

## Lesson One: Simple Bag

**Skill Level:** Grades 6-8

**Learner Outcomes:**

Youth will be able describe the value of upcycling and understand the basics of how to operate a sewing machine.

**Education Standard(s):**

*SP.PK12.US.9.2a: Select and engage in volunteer activities in school or community, such as recycling, litter patrol, or collecting money for a charity.*

*VA.68.F.1.1: Use non-traditional thinking and various techniques to create two-, three-, and/or four-dimensional artworks.*

*VA.68.C.1.1: Apply a range of interests and contextual connections to influence the art-making and self-reflection processes.*

*VA.68.S.3.3: Demonstrate understanding of safety protocols for media, tools, processes, and techniques.*

**Success Indicator:**

*Students will sew their own bags from used t-shirts and share the importance of upcycling during group reflection*

**Life Skill(s):**

*Environmental stewardship; sewing*

**Tags:**

*SPIN, sewing, environment*

**Time Needed:**

*1 hour*

**Materials List:**

*cotton t-shirt, each youth brings their own scissors  
sewing machine with thread  
paper plate*

**Introductory question:**

*What is upcycling and why is it important?*



**Introduction to Sew Grateful SPIN Club:**

*This SPIN club will transform old t-shirts into new items, while learning basic sewing skills.*

*The need to find alternative ways to deal with our waste has never been greater – across the United States we throw a staggering amount of stuff into our landfills. Even if you look just at clothing and textiles, we throw 12.8 million tons away every year.*

*Upcycling is becoming increasingly popular among groups and individuals concerned about climate change. Recycling is great, but it requires energy and resources to collect, sort and process unwanted items and waste. Upcycling is an even greener way of recycling – you find a new purpose for your unwanted items before you chuck them away. It's all about taking disposable things and creating something useful from them.*

**Did you know?**

Plastic shopping bags are typically used less than 30 minutes and only 1 % are recycled. The average American adult uses approximately 288 bags a year, or 22,000\* in an average lifetime.

**Learn More**

Creative Upcycling Blog:  
<http://creativeupcycling.blogspot.com/>

Upcycling Ideas and Inspiration:  
<http://www.upcyclethat.com/>

Free Used Item Exchange:  
<http://yerdle.com>



**Lesson:**

1. Gather the group around one sewing machine and identify parts of the machine. Be sure to discuss the function of each of the parts.
2. While the group watches, thread the machine, narrating the steps as you go along (OR you might ask a youth to thread the machine as you narrate the steps.) Be sure to name the parts that the thread goes through and around. Answer any questions the youth may have.
3. Have the youth break into groups of two or three and gather around their own machines. Call out a part of the machine that you previously identified. Instruct the groups to point to the part on their machines. Check to see if they have identified the part correctly. Review all parts in this manner.
4. Gather the participants around one of the sewing machines. Identify the bobbin case, the bobbin and show the proper placing of the bobbin. Ask one youth to follow the steps as you explain how to fill the bobbin and bring the bobbin thread up. Have the youth return to their machines and fill the bobbin, assisting as needed. Youth who complete the task first can help the others. Discuss common mistakes and the problems that will occur if this is not done correctly.
5. Now youth can also thread their own machines, with help as necessary.
6. Gather the group around one machine to review how to sew with a machine:
  - a) Raise the pressure foot and needle.
  - b) Position the fabric.
  - c) Lower needle into fabric using the hand wheel.
  - d) Lower the pressure foot.
  - e) Position hands to hold and guide the fabric.
  - f) Guide fabric and press foot control gently.
  - g) At the end of seam, release foot control and bring needle up by turning hand wheel until the take-up lever is in the highest position.
  - h) Lift pressure foot and pull until thread is about three inches long.
  - i) Clip thread and remove fabric.
7. Explain and demonstrate how to secure the ends of a seam by backstitching:

To backstitch, you use the reverse stitch. To backstitch at the beginning of a seam, place the needle in  $\frac{1}{4}$  in from the edge of the fabric, stitch back three stitches, release and stitch seam. To backstitch at the end of seam, stitch to end of seam and reverse stitch three stitches.
8. Share these tips:
  - a) Remove pins before stitching across them – you can break a needle or create a burr on the needle that will cause pulls in the fabric.
  - b) Never pull the fabric – guide it.
  - c) Never have hands close to the needle when holding fabric.
9. Have youth return to their machines to practice on scrap fabric. Assist as needed.



### Practice Activity

1. Start by smoothing the t-shirt flat on a table. Use scissors to cut and remove the sleeves---make sure you leave the seam in place---this keeps your tote strong!



2. Position a plate about halfway over the neck opening of the shirt. Trace the plate with your pencil or pen. This will be your cutting line to create the opening for your tote bag. Cut along the traced line with the scissors.



3. Turn your shirt inside out and match up the bottom edges of the t-shirt together. Pin the bottom of the t-shirt, along the hem, closed.



4. Use the sewing machine to sew the bottom of T-shirt hem closed. Reinforce your tote bag by sewing over this seam a second time! As a variation you may consider adding a "gusset" at the bottom corners- as several commenters have- that's where you sew across the corner at a right angle so that the bottom of the bag has more depth and is not just flat---it "boxes" the corners of the tote bag.



5. Turn your shirt back out, with the front side out, and you're done. It's that simple!

*Now your new T-shirt Bag is ready for groceries or toys, handmade by YOU!*

### Glossary Words

**Upcycle:** to reuse discarded objects or material in such a way as to create a product of a higher quality or value than the original

**Seam:** the joining two fabric edges

**Backstitching:** taking short backward stitches to secure a line of stitching

**Gusset:** a piece of material sewn into a garment to strengthen or enlarge a part of it

### News

Values as part of environmental education:  
[http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/value\\_s\\_as\\_part\\_of\\_environmental\\_education](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/value_s_as_part_of_environmental_education)



**TALK IT OVER:**

Share. . . .

*Name the parts of a sewing machine.*

*Describe what you did to thread the machine.*

*Describe the steps you followed to fill the bobbin.*

*What are some of the problems that will occur if threading is not done correctly.*

*Was it hard to control the sewing machine? What made sewing easier?*

*What is meant by the phrase 'reduce, reuse and recycle'?*

*Define each of the words and what they mean to you.*

Reflect. . .

*Where do your old things go?*

*What is a landfill?*

*What do you recycle or reuse at home and at school?*

*What is upcycling?*

*Should upcycling be added to the 'refuse, reduce, reuse and recycle' phrase? Explain.*

*How could you reuse the following objects? A milk carton, a cardboard box, glass jars.*

Generalize. . . .

*Why is it important to reduce, reuse and recycle?*

*What is the best way to reduce landfill?*

Apply. .

*Practice sewing more at home.*

*Go online to explore more upcycling projects. Make some of your own at home.*

**References**

<http://www.instructables.com/id/FASTEST-RECYCLED-T-SHIRT-TOTE-BAG/>

<http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/conserve/materials/textiles.htm>

<http://peanc.org/>

<http://worldwearproject.com/about-us/global-responsibility>

## Lesson Two: Throw Pillows

**Skill Level:** Grades 6-8

**Learner Outcomes:**

Youth will learn about the production of cotton in the United States. Youth will practice hand stitches and machine stitching and control.

**Education Standard(s):**

VA.68.S.3: Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.

SS.6.E.1.: Understand the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of a market economy.

**Success Indicator:**

Youth will discuss the steps in cotton production. They will sew a pillow cover from upcycled t-shirts.

**Life Skill(s):**

Economics, hand and machine sewing

**Tags:** SPIN, sewing, economics

**Time Needed:** 1 hour

**Materials List:**

T-shirt  
Throw pillow  
Measuring tape  
Scissors  
Washable fabric marker  
Pins and pin cushion  
Sewing machine  
Needle and thread

**Introductory question:** Who is wearing cotton today?



**Introduction:**

Sewing opens up a world of opportunities and possibilities for expressing your creative side. Whether sewing for practical reasons, or as an art form, it should always be a rewarding, positive experience. Confidence comes from experience.

This lesson is designed to follow up on the basics learned in lesson one. Youth will sew throw pillows made from upcycled old t-shirts. The lesson will include cutting, pinning, pivoting, seam finishing, hemming, and more!

Additionally, in this lesson, youth will learn about cotton production in the United States and in Florida. They will be encouraged to think about the potential benefits of sewing with cotton produced in our local communities.

**Did you know?**

The U.S. cotton industry produces 20% of the world's cotton.

**Learn More**

Why should you learn to sew?

<http://www.sewcountrychick.com/why-should-you-learn-to-sew/>

The art of sewing:  
<http://www.kidsvt.com/vermont/the-art-of-sewing/Content?oid=2129654>

Why buy locally owned:  
<http://sustainableconnections.org/thinklocal/why>



## **Lesson**

### **Opening Activity:**

Have students look at each other's shirt tags and count how many are wearing cotton shirts. Show students other things made from cotton such as cotton balls, shoe strings, Q-Tips etc. Have students name other products made from cotton.

### **Explain:**

Cotton continues to be the basic resource for thousands of useful products manufactured in the U.S. and overseas. U.S. textile manufacturers use an annual average of 7.6 million bales of cotton. A bale is about 500 pounds of cotton. More than half of this quantity (57%) goes into apparel, 36% into home furnishings and 7% into industrial products.

