

# Ethics

**Who made my fibre? Made by humans.**

RecyCOOL Lessons

# Disclaimer

These lessons have been created for and tested with young people in Slovakia, the Czech republic, Germany, Hungary and Croatia. They are open-source and available for adaptation for different groups globally.

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# Who made my fibre? Made by humans.

## Description

Please read through the outline of this lesson carefully and follow the parts step by step. We will get to know the activism tool:

**Who made my fibre?** And reflect on the background of the fabrics that our clothes are made of. Last we look at pictures and statements of garment workers.

## Objective

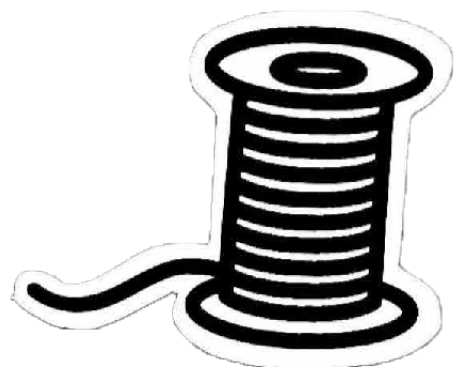
Objective of this lesson is to use our voice on social media, ask who made our fibre, search for the answers and understand that clothes are products and every product and its materials has to be produced by humans.

## After this lesson you will be able to

- understand that your choice and your voice have power. And you will be able to better answer the question of: **Who made my fibre?**

## Tools and materials

smart phone or computer, picture / selfie, any clothes



## **MATERIAL USAGE:**

Every fabric is made of material. Materials, on the other hand, are mostly made of different types of fibres. This production process is still in the hands of humans.

## **FIBRE:**

A fibre is a thin thread of a natural or artificial substance, especially one that is used to make cloth or rope.

## **YARN:**

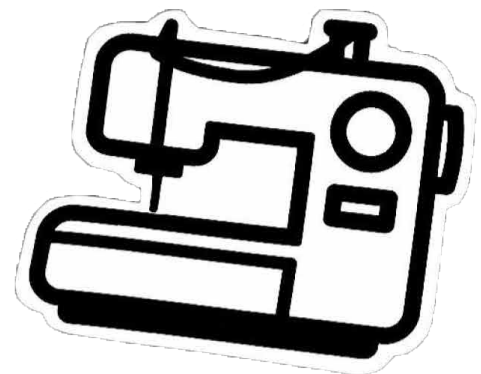
Yarn is thread used for knitting or making cloth.

## **SPINNING MILL:**

A mill or factory where thread is spun.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS:**

Working conditions refers to the working environment and aspects of an employee's terms and conditions of employment. This covers such matters as: the organisation of work and work activities; training, skills and employability; health, safety and well-being; and working time and work-life balance. Pay is also an important aspect of working conditions, although Article 153 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) excludes pay from the scope of its actions in the area of working conditions.



**Please read through the outline of this lesson carefully and follow the parts step by step.**

**We will get to know the Activism tool: Who made my fibre? And reflect on the background of the fabrics that our clothes are made of. Last we look at pictures and statements of garment**

