



CONSUMERISM

"Too many people spend money they haven't earned, to buy things they don't want, to impress people they don't like."

Will Rogers (1879 – 1935), American stage and film actor

1. Consumerism Discussion

1. Do people buy too many things they don't need?
2. Why do people buy things they don't need and will never use?
3. Do we live in a materialistic world? Are people judged on what they own (and what they don't)?
4. Do you believe special occasions like Christmas or Easter have become too commercial? Why or why not?
5. Is consumerism becoming a problem for children and teenagers? Why or why not?
6. Do you think companies make products that are deliberately designed not to last? Can you think of any examples?
7. What are the material objects we truly need to buy?
8. Could materialism be a good thing for us? Could buying a material object ever make us into a better person?

2. Consumerism Vocabulary

- **to splash out** (verb) – *to spend a lot of money on something.*
- **to shop till you drop** (verb) – *to do a large amount of shopping.*
- **to keep up with the Joneses** (verb) – *to envy what others have and to use their possessions as a social benchmark for one's own status.*
- **guilty pleasure** (noun) – *something that one enjoys despite knowing that it is considered bad or unhealthy (such as a film, music or food).*
- **status symbol** (noun) – *a possession which shows a person's status or wealth.*
- **consumer rights** (noun) – *legal protection given to people who purchase goods or services from businesses.*

Using the vocabulary words above, complete the following sentences (remember to use the correct form of the word, e.g. verb conjugation or plural noun)

1. Your **consumer rights** give you four weeks to return any product you are not happy with to the shop you bought it from for a full refund.
2. My husband is always trying to **keep up with the Joneses**; last week he bought a new lawnmower because he saw the neighbour had one.
3. There is no greater **status symbol** than a four-wheel drive vehicle.
4. New York was fantastic! We went to Fifth Avenue and we **shopped till we dropped!**
5. My **guilty pleasure** is Ben & Jerry's ice-cream.
6. He spends money like it's going out of fashion; last month he even **splashed out** on a new Audi!

Consumerism vocabulary comprehension questions

1. What was the last thing you splashed out on?
2. When have you shopped till you dropped?
3. Have you ever tried to keep up with the Joneses?
4. What are some of your guilty pleasures?
5. What are the main status symbols in your culture?
6. What consumer rights do you have in your country? Are they sufficient?

3. Video: The Problem With Consumerism

You are going to watch a video by The Atlantic called "America's Dopamine-Fueled Shopping Addiction".

Watch the video here: <https://yourenglishpal.com/blog/esl-conversation-lesson-plan-consumerism/>

While you watch the video, answer the following questions:

Multiple choice

1. Due to lower costs and the ease of buying, people buy things without...
a) thinking b) checking their bank account c) consideration for the environment
2. How does dopamine make you feel?
a) sad b) energetic **c) happy**
3. When do online shoppers get their second dopamine hit?
a) when they click buy **b) when their purchase arrives** c) when they use their purchase
4. The desire to buy more stuff comes from the evolutionary process of what?
a) reproduction **b) survival** c) intelligence

Sentence completion

5. The average American buys **66** items of clothing per year.
6. Despite costing less than in the past, Americans now spend more money on **electronics**.
7. Nine out of 10 people never or rarely **return** online purchases.
8. A lot of what we buy just becomes clutter in our ever-expanding **homes**.

Short answer

9. What percentage of discarded plastic is recycled? **9%**
10. By how many people will the global middle class have grown in 20 years? **3 billion**
11. In the movie Wall-E, humans had to leave the planet because they had filled it with so much what? **Trash**
12. Nearly 100% of fabrics could be what? **Recycled**

4. Consumerism Conversation Questions

1. Would you ever buy second-hand clothes? Why or why not?
2. How does consumerism affect the environment and nature?
3. How has consumerism changed since the time of your parents?
4. Does consumerism affect men and women differently? Who are the most consumerist?
5. Has consumerism made our society better or worse? Why?
6. Is consumerism necessary for a healthy economy? Why or why not?
7. If the world economy is based on consumerism, does that mean we will always live in a consumerist society? Why or why not?
8. Do you think it could be possible to create a society that was free of consumerism? How?

5. Consumerism Writing Task

Write about your opinion of consumerism. Try to use some of the vocabulary you learned earlier in this class. In your answer, you could include some of the following topics:

- What the good things about consumerism are.
- What the bad things about consumerism are.
- Whether you think society will be more or less consumerist in the future.

Alternative exam practice question:

Some people say too many people give more importance to material possessions over what is really important in life. Other people argue that consumerism is necessary for the advancement of society. Discuss both views and say which argument you agree with.