Today's modern cotton production system provides many benefits. Healthy rural economies are based on stable farm income, and cotton yields and prices are often among the healthiest of all field crops, vegetable or fruit. The value of cotton and its system of production, harvesting and ginning provides countless jobs for mechanics, distributors of farm machinery, consultants, crop processors and people in other support services.

All of the cotton acreage in Florida is in the Panhandle area. Tallahassee was at one time considered the capital of the Cotton Belt; however, by 1975, there were only 4,000 acres in the state devoted to cotton production due to a host of factors, including pests like the boll weevil and bollworm. But then, new technology and new insecticides came on the market and caused a shift once again. In the late 1980s the boll weevil eradication program basically eliminated the pest. This opened the market back up. By 1995 the state was up to 110,000 acres of cotton.

### **Activity:**

Production Steps Scramble: Print or write the following steps on index cards. Consider adding pictures of each step. Pin the cards in random order onto a bulletin board and ask the youth to place the following sentences in the correct order:

- Cotton flower develops into a boll, which opens to form a fluffy lock.
- When all the bolls have matured the cotton locks are harvested using a cotton stripper.
- Cotton is stored in the field in large modules.
- The modules are transported to the cotton gin.
- At the gin revolving circular saws separate the cotton lint from the seed.
- The lint is pressed into 480 pound bales.
- The bales are delivered to a textile mill where the cotton is cleaned, washed and spun into yarn.
- Large looms weave the yarn into cloth.
- The cloth is made into jeans, shirts, towels and other cotton products we use every day.

### **Optional:**

Contact your County Extension Agent or County Farm Bureau for a farmer in the area who grows cotton and have him visit and speak to the class.

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*Foundation for the Gator Nation: An Equal Opportunity Employer*



**Sewing Activity:**

1. Measure the throw pillow, adding about an inch and a half over the dimensions of the pillow for the seams, and create a pattern out of newspaper.



2. Trace the pattern onto a t-shirt, making sure the image or logo is centered on the pattern.



3. Cut carefully! If you hold the t-shirt together, you can cut both sides at once and save yourself a step. However, if you like an image on the back of the t-shirt also, you may want to cut it separately to center it.



4. Turn the fabric so that the "wrong" side is facing out on both sides; pin the sides of the pillow together on three sides, about 1/2-inch from the edge of the t-shirt fabric.



5. Sew three sides of the pillow, leaving one side open that is wide enough to stuff the throw pillow into.



6. Trim the corners and then turn the pillow "right" side out.



7. Slip the t-shirt over the pillow, smooth it out, and sew up the last side by hand.



**Glossary Words**

**Economy:** the wealth and resources of a country or region, especially in terms of the production and consumption of goods and services.

**Right side of fabric:** the side of the fabric that faces out when you see the item or wear the garment

**Wrong side:** the side of the fabric that you do not see in a finished item

**News**

"Overdressed" Book Review:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/books/review/overdressed-by-elizabeth-cline.html?smid=pl-share>



**TALK IT OVER:**

Share. . .

*What are the steps in cotton production?*

*Why did cotton production decline in Florida and why has it increased since the 1990s?*

Reflect. . .

*Have you ever thought about where your clothes come from? Did you think they might have started on a farm?*

*Besides cotton, what other types of fabrics do you know of?*

Generalize. . .

*How does a community benefit by growing cotton?*

*Why might it be important to sew with cotton created in your local community?*

Apply. . .

*Look online to find companies that make clothing using cotton grown in the United States.*

*Make more pillow covers at home for you and your friends.*

*Show and tell a friend how to make one of your projects.*

**References**

<http://www.beagsmart.org/sites/default/files/Cotton.pdf>

<http://www.wcjb.com/local-news-state-news/2014/01/north-central-florida-farmers-seeing-profits-cotton>

<https://www.cotton.org/pubs/cottoncounts/fieldtofabric/economics.cfm>

## Lesson Three: Apron

**Skill Level:** *Grades 6-8*

**Learner Outcomes:**

*Youth will understand some ethical challenges associated with the international textile industry and practice machine sewing.*

**Education Standard(s):**

*VA.68.S.3: Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.*

*SS.6.E.1.: Understand the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of a market economy.*

**Success Indicator:**

*Youth will discuss how socially responsibility applies to the textile industry. Youth will sew their own apron.*

**Life Skill(s):**

*Sewing; economics*

**Tags:**

*SPIN, sewing, economics*

**Time Needed:**

*1 hour*

**Materials List:**

*Used t-shirts  
Scissors  
Pins and pin cushion  
Sewing machine and thread*

**Introductory question:** *Where did your clothes come from?*



**Introduction:**

*Why do our clothes come from so far away? To make a single finished product, there are often many different components. For example, a suit is comprised of thread, buttons, a zipper, etc. Discuss with the youth the idea that certain products are found in greater abundance in certain areas of the world. In addition, labor to manufacture products may be cheaper in some areas of the world than in other places. Most companies want to make the best products they can for the least amount of money. Therefore, they will ship materials from different parts of the world to make their final finished product.*

**Did you know?**

98 percent of the clothing purchased in the United States is imported from abroad. Just two percent of clothing bought in this country is manufactured on U.S. soil.

