

Who Made My Uniform?

Becky Earley

Partner: Staff at St Mary's RC Primary School Chiswick

Short Description: This workshop aims to give young students a fundamental understanding of where materials come from, how textiles and clothes are made, where they are made and by whom.

Audience and Space: Primary school students, all years, ideally in a classroom based around a central set of tables.

Duration: 1 day, 24th April every year (Fashion Revolution Day)

What happens?

In Advance

Ask the pupils to research the origin of their school uniform: material, country etc. leading up to the workshop day. Ask the students to come to school on the workshop day wearing their clothes inside out. Set the tone of the workshop day by playing a film, (e.g. showing workers picking cotton) while the students enter the morning assembly. Initiate a discussion about where their clothes come from. Use a pin board to put up some items of uniform, and label where in the world they were manufactured. You can even look up how many miles away each destination is to trace air miles, and/or carbon emissions.

Session 1: A Handling Collection

Fill a box with fibre and fabric samples and related objects that help the pupils to become more

familiar with the idea of textiles and their origins through touch. This could include:

- I. Cotton plants, fibre, fabric (plain), screen printed, with cotton wool balls
- II. Recycled polyester chips, fibre, fabric, and a plastic bottle
- III. Wool fibre (inspun and spun), knitted and woven samples, a toy sheep
- IV. Silk fibre and fabric (plain) and printed samples, and a picture of a silk worm
- V. Leather swatches, a shoe, and a toy cow
- VI. Bamboo fibre, fabric and sticks, and some plant cuttings
- VII. Milk fibre, fabric, and a milk carton
- VIII. Coffee beans, fibre and fabric, and some coffee beans

Session 2: Polyester Shirt Upcycling

Start this session with a discussion about clothes, fashion, wearing, washing and waste. Divide the class into smaller groups and give each group a second hand polyester shirt, pairs of scissors and pieces of heat transfer paper. Demonstrate how to fold and cut the paper to create pattern pieces. Let each child transfer its design onto the shirt by using a domestic iron. Create a class shirt to sell at a school fund raising event.

Session 3: Natural Dyes

Use plants and flowers collected by the students to create natural dyes. Put the dye substance and pieces of cloth into trays of water in sunlit space. Rinse the cloth and hang to dry. Use this stage of the workshop to discuss the environmental

impact of the dye industry. Suggested points of discussion may be the difference between natural and synthetic dyes.

Session 4: Upcycling a School T-shirt

Ask each child to bring an old school t-shirt or vest from home. Give the students a design concept and let each child upcycle their second hand garment with fabric paints and pens. (Iron to fix before the children take them home.)

Session 5: Material & Uniform Origins

Ask the children to identify textile materials in their natural state by looking at images. Then ask the students to discriminate between a range of material samples using touch and taking notes of the tactile experience of each material. Ask the pupils to identify the composition of their own uniform, and where it was made, then let each student geographically locate the manufacturing country on the world map and calculate the mileage that each garment has travelled to reach London.

Help the students to conduct a survey and analyse the results by building a spreadsheet that states where each garment was bought, and what fibre type it was made from. Ask students to write about their findings.

Finally ask the class to think about the stakeholders in a Fair-trade supply chain – the farmer, the factory maker, the retailer and the consumer. Ask the students to identify the benefits of using Fair-trade principals and what positive effect these would have for the individual stakeholder in the supply chain. Let each student write a letter to a retailer asking them to consider making their products using Fair-trade principles based on their recent discoveries.

Equipment Needed:

Introduction

Laptop & projector, film about the textile and fashion industry, pin board and labels

A Handling Collection

Box with differently processed textile materials

Polyester Shirt Upcycling

Second hand polyester shirts, pairs of scissors, heat transfer paper, iron, and piece of cloth to cover the table

Natural Dyes

Flowers and plants, pieces of cloth, trays, water

Upcycling a School T-shirt

Second hand t-shirts and vests, fabric paints and pens.

Material & Uniform Origins

Images of textile materials in their natural form, samples pieces of processed different textile materials, garments, A4 paper, a ball of string, clothes pegs.

Suggested Timings:

30 min: Introduction

30 min: Handling Collection

60 min: Polyester Shirt Upcycling

60 min: Natural Dyes

60 min: Upcycling a School T-shirt

120 min: Material & Uniform Origins

Pre Workshop Questions:

Do you know what your clothes are made of?

Do you know where the materials come from?

Do you know how materials become fabrics?

Do you know who made your clothes?

Do you know how far your clothes had to travel to reach you?

How can we look after people in the supply chain?

Post Workshop Questions:

Do you feel differently about your school uniform?

If yes, why?

Film Clips, Websites and Books – things to watch and read before and during the project:

Fashion Revolution

<http://fashionrevolutionusa.org>

Who Made My Boden Shirt

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyDVxcvN-rQ&feature=youtu.be>

“It’s Important to Know that the People Making the Garments are Well Cared for”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8O0i9oz51k&feature=share>

‘The True Cost’

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/truecost/the-true-cost>

Does Mothercare?

<http://www.mswandas.co.uk/2013/10/15/watch-does-mothercare/>

The Real Toystory

<http://imgur.com/a/wrlds>

What Price Cheap Clothes

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b03b0yf8>

Follow the Things – Another Kind of Shopping

<http://www.followthethings.com/fashion.shtml>

Ethical Fashion: The Story Behind the Label

<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/26/living/aj-zady-ethical-fashion/index.html>

Op-Ed | In the Face of Continuing Injustice, a Socially Responsible Garment Factory

<http://www.businessoffashion.com/2013/08/in-the-face-of-continuing-injustice-a-socially-responsible-garment-factory.html>

The Story of Stuff

<http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff/>

Seasalt Clothing, Cornwall - Who Made my Clothes?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_i8jx7OFyA

Fashion Revolution Day USA Introduction

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyMBVYXIUgk>

Fashion Revolution Movement [SWC 56]

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhP4nuiOGYQ>

Follow the Frog

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ilkOi3srLo>

Sustainable Fashion and Textiles Websites with Resources:

Textiles Environment Design

www.tedresearch.net

Sustainable Materials

<http://www.sustainablematerials.org.uk/resource/textiles.html>

Centre of Sustainable Fashion

<http://www.sustainable-fashion.com/resources/publications/>

Notes: