

# ACTION ON GREENWASHING



## AIMS

Students will:

- develop a definition of corporate greenwashing using brands they are familiar with
- be able to articulate why companies might engage in greenwashing & the potential consequences for consumers
- develop critical skills for recognising greenwashing
- generate ideas for a school-wide action project to raise awareness of greenwashing with their peers & community

## ACTIVITIES

Students will:

- compare advertising claims with journalistic reporting to develop a definition of greenwashing
- Watch a video and discuss the causes and consequences of greenwashing
- Understand some techniques used by corporate greenwashers and apply them to an advertisement

## MATERIALS

Action on Greenwashing presentation

Handout 1 - Greenwashing question cards, copied and cut, 1 per group.

Handouts 2a, 2b, 2c - Greenwashing examples

## TIME

There are approximately 3x 40-minute lessons here. These activities can be extended with some of the additional resources included at the end.

## JUNIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM



### Business studies

1.9 - Debate the ethical and sustainability issues that arise from their consumption of goods and services and evaluate how they can contribute to sustainable development through consumer behaviour

2.5 - Investigate the positive and negative impacts on a community of an organisation from an economic, social and environmental perspective

### English

1.8 - Listen actively to interpret meaning, evaluate effectiveness, and respond to media broadcasts and digital media, noting key ideas, style, tone, content and overall impact in a systematic way

### CSPE

2.4 - discuss sustainability strategies that individuals, communities, businesses, agriculture and governments can employ to address climate change

2.11 examine a campaign for change in the area of sustainability and assess reasons why it has or has not been successful

## NOTE TO TEACHERS

- When exploring this topic, be mindful that you may touch on topics that are sensitive. Check who is in the room and adapt lessons accordingly.
- Always try to link the local to the global and prevent 'othering' of people or places.
- Discuss with your students what language is appropriate to use when discussing 'rich' and 'poor' countries. See the glossary on p. 4 for a discussion of terms.

Written by **Alex Whyatt** (Global Action Plan).

Designed by **Daniella Musimbi**.

Special thanks to **Fiona Mallen & Grace McGuinness** (Coláiste Bríde) and **Ruth Finneran** (Loreto Secondary School, Navan).



This resource was developed with financial support from Irish Aid's Worldwide Global Schools. The ideas, opinions and comments therein are entirely the responsibility of its author(s) and do not necessarily represent or reflect Irish Aid and WWGS policy.

# LESSON ONE

## WHAT IS GREENWASHING?

### Defining greenwashing - video - 15 minutes

- Show **Slide 2**. The FIST model allows students to reflect on how they respond to a text. Read the questions together before showing the video.
- Show **Slide 3**. This is an old video from American oil company Chevron that was accused of greenwashing. Ask the students to keep in mind the questions from Slide 1 as they watch.
- After the video, students discuss in pairs to compare their feelings, images, sensations and thoughts on watching the video. What made them feel this way?
- Take full-class feedback. Elicit / discuss:
  1. Images of greenery, nature, etc.
  2. Contradictory messages, e.g. an oil company protecting nature, a buckwheat field next to an oil well.
  3. The message that "Who cares? We do" - positive, but paternalist and possibly condescending
  4. The narrator of the advert (& Chevron) portrayed as saviours / protectors of nature

### Defining greenwashing - slides - 15 minutes

- Show **Slides 4 & 5**, examples of major brands that have been accused of greenwashing.
- Elicit a definition of greenwashing. Compare with the definitions on **Slide 6**.

### Why greenwash? - 20 minutes

- Discuss why companies would greenwash with reference to Chevron, Shein and Coca-Cola. There are three ways you can do this:
  1. Project **Slide 7** and ask students to discuss in pairs or small groups.
  2. Distribute the cards from **Handout 1 - Discussion cards**. Students work in groups. One student draws a card and asks the question to the group.
  3. Ask the below questions directly for a full-class discussion.
- Questions:
  1. What have you heard about greenwashing before (from the media, school, family, etc.)?
  2. Who has power in advertising - companies or the consumers? What gives them this power?
  3. When we hear about companies and the environment, whose perspectives do we usually hear from? Companies, governments, environmental support groups? Who don't we hear from?
  4. What are some reasons companies might greenwash? Why wouldn't they change their practices?
  5. Are consumers influenced by environmental claims? Are you? How? Can you think of an example?
  6. Why is greenwashing unfair?

### Reflection - 5 minutes

- Use **Slide 17** after each lesson on greenwashing to reflect on student learning.