**Learn More**

Clothing “Made in America”: Should US. Manufacture More Clothes:  
<http://abcnews.go.com/Business/MadeInAmerica/made-in-america-clothes-clothing-made-usa/story?id=13108258>

Garment Worker Center:  
<http://garmentworkercenter.org/about/>

Waging a Living:  
<http://www.pbs.org/pov/wagingaliving/>



**Lesson (Adapted from the New York Times Learning Network)**

Ask youth to take a few moments to look at the labels on their clothing. Where was their clothing made? Write the names of the countries on the board, and keep track of how many times a country is named.

Ask youth: What do you notice about where our clothing is made? Are you surprised? Why do you think so much of our clothing is made in these countries, instead of in the United States?

Bangladesh's garment industry is a global powerhouse — second only to China in the value of apparel exports. The industry is worth \$18 billion, and accounts for 80 percent of Bangladesh's total export earnings. It employs more than 3.2 million workers, 80 percent of whom are women. Yet workers earn as little as \$37 a month, the country's minimum wage, and reports of unpaid wages and abusive bosses are common. Yet when workers protest, they can face riot police with tear gas and rubber bullets. Labor organizers can face intimidation and torture.

But the not-so-secret formula to Bangladesh's thriving garment industry is that the country offers the world's lowest wages and lowest cost of production for clothing brands. Will shoppers at H&M or Walmart be willing to pay more to ensure that the workers who make their clothing earn a decent wage? Will companies flock elsewhere if doing business in Bangladesh gets more expensive? And would an exodus of foreign capital and jobs harm the country in the long run, now that the garment industry has helped raise living standards for millions of Bangladeshis?

- What responsibility do companies have to ensure the health and safety of the workers who manufacture the clothing they sell?
- Which response is better: the Walt Disney Company's decision to stop manufacturing in Bangladesh or Loblaws' decision to stay in Bangladesh and push for tougher safety standards? Why?
- Do we as consumers have any responsibility for the workers in other countries who make our clothing? If yes, how do we exercise that responsibility? What should or can we do?

Unfair labor conditions do not only exist outside of the United States. In 2001, garment workers from different factories in Los Angeles joined forces with the Garment Worker Center to file wage claims against retailer Forever 21, who subcontracted with manufacturers to produce inventory for its retail shops. Forever 21 said it wasn't responsible for the workers' complaints because the workers were employees of the subcontractors, and not Forever 21. Through unity and persistence, the workers were able to eventually negotiate a labor settlement with Forever 21 that improved labor conditions.

Such struggles for better working conditions are not new in the United States. The term "sweatshop" was coined in the late 1800s to describe factories with poor working conditions, low wages, long hours and the supervisor's arbitrary power over the workers. With the help of legislation and union organizing, working conditions in the garment industry have gradually improved. Sweatshop conditions continue to exist in many U.S. factories, however, indicating that there is still progress to be made.



### Sewing Activity

1. Cut the front design out in a large rectangle from sleeve inseam to sleeve inseam, and from under the neck to the bottom of the shirt:



2. Fold the bottom of the shirt up until it's right under the design, then fold the hem down for a more finished look. Sew into four even sections, with the end section sewn into two for spoon slots.



3. Using the back of your shirt, cut 6 strips, 2.5" x 24"



4. Then sew three strips together into one, and repeat for the other three.



5. Put them on top of each other with wrong sides facing and seams matched, pin, and stitch all the way around to make your apron waistband/ties.



6. Then pin your apron skirt to the back in the center, and sew on!



All done!

### Glossary Words

**Textile:** cloth or woven material

**Sweatshop:** a factory or workshop, especially in the clothing industry, where manual workers are employed at very low wages for long hours and under poor conditions

**Inseam:** an inside or inner seam of a garment

### News

A Factory Burns in China:  
<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/evanosnos/2013/06/a-factory-burns-in-china.html>



**TALK IT OVER:**

Share. . . .

*What does it mean when someone is described as a responsible person?*

*How does it make you feel or what do you think when someone lets you down?*

Reflect. . .

*What are some of the responsibilities youth your age have?*

*What are some reasons you may want to be considered a responsible person?*

Generalize. . . .

*Why should we worry about being socially responsible?*

*What would happen if people were not socially responsible? To the environment? To other people?*

Apply. . .

