

what's in a t-shirt?

module 2

3

Activity presentation

In this activity, students will begin thinking about the lifecycle of clothing. They will trace the paths that a single article of clothing took from the country/area of manufacture, to where it was purchased. This activity serves as a steppingstone to a larger discussion on the true environmental and social cost of clothing.

Materials

-  One t-shirt per student (preferably a loved shirt)
-  Appendix 2a: What's in a t-shirt
-  Appendix 2b: Map of the world
-  Appendix 2c: A t-shirt's web of connections

Activity breakdown

1

Let the students know that through this activity, they will begin to think through all the human and non-human beings that come together to create the clothes that we are wearing. Clothing is universal to nearly every single human being on the planet. It can be a form of self expression, a demonstration of faith, and an absolutely necessity to protect us from the elements! *Ask students where they think their clothing comes from.* Take note of some of the ideas, which may include the store, family, friends or factories. Ask students if they have any idea how much t-shirts can cost. Work with students to establish a consensus definition of cost. At this point, cost may mean only how much someone may pay for a t-shirt.

②

Using the included sheets, ask students to estimate how much each of the categories might cost. *Ask why students chose that amount.* Students will then look into the cost of different t-shirts to determine how different locations or brands will price a t-shirt. Students can do this research, can be provided with the information. It is important to note that prices may differ greatly in different towns or cities and can spark conversations with students about why this might be. For example in Montreal in 2024,

- Second hand/thrift store: 5 - 8 \$
- “Affordable” retail brand (like Old Navy): 10 - 20 \$
- “Expensive” retail brand (like La Baie): 30 - 40 \$
- “Ethical” or “sustainable” brand: 40 - 200 \$
- “Fashion” brand 500 - 1500 \$

③

Once students have completed their organizer, *ask why there might be such a difference in the price range. What makes the expensive t-shirts more expensive, and the affordable shirts affordable? Are the expensive shirts “better”?*

④

Students will now use their own favourite t-shirt to consider how interconnected human and non-human beings (such as animals and plants) come together in a single t-shirt. Ask the students to read the labels and tags on the t-shirt and try to extract as much information as possible. This information might include the material in percentages (for example 60% cotton, 40% polyester), where it was made, and the care instructions, sometimes written out in words, sometimes in symbols).

Activity breakdown (continued)

5

Have a discussion on what the clothes are made of. Explain how natural fibres can come from plants and animals (such as cotton and wool), while synthetic fibres are man-made, and are made of plastics. If available, invite the students to look at and touch examples of these materials. *Ask students how they think that materials are related to the well-being of the Earth.* Some examples of conversation could be what is required to produce and make these materials, including planting, harvesting and weaving these materials.

6

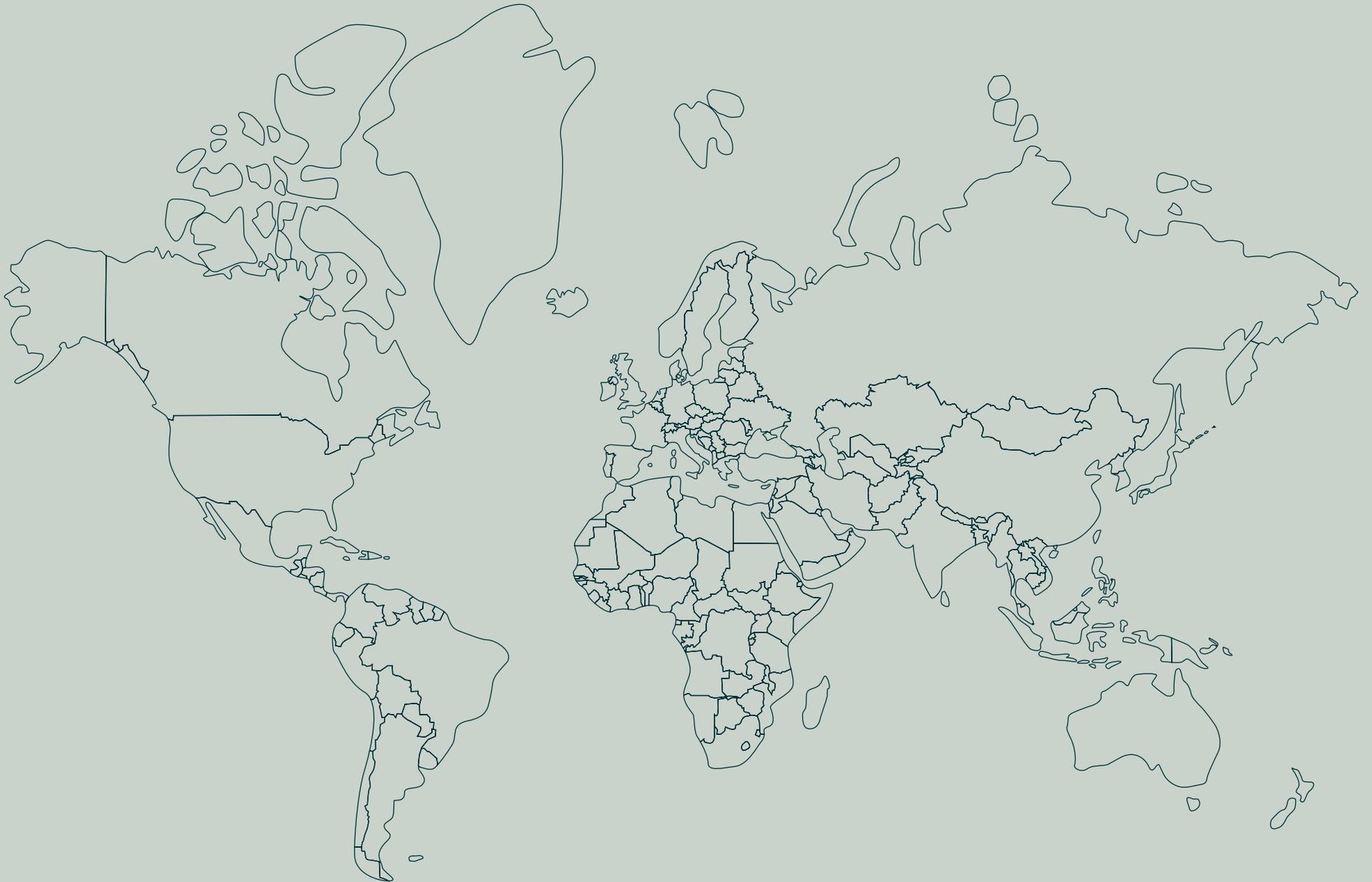
Using the map, ask students to identify where their shirt was made. *Are they familiar with this country? Have they heard of it before? How far away is it from their home town or city?*

7

Drawing on the second activity in this module (connecting through yarn) ask students to reflect on who and what have been involved in the creation of their t-shirt from its inception to their hands. Use Appendix 2c- *A T-shirt's web of connections* to visualize these connections.

Conclusion

Explain to students that there are thousands of people involved in different processes of the clothing industry across the entire planet. All of the processes involved in making clothing requiring a lot of energy and resources and generate waste. In the next module, we will consider how some types of waste can be rethought and repurposed.



How much does a t-shirt cost?

Where does shirt come from?

| |
|---|
| Gifted |
| Second hand/thrift store |
| "Affordable" retail brand (like Old Navy) |
| "Expensive" retail brand (like Simons) |
| "Ethical" or "sustainable" brand |
| "Fashion" brand |

How much I think it costs

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

How much it costs

| |
|--|
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

Why do you think there is such a difference in price ranges?

Web de connexions : un t-shirt

