

Consumption

Why is this a Global Justice Issue (GJI)?

What we consume is generally brought to us by capitalism. This economic system focuses on growth, often at the expense of the environment and human rights. Our consumption in a capitalist system benefits multinational corporations and the already uberwealthy, while systems of intergenerational poverty, oppression and exploitation continue. However, more just and sustainable consumption options exist. There are alternative economic models such as circular economies, doughnut economics, degrowth and a wellbeing economy, which value people and planet over economic growth.



Connected Global Justice Issues

Child Labour, Climate Justice, Fast Fashion, Labour Rights, Trade Justice, Poverty, Waste, Water.



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

3: Good Health and Wellbeing. 6: Clean Water and Sanitation. 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. 10: Reduced Inequalities. 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. 13: Climate Action. 15: Life on Land.

Topic	Teaching and Learning Activity	Resource for Activity
Ethics Matter	The student video explores supply chains and considers ethical consumption in a complex world. Watch the video and discuss the follow-up questions (at the bottom of the page) using a Fishbowl Discussion method.	Ethical Consumption (2017, 12mins) 
		See the WWGS for instructions on a Fishbowl Discussion . 

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Why is Ethical Consumption Important?	1. Read one or both suggested short articles. 2. Carry out a Why-Why-Why Chain Activity to explore the question <i>Why is ethical consumption important?</i> 3. Encourage learners to adopt a human rights lens and incorporate the WWGS Guiding Principles for GCE as they explore the question.	The Myth of Ethical Consumption in the Medium (2022) 3min read. 
		What is Ethical Consumption available on developmenteeducation.ie (updated 2015) 3-5mins read. 
		See the WWGS for instructions on Why-Why-Why Chain activity . 
Consumer Power	This lesson focuses on ethical shopping. It considers clothing labels, consumer motivations and trends in ethical consumerism. It includes a detailed lesson plan , PowerPoint slides , and student worksheets.	Consumer Power was created as a Teaching English resource by the British Council (2021), yet also suitable for post primary learners. 
Ethical Consumerism & Fair Trade	This toolkit contains 6 workshops as well as some information on campaigns and taking action. Workshop themes include a Needs v Wants activity, an exploration of Fair Trade, the Story of Stuff video and a drama activity.	Ethical Consumerism in European Education Toolkit (2014). 

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Quotes on Consumption	1. Present the quote by economist Victor Lebow in 1955 to the class without any context and ask for reactions. 2. Use a concentric circles method to discuss: <i>how relevant is this economic approach to today's economy? What are the current consequences of this economic approach? What changes have occurred since then?</i> 3. Learners find other quotes on consumerism. 4. Learners create their own quote on consumerism. 5. Option to display and reflect on quotes through a Gallery Walk activity.	‘Consumption’: Victor Lebow. 
		WWGS Concentric Circles discussion activity. 
		WWGS Gallery Walk 
Adbusters	1. Select a spoof ad to act as a stimulus for a group discussion, try a Concentric Circles or Fishbowl discussion method. 2. Select a few spoof ads to use for an Analysing Images activity. Learners can create captions, titles scripts, roleplays, or their own ad/poster.	Adbusters - explore the ‘Spoof Ads’ on topics including consumerism, politics, economics and more. 
		See the WWGS Activities Resource for classroom discussion activities and instructions for Analysing Images. 

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Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy	1. Watch the documentary. Follow up with discussion activities such as Socratic Questioning or de Bono's Thinking Hats to encourage debate and dialogue on the issues raised. 2. The Digging Deeper Tool could be used as a follow-up lesson to explore ethical consumption in depth. *Connect to the WWGS GJI resources on Fast Fashion and Waste.	Documentary Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy, available on Netflix (2024) (1h 24mins). 
		See WWGS for a range of GCE classroom activities. 
		The Digging Deeper Tool is available here, in English and as Gaeilge. 
	Two lesson plans based on the documentary. These ready to use teaching materials include slides, video clips, discussion questions and activities. Free sign-up required for download.	Lesson plans from the Association for Citizenship Teaching UK: Buy Now! The Shopping Conspiracy 
Not Business as Usual	This resource from Financial Justice Ireland is aimed at Junior Cycle Business Studies. However, the following lessons can be used to explore consumption: • Needs and Wants, pages. 9-10 • Christmas Special- The Consumer at Christmas pages 11-14	Not Business as Usual: Exploring Global Justice in Business Studies Curriculum (2019). Financial Justice Ireland. 
The Story of Stuff	The Story of Stuff Project began with Annie Leonard's video outlining 'our consumption-crazed culture'. The website has videos and ongoing actions, as well as the learning unit (10 lessons) 'Buy, Use, Toss' which explores the sustainability of consumption.	The Story of Stuff (2007) video 22 mins. 
		Buy, Use, Toss? A Closer Look at the Things We Buy (2010) 

