the sentence “Remember: this is how the documentary makers see the situation!”. This is to indicate that this is not necessarily reality - after all, who can fully see through it? Possibly the videos also raise such questions: is what is told here really true?

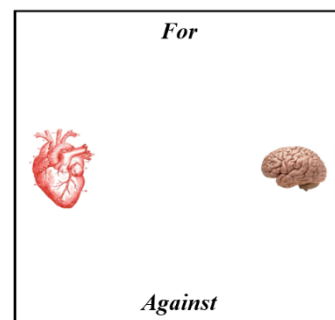
After this interlude, students talk further about their selected clothes ([question 2](#)). When you think it’s time for the next video turn on [Intermezzo 2](#) (link again also in student booklet, <https://youtu.be/lhfYykKv3Do> ). This one is about returning clothes bought online. Again, there is sound (Dutch) and subtitles (English). These images and most of the text are from *Tegenlicht* and from *Willem Wever*, the numbers of returned clothes are from 2019 (Radar, AVROTROS).

Again, after this interlude students discuss with each other whether their opinions have changed ([question 3](#)). If you suspect a new impetus is needed, show [Intermezzo 3](#), this is the final video (available here, again with sound in Dutch and subtitles in English, link also in student booklet: <https://youtu.be/GRIfoi33ylQ> ). These images and part of the text come from *The Economist*, from a YouTube video “What will people wear in the future?”. After this interlude, in [question 4](#), students discuss one last time whether they think their chosen garment is OK.

### ***Statements and arguments in motion (15 minutes)***

If there are 20 minutes of the lesson left, students think of a **statement** ([question 5](#)) that should be about what they would like to change about the fashion industry. What should it look like in the future? The student booklet explains on page 6 what a statement is.

Once you have a statement from each group (written on the board, for example), it is time for **arguments in motion**. This is done using the self-devised statements from question 5. As a teacher, you lead the arguments in motion activity. You and the class can choose two or three statements from question 5 to use. Hang four papers on the four walls of the classroom: **for and against** (on opposite walls) and **heart and head** (on opposite walls). So your class will look like the one shown in the figure opposite.



You now introduce the statement you are going to discuss with the students. You then ask the pupils to take their places on the line **for-against**. So you can stand anywhere on the line, the closer you are to 'for', the more you are in favour of the statement. Then introduce the **heart-head** line. This indicates whether the students made the choice by acting on their gut feeling/intuition (heart) or by thinking, made a rational consideration (head). This way, you get a 'point cloud' of students in the room, their position indicating what they think of the statement and how they decided this.

Now it is good to ask some students **to explain** why they are standing where they are. Then you can also ask if they can stand in the opposite spot and question their neighbours there or explain why someone would stand there. The aim in this activity is not to convince each other: all opinions are allowed and both reason and emotion are important drivers of argumentation! You can (if you have time to spare) further nuance the statement and ask students to move if they wish. More information about this activity can be found on the following website:

<https://elbd.sites.uu.nl/2017/07/28/beweegredeneren/> (in Dutch).

### ***Reflective questions (5 minutes)***

After enough arguments in motion has taken place, there are a few more **reflective questions** that students fill in individually in their workbook (**questions 6, 7 and 8**, page 7). They are about the questions they still have about the fashion industry, what the student learnt and whether they had any doubts about what was said in the videos.

**Teacher manual ‘Buying clothes’**

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