

Brand New 2 U - Lesson One – Fast Fashion and People

Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will recognise the human costs of the fashion industry. Students will learn about the Rana Plaza disaster and locate its root causes in unsustainable global supply chains Students will weigh responsibility for unsustainable fashion practices among different groups and appraise different responses we can make as citizens
Materials	<i>BrandNew2U – Lesson 1</i> Powerpoint file Role play cards – 1 copy per 5 students, cut
Time	Approx 60 minutes

Procedure

World map – 5 minutes

- Project Slide 1 onto the board.
- Ask students to check the label of their bag or jacket. Where was it made?
- Mark the country of origin on the map. Do this for all students. If more than one person has something from the same country, count the total. (e.g. China - 5).
- Ask: What do the countries marked all have in common? (Likely answers: developing countries, outside Europe). Why do many of our clothes come from these countries? (lower standards of living, cheaper labour, less government oversight)

Role Play – 20 minutes

- Tell students they will be exploring the conditions in a factory in one of the countries that makes our clothes. Don't tell students about the Rana Plaza disaster yet.
- Put students in groups of five. Give each student one card, and some time to read it. When they have finished reading, they should put the card on the table, face down.
- Introduce the scenario by reading this aloud:
 - “You all work in a factory that is home to five different companies. These companies make clothes that are sold to major brands. One day, you are sent home from work because you hear there is a problem in the building and it is not safe. The next day, everybody comes to work in the morning. You are all standing outside the factory gates. Introduce yourself to the rest of the group by saying your job. Then discuss: should you go to work today?”
- Give the students some time to discuss. If they are getting off topic, remind them that the clock is ticking, and every moment they delay is costing them money. They need to decide what to do about the problem.

- After all students have made their decision, ask them to share with the group. What did they choose to do? Why did they make that decision?

Rana Plaza – 10 minutes

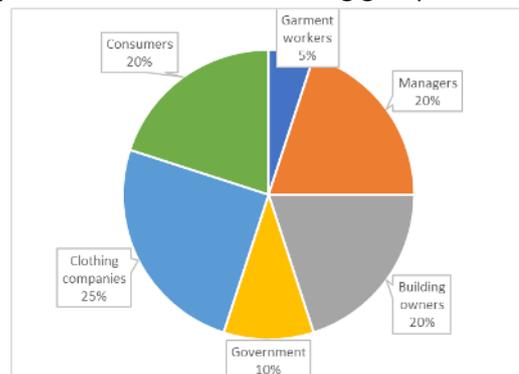
- Show the video (5 minutes) from Human Rights Watch about the Rana Plaza disaster (Slide 2). Ask:
 - Why did the workers continue to work in the factory, even though they knew it was dangerous? (No choice, they may not be paid, physical force e.g. Beauty)
 - According to the video, what other problems do Bangladeshi garment workers experience? (Uncomfortable environment, risk of low pay, threats of physical harm, required to work overtime, pay delayed)
 - The video suggests forming a union is a solution to these problems. Why would that help? What stops workers from unionising?
 - Why don't companies work harder to make better conditions for garment workers?

NOTE: This video contains descriptions of injury that some students may be uncomfortable with. You may want to warn them first.

Responsibility – 10 minutes

- In the same groups, ask students to decide who bears responsibility for the Rana Plaza disaster. They should represent their answer in a pie chart and apportion blame in percentages for different groups (see right). They should include the following groups:

- Garment workers
- Manufacturing company managers
- Building owners
- Government of Bangladesh
- Clothing companies (e.g. Penney's, Adidas, etc.)
- Consumers in wealthy countries who buy products from those companies



- Give the students some time to draw their pie charts, then ask them to share with the class.
- Show the quote from the clothing company executive (Slide 3). Ask:
 - Does this change their pie charts?
 - Do you agree that consumers are responsible for companies' behaviour?
 - Is it true that people prefer inexpensive clothes over human safety or the environment? If so, why?

Action – 10 minutes

Show slide 4. Ask:

- How could these actions would make life better for people in places like Rana Plaza?
- Which of these actions would you take individually? Which of these would you take as a group?

Reflection – 5 minutes

- What did you learn in today's lesson?
- Do you feel differently now about clothing?
- What will you do differently now?

Additional Materials - Lesson One – Role Cards

The details for this role play were taken from [an article in The Guardian](#). If you would like to know more about the disaster, you can read it before the lesson.

You are a **sewing machine operator**.

- You are originally from the countryside but have moved to the city because the money you earn at the factory is much more than working on a farm.
- You earn \$60 per month, which is not enough to pay the rent. Therefore, you rely on overtime to make another \$30 per month.
- It's hot and dark in the factory, where you stitch seams and pockets on denim jeans. You stitch 120 pairs an hour, 10 hours a day, six days a week, 50 days a year.
- You have a very good relationship with your supervisor, and your manager seems nice, although you don't really know them.
- You have heard that the building is not in good condition, and may be dangerous.

You are a **supervisor**.

- You watch over 15 sewing machine operators and five helpers, all of whom you trust and have a good relationship with.
- Your manager is a well-mannered person, and you have no complaints about them.
- Your team has strict targets to meet, although because work was cancelled yesterday, you are behind on the current order of 500,000 pairs of jeans.
- You earn about \$100 per day. This is just about enough for you to pay the rent and eat, although you don't have much money left over at the end of the month.

You are the **manager** of one of the clothes manufacturing companies.

- You currently have an order for 500,000 basic shirts at \$6 per piece from a famous clothing brand.
- Your company needs to fulfil this current order on time, or the buyer may not pay in full. If that happens, you won't be able to pay the very high rates of rent that the owner of the building charges.
- Yesterday, someone reported a crack in a pillar in the building. In the interests of safety, you sent all your workers home. However, this means you are delayed on the current shipment, and need to catch up today.
- If your employees don't want to work, you can stop their overtime pay until the order is completed.

You are a **buyer for a clothing brand** that is very famous in Ireland.

- You have ordered 500,000 pairs of jeans from the company. These need to be in stores in Ireland in two months.
- This country has a lot of problems; electrical blackouts, political unrest, strikes and blockades all threaten to make your shipment delayed. You cannot afford any more delays to the production schedule.
- If the deal is late, your company will deduct 5% for every week that the clothes are overdue by. You will therefore lose some of your commission.

You are an **engineer** working for the local municipality.

- You know that the city has a poor power grid, and can't supply enough electricity to meet demand. Therefore, most buildings have generators to make sure they can work all day.
- Yesterday, a crack was discovered in the building. You were called in to inspect.
- You discovered that the owner of the building did not follow safety guidelines when building the factory. They put heavy electricity generators on the top floor, and when they vibrate, they shake the building and have cause weaknesses.
- The cracks are in pillars that are essential to support the whole building. You are concerned that, if the generator turns on today, the building may collapse.