*Encourage youth to develop a social action project such as letter writing, protesting, testifying, raising money or working at a local organization to help a group of people. Making the leap from investigation to action can be a powerful experience for young people.*

**References**

<http://www.rufflesandstuff.com/2010/04/double-apron-day-easy-t-shirt-aprons.html>

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/05/14/corporate-irresponsibility-fashions-hidden-cost-in-bangladeshs-garment-industry/>

[www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org)

[www.responsibilityproject.com](http://www.responsibilityproject.com)

## Lesson Four: Memory Scarf

**Skill Level:** *Grades 6-8*

**Learner Outcomes:**

*Youth will develop an understanding of the significance of fair trade products. Youth will continue to develop machine sewing skills.*

**Education Standard(s):**

*VA.68.S.3: Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.*

*SS.6.E.1.: Understand the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of a market economy.*

**Success Indicator:**

*Youth will define fair trade and its relevance to the textile industry. Youth will sew their own scarf from several upcycled t-shirts.*

**Life Skill(s):** *Sewing, economics, social responsibility*

**Tags:** *SPIN, sewing, economics*

**Time Needed:** *1 hour*

**Materials List:**

*Several t-shirts per youth (min of 6)  
Scissors  
Tape measure  
Paper to use for template  
Sewing marker or pen  
Sewing machine  
Needle and thread*

**Introductory question:** *What is fair trade?*



**Introduction:**

*When clothes are produced cheaply, it usually means the people making these clothes are working in bad conditions and being paid very little money. In some case, these workers may be children as young as ten, picking cotton or making the clothes.*

*It's up to us to become more aware and recognize that we can make a difference.*

**Did you know?**

UNICEF believes that 1 in 6 children between 5 and 14 have to work.

1.4 billion people in the world live on less than \$1.25 a day.

**Learn More**

Fair Trade:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/citizen/international/global/animation.shtml>

A Bold Experiment in Ethical Clothing:

<http://www.thecanongroup.com/docs/Apparel%20Pilot%20Report.pdf>

Child Labor:

[http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp/NLC\\_child\\_labor.html](http://www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp/NLC_child_labor.html)



## Lesson

Write the word “fair” on a piece of chart paper. Ask youth the following questions and write responses on the chart paper:

- What do you think fair means? (Youth should develop a definition of “fair” to be recorded on the chart paper. Encourage the understanding that fair is (1) something right and just and (2) something that does not unjustly favor one person over another.)
- What are other ways to say fair?
- What is the opposite of fair? (unfair/not fair)
- Can you share a story of something that happened to you that you thought was unfair? How did that make you feel?

Write the word “trade” on a piece of chart paper. Ask the youth and write responses on chart paper:

- What do you think trade means?
- What is a trade? (Encourage the understanding that “trade” is an exchange of one thing for another.)

Show youth five dimes. Tell the youth you need to trade or exchange the dimes for quarters because you are playing an arcade game that takes only quarters. Ask:

- How many quarters should I get for my dimes?
- What would be a fair trade?
- What if I were given one quarter? Would that be a fair trade or an unfair trade? Why?

Tell youth that the coin exchanges were one example of a trade. Ask youth, what was a “fair trade” in the coin exchanges performed? (Encourage the understanding that the equal coin trades during the lesson are one example of a fair trade, because they are equal.)

Demonstrate some trades/exchanges using objects. For example, ask one student if they would trade an apple in their lunchbox for an orange. Ask the youth:

- If we trade one thing for a completely different thing, how do we know if that trade is fair?
- If we trade money for a different thing, how do we know if that trade is fair?

Refer youth to the chart paper with their definition of fairness. Encourage the understanding that, if you are exchanging one thing for a different thing or money for a thing, whether a trade is fair depends on whether we think it is the right thing to do and whether it is just, as in the scenarios.

Ask youth and write responses on a piece of chart paper:

- What do you think is a fair trade?



**Sewing Activity:**

1. Create an 11-inch (or different size) square template and cut panels out of the front and backs of the shirts.



2. Pin the panels right sides together and sew across their widths to attach them in a patchwork fashion.



3. Once the panels are all sewn together, press the seams flat.
4. Do the same with the panels from the backs of the shirts to create the backside of the scarf (alternating the pattern of the shirt fabric from the front to the back allows you not to worry so much about things matching up perfectly).
5. Stitch the scarf right sides together, leaving an opening on one end for turning.
6. Trim excess selvage.



7. Turn the scarf right side out and edge-stitch the entire scarf (optional), closing the opening on the end.

**Glossary Words**

**Minimum wage:** established by federal, state and local government law sets the lowest wage an employer may legally pay to workers

**Living wage:** earnings an individual or a family needs to support a decent standard of living

**Selvage:** the edge produced on fabric

**News**  
<http://umaine.edu/tanglewood/blog/2011/11/03/extension-4-h-program-inspires-students-sustainability-projects/>



**TALK IT OVER:**

Share. . .