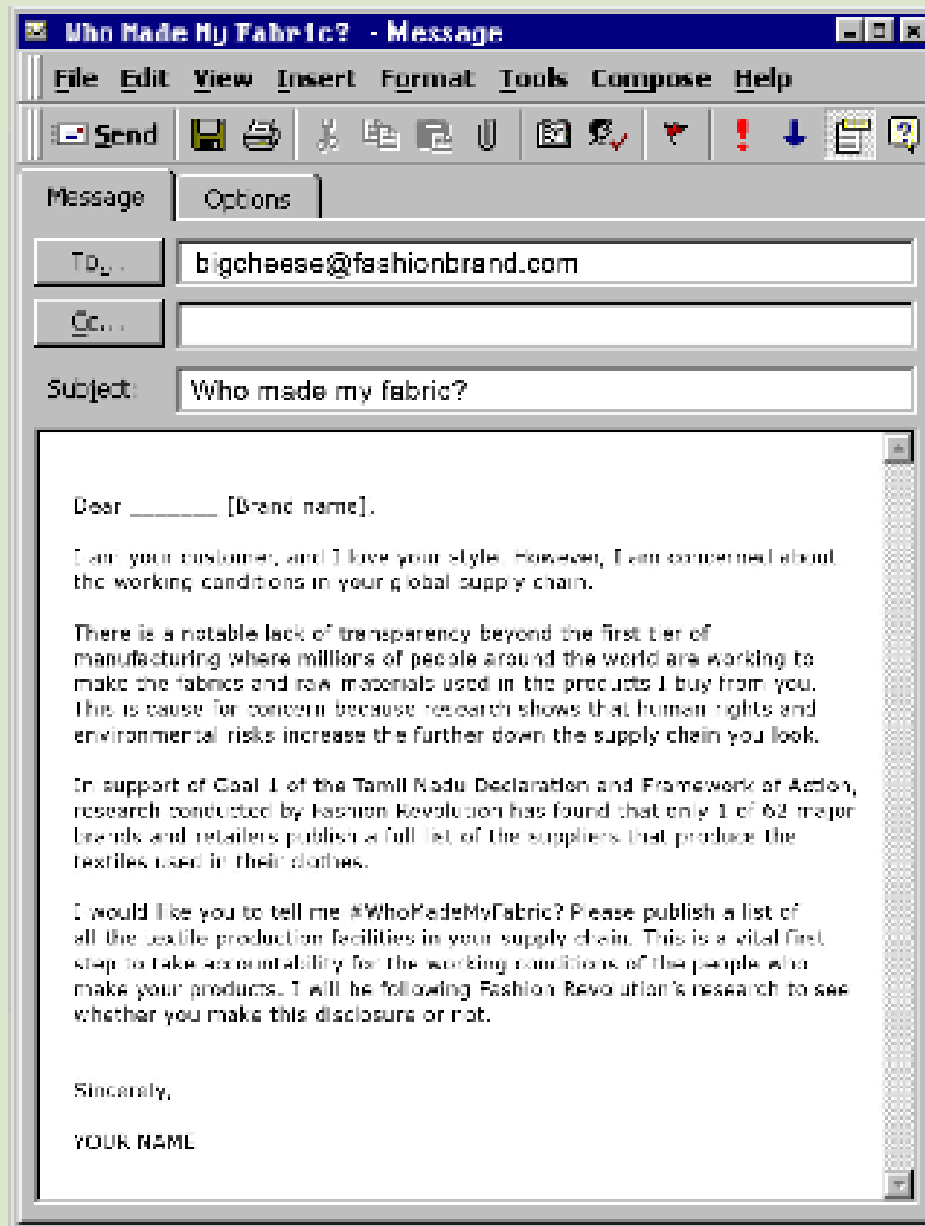
The campaign organisation, Fashion Revolution, stands for transparency and activism. From the start the global movement has asked simple questions and has introduced hashtags that raise awareness and empower people to use their (political) voice. The first question was **#WhoMadeMyClothes**, several more have developed flagging a variety of topics and issues within the fashion industry.

In this lesson we would like you to ask: **"Who made my fibre"**? on social media. And experience the power of a community, your voice and individual activism.

- **Pick some clothes that you own**
- **Determine the brand**
- **Turn the clothes inside out, so the label is visible**
- **Take a selfie of you and the clothes**
- **Tag the brand**
- **Ask: "Who made my fibre?"**

Alternatively you could use the option / tool "Email a brand".

#WhoMadeMyFabric



afash\_rev

Photo credit: [Fashion Revolution](#)

What do you know about the production of textile materials? Where are they coming from? Are there countries that are specifically known for fibre production?

Look at your clothes and the label that is usually attached.

Are there any clues?

If you have a geography atlas at home, have a look if there is any information on topics such as cotton cultivation. You could also browse the internet.

Very often manufacturing parts are in focus but also during cultivation or inside spinning mills exploitation happens. Both tiers are essential for the production of materials but often forgotten.

The production conditions along all tiers are directly affecting the working conditions for the people in the textile industry. Low wages, health issues, discrimination are only a few of many problems garment workers face in the textile industry.

To have a more personal context read through one or both journals (find below in appendix) of the two young garment workers from India and Bangladesh. Both reports are based on research and interviews made by the Clean Clothes Campaign and Femnet e.V. and display the lives of garment workers fully.