## LESSON TWO

### RECOGNISING GREENWASHING

#### Greenwashing techniques - presentation - 10 minutes

- Present **Slides 8-14**. These are adapted from the “Seven Deadly Sins of Greenwashing” - seven techniques used by companies, governments and organisations. Each slide presents a claim from a major company and a reason it may be untrue. A critical question helps to understand why these messages may be greenwashing.

#### Recognising greenwashing - analysis - 20 minutes

- Show **Slide 15**. This has all the questions from the previous 7 slides.
- Either share one of these videos with students or give each group **Handouts 2a, 2b and 2c**.
  1. Farming | Trust | McDonald's UK
  2. Reduced Methane Whoppers - Burger King
- Students use the questions on **Slide 16** to decide if this is an example of greenwashing. They should justify their decision with reference to the questions on slide 14. Are there any other things that influenced their decision?

## LESSON THREE

### ACTION ON GREENWASHING

Apply this knowledge with one of these tasks.

#### Greenwash this! - 40 minutes

Students create a satirical advertising campaign for an unsustainable product. Some possible products they can greenwash:

- SUVs
- Paper plates
- Weedkiller
- Steak

Share the ad with the rest of the school or on social media.



#### Survey - 40 minutes & Homework task

Are people more likely to buy products they think are green? Can everyone recognise greenwashing? Students design and carry out a survey to understand these questions. Survey their family, school staff, or other classes.



#### School communication - 40 minutes

Are there claims to sustainability on your school's website, newsletter, or social media? If so, how accurate are they? Students analyse these claims and then write an article or correction.



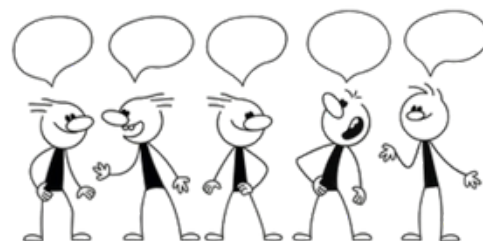
## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Articles

- [developmenteducation.ie](http://developmenteducation.ie) - Deniers, delays and regulators, oh my!
- [Greenbiz](#) - Greenwashing terms to avoid at any cost

### Videos

- [Global Action Plan](#) - Greenwashing
- [Last Week Tonight](#) - Carbon offsets



### Examples of greenwashing

- [Greenwash.com](http://Greenwash.com)

### Critical reading

- [Centre for Media Literacy](#) - Five key questions that can change the world
- [Worldwise Global Schools](#) - Junior Cycle - Digital media literacy
- [Worldwise Global Schools](#) - Teacher Handbook, especially pages 14-15.

## GLOSSARY

### AVOIDING STEREOTYPING WHEN COMPARING COUNTRIES

Every society in the world has a mixture of people with access to different levels of material and social resources. For this reason, we need to choose words carefully when comparing countries. The language we use can 'other' and reinforce stereotypes - or they can challenge these ideas. Here are some terms used to discuss countries - bear in mind that none of these are considered 'perfect'. It might be worth discussing all these terms with students and agreeing meaning.

rich / poor	In any country, everyone has differing levels of access to resources. This doesn't mean that any one country is 'rich' or poor - many of the wealthiest countries have very high poverty. The definition of 'poor' is often associated with wealth, and doesn't consider one's wellbeing.
Global North / Global South	This framing makes assumptions about countries income, population, infrastructure and relative marginalisation. Many countries in the Global North have benefitted from years of extractive colonial practices to build their economies at the expense of their colonies, a process that has continued under capitalist globalisation.
First world / Third world	This framing comes from the Cold War, when Western-aligned countries were the 'First World', Soviet-aligned countries the 'Second world' and others were the 'Third World'. Beside the fact that it's politically irrelevant, it also refers to outdated stereotypes.
Developed / Developing	This framing is problematic for several reasons. The meaning of 'developed' can vary depending on the metric used to measure it. Also, is it fair to suggest countries like Ireland are completely 'developed' and have nothing left to improve? Is it fair to suggest that other countries need to catch up to our development, in the same way?

# HANDOUT 1

## DISCUSSION CARDS

What have you heard about greenwashing before?  
(e.g. from the media, school, family, etc.)?

Who has power in advertising - companies or the consumers?

What gives them this power?

When we hear about companies and the environment, whose perspectives do we usually hear - companies, governments, environmental support groups?

Who don't we hear from?

What are some reasons companies might greenwash?

Why wouldn't they change their practices?

Are consumers influenced by environmental claims?

Are you?

How?

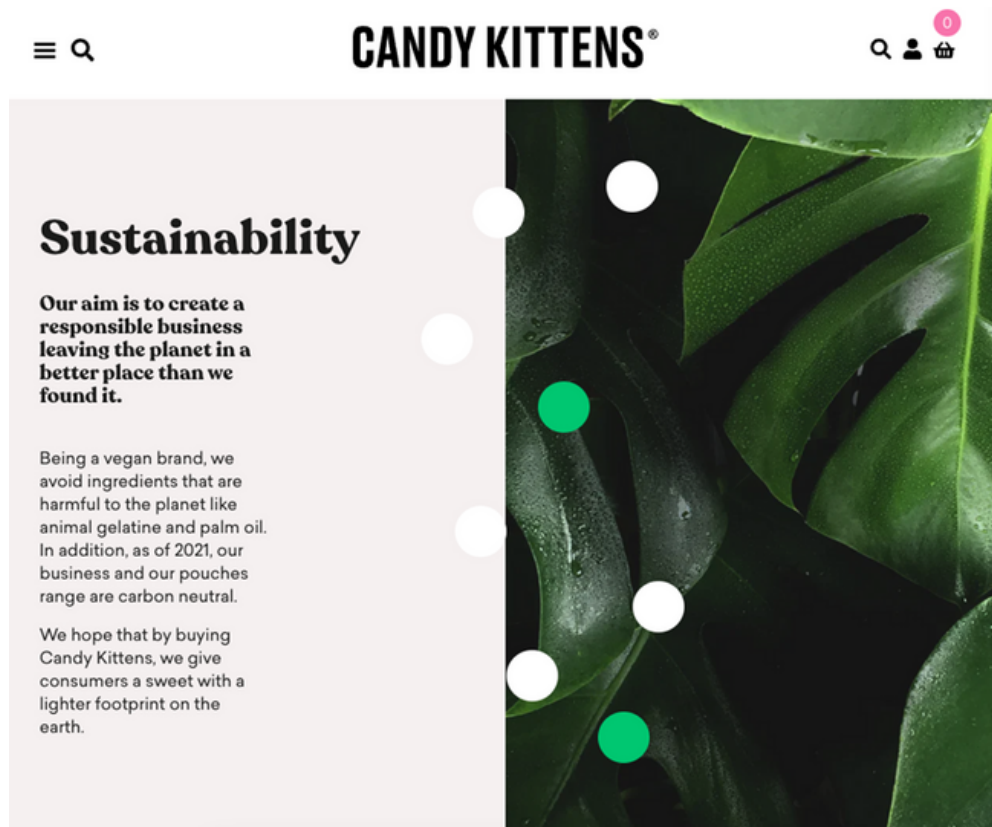
Can you think of an example?

Why is greenwashing unfair?

# HANDOUT 2A

## CANDY KITTENS - SUSTAINABILITY

Candy Kittens is a sweets manufacturer founded by Jamie Lang of The Only Way is Essex. These images are taken from the 'Sustainability' page of the company's website.



## How we're building a greener future



**I'm recyclable!**

ck its  
|  
ost  
im us.

Our plastic pouches are the same material (OPE/PE) as a plastic bag, which means that you can take them to your local supermarkets and recycle them at carrier bag collection points. Simple.

Recycling  
OPRL ar  
icons acro

## How we're building a greener future



**We're carbon neutral.**

work with  
recycling  
now how to

As of 2021, our business and our pouches range are carbon neutral. We've measured our carbon emissions, we're offsetting them through supporting certified projects, and now we're working to reduce them.

Ani

Since 2018, we've  
gelatine. Gelatine  
and is can be deri  
proteins and star

## HANDOUT 2B

### ROLE MODELS X H&M

H&M has been described as 'one of the world's most recognisable fast-fashion brands'. This campaign was displayed online and in their stores.

### Role Models x H&M

The ones we've been waiting for are already here

They can't drive, vote or tweet. But they will change the planet. Or even find new ones. We're shining a spotlight on the people making the world a better place: the kids. These are the Role Models. In this film, you'll meet a few of them, helping us rethink who we look to for hope.

### Meet the new Role Models

Age doesn't make a role model. You're never too little to dream big and change the world. It's time to get inspired.



**THE FUTURE  
BELONGS  
TO THOSE  
WHO WILL  
LIVE IN IT**

**Catarina, 13**  
Eco Warrior & Climate Crusader

At just thirteen, Catarina from Bahia, advocates for change in her native Brazil. Witnessing the destruction of the Amazon rainforest keeps her focused on her goal: to make a difference.



**Ryan, 11**  
Founder of Ryan's Recycling

**ANY AGE,  
AND  
YOU CAN  
BE A ROLE  
MODEL**

Ryan from California started recycling eight years ago, when he was only three years old. Today, the sixth grader runs his own recycling business.

## HANDOUT 2C

### HEINZ BY NATURE RANGE

