

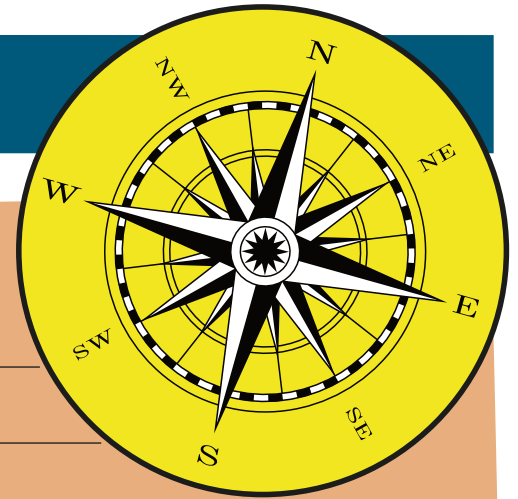
The image features a vertical blue line that divides the page. On the left side, there are several overlapping circles in various shades of blue. One of these circles contains the word "Consumerism" in a bold, italicized font. A horizontal blue line extends from the left edge of this circle towards the vertical line. On the right side of the vertical line, there is a large, light blue circle that overlaps with the vertical line and extends towards the right edge of the image. There is also a smaller, solid blue circle in the upper right quadrant.

Consumerism

Introduction

Consumerism—the consumption of goods and services in excess of one’s basic needs, usually in greater and greater quantities—is not a new phenomenon, and early examples of consumerism can be traced back to the first human civilizations. A significant consumerist tide hit Europe and North America in the mid-18th Century as a result of the Industrial Revolution and the transformation of Western Europe’s and North America’s economies. The mechanization of a number of processes freed a certain percentage of the workforce from their jobs in areas such as farming and fuelled both the Industrial Revolution and population growth. As industrialization created the conditions for mass production and mass consumption, for the first time in history immense quantities of manufactured goods were suddenly available to everyone at outstandingly low prices.

The Second World War brought about a strong need to conserve natural resources, as the demands of war led to resource scarcity. The U.S. Government launched a massive campaign urging citizens to be patriotic and to conserve resources, reuse and recycle, grow their own food, and to share. As a result, frugality became the new norm. However, in the 1950s, factories and labour, which were used to produce weapons, planes, and ships during the war, became idle and needed to be employed. The government wanted to end the population’s penchant for austerity and induce them to consume. One of the architects of the consumer society was the retail analyst Victor Lebow, who remarked in 1955 that “Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption. [...] We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced, and discarded at an ever increasing pace.” This line of thinking launched the consumer society and the growing conspicuous consumption of the United States (and Canada) that still prevails today.



Exploring the Issues

What is consumerism? How is it described? What drives consumerism?

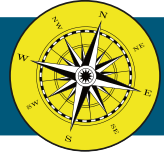
- History of consumerism
- Production of goods and services
- Variations of consumerism: affluence, conspicuous consumption, overconsumption, profligate consumption
- Quality of life versus acquiring goods
- Relationship between political and economic interests, investment decisions, production, marketing and distribution, and consumption

What are the impacts of consumerism? How does it affect different countries? Canada? How does it affect you?

- Ecosystem degradation and ecological overshoot (when our demands exceed our capacity)
- Increased waste streams
- Planned obsolescence
- Unfulfilling jobs; working longer hours for reduced pay; job insecurity
- Economic inefficiencies
- Uneven resource distribution
- Growing disparities between the rich and poor
- Feelings of frustration, exclusion, of never having enough or being good enough
- “Keeping up with the Joneses”

What is the role of media in fuelling consumerism? What images does society project about how people should live and what makes them happy?

- The people/corporations that own the media
- Advertising to children and other groups
- Advertising in public spaces
- Consumerism and social status



What is progress? ...wealth? ...prosperity? ...well-being? How are these measured?