**Our choice of what and how much we buy should be a responsible choice because there are consequences for the people manufacturing it.**

Search for the #Hashtag “**I made your fibre**” and “**I made your yarn**”. Have a look at the pictures and stories. These are people that work in the textile industry, they tell their story. The brand shows transparency by showing the people behind their products and offering them a spot to raise their voice.

Have you ever thought of the people behind a product?  
What do you think, how much are they paid for each product?

Photo credit: [Pinatex](#)





# Reflection

What could you find on social media using the two hashtags? Did it provide answers? Is there background knowledge that helps you understand the production of materials? Do you think it is fair that people are exploited for the production of materials?

If you want to discover more about the origins of your clothes, have a look at the campaign of Fashion Revolution and browse the following resource on fabrics and the fibres those are made of:  
Fashion Revolution - [Who made my fabric?](#)

You could also have a look at the country team activities:  
Fashion Revolution - [Find your Country](#)

Which solutions are given to citizens?  
Fashion Revolution - [Get involved](#)



# Resources

EUROFund, Working conditions, 2011. Available at: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/industrial-relations-dictionary/working-conditions>,

Collins Dictionary, 2022. Available at: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/de/worterbuch/englisch/yarn>

"The True cost"  
<https://truecostmovie.com/>

How cotton is processed in factories | How it's made  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHgNoSYlhYs>

The life cycle of a t-shirt (An overview video)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiSYoeqb\\_VY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiSYoeqb_VY)

**Watch the documentary Mode.Macht.Menschen: (It's in German with English subtitles. The episodes can be watched on their Instagram account: @mode.macht.menschen)**

# Attachments

## [savetheplanetinstyle](#)

Did you know it takes an average of 55 people to make just 1 basic t-shirt? Swipe left on the social media post, linked above, to see why: The textile supply chain is not only long, but also very complex – before you can wear your average t-shirt, the fibre needs to be grown (or made in a lab), spun into a yarn, weaved or knitted into a fabric and eventually sewn together into the final garment.

Every tier itself holds even more complexity with harvesting, washing, dyeing, cutting and many more. And in every single one of these steps millions of people are involved, which leads to one of the most pressing problems in fashion: the lack of transparency. Most fashion companies still don't know their whole supply chains and the people who are involved. But the deeper down you get in the supply chain, the higher the risk of human rights violations as companies are exerting a downward pressure on prices while nobody is watching. On April 24th 2013 this led to one of the biggest catastrophes in fashion: The collapse of [#RanaPlaza](#).



Recognising a greater need for transparency in the fashion industry, Fashion Revolution ([@fash\\_rev](#)) was founded. The movement is all about bringing transparency into the complex processes of the supply chain and adding acceptance and appreciation for the people and their work. Rana Plaza was very much a preventable accident. Although transparency alone could not have stopped it, it would at least provide visibility of which brands were sourcing there. It was their responsibility to improve health and safety and working conditions in those facilities. To increase visibility of the supply chain, Fashion Revolution started to ask the question, "WhoMadeMyClothes? Since then, more hashtags have been developed to get people to be curious about what happens further down the supply chain and bring greater visibility to each and everyone involved.

If you want to get first-hand information on the people and their working conditions in every tier of the supply chain, I encourage you to follow [@closedloopfashion](#) 's posts and stories this week. Here we are giving you a little insight into the work and the lovely people within the textile supply chain. Have you asked [#whomademyclothes](#) yet?

Who made my clothes?

Who made my fabric?

Who made my yarn?

Who made my fibre?

Photo credit: [Save the planet in style](#)

[tearfil.pt](http://tearfil.pt)

Hello! My name is Diogo Ferreira, I'm a spinning operator at Tearfil, a spinning mill based in the north of Portugal, and [#IMadeYourYarn](#) alongside my colleagues.

At Tearfil my work is crucial to assure the maximum quality of the yarns. My main function is to scout for potential machine raptures. I'm also in charge of minor cleanses in the spin weighting arms and supervising the transitions of fully loaded yarn cones. Besides that, after the cleaning team washes the machines, I help make sure the machinery is put into production mode.

I like the fact that my job always keeps me moving around. I enjoy the responsibilities that come with my work, when I have fewer assignments, I take the initiative and advance on other tasks, such as cleaning the work space. I really appreciate working with my colleagues.

