



2020

ISSUE

FASHION

**A TALKING POINTS ENGLISH
LESSON FOR READING, SPEAKING,
WRITING & VOCABULARY**

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Introduction

What do you think of the fashion industry?

What kind of people work in this industry?

Do you buy any high-end fashion items? If so, what do you buy?

The Fashion Industry

Read the account below from fashion writer Carlos.

I have worked in the fashion industry for many years, more than thirty years now. And if there is one thing I have learned it is this – fashion is art.

Whenever I go to a fashion show, for me it is like visiting an art gallery.

I don't see shirts, trousers, dresses – I see garments.

The designers are the same as Rembrandt, Picasso, Da Vinci.

It is the perfect embodiment of all three parts of the artist – the hand of the artisan, the mind of the engineer and the heart of the artist.

I am not interested in clothes. Even the word – clothes – it sounds so depressing.

I don't wear clothes. I wear creations. I wear art.

If I want to see clothes, I can see those anywhere. I can go to the high street, to the mall and I can see people wearing clothes. Men in drab suits, women in ill-fitting skirts, young people in jeans designed for the masses.

Anytime I see these kinds of clothes and I just think they have no real purpose in the world. These kind of clothes are like going to a fast-food restaurant and eating a cheeseburger. Yes, you will eat something but what nutritional value will you get from it?

I don't expect ordinary people to understand fashion. It is a very private world and it is closed to the large majority of people. These people cannot be permitted to enter.

No, I am not sorry for saying that! Someone needs to say it!

Let me give you an example. Last week, I was a privileged guest at a show in Rome. We saw the new season of Luigi Rossi. His work is simply divine.

And the show was amazing.

At the end, people applauded. Why? Because we were all aware enough, educated enough and sophisticated enough to know that what we saw was art. It was culture. It was genius.

Only people who work in fashion can appreciate that. If you work in the fashion industry, you can see how much work, how much thought, has gone into creating these beautiful garments.

The perfect combination of love and intellect.

Rossi is not a mere craftsman, making shoes down some dingy alley.

No. He is an artist.

And as such he deserves respect. The same respect that we might give to Jackson Pollock or Matisse or Mondrian.

I write about the fashion that I witness before my eyes and I know that I am writing for the people who appreciate it as much as I do.

It is not for the likes of a housewife in suburbia. Or a teenager who buys their clothes online.

I write for people who view fashion as art.

Enjoy your high street fashion, your shopping mall chain-stores. These are the places that sell you the uniform that you all wear – your jeans and t-shirts in lurid colours. All mass-produced in a factory somewhere.

I do not like it and I refuse to wear it. To me, it is worthless trash.

This may sound arrogant but there are two separate worlds in which we live. One of mass consumerism. The other, a place of beauty and art.

I live in a world of beauty and art.

Reading Comprehension Questions

How long has Carlos worked in the fashion industry?

What does he do?

How does he regard fashion? What does he compare it to?

What word does he like to use for 'clothes'?

According to Carlos, what are the three parts of the artist?

What two places does Carlos say we can see clothes?

How does he compare clothes we may find in the shopping mall?

Does Carlos think anyone can enter the world of fashion?

Whose show did Carlos attend recently? Did he like it?

How did people react at the end of this show?

Who does Carlos think he is writing for? Who does he think he is not writing for?

What are the two worlds that Carlos talks of?

Essential Vocabulary

fashion industry	art gallery	garments
embodiment	artisan	engineer
depressing	creations	the high street
the mall	drab	ill-fitting
for the masses	purpose	fast-food
cheeseburger	nutritional	value
ordinary	majority	permitted
privileged	guest	the new season
divine	amazing	to applaud
aware	sophisticated	genius
appreciate	intellect	mere
craftsman	dingy alley	to deserve
respect	witness	the likes of
housewife	suburbia	online
chain-stores	uniform	lurid
mass-produced	factory	to refuse
worthless	trash	arrogant
mass consumerism		

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

Discussion Questions

What do you think of Carlos and his thoughts on fashion?

Is the fashion world really as Carlos says it is?

Is there a big difference between high-street fashion and designer fashion? What are the differences?

What artists does Carlos compare fashion to? Do you know anything about these artists?

Are fashion designers artists?

What kind of clothes can people buy in a high street store or a shopping mall?

Why does Carlos compare buying clothes in a mall to eating a cheeseburger? Explain what he means by this.

Do you think Carlos is being rude in his story? Why is he being like this do you think?

What do you think of designer brands and high-end fashion?

Do you like expensive designer brands? Why/why not?

Is there anything wrong with high street or shopping mall clothes stores? Do you buy clothes from these places?

Is the fashion industry pretentious? Or are the people that work in this industry all misunderstood artists?

Who buys these expensive designer brands? What kind of people are their customers?

Should clothes be worn as a fashion statement? Or for practical purposes?

Is fashion overrated?

What is in Fashion Today?

This is a group exercise. All the students should get into groups of four people.

