

# Curriculum Extra Unit 3

## History: Consumerism

### 1 Look at the photo and answer the questions.

- 1 What level of wealth do you think the people in the photo have?  
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- 2 Do you think they have basic or luxury items in their bags?  
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- 3 Do you think they bought the things in their bags because they needed them or desired them?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 4 Do you think their country has a strong or weak economy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Do you think they bought handmade or factory-made items? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 2 Read the article and match summaries 1–4 with paragraphs A–D.

- 1 People continue to spend a lot of money and the economy in that country improves even more. \_\_\_\_
- 2 Things get cheaper due to industrialization, but two world wars cause economic problems. \_\_\_\_
- 3 Advertising increases sales of luxury items, but people see the bad side of consumerism. \_\_\_\_
- 4 As well as buying things they need, people start to buy things they want. \_\_\_\_



### The history of consumerism

**A** For most of human history, people have existed with only the most basic goods – bowls, pots, clothes, simple farming equipment, and so on. Then, at the beginning of the 18th century, economies in some parts of the world began to expand. People started earning more money and, for the first time, they could afford to buy small luxury items such as mirrors, towels and better clothes.

**B** As the range of goods on sale grew, people were able to buy better clothes, furniture and things for the home. For those with money, shopping became a popular pastime. Some economists noticed that when people spent money on things they didn't need, it encouraged trade and created employment. This led to more wealth, which could be invested in places like hospitals. This was the beginning of consumerism – the belief that the more people buy, the better it is for the economy.

**C** Between about 1760 and 1830, the Industrial Revolution transformed the way goods were produced. Now, instead of having to pay large amounts of money for handmade items, people could choose to buy factory-made goods at affordable prices. The huge cost of World Wars I and II to countries in Europe, however, damaged economic growth for many decades, making life much harder for consumers in the early 20th century.

**D** From the 1950s onwards, people had extra money to spend again, and more than ever before, advertising increased their desire for luxury goods. To many people today, this level of over-consumption seems normal. This will have to change, however. The anti-consumerist movement has shown us the damage over-consumption causes to the environment and to people's health and happiness.

### 3 Read the article again and answer the questions.

- 1 What sort of objects did people own before consumerism? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 What consumer behaviour did 18th-century economists believe was good for the economy? \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 3 What sort of goods could people buy for the first time as a result of the Industrial Revolution?  
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- 4 According to the article, how does advertising lead to over-consumption?  
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- 5 Why is consumerism harmful according to the anti-consumerist movement?  
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- 4 'Consumerism has more negative than positive effects.' Do you agree? Write an opinion essay in your notebook giving reasons.