*Have you (or your family) ever purchased fair trade items before? Do you know what the fair trade logo looks like?*

Reflect. . .

*Does it matter from where you buy your clothes?  
How do your shopping habits affect the environment and working conditions of people around the world?*

Generalize. . .

*Is fair trade useful and is it important for everybody?  
What is more important: worker's rights or lower consumer costs? Why?*

Apply. .

*Write a newspaper article explaining why we should reuse our clothes.  
Advertise fair trade items by designing posters letting other youth know what fair trade is all about.*

**References**

[http://makezine.com/craft/t-shirt\\_memory\\_scarf/](http://makezine.com/craft/t-shirt_memory_scarf/)

<http://www.globalexchange.org/fairtrade/cocoa/classroom>

<http://www.teensturninggreen.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/pgc-fairtrade-curriculum-v2a.pdf>

## Lesson Five: Cinch Sack

**Skill Level:** *Grades 6-8*

**Learner Outcomes:**

*Youth will understand the concept of slow fashion and become more adept at machine sewing.*

**Education Standard(s):**

*VA.68.S.3: Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.*

*SS.6.E.1.: Understand the fundamental concepts relevant to the development of a market economy.*

**Success Indicator:**

*Youth will be able to discuss society's constant push to buy more and identify strategies for environmentally-responsible consumption. Youth will sew their own cinch bags.*

**Life Skill(s):** *sewing; social responsibility*

**Tags:** *SPIN; sewing; economics*

**Time Needed:** *1 hour*

**Materials List:**

*Chart paper  
2 t-shirts per youth  
Scissors  
Sewing machine and thread*

**Introductory question:** *What is slow fashion?*



**Introduction:**

*Today's mainstream fashion industry relies on globalized mass production where garments are transformed from the design stage to the retail floor in only a few weeks. With retailers selling the latest fashion trends at very low prices, consumers are easily swayed to purchase more than they need. The fast-fashion has spoiled our senses in judging what to buy, let alone what to wear. Fashion knock-offs made by mass-production companies and with material such as polyester instead of natural fabrics cost peanuts compared with the originals and barely last a season if worn daily and machine washed. This is the vicious circle in which we all live in: buy cheap, throw it away after a season, buy more.*

**Did you know?**

Seventy percent of Americans visit malls each week, more than attend churches or synagogues. On average, Americans shop six hours a week and spend only 40 minutes playing with their children.

**Learn More**

The Slow Fashion Movement:  
<http://www.notjustalabel.com/editorial/the-slow-fashion-movement>

Slow Fashioned:  
<http://www.slowfashioned.com/about>

One Dress Protest:  
<http://onedressprotest.com/2011/01/slow-it-down-fast-fashion-vs-slow-fashion/>



**Lesson (adapted from the No Impact Man Project)**

Register here to access the video clips needed for this lesson: <http://noimpactproject.org/educators-middle-high-school-environment-curriculum-html/>

This lesson plan features the film and book from the project, No Impact Man, which follows a family in New York City as they examine how they live, exchange old habits for more environmentally-friendly ones, and discover in the process that such changes actually make them happier and healthier. This lesson is designed to help students examine their consumption habits and consider strategies for acquiring necessities in ways that do less harm to the environment.

1. Ask students to share what brings them the most happiness during celebrations like birthdays, holidays, etc. Lead a brief discussion that seeks to determine whether the students' happiness at these times comes from receiving gifts (acquiring "stuff") or to some other factor like time with loved ones, etc. What brings us the greatest happiness?
2. Tell students that you are going to show them a brief video clip that will introduce them to the Beavan family of New York City, who set out on a radical experiment they called No Impact Man, where they exchanged old habits for more environmentally-friendly ones over the course of a year. Focus student viewing by having them take notes on the types of lifestyle changes the family decided to make. Then show the video "Intro to the Project" (length 4:30).

The clip begins at 2:12 with a scene of traffic in New York City and ends at 6:58 when the TV is being loaded on to a truck. To access this video clip, please find the link to it in the e-mail you received when you registered.

3. Explain that getting rid of the TV was Michelle's idea.

4. Discuss:

- What problems did Michelle and Colin think the TV caused for them?
- Do students think that TV causes similar problems in their own lives? Why or why not?
- What role does advertising play in our society?

The combined marketing budget of companies who advertise to kids is \$17 billion. Where have students already encountered advertising today before coming to class? (Possible answers might include ads on TV, radio, Internet, buses, vending machines at school, logo T-shirts on other students, sponsored textbook covers, etc.) Emphasize the prevalence of advertising and the consistent message to spend money on products that may or may not be needed.

