

# Consumerism

SPEAKING

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_2068S\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English





## Goals

- Can read, listen to and understand a text about consumerism.
- Can identify and discuss the problems that are related to consumerism and modern society in depth.







## Buying things

**How many things did you buy yesterday? Do you remember?  
Were they basic necessities or treats?**





## Conscious consumerism

**Think about the last item of clothing that you bought.**



Where did you buy it?

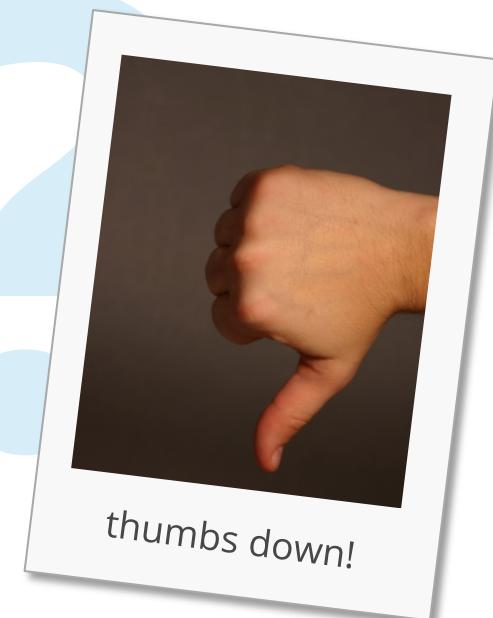
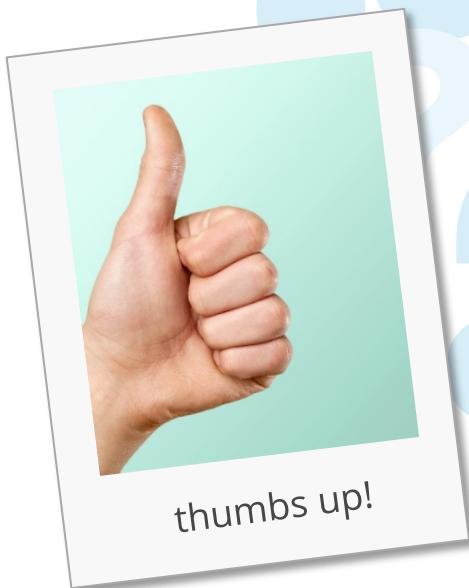
Why did you buy it?

Do you know where it was made? Is it important to you?



## Consumerism

When you hear  
the word  
*consumerism*, is  
your initial  
reaction  
positive or  
negative?





## Buy Nothing Day



There is one day a year called *Buy Nothing Day*, when people are not supposed to buy anything. Would you want to take part in it? What do you think about it?



## Consumerism



The theory of consumerism is that a country will be economically better off if society consumes goods and services in large quantities. Few argue against the idea that in pure economic terms, consumerism is positive for a country. However, during the twentieth century consumerism came to mean something more negative: it became associated with **greed**, with a connection between happiness and things, with seeking **fulfilment** through material goods.



## Consumerism



Consumerism first developed apace in the eighteenth century. In Britain, with the rise of the middle class, more people had money to spend on things not deemed basic necessities. The appetite of the middle classes for things such as sugar, tobacco, tea, and coffee grew **exponentially**, as **disposable** income created the need for the display of status symbols, which included the aforementioned goods, as well as things such as silk and glassware.



## Consumerism



It was in the twentieth century that mass production of goods for the average consumer really took hold, **exemplified** by Henry Ford's production of the motor car in any colour.

In the 1920s, the 'buy now, pay later' model allowed people to buy more and more without having to have the money immediately, and this further intensified in the 1950s with the introduction of credit cards.



## Consumerism



In the twenty first century, consumerism has developed further and is now associated with having a huge choice of goods. The **adage** that we should be 'keeping up with the Joneses' created a need to always have the latest products.



## Vocabulary

**Do you remember these words and phrases from the text?  
What were they referring to?**



greed

fulfilment

disposable

exponentially



## Keeping up with the Joneses

Have you heard the phrase *keeping up with the Joneses* before? Is it something you feel pressure to do?



## Payment methods

**Do you use either of these methods of payment? Are they good or bad for society and for consumers, in your opinion?**



*buy now, pay later*

*credit cards*



## Choice

Do you like having a large choice of goods when you are shopping? Can choice ever be overwhelming?





## Get ready to listen



The next few slides will focus on training your listening comprehension.



These words come from the listening text. Can you guess what they refer to? While listening, check if you are right!

proclivity

rampant

epitome

peer

degradation

finite



## Fill in the gaps

Using the vocabulary on the previous page, fill in the gaps.

1. The USA is often thought to be the \_\_\_\_\_ of a consumerist society.
2. Ecological \_\_\_\_\_ is often cited as one reason why consumerism cannot continue at its current pace.
3. Consumerism instils in us a fear of not keeping up with our \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Our planet's resources are \_\_\_\_\_, thus we must conserve them.
5. People have begun to kick against the \_\_\_\_\_ consumerism of recent decades.





## Black Friday



Have you heard about Black Friday in the USA? Do you have a similar day in your country when there are lots of sales?



## Criticisms of consumption

**Below are some of the common criticisms of consumption. Do you agree with these criticisms? Do you have any concrete examples?**



displaying material wealth

environmental factors

conflating  
materialism  
with happiness



## Conscious consumerism

The text mentions a move towards conscious consumerism. What do you think this involves? Would you be interested in trying out this movement?





## Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





## Answer key

**Exercise p. 18**

1. epitome, 2. degradation, 3. peers, 4. finite, 5. rampant

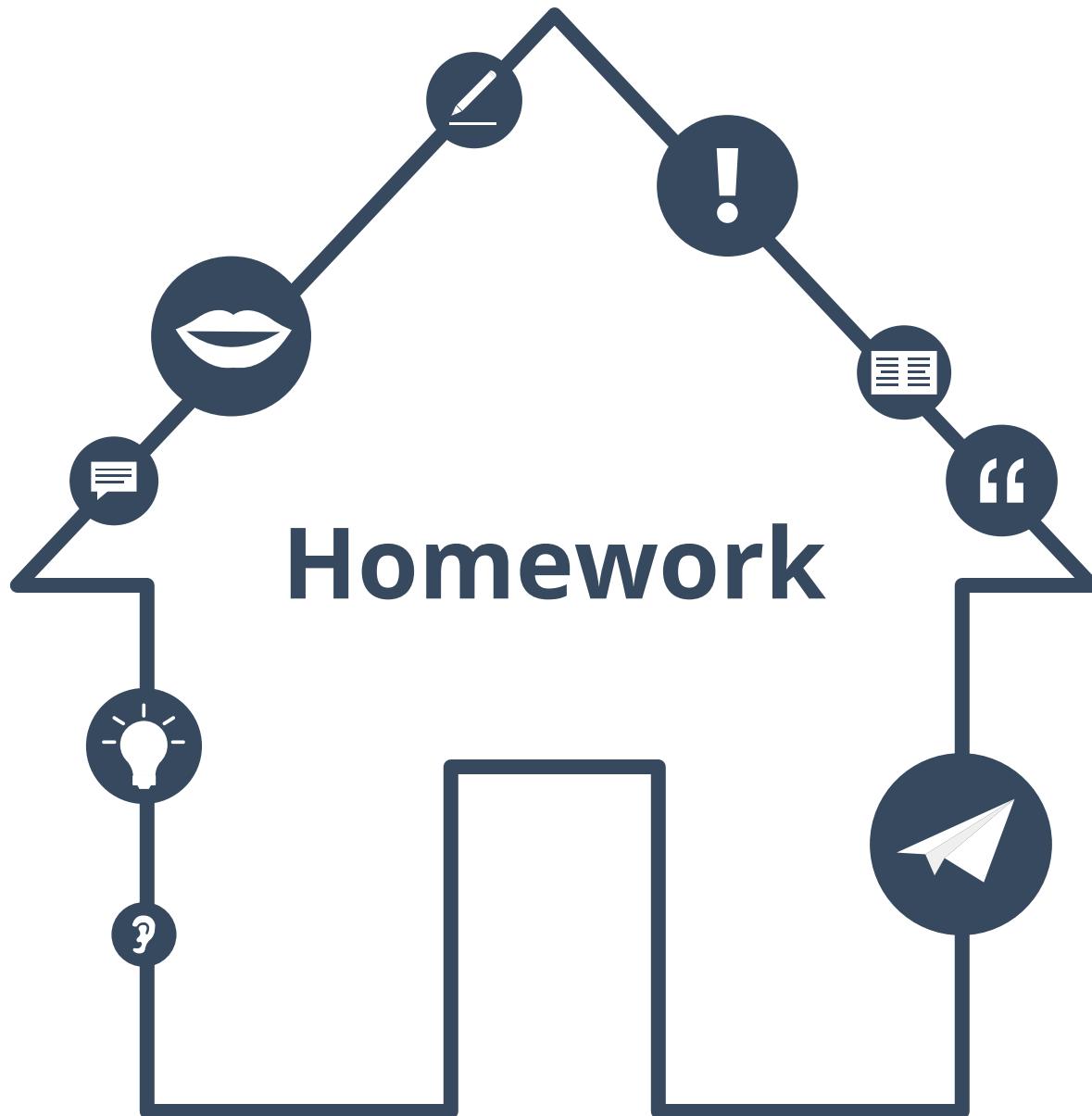


## Transcription

The United States is often seen as the **epitome** of consumer culture. Accounting for a mere 5% of the world's population, but consuming 30% of the world's energy, citizens of the USA seem to have a **proclicity** for consumption. Black Friday may be the most visible example of this: an annual day of huge sales when half of all Americans will go shopping and buy goods at reduced prices, seemingly regardless of whether or not they need them. The semiannual **degradation** is resulting from the drive to have finite and current level is not environmentally sustainable: resources are more and more possessed. Consumerism is also criticised as having changed our mentality: we no longer want to buy goods which are useful, but because of what they say about us. Rather than our peers. The movement termed 'conscious consumerism', which encourages us to make carefully thought-out purchases of local products produced in a sustainable, ethical way, has been gaining traction in recent years as a kick against the **rampancy** consumerism of the past century.

There are many critics of consumerism. Some say that consumerism at the current level is not environmentally sustainable: resources are finite and ecological **degradation** is resulting from the drive to have more and more possessions. Consumerism is also criticised as having changed our mentality: we no longer want to buy goods which are useful, but because of what they say about us. Rather than our peers. The movement termed 'conscious consumerism', which encourages us to make carefully thought-out purchases of local products produced in a sustainable, ethical way, has been gaining traction in recent years as a kick against the **rampancy** consumerism of the past century.

displays of material wealth. Seminal research on the American Dream has become caught up with displays of material wealth. Americans will go shopping and buy goods at reduced prices, regardless of whether or not they need them. The semiannual **degradation** is resulting from the drive to have finite and current level is not environmentally sustainable: resources are more and more possessed. Consumerism is also criticised as having changed our mentality: we no longer want to buy goods which are useful, but because of what they say about us. Rather than our peers. The movement termed 'conscious