- “Needs” versus “wants”
- Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
- Overconsumption and underconsumption
- Alternatives to Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Genuine Progress Indicator; Ecological Footprint; Gross National Happiness; Human Development Index; Satisfaction with Life Index; Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare; Living Planet Index

Solutions and Moving Forward

- Social movements and initiatives: anti-consumerism; culture jamming/”subvertising”
- Alternative lifestyles: voluntary simplicity; frugality; downshifting; green living; LOHAS (lifestyles of health and sustainability)
- The positive story of moving away from consumerism: time for friends and family; better health; more fulfilling lives; more efficient and resilient economies; better global relations
- Better product design and closed-loop systems that promote “clean production”: cradle-to-cradle; biomimicry; industrial ecology; design for sustainability
- Collaborative consumption or “what’s mine is yours” (renting, swapping, sharing)
- Community centres and attractive public spaces; progressive urban design
- Cheap, comfortable, and reliable public transportation
- Education for sustainable consumption and citizenship
- Re-localization of the economy

Exploring the Issues

- | | |
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| ■ Consumer-based economies | ■ Corporate sponsorship |
| ■ Capitalism and free market economies | ■ Product placement |
| ■ Citizen responsibilities and decisions | ■ Perceived/planned obsolescence |
| ■ Corporate responsibilities and decisions | ■ Lifestyle and health issues (e.g., obesity, chemical intolerances, allergies, illnesses, sedentary lifestyles) |
| ■ Culture of entitlement | ■ Energy and natural resource depletion |
| ■ Culture of credit | ■ Generation of waste |
| ■ Culture of excess | ■ Petro-politics |
| ■ Commoditization of Indigenous cultures | ■ Corporate and consumer greed |
| ■ Impact of branding, marketing, and advertising | ■ Sweatshops |
| ■ Mass media manipulation | |



Essential Questions

Inquiry questions related to consumerism issues may include the following:

- How are the products and resources we consume actually produced? Where do they come from and who makes them? What happens to products when we're finished with them?
- What are the impacts on the environment of production and consumption in North America? ...on society? ...on people here and around the world? How does our consumption affect poorer people and nations?
- How do the media affect our thoughts and actions? Who/what influences our consumption choices? Whose needs are being met when we consume?
- Why does our society generally think of consumption as a good thing?
- What is a necessity and what is a luxury? How do we differentiate between "needs" and "wants?"
- Does consuming make us happy? What are the requirements for a "good life?"
- How do consumption habits change as societies change? How do these changes affect our relationships with other people, here and around the world?
- How does consumerism relate to our social status? How do our values around consumerism affect our relationships with others?
- What are the relationships among consumption, wealth, and population growth?
- What does it mean to be a consumer versus being a citizen?

DYK?

Did You Know?

Canada's ecological footprint (measure of human demand on Earth's ecosystem) is seventh-largest per capita among 130 nations measured in WWF's *Living Planet Report*. Approximately half of this footprint is the result of carbon emissions from transportation, heating, and electricity production from fossil fuels, which contribute significantly to climate change. This is more than twice the average global citizen's consumption rate and would require approximately four Earths to sustain if every human were to live as Canadians do. (WWF)

The U.S. and Canada, with 5.2% of the world's population, are responsible for 31.5% of consumption. South Asia, with 22.4% of the population, is responsible for 2% of consumption. (Worldwatch Institute, 2004)

"Globally, the 20% of the world's people in the highest-income countries account for 86% of total private consumption expenditures—the poorest 20% a minuscule 1.3%. More specifically, the richest fifth consume 45% of all meat and fish, the poorest fifth consume 5%

- consume 58% of total energy, the poorest fifth consume less than 4%
- have 74% of all telephone lines, the poorest fifth have 1.5%
- consume 84% of all paper, the poorest fifth consume 1.1%
- own 87% of the world's vehicle fleet, the poorest fifth own less than 1%"

(UNDP, p. 2)

Annual expenditures on luxury items compared with funding needed to meet basic needs			
Product	Annual expenditure (\$US)	Social or economic goal	Additional annual investment needed to achieve goal
Makeup	\$18 billion	Reproductive health care for all women	\$12 billion
Pet food in Europe and the United States	\$17 billion	Elimination of hunger and malnutrition	\$19 billion
Perfumes	\$15 billion	Universal literacy	\$5 billion
Ocean cruises	\$14 billion	Clean drinking water for all	\$10 billion
Ice cream in Europe	\$11 billion	Immunizing every child	\$1.3 billion

(Worldwatch Institute, 2004, p. 10)

"In the past three decades, one-third of the planet's natural resources base has been consumed."
(Hawken, et al., 1999)

"...75 per cent of the major marine fish stocks are either depleted, overexploited, or being fished at their biological limit." (WEHAB Working Group, p. 7)

The western world spends more on luxury products than it would cost to achieve the UN's Millennium Development Goals. (Worldwatch Institute, 2004)

"Each person in the United States makes 4 1/2 pounds of garbage a day. That is twice what they each made 30 years ago." (The Story of Stuff Project, n.d.)

"For every one garbage can of waste you put out on the curb, 70 garbage cans of waste were made upstream to make the junk in that one garbage can you put out on the curb." (The Story of Stuff Project, n.d.)

"Some 4 billion PET recyclable bottles end up in the U.S. waste stream each year, costing cities some \$70 million in cleanup and landfill costs. A plastic water bottle can take up to 1000 years to degrade in a landfill; when plastic is burned in incinerators, it releases dioxins, some of the most harmful human-made chemicals that exist." (The Story of Stuff Project, 2010)

"Between 10 and 15 percent of the price of a bottle of water goes to advertising costs. Effective marketing of bottled water has contributed to undermining confidence—and investment—in public tap water and encouraging underfunding of public agencies." (The Story of Stuff Project, 2010)

"Numbers from Nutrition Business Journal put the organic food and beverage market in the U.S. at \$29.2 billion in 2011, with growth projected at 9.4%, as compared to an anticipated growth in the low single digits for conventional food and beverages." (Daniells)

“Organic Monitor estimates that organic food and drink sales worldwide reached almost \$64 billion in 2012.” (Soil Association, p. 20)

“In 2006, people around the world spent \$30.5 trillion on goods and services, and in 2008, they purchased 68 million vehicles, 85 million refrigerators, 297 million computers, and 1.2 billion cell phones.” (Worldwatch Institute, 2010, p. 4)

“The world extracts the equivalent of 112 Empire State Buildings from the earth every single day.” (Worldwatch Institute, 2010, p. 4)



Thought-Provoking Quotations

“We are not going to be able to operate our Spaceship Earth successfully nor for much longer unless we see it as a whole spaceship and our fate as common. It has to be everybody or nobody.”

– Buckminster Fuller

“Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.”

– Edward Abbey

“Educational and cultural institutions, governmental agencies, financial institutions, and even the family itself changed their meaning and function to promote the consumption of commodities.”

– Richard Robbins

“The only reason a great many American families don’t own an elephant is that they have never been offered an elephant for a dollar down and easy weekly payments.”

– Mad Magazine (Benett et al.)

“There must be more to life than having everything!”

– Maurice Sendak

“The world will no longer be divided by the ideologies of “left” and “right,” but by those who accept ecological limits and those who don’t.”

– Wolfgang Sachs (Potter)

“Change is disturbing when it is done to us, exhilarating when it is done by us.”

– Rosabeth Moss Kanter



“We need new thinking, new leadership, and innovation to create a post-carbon economy. Our goal is not to undo industry, but to remake it into a force for sustainable wealth generation.”

– Jigar Shaw (Lovins et al.)

“The most critical task facing humanity today is the creation of a shared vision of a sustainable and desirable society, one that can provide permanent prosperity within the biophysical constraints of the real world in a way that is fair and equitable to all of humanity, to other species, and to future generations.”

– Robert Costanza

“We are human beings, not human havings.”

– Mike Nickerson

“Anything you cannot relinquish when it has outlived its usefulness possesses you. And in this materialistic age, a great many of us are possessed by our possessions.”

– Mildred Lisette Norman

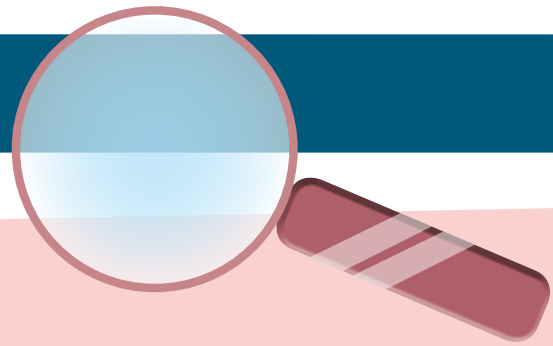


Making a Difference

Name	How they make a difference
One Earth Initiative Society	<p>The One Earth Initiative is a non-profit research and advocacy group based in Vancouver. We seek to transform unsustainable consumption and production patterns locally, nationally, and internationally. One Earth is engaged in convening policy, communication and action initiatives to transform the consumer lifestyle—and the economic, industrial production, financial, political, social, and cultural systems that support it.</p> <p>http://oneearthweb.org/</p>
The Story of Stuff Project	<p>The Story of Stuff Project was created by Annie Leonard to leverage and extend the impact of the original <i>Story of Stuff</i> film. The project aims to amplify public discourse on a series of environmental, social, and economic concerns and increase the Story of Stuff community's involvement in efforts to build a more sustainable and just world. The online community includes over 150,000 activists, and they partner with hundreds of environmental and social justice organizations worldwide to create and distribute films, curricula, and other content.</p> <p>www.storyofstuff.com/</p>
Center for the New American Dream	<p>The Center for the New American Dream helps Americans consume responsibly to protect the environment, enhance quality of life, and promote social justice. They work with individuals, institutions, communities, and businesses to conserve natural resources, counter the commercialization of our culture, and promote positive changes in the way goods are produced and consumed. Its focus is on shifting our understanding of well-being away from “stuff” and back to opportunity and relationships.</p> <p>www.newdream.org/</p>
Interface	<p>Interface is a sustainable flooring company dedicated to eliminating by 2020 any negative impact of its business on the environment. Its mission is to serve as a model to the business community and to show the industrial world what sustainability is in all its dimensions: people, process, product, place, and profit. Its business model runs on what they have termed the “7 Fronts of Sustainability.”</p> <p>www.interfaceglobal.com/</p>



Name	How they make a difference
Adbusters	Based in Vancouver, <i>Adbusters</i> is a not-for-profit, reader-supported magazine with a circulation of 120,000. It is concerned with the erosion of our physical and cultural environments by commercial forces. <i>Adbusters</i> offers incisive philosophical articles, as well as activist commentary from around the world addressing issues ranging from genetically modified foods to media concentration. In addition, its annual social marketing campaigns like Buy Nothing Day and Digital Detox Week have made it an important activist networking group. www.adbusters.org/



Glossary

Capitalism:

Capitalism is a way of organizing an economy so that the things that are used to make and transport products (such as land, oil, factories, ships, etc.) are privately owned by individual people and companies rather than by the government. Capitalism is the dominant economic structure around the world, particularly in developed countries.

Carbon footprint:

A carbon footprint is the total set of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by an organization, event, or product. It is often expressed in terms of the amount of carbon dioxide (or the equivalent of other greenhouse gases) that is emitted. (UNEP)

Carrying capacity of ecosystems:

The capacity of an ecosystem to support healthy organisms while maintaining its productivity, adaptability, and capability for renewal. Carrying capacity is a quantitative concept: key factors for human populations include numbers and density, affluence, and technology. Concerns focus on the depletion rates of renewable and non-renewable resources and the build-up of hazardous wastes in the environment. (UNEP)

Choice editing:

Choice editing is the term used to describe instances where governments and/or businesses influence the choices made by consumers. For example, a decision by a government to remove all non-energy efficient light bulbs removes the

consumers' choice to buy light bulbs that are not energy efficient. (UNEP)

Citizen:

A citizen is a person who legally belongs in a country and has the rights and protection of that country and its government.

Consumer information:

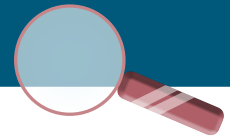
Consumer information is the characteristics of products and transactions that are made available to consumers/users to allow them to make informed choices, both at the time of their initial acquisition and afterwards. Consumer information makes it easier for consumers to compare goods and services, increases transparency and accountability, and reduces search costs. It can be used not only to inform but also to influence consumer behaviour. (UNEP)

Consumer preferences:

Consumer preferences are a consequence of consumer choice, guiding the acquisition of a good or service on the basis of the information available. This may include the preference not to consume at all. (UNEP)

Consumer:

A consumer is an everyday purchaser of a good or service in retail or the end user in the distribution chain of a good or service. (UNEP)



Conspicuous consumption:

Conspicuous consumption is lavish spending on goods and services acquired mainly for the purpose of displaying income or wealth and maintaining social status.

Corporate social (and environmental) responsibility:

Corporate social and environmental responsibility is the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment.

Credit:

Credit is a contractual agreement in which a borrower receives something of value now and agrees to repay the lender at some later date. When consumers purchase something using a credit card, they are buying on credit (receiving the item at that time and paying back the credit card company later). Whenever people finance something with a loan (such as an automobile or a house), they are using credit in that situation as well.

Eco-efficiency:

Eco-efficiency is a management philosophy that encourages business to search for environmental improvements that also yield economic benefits. It focuses on business opportunities and allows companies to become more environmentally responsible and more profitable. It is a key business contribution to sustainable societies. Eco-efficiency is achieved by the delivery of competitively priced goods and services that satisfy human needs and bring quality of life,

while progressively reducing ecological impacts. (UNEP)

Ecodesign:

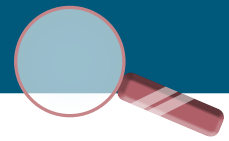
Ecodesign is an approach to designing a product that aims at reducing the environmental impact (and energy consumption) of the product throughout its entire life cycle. (UNEP)

Ecolabels:

Ecolabels are labelling systems for food and consumer products, which are often voluntary but can be mandated by law, like for major appliances and cars in North America. Ecolabels make it easier for consumers to choose more environmentally friendly products.

Education for sustainable consumption:

Education for sustainable consumption (ESC) aims to provide knowledge, values, and skills to enable individuals and social groups to become actors of change towards more sustainable consumption behaviours. The objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the global community are met, quality of life for all is improved, and inefficient use of resources and environmental degradation are avoided. ESC is therefore about providing citizens with appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as providing workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms, including consumers' rights, and aims at protecting and empowering consumers in order to enable them to participate in the public debate and economy in an informed, confident, and ethical way. (UNEP)



Entitlement:

The state of having the right to something not equally enjoyed by others.

Fair trade:

Fair trade is an organized social movement and market-based approach (voluntary) that aims to help producers in developing countries make better trading conditions and promote sustainability.

The movement helps to ensure that producers, including employees, receive a share of the total profit, commensurate with their input, and that social conditions are improved, particularly those of employees in the absence of developed structures for social services and worker representation (trade union representation, for instance). (UNEP)

Greenwashing:

Greenwashing is the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service. Companies are notably accused of greenwashing when they spend more time and money claiming to be “green” through advertising and marketing than actually implementing business practices that minimize their environmental impact. (UNEP)

Luxury:

A luxury is something inessential but conducive to pleasure and comfort—often something expensive or hard to obtain. In western culture, luxuries are often considered to be “necessities.” (UNEP)

Planned obsolescence:

Planned obsolescence is a business practice of deliberately outdating an item (much before the end of its useful life) by stopping its supply or service support and introducing a newer (often incompatible) model or version. Its objective is to prod the consumer or user to abandon the currently owned item in favour of the “upgrade.” It is a common practice in the computer industry for technical reasons, but can also be accomplished by making the old product “unfashionable.” (BD)

Product placement:

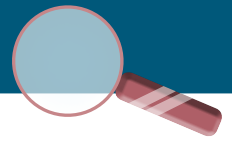
The paid inclusion of commercial products in video and print media for advertising purposes.

Subvertising:

The practice of making a parody of corporate and political advertisements in order to make a statement.

Sufficiency:

The concept of “sufficiency” has emerged over the years as an alternative economic model to consumerism and a necessary component of sustainable lifestyles. It is a philosophical ideal that offers the possibility of a higher quality of life while simultaneously reducing the human impact on the natural world. (UNEP)



Sustainable consumption and production:

Sustainable production and consumption is the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and that bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources, toxic materials, and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations. (UNEP)

Sustainable lifestyles:

A “sustainable lifestyle” is a way of living that is enabled both by efficient infrastructure (public transportation, green buildings, etc.), goods and services (fair trade and organic products, etc.), and by individual choices and actions (walking instead of driving) that minimize the use of natural resources and generation of emissions, wastes and pollution, while supporting equitable socio-economic development and progress for all. (UNEP)

3 Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle):

The 3 Rs form the foundation of the waste hierarchy by order of importance: reducing means choosing to use things

with care to reduce the amount of waste generated; reusing involves the repeated use of items or parts of items that still have usable elements; recycling means the use of waste itself as a resource. Some people add other “Rs” to the original three: renewing; respecting; refusing (to acquire or purchase certain goods or products).

Voluntary simplicity:

Voluntary simplicity encompasses a number of different voluntary practices to simplify one’s lifestyle in an effort to make one’s personal and social project the pursuit of other, non-materialistic purposes. Simplifiers gain more satisfaction out of lifelong learning, public life, volunteering, community participation, sports, cultural activities, and observing or communing with nature. (UNEP)



Suggested Resources

Books

- Klein, Naomi. *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. Toronto, ON: Knopf Canada, 2000.
- De Graaf, John, David Wann, and Thomas H Naylor. *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2002.
- Quart, Alissa. *Branded: The Buying and Selling of Teenagers*. New York, NY: Perseus Books, 2003.
- Assadourian, Erik (ed.). *State of the World 2010: Transforming Cultures from Consumerism to Sustainability*. New York, NY: Norton/Worldwatch, 2010.
- Starke, Linda (ed.). *State of the World 2004—Special Focus: The Consumer Society*. New York, NY: Norton/Worldwatch, 2004.
- Schor, Juliet B. *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth*. London, UK: Penguin, 2010.
- _____. *Do Americans Shop Too Much?* Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000.
- Meadows, Donella H. *Thinking in Systems*. London, UK: Earthscan, 2008.
- Jackson, Tim. *Prosperity without Growth: Economics for a Finite Planet*. London, UK: Earthscan, 2009.
- Leonard, Annie. *The Story of Stuff: How Our Obsession with Stuff Is Trashing the Planet, Our Communities, and Our Health—and a Vision for Change*. New York, NY: Free Press, 2010.
- Smart, Barry. *Consumer Society: Critical Issues & Environmental Consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2010.
- Durning, Alan. *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*. Seattle, WA: Sightline, 1997.
- Robin, Vicki. *Your Money or Your Life: 9 Steps to Transforming Your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence: Revised and Updated for the 21st Century*. London, UK: Penguin, 2008.
- Friedman, Thomas L. *Hot, Flat, and Crowded 2.0: Why We Need a Green Revolution—and How It Can Renew America*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008.
- Lakoff, George. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1980.



Lindstrom, Martin. *Buyology: Truth and Lies about Why We Buy*. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2008.

Robbins, John. *The New Good Life: Living Better Than Ever in an Age of Less*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2010.

Nickerson, Mike. *Life, Money and Illusion: Living on Earth as if We Want to Stay*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society, 2009.

Trainer, Ted. *The Conserver Society*. London, UK: Zed Books, 1995.

Websites

UNEP/Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production

“The Centre provides scientific support to clients from the private and the public sector, such as UNEP and other organizations in the field of SCP. This support includes the development, testing, implementation and monitoring of concrete projects, especially in developing countries, which enables these countries to leapfrog to sustainable consumption and production patterns using life cycle thinking and regional perspectives as guiding principles.”

www.scp-centre.org/home.html

Youth Xchange

“Planet Earth is facing a severe global crisis. Inefficient consumption and production patterns are putting an unbearable strain on our planet. *youthxchange* is designed to help trainers and individuals to understand and communicate on sustainable lifestyles.”

www.youthxchange.net

Global Footprint Network

Global Footprint Network is “an international think tank that provides ecological footprint accounting tools to drive informed policy decisions in a resource-constrained world.”

www.footprintnetwork.org

Interview with Richard Heinberg from the Post Carbon Institute

Interview with Richard Heinberg, an American journalist and educator who has written extensively on energy, economic, and ecological issues, including oil depletion.

<http://transitionvoice.com/2011/03/interview-richard-heinberg/>



Interview with James Howard Kunstler: “The old American dream is a nightmare”

Interview with James Howard Kunstler, an American author, social critic, public speaker, and blogger.

www.grist.org/sprawl/2011-03-09-james-howard-kunstler-we-need-a-new-american-dream

Buy Nothing Day

“Buy Nothing Day is an international day of protest against consumerism celebrated annually just after Thanksgiving.”

www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd

Good Stuff? – A Behind-the-Scenes Guide to the Things We Buy

“Have you ever wondered where chocolate comes from, if antibacterial soap is good for your family, or how to recycle an old computer? If you’ve had these or other questions about the environmental and social impacts of the products you buy and use, *Good Stuff* is for you. It contains many of the tips, facts, and links you’ll need to start making more informed purchases that benefit your health and the environment.”

www.worldwatch.org/bookstore/publication/good-stuff-behind-scenes-guide-things-we-buy

Affluenza

A one-hour television special that explores the high social and environmental costs of materialism and overconsumption. You can learn more about the show, get an “affluenza diagnosis,” and check out resources for treatment at

www.pbs.org/kcts/affluenza/

The Hairy-Nosed Wombat

In this video, a hairy-nosed wombat explains what life on earth should be like.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=l5i714FbDJw

The Solutions Journal

Solutions for a sustainable and desirable future.

www.thesolutionsjournal.com/

Yes! Magazine

“*YES! Magazine* reframes the biggest problems of our time in terms of their solutions. Online and in print, we outline a path forward with in-depth analysis, tools for citizen engagement, and stories about real people working for a better world.”

www.yesmagazine.org/



What is Gross National Happiness?

Gross National Happiness is explained in 3 minutes by Morten Sondergaard.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Zqdqa4YNvI

Curriculum

Facing the Future: *Buy, Use, Toss? A Closer Look at the Things We Buy* (free download)

“This two-week unit provides multiple entry points to help students think critically about consumption, while building math, science, and civil discourse skills.”

<https://www.facingthefuture.org/products/buy-use-toss-a-closer-look-at-the-things-we-buy?variant=13195327491>

Lesson 1: Garbology

Lesson 2: Mapping the Impact (*Mapping and networking our varied impacts on the planet*)

Lesson 3: Drilling down to Sustainability (*Exploring what sustainability really means*)

Lesson 4: The Cost of Production

Lesson 5: On the Road to Retail (*Analyzing distribution and a product’s externalities*)

Lesson 6: Why Buy? (*Considering values and the effects of advertising*)

Lesson 7: Defining Happiness (*What is the “good life?”*)

Lesson 8: It’s a Dirty Job (*Designing a waste management plan*)

Lesson 9: A System Redesign (*Brainstorming a more sustainable economy*)

Lesson 10: Analyzing the Message (*Critically analyzing the Story of Stuff*)

Understanding Sustainability: Two-Week Unit for Social Studies Grades 9–12

(downloadable PDF)

Understanding Sustainability is an activity-based curriculum unit that contains eight engaging and inspiring lessons that help students build the connections among economy, history, democracy, and sustainability. Each lesson in the two-week unit is aligned with the National Council for the Social Studies curriculum standards for easy classroom integration.

www.facingthefuture.org/Curriculum/UnderstandingSustainabilityGrades912/tabid/461/Default.aspx



Sightline Institute—Secret Lives of Everyday Things curriculum guide (2000)

This curriculum package was developed by NEW BC, a non-profit organization based in Victoria, British Columbia, to accompany a 1997 book by Northwest Environment Watch (now Sightline Institute) called *Stuff: The Secret Lives of Everyday Things*. An entire web of connections and impacts is revealed behind those everyday items we normally don't even think about. In learning about their stuff, students will also explore new ways of looking at their world and make links among the environment, their society, and themselves.

www.sightline.org/research_item/stuff/

Multimedia

The Sustainability Project / 7th Generation Initiative

An educational, non-profit organization that exists to collect, study, develop, and teach ideas, information, technologies, and customs that promote green values and lead toward a sustainable future.

www.sustainwellbeing.net/

The Story of Stuff

The Story of Stuff has fostered a community of over a million change-makers worldwide who are working to build a healthy and just planet. This site provides resources that explain how our “stuff” is produced, distributed, disposed of, etc., including our cosmetics, electronics, and bottled water. It also provides an overview and cap and trade, as well as additional information, downloads, activity guides, annotated scripts, FAQs, etc.

<http://storyofstuff.org/>

Discussion Guide:

https://www.nwf.org/~media/PDFs/Eco-schools/annie_leonard_discussion_guide.ashx

Teaching Tools:

<http://storyofstuff.org/resources/>

Consumerism! The Musical

A short satire/song on excessive consumption.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=hGaOQKJik-s

The Good Consumer

A short film on expectations around consumption.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_ut93YYZu8&feature=related



Rachel Botsman

In *The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*, Rachel Botsman “charts the growth of a movement that is transforming the way we consume and contribute.”

