



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 10

Answer Key

The Silent Cost of Fast Fashion

I still remember the shirt: three dollars, a color I liked for exactly one season, worn perhaps five times before it stretched out of shape and went into a donation bin I never checked on again. I did not think about where it came from, who made it, or where it ended up. Most of us don't, and the fast fashion industry depends on precisely that lack of attention.

Consider the numbers. The global fashion industry produces over one hundred billion garments annually, and researchers estimate that the average garment is now worn only seven times before being discarded, a dramatic drop from just a few decades ago. Meanwhile, textile waste in landfills has grown so large that some discarded clothing, particularly synthetic blends, will take literally hundreds of years to decompose, quietly outliving everyone who ever wore it.

Behind these numbers are people. Investigative reports have repeatedly documented garment workers, disproportionately young women in countries with limited labor protections, working excessive hours for wages that fail to cover basic living costs, all so that a shirt can retail for less than the price of a cup of coffee. I think often about the workers who sewed that three dollar shirt of mine, whose names I will never know and whose working conditions I never once considered while making my purchase.

None of this means clothing itself is the problem, or that anyone should feel ashamed for needing to dress affordably. The deeper issue is a system built on disposability, one where garments are priced so low precisely because their true costs, environmental and human, are hidden from the person standing at the register. Recognizing that hidden cost is not about guilt. It is about the kind of clarity that has to come before any meaningful change, individual or industry wide, can actually happen.

Circle the Correct Answer

1. What personal anecdote does the author open with?

Answer: b) A story about a cheap shirt the author bought and quickly discarded

2. What statistic does the author cite about how often garments are worn?

Answer: a) The average garment is now worn only about seven times before being discarded

3. What does the author say about garment workers?

Answer: b) They are disproportionately young women working long hours for wages that fail to cover basic living costs

4. What is the author's final point in the essay?

Answer: b) Recognizing the hidden cost of cheap clothing is necessary clarity before meaningful change can happen

True or False

5. The author says clothing itself is the problem and people should feel ashamed for buying it.

Answer: False

6. The essay cites a specific statistic about global garment production.

Answer: True

7. The essay claims garment workers are treated fairly across the entire industry.

Answer: False

Fill in the Blank

8. The author says some discarded clothing will take hundreds of years to _____.

Answer: decompose

9. The author says the deeper issue is a system built on _____.

Answer: disposability

Think and Explain

10. This essay uses ethos, pathos, and logos, the three classical rhetorical appeals. Identify one specific example of each appeal in the text: ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic or evidence).

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers identifying ethos in the author's personal, honest admission of their own past behavior (establishing relatable credibility rather than moral superiority), pathos in the emotional appeal of imagining an unnamed worker who sewed the author's shirt, and logos in the cited statistics about garment production, wear frequency, and decomposition time.

11. Why might the author have chosen to begin with a personal anecdote of their own past behavior, rather than opening directly with statistics? What effect does this structural choice have on the reader?

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers noting that opening with a relatable, slightly self-critical personal story invites the reader to recognize similar behavior in themselves without feeling immediately attacked or lectured, building trust and empathy before introducing harder statistics and criticism, which likely makes the argument land more persuasively than leading with data or accusation.