[#tearfil](#) [#textile](#) [#yarns](#) [#madeinportugal](#) [#innovation](#) [#transparency](#)  
[#sustainability](#) [#fashionrevolution](#) [@fash\\_rev](#) [@fash\\_revportugal](#)



Photo credit: [Tearfil](#)

## [kpcyarn](#)

Have you ever thought about #whomadeyourfibres and #whomadeyouryarns? We do. It's OUR responsibility to provide the fairest and safest working environment for our invaluable staff, as well as ensuring we eradicate gender discrimination. Keeping our ecosystems healthy and safe is also OUR responsibility, so we thrive to ensure our fibres and yarns are environmentally friendly.

#whomadeyourfibres #whomadeyouryarns #imadeyourfibre  
#imadeyouryarn #ethicallysourced #environmentallyfriendly  
#fashionrevolution #WhoMadeMyClothes #IMadeYourClothes #cashmere  
#luxury #coloursofkpcyarn #colours #kpcyarn #yarn #handknityarns  
#loveyarn #diy #handmade #makersgonnamake #crafters #craft #jac-  
quifink #Knitwellcollection #luxury #yarnsinpiration #yarntherapy #maker



Photo credit: [KPC yarn](#)

## Journals from Garment Workers

### Suhana from India

My name is Suhana. I am 17 years old and come from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. My family belongs to the “untouchable” caste. About three years ago, a man came to our village. He promised my family the blue of heaven: a good job for me, comfortable and protected housing, and a large sum of money at the end of a three-year contract. We were grateful for the offer. My family is heavily in debt and we could use the money well for my dowry; because although it is officially forbidden, we will surely have to pay it. So we signed a contract and I went with great expectations to the spinning mill for which I was to work for the next few years. But the reality was different: I slept with seven other girls in a tiny room without windows, without furniture right in a building next to the factory, surrounded by a barbed wire fence. I was forbidden contact with my family. I was only allowed to leave the premises sometimes in the company of a supervisor.

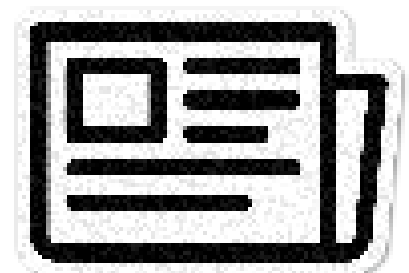
Our working day was hell. I was housed in a hall with 150 girls, there were only 4 toilets and we were not allowed to leave the factory premises. Twelve-hour shifts were the order of the day. In addition, they forced us to work overtime. We had to work standing up most of the time. I was often tired, had circulation problems, insomnia, and headaches and stomachaches. When we worked, we did not wear respiratory protection, so we always breathed in the cotton dust that floated in the air due to production. This caused me to develop a ball of cotton particles, which had to be surgically removed. My parents had to pay 20,000 rupees, the equivalent of 330 euros, for the operation. We are still waiting in vain for the reimbursement of the operation costs promised by my employer.



My monthly salary was 25 EUR. However, only about 1 EUR was paid out, because the costs for room and board were deducted beforehand. Only women worked as spinners in the factory. Men were overseers or the factory owners. I have heard that factory owners prefer to hire women because they work more than men and do not protest.

Women are more likely to work overtime without protest. We are also paid less. Often the supervisors beat us or sexually harassed us. But we also endured that silently for fear of losing our jobs. Many of the girls who worked with me in the spinning mill are no longer alive. They just couldn't take it anymore. They ingested toxic pesticides or poured gasoline over their bodies and set them on fire.

Shortly before my 3-year contract was up, the management fired me early. Allegedly, I had been absent without excuse. Now they don't want to pay me the agreed bonus of 500 EUR because the contract was not completed and therefore expired. I will now try to sue for my outstanding wages with the support of a non-governmental organisation.





## Rheka from Bangladesh

I am just 19 years old. But I already have three years of experience in a garment factory. I come from a village in the south. I am the oldest of us siblings (four girls and two boys in total). Until I was 12, I went to school until the seventh grade. My father showed more and more disturbances, a kind of confusion. I had to leave school. My father's illness meant that he could no longer work. I was forced to take a job in order to contribute something to the family's income. Growing up in the countryside, sixteen years old, seven years of schooling, I didn't have many options.