<https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/event-videos/2011/02/the-rise-of-collaborative-consumption/>

David Harvey

“In *RSA Animate: Crisis of Capitalism*, Harvey asks if it is time to look beyond capitalism, towards a new social order that would allow us to live within a responsible, just and humane system.”

<https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/rsa-animate/2010/06/rsa-animate---crisis-of-capitalism/>

David Biello.

“So are the world’s environmental ills really a result of the burgeoning number of humans on the planet—predicted to reach at least nine billion people by 2050? Or is it more due to the fact that although the human population has doubled in the past 50 years, we have increased our use of resources fourfold?”

<http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/environmental-ills-its-consumerism-stupid/>

Chris Jordan

His art explores the phenomenon of American consumerism.

<http://chrisjordan.com/gallery/camel/#gastrolith>

Edward Burtynsky

Edward Burtynsky’s original photography depicts global industrial landscapes.

www.edwardburtynsky.com/

Films

The Age of Stupid

“*The Age of Stupid* stars Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite as a man living in the devastated future world of 2055, looking back at old footage from our time and asking: why didn’t we stop climate change when we had the chance?”

www.spannerfilms.net/films/ageofstupid

The Corporation

“Provoking, witty, stylish and sweepingly informative, *The Corporation* explores the nature and spectacular rise of the dominant institution of our time.”

www.thecorporation.com/



What Would Jesus Buy?

“An examination of the commercialization of Christmas in America while following Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping Gospel Choir on a cross-country mission to save Christmas from the Shopocalypse (the end of humankind from consumerism, over-consumption and the fires of eternal debt). The film also delves into issues such as the role sweatshops play in America’s mass consumerism and big-box culture.”

<https://freedocumentaries.org/documentary/what-would-jesus-buy>

The Greed Game

“As the credit crunch bites and a global economic crisis threatens, Robert Peston reveals how the super-rich have made their fortunes, and the rest of us are picking up the bill.”

<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/super-rich-greed-game/>

The 11th Hour

“With contributions from over 50 politicians, scientists, and environmental activists, including former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, physicist Stephen Hawking, Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, and journalist Armand Betscher, and Paul Hawken, the film documents the grave problems facing the planet’s life systems. Global warming, deforestation, mass species extinction, and depletion of the oceans’ habitats are all addressed. The film’s premise is that the future of humanity is in jeopardy.”

<https://freedocumentaries.org/documentary/the-11th-hour>

The Cost of a Coke

This documentary takes a critical look at Coca-Cola and the actions it has taken to become the world’s most popular soda.

<http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/the-cost-of-a-coke/>

Money as Debt: International Bankers Own the World and This is How

“This highly informative and easy to understand film covers just about everything that isn’t taught in school regarding the corrupt banking system. It explains how these institutions get away with robbing the unsuspecting public by creating monetary policies designed to enslave society, while keeping the system in a perpetual state of rising debt.”

<https://freedocumentaries.org/documentary/money-as-debt-international-bankers-own-the-world-and-this-is-how>



Online Lessons

Group Activities from the Story of Stuff

“The Story of Stuff is a 20-minute film that takes viewers on a provocative and eye-opening tour of the real costs of our consumer driven culture—from resource extraction to iPod incineration.”

www.agnt.org/earth/group_activities.pdf

Facing the Future: Engaging Students through Global Issues – Activity-Based Lessons and Action Projects

“Motivate students to take creative action in their local and global communities. *Engaging Students through Global Issues* is an activity-based lesson book that bridges social studies, science, and environmental studies to help students make connections between complex global issues and sustainable solutions.”

<https://www.facingthefuture.org/products/engaging-students-through-global-issues-activity-based-lessons-and-action-projects?variant=13633649219>

Lesson 4: Making Global Connections (*Connect issues using everyday materials.*)

Lesson 7: Systems are Dynamic (*Explore dynamic systems through movement.*)

Lesson 12: Watch Where You Step! (*Create a web diagram of all the resources they use in their everyday lives and the mark or “footprint” this consumption leaves on the environment.*)

Lesson 22: Livin’ the Good Life? (*Develop indicators to measure quality of life and conduct a survey of peers and adults to obtain data for their indicators.*)

Lesson 38: Metaphors for the Future (*Explore world views and mental models.*)

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