5. Explain that as part of the No Impact experiment, Colin and Michelle committed themselves to not buying anything new throughout the year, except for food. The idea was that by reducing their consumption of goods, they wouldn't be asking industry to tap environmental resources and cause pollution to create and transport something they didn't really need. Colin and Michelle allowed themselves to buy used or recycled items from local sources, from Craigslist or thrift shops, or to get necessities for free using services like Freecycle. Putting secondhand items to good use also helped the environment because they were then diverted from the landfill. The Beavan's purpose wasn't to deny themselves things that they needed, but rather to avoid being wasteful and consuming things unnecessarily, just because advertisements told them that they should. The result was that they found they had more money, more time to have fun with family and friends, and a greater sense of gratitude for what they already had.



### Sewing Activity:

*This activity is designed to practice your sewing skills. The cinch sack is lined, making the t-shirt keep its shape and last longer. Everything to make the bag is from the shirts. No other materials are needed.*

- 1) Cut 2 pieces out of the t-shirt for the outside of the bag– 14" X 11" {this size can be adjusted to your needs}. Try to center the design in the middle of the rectangle. Don't worry about having finished edges on these. They don't need them.
- 2) Cut 2 additional pieces from the second shirt for the lining, ADDING 1" to the top edge of both pieces {this will be folded down on top of the outside to hold the ties, my size in the example would be 15" X 11"}—\* cut out with the finished hem on one side, this will come in handy when sewing the bag together to have this finished already.
- 3) Cut 2 strips 4" long out of the neck or sleeve hem– used as the loops at the bottom of the bag
- 4) Fold the strip in half and pin to the **side** of the outside piece — 1" from the bottom
- 5) Pin right sides together the front and back of the outside- Sew around the bag, leaving the top open
- 6) Repeat with the lining t-shirt (there won't be any loops to pin or sew)
- 7) Stuff the lining inside the outside bag, wrong sides will be facing
- 8) Match the side seams
- 9) Fold the extra 1" down, on top of the outside bag, Pin in place
- 10) Sew around the whole top, along the bottom edge of the folded hem..... leaving a 1/2" opening on either side of the bag for the tie opening.
- 11) Cut 1" wide ties X the length you need. If your shirt isn't large enough, sew the strips together end to end \*pull these ties and stretch them so they will naturally make a cord
- 12) Tie one end of the strap to the loop at the bottom of the bag
- 13) On the same side you tied the strap to, feed the tie through the hole, going all the way around the bag and coming back out of the same hole
- 14) Make any kind of adjustments to the strap and wear!

### Glossary Words

**Slow fashion:** an approach in which designers, buyers, retailers and consumers are more aware of the impacts of products on workers, communities and ecosystems.

### News

Forever 21:  
<http://www.businessinsider.com/the-secret-behind-forever-21s-dirt-cheap-clothing-2012-2>

Slow Fashion Movement:  
<http://www.today.com/style/slow-fashion-movement-your-closet-needs-cleanse-1D79559523>



**TALK IT OVER:**

Share. . .

*Are there any types of slow fashion that you participate in (sewing or altering your own clothes, knitting, buying hand-made items, shopping at second hand stores, etc).?*

Reflect. . .

*Do you buy things only when you need them?*

*How do you differentiate between what you "want" and what you "need?"*

Generalize. . .

*How might slow fashion impact the world?*

*How do you think having greater or fewer material goods has affected your own family?*

Apply. .

*Opposed to fast fashion? Consider going on a fashion fast: select 6 items of clothing from your wardrobe and pledge to wear only these every day for 6 weeks (or any timescale you choose).*

*Don't panic - you can have unlimited access to underwear, accessories and footwear. You're even allowed to use your sportswear or performance gear if you need to maintain a health regime. But your main items of clothing – dresses, trousers, tops, skirts, jumpers, shirts or cardigans - must remain the same throughout.*

*Get creative with your combining... Think what you really love. What defines you? You might surprise yourself with your choices but remember to be practical too!*

**References**

<http://www.patchworkposse.com/2014/04/2-t-shirt-cinch-sack-tutorial-earth-day-project/>

<http://noimpactproject.org/>

<http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org/>

[http://www.notjustalabel.com/editorial/the\\_slow\\_fashion\\_movement](http://www.notjustalabel.com/editorial/the_slow_fashion_movement)

## Lesson Six: Create your own design

**Skill Level:** *Grades 6-8*

**Learner Outcomes:**

*Youth will design their own pattern from a picture of the finished product and demonstrate creativity in sewing a simple project. Youth will explore how they may enter the local economy through crafting.*

**Education Standard(s):**

*VA.68.S.3: Through purposeful practice, artists learn to manage, master, and refine simple, then complex, skills and techniques.*