All I could find was a job in the textile factories. I offered myself on the market, so to speak, when I was sixteen. I got a job in a garment factory at X company. The factory was an hour's walk away from my parents' house. A rikshaw would cost 15 taka, so I have to walk, there and back, with another girl from the village. Sometimes, however, I am not spared the rickshaw. As a seamstress I now get 5300 taka a month, before that it was 3000 taka and when I started as a helper it was even less.

But even with my current salary we cannot pay for the most necessary things. Just our room in a corrugated iron shack costs 2,500 Taka. In order to cover our basic needs as a family, we would actually need 25,000 taka (= 260 euros). Before entering the factory, there was something like an entrance examination. I was asked in detail about my village of origin. I was allowed to start at the factory, but I was given neither an employment contract nor a letter of engagement.

In the factory, I work every day for as long as it is ordered. The orders or work tasks are such that it is impossible to leave the workplace after eight hours. Each worker has a set amount of work to do before she leaves. They know our capabilities and our abilities quite well, and on purpose they ask more of us so that we have to go beyond our strength to finish the work. If a worker wants to leave early because she lives too far away, she is told that she doesn't have to do the work, no one is holding her, she might as well give up the work altogether. Sometimes we also have to work on Friday (holiday). Last week I worked seven days, including Friday.

To keep the job, I have to be ready to work at any time and agree with any working hours. Often I work all night, the factory donates a banana and a piece of bread (worth 2 taka). The factories prefer unmarried women. We can be forced to work more and longer, otherwise we would have nothing to do. Irregular payment of wages, wrong payroll, no vacation, deception, this is my experience in my work. The factory pays us our wages only on the 23rd of the following month. But even this long deadline is not always respected. The payment of overtime is delayed much more.

When it comes to payment, we are cheated in several ways. Wages are calculated on the basis of the so-called attendance card. The card must be given to the supervisor at the end of the month. When the wages are paid, even if the worker did not miss a day, days of absence are calculated and the wages are reduced accordingly. Anyone who protests is called a liar and is subject to dismissal.

More than 28 hours of overtime are not recorded on the attendance card: anything over that is recorded in a separate register. I get ten taka for each hour of overtime. I don't know if this is right?

I am always humiliated and degraded at work. We women workers are insulted, tormented, finished off at every opportunity. We fear most the accusation of having been absent; being accused of being absent means deduction from wages. We sometimes want a day off, or just a few hours off, and only when absolutely necessary. But no, they say stay away, you are absent. That means deduction of wages. And then they insult us because we ask for vacation. It's so depressing, so hopeless, I can't understand why they treat us so meanly. We are just nothing to them, every chance they get they tell us if we leave there are always enough women to take our jobs.

It's really like that, I feel like I'm suffocating in the factory. Often we women workers faint. The toilets are just horrible. I am almost afraid to use them. The drinking water is not clean, a water filter was installed, but it does not work. I wish, and I am not alone, that we had a union. But once you protest, you immediately lose your job.

The police, the so-called security forces, were called by the factory twice and lined up outside the factory; this was to show us who is the stronger, to intimidate us. In our factory we have no way to say anything against the superiors, even when they do bad things we are obliged to obey their orders. I spend most of my life in the factory, I have no time for myself, for my sick father and for my family. We don't have television, we can't afford it. For a little bit of recreation like watching TV, I have to go to the neighbours. I don't know what I will do or what will become of me.

**Credits: Femnet e.v., Clean Clothes Campaign Bonn.**



# Author

Ariane Piper, Fashion Revolution Germany

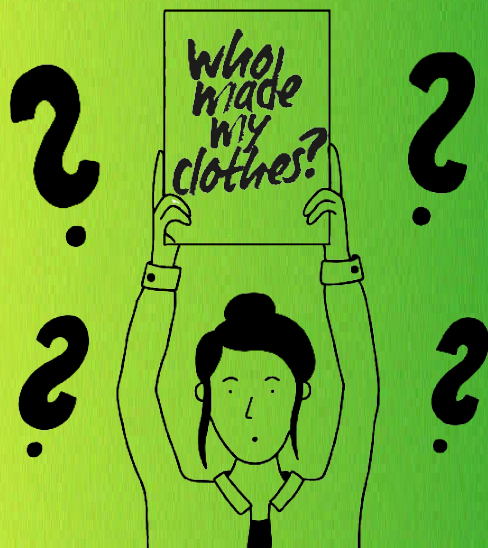
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