

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

Upper High School (11-12)

Description: The United States, despite having less than 5 percent of the global population, consumes a significant portion of the world's fossil fuel resources: approximately 25 percent of coal, 26 percent of oil, and 27 percent of natural gas. This consumption supports mass production of goods and services. Consumerism emerged from an intentional shift in 18th century England, moving from focusing on product utility to desires. The Industrial Revolution further fueled this shift by increasing the availability of consumer goods, enabling purchases based on wants rather than needs. In the 1920s, the advertising industry expanded significantly, linking mass-produced goods to subconscious desires and altering global consumption patterns. This shift towards mass consumption has led to severe environmental degradation, conflicts over finite resources, health issues, unsustainable personal debt, and other consequences.

Lesson Plan: <https://www.globalonenessproject.org/lessons/deconstructing-consumerism>

Highlights:

- This lesson utilizes a short film that asks the question “what would it look like if...” and essentially takes the viewer through what the world will look like if current consumption and production trends were to continue
- Discussion questions based on the film include:
 - Choosing from the list of images students created, ask what they would consider giving up for a day or a week. What could be gained from this experience?
 - When purchasing items, how do you distinguish between a need, something you have to have, and a want, something you would like to have?
 - "We are still trying to colonize one another's minds. We're still trying to tell people what to think." What do you think they mean by this? How is it possible to tell people what to think?
 - What do you think makes a person want to consume and buy more? Are you, or someone you know, persuaded by advertising? Do celebrity ads or peer pressure contribute to your purchasing habits? If so, how?
 - How do you think this film reflects people's behaviors in the world?
 - What could be the danger of pursuing happiness through the ownership of one's possessions, such as a television? What dangers do you think the film identifies for people around the world who desire to have products to make their lives easier or happier?