*VA.68.C.2.2: Evaluate artwork objectively during group assessment to determine areas for refinement.*

*VA.68.F.2.1: Investigate career opportunities available in the visual arts to determine requisite skills and qualifications for each field.*

**Success Indicator:**

*Youth will design and sew their own crafts. Youth will describe the connection between their interests and a possible career in crafting.*

**Life Skill(s):** *Sewing, creativity, design, career planning*

**Tags:** *SPIN; sewing; design; career planning*

**Time Needed:** *1 hour*

**Materials List:**

*t-shirts  
paper for patterns  
sewing machine and thread*

**Introductory question:** *How can you apply what we've learned in these past five "Sew Grateful" lessons to your life?*



**Introduction:**

*In this section, integrate all the information from the unit and encourage the understanding of the connection between the youth as consumers and how the choices they make about clothing can impact the world.*

*Slow Fashion focuses on using locally available materials, resources and human capital whenever possible. It supports the development of small-scale local businesses and individual garment-making skills. By relying on local materials and skills, the environmental footprint from fashion is reduced, local economies are strengthened, and communities are enhanced.*

**Did you know?**

Together, the apparel and textile industries are the largest industrial employer in the world. The apparel sector represents about half that global industry. More than 23.6 million workers are employed in the garment industry world-wide. Close to 75 percent are women.

**Virtual Fun**

T-Shirt Crafts:  
<http://wellingtonboot.hubpages.com/hub/altering-embellishing-decorating-t-shirts-fashion-sewing>

Careers in Sewing:  
<http://www.threads magazine.com/item/14212/advice-for-those-thinking-about-a-career-in-sewing-or-design>



**Lesson:**

Love creating hand-crafted gifts for friends and family? Have a good business sense for what the crafting market will demand - and pay you for - unique handmade works of art?

For those who have a talent for making clever and beautiful craft pieces, there are a variety of ways to sell your handmade crafts. A creative mind combined with a good work ethic generally holds great promise for any crafter. And, since many of them are necessarily self-employed, a natural head for business and a special feel for marketing and public relations are also absolutely essential for building a successful career.

In fact, a good business sense can be the determining factor in how much a craft artist can make. Success at displaying at craft fairs and studios (and increasingly in online crafts directory sites and galleries), is almost entirely dependent on your ability to show your work to best advantage. Photography skills and copywriting ability (or hiring someone else to do it for you) are also important for producing marketing brochures as well as online displays.

You can sell only what someone will buy, so the first step in going into business is to determine whether there's a big enough market for your wares. Consider how much you will need to charge to break even or, better yet, turn a profit? A small-business class can help you navigate the details.

Several great websites that help small businesses and hobbyists sell have popped up recently. For handmade items, [Etsy.com](http://Etsy.com) is probably the best known. It's easy to set up shop there, and the fees are nominal. For a more customized selling experience, consider setting up a storefront on [Big Cartel](http://Big Cartel), or apply to be a part of the curated site [Supermarket](http://Supermarket). You could also sell your products at markets and crafts fairs. With time, you'll discover the venues that work best for you. Then, the next time someone urges you to sell your wares, you'll be able to smile and say, "Oh, I do."

**Sewing Activity**

Choose a simple project that you think you can sew from upcycled t-shirts. Visualize the pattern pieces that make up the item. Construct your own item out of paper. Be creative in sewing your project. Remember this is your own project and it should turn out how you want it to. You can look online or in books for ideas.

**Did You Know?**

**Glossary Words**

**Tailor:** a person whose occupation is making clothes such as suits, pants, and jackets to fit individual customers

**News**

<http://www.businessspundit.com/10-kids-who-started-wildly-successful-companies/>

[http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2011/smallbusiness/1105/gallery.kid\\_entrepreneurs/](http://money.cnn.com/galleries/2011/smallbusiness/1105/gallery.kid_entrepreneurs/)



**TALK IT OVER:**

Share. . .

*What item did you choose to make? What were the steps you took to complete the project?*

*What leisure activities do you enjoy? Do you enjoy sewing?*

*Would you enjoy earning money through by sewing?*

Reflect. . .

*What did you learn through this project?*

*What did you do well? What do you need to work on?*

*If you wanted to pursue sewing as a career, what are some steps that you might take.*

Generalize. . .

*Identify some occupations which are considered leisure occupations. Examples might include: cruise ship jobs, golf course jobs, scouting jobs, etc.*

*What are some benefits of creating a career from the activities that you love to do?*

Apply. .

*Design and sell crafts to your local community.*

*Take a career assessment that can highlight some of your skills and talents and connect them to potential careers.*

**References**

<http://www.marthastewart.com/280487/dreamers-into-doers-how-to-turn-crafts-i>