Each group has to think of three things today that are very fashionable – things that are in fashion today.

The three items on their list can be clothing, shoes, hairstyles, or something else about people's appearance.

Once each group has three items, they should stand at the front of the class and make a short presentation.

Each person in their group should have a turn at speaking.

Debate: Fashion is Overrated and Stupid!

This is a debate activity.

Divide the whole class into two teams of equal size. Elect or choose a student to act as chairperson for the debate. This person is responsible for order during the debate and to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak.

These are the two teams:

Team A

You think fashion is overrated, stupid and pretentious. You think most of the clothes that the models wear could only ever be worn in a fashion show. No one could wear them in normal life.

The clothes are designed for stick-thin fashion models – not real people.

Fashion is not art!

Team B

You think fashion does have a place in the world. You think it is a modern-day artistic expression.

The clothes are not for everyday wear. But neither is Picasso – we cannot see his paintings in people's living rooms.

Fashion is art – but not for masses.

In your teams, you need to think of lines of argument to present in the debate.

Once you are ready, begin the debate!

Role Play: A New Jacket

This is a role play exercise.

There are two characters in this role play:

One

You have just bought a new jacket. It is made of fake fur, dyed green, and the buttons on the front of the jacket are in the shape of small smartphones. They light up as you move around in the jacket.

On the back are some words printed – Keep Your Distance!

You think this jacket is wonderful. And it cost you a lot of money – but you don't really want to say how much.

But it is YOUR jacket and you are happy with it.

It is no one else's business what you wear.

Two

You are the best friend of the person above.

You have met them for coffee in a very crowded cafe and your friend has just walked in wearing the ugliest jacket you have ever seen. Your friend is obsessed with all the latest fashion trends but this has gone too far.

You are too embarrassed to be seen in public with someone wearing such terrible clothes.

You want to tell your friend that they are wasting their money on stupid fashion items. They need to think about how they look in public!

Please be discreet when telling your friend!

In your pairs, take some time to prepare your role play.

When you are ready – show the class.

Writing

This is a writing exercise.

You are going to write a review of some clothes that you bought recently. You should write a positive review and say all the great things about this item of clothing.

If you can, include some pictures of this item of clothing in your review.

You can then present this to the class. Or submit to your teacher for feedback.

Teacher's Notes

Introduction

Go through all the questions and ask the students. Elicit as many responses as you can. If you are a foreign teacher working abroad, you might want to add one or two comments of your own about fashion in your country to try to get more responses from the students.

The Fashion Industry

Pick a few students to read through all the text. You might need to read through twice, but hopefully, the students are at the right level where they can pick up most of the meaning.

The speaker in this story, Carlos, has some very strong opinions about the fashion industry. You should ask the students for their opinions of him and how he talks about 'the masses'.

This could create some healthy debate in the classroom!

Reading Comprehension Questions

You can do this by going through all the questions as one group with all the class. Or you could put the students in small groups. Or let them do the whole exercise individually.

Essential Vocabulary

This is a list of vocabulary that may be very useful to your students.

You can do this for homework or as an in-class activity.

For either purpose, I would suggest doing the following:

- Look the word or phrase up in a dictionary
- Write down the meaning of the new word in the students' vocabulary notebook
- Think of a sentence using the new word

You could do this as a class activity for the first four or five words, then assign the rest as homework. Students often need to practice using a dictionary, so this could be a useful exercise for them.

Discussion Questions

This is a class activity.

Go round the class, and ask the students all the discussion questions one by one. Their answers and responses may encourage further or follow-up questions.

The point is for the students to become active in discussing what they have read and the vocabulary they have gained.

Group Exercise: What is in Fashion Today?

This is a group exercise for around four students in each group.

Each group should think of three current fashion trends in clothing, shoes or maybe hairstyles and then present these to the whole class.

Give each group some time to come up with their ideas and go around the class to assist where necessary.

Debate: Fashion is Overrated and Stupid!

This is a debate activity. Divide the class into two groups of equal number. Then either elect or choose a student to chair the debate. This person should ensure there is order during the debate and make sure that all members have the chance to speak.

Ideally, split the two groups and give each group some time to come up with strong points to support their argument. And then when they are ready, you can begin the debate.

As the teacher, you should take a very quiet part in this activity. This should be a student-led activity.

After the debate, you can have a discussion based on some of the points raised during the debate.

Role Play: A New Jacket

This is a role play exercise. It is self-explanatory.

The students divide into pairs, and each student chooses a character to do in the role play. Give the students some time to prepare, then let each pair show their role play in front of the class.

Writing

This is a writing exercise to let the students write a review.

They should choose an item of clothing, a pair of shoes or a new bag – whatever they want.

Now they should write a review of this item. They need to say positive things about it and try to encourage other people to buy it too.

They can also use pictures of their item as part of the review.

When they have finished, they can read out their review as a kind of presentation. Or they can submit to you for feedback.

Credits

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