

# Fashion

## Warm-up

1 Do you know which periods these fashions belonged to? Match the years to the pictures. Then describe one for your partner to guess.



- |       |                          |       |                          |       |                          |
|-------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| 1940s | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1970s | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1990s | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1920s | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1980s | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1960s | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1950s | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2000s | <input type="checkbox"/> |       |                          |

2 Now discuss these questions with a partner.

- Do you follow fashion? Why? Why not?
- Where do you buy your clothes?
- Do you wear famous labels?



Reading

3 Look at the photograph and in pairs discuss the answers to the following questions.

- a Where was this photograph taken?
- b What are the two women doing?
- c What do you think the working conditions are like?



## The Price of Fashion

### Cheaper clothes

Clothes have never been cheaper for shoppers in the western world. Since the late 1990s prices for women's clothing have dropped by 40%! Twenty years ago people were paying twice the amount they pay today! But how is this possible?

### A human issue

Retailers have come to the conclusion that such low prices are possible due to buying in bulk. Huge chain stores can sell thousands and thousands of the latest item very quickly. For example, the British supermarket Asda were selling trousers at £7 each and actually sold 7,000 pairs in just one week! However, such cheap fashion cannot be attributed purely to bulk sales. Developing countries compete to win orders by offering low prices based on the sweatshop factor. Millions of people work in garment sweatshops where extremely long hours are normal, overtime is compulsory (and sometimes unpaid), safety conditions



are non-existent and unions are dealt with violently (in China they are illegal).

### An environmental issue

As a result of these low prices, people are buying twice as many clothes as they did a decade ago. Whilst some of these clothes might find their way to charity shops or be donated to recycling campaigns, a lot of them end up as landfill. In the UK alone, 900,000 tonnes of textiles become landfill every year.

### The alternative

So what can we do to be better shoppers but keep up with fashion?

- Buy less. Next time you go to buy a new item of clothing, think if it is really necessary. Will you get use out of it or will it sit at the back of your wardrobe?
- Recycle. Don't throw your clothes into the bin along with all the other household rubbish. Take them to a charity shop or a recycling project.
- Buy fair trade clothes. Look out for products which carry the fair trade logo. This is a sign that they have not been produced under sweatshop conditions.

4 Read the article and answer the questions.

- a What has happened to prices for women's clothing?
- b How much were people paying for clothes 20 years ago?
- c How many pairs of trousers did the British supermarket manage to sell in one week?
- d What is the sweatshop factor?
- e What happens to all the clothes people buy?
- f What are fair trade clothes?

5 Read the article again and match the words below to their definitions.

- |                 |  |                          |
|-----------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1 bulk          | a clothes  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 charity shops | b people who sell things                           | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 garment       | c very large quantity                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 landfill      | d only   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 purely        | e shops which donate all their profits to charity  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 retailers     | f waste material that will be put under the ground | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Reading Tip

First read the text quickly to get an idea of its general meaning. Then read one question at a time and scan the text for information referring to that question.