Topic	Teaching and Learning Activity	Resource for Activity
The Story of Solutions	Watch the 9 minute video which explores how we can move our economy in a more sustainable and just direction. Suggested questions for a follow-up activity, eg placemat or World Café: • What is GDP? And what are the problems with it? • Outline the citizens campaign to ban plastic? • What is collaborative consumption? • What other ideas do you have for the Story of Solutions?	The Story of Solutions (9mins) (2013) Part of the Story of Stuff. 
		See WWGS for instructions on a World Café activity. 
		WWGS Gallery Walk 
Wellbeing Economy (WE)	1. Use a placemat technique to come up with a definition of the WE. On the placemat, groups identify the concepts which define a WE, the principles of a WE, characteristics of the paradigm shift and an example of paradigm shift (e.g. health or culture). This is all available on the webpage. 2. Understand the Key Concepts. Use an Each-One-Teach-One technique to explore the 10 concepts presented. 3. Access the Turbulent Times, an 8-page magazine with articles and illustrations. Learners browse through the publication and respond by creating either their own illustration (p.3) an obituary (p.6) 24 hours in the Wellbeing Economy (p. 7) or an ad (p.8).	What is a Wellbeing Economy? at weall.org 
		Understand the Key Concepts (print off the 10 concepts). 
		Each-One-Teach-One 
		Turbulent Times from weall.org 

Topic	Teaching and Learning Activity	Resource for Activity
Beyond GDP	1. Watch the Impossible Hamster and ask for reactions. Carry out a round robin on: <i>What words come to mind (growth, capitalism)</i> <i>How does the video relate to (over) consumption?</i> 2. Play the 2-minute Jason Hickel video. <u>Before watching</u>, ask: What alternatives to economic growth might there be? <u>As they watch</u>, learners answer: <i>What are the issues with economic growth? What alternatives to economic growth are mentioned? What are the problems of using GDP as a measure of progress? What type (characteristics) of economic model does Hickel advocate?</i> 3. Imagine an economy without GDP, what metrics could it be based on? (e.g. happiness, health, wellbeing, environment etc, see <u>Beyond GDP</u> from weall.org for more answers). Use a <u>Concentric Circles</u> activity to discuss the question. 4. Based on the article ‘GDP Alternatives’, carry out a Jigsaw activity or group work summarising and presenting the 7 alternatives. 5. Option to follow-up with Nation Creation, a WWGS creative activity about building an ideal nation.	The Impossible Hamster video (1min) 
		Jason Hickel: ‘Our addiction to economic growth is killing us’ (2mins) (2017) 
		GDP Alternatives (2019) in Ethical 
		Nation Creation 
Doughnut Economics	This student video-workshop explores Doughnut Economics as an alternative economic model to our current capitalist system. The video is rich with ideas and concepts and has extension activities.	GAP/ISSN video: Back to Basics Workshop Doughnut Economics- Who’s Hungry for Change? (2022)- 20min 
	This ISSN booklet builds on the student video. It contains a multiple-choice worksheet (with answers provided for teachers), statements for a walking debate and a ‘good news’ story from RTE.	ISSN Global Citizenship and Environmental Education Resource Booklet 2025 (pgs. 89-97). 

Topic	Teaching and Learning Activity	Resource for Activity
Donut Panic	Donut Panic! Teaching Young People to Thrive in a Finite World is a cross-curricular GCE resource by Financial Justice Ireland. Through storytelling, discussion, reflection and hands-on activities, learners explore how we can build futures that are fair, sustainable and full of possibility.	See the FJI website for more details and to access Donut Panic (2026). 
Degrowth	1. Watch the video and read the short article on Degrowth. 2. Learners do a think-pair-share to come up with a definition/explanation of degrowth. 3. In groups or as an individual task, learners create a Consequence Wheel based on adopting degrowth as an economic model, include positive and negative consequences.	Degrowth , explained by Grist (2015) (4.24mins)  Degrowth- What's behind the economic theory and why does it matter right now? From the World Economic Forum (2022)  See WWGS Consequence Wheel for instructions on this activity. 
Circular Economy (CE)	See the WWGS Wood Technology Unit, adaptable to learning about the Circular Economy and Design Thinking in any subject. CE: activities include K-W-L, videos and websites with questions and tasks, case studies on Forestry and the CE (pages 36-43). Stanford Model of Design Thinking: videos and questions are included to explore this approach through a GCE lens (pages 43-46).	WWGS Doing GCE in JC Wood Technology , (2024). Topic 2 Design Thinking. Includes PowerPoint slides and student worksheets. 



TAKE ACTION

- Subscribe to [Ethical Consumer](#), the magazine and website with information and inspiration on using your spending power for positive change.
- Explore Global Citizen, an advocacy platform which mobilises millions of people and convenes across sectors to drive tangible policy change and financial investments to defeat poverty and defend the planet. See for example [Waste is a Design Problem](#), [Try One Circular Action](#). As the name suggests it encourages global citizens to participate and take on circular actions.
- Get involved in [Fairbruary](#), the annual awareness campaign by Fairtrade Ireland which runs in February. Explore the [Fairtrade Ireland](#) website for more ideas and resources. See the WWGS case study from [Castletroy College](#) for some inspiration.
- Organise a campaign or event for Buy Nothing Day, the day of protest against consumerism and over consumption. It is held on the same day as Black Friday, which is at the end of November each year. See the [Buy Nothing Day UK website](#) for some inspiration.

Workshop Facilitators

- [Rediscovery Centre](#)- focus on the circular economy through training and workshops for students.
- [Financial Justice Ireland](#) campaign for a fair and just society for everyone and want a financial system that serves the needs of people and planet. Explore their website and get in touch to inquire about workshops and resources.
- [Feasta](#): Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability ‘envisions a safe and just space for humanity within a resilient, healthy global ecosystem. Feasta articulates and promotes the changes needed to make the necessary transition’. Explore their website to find out about upcoming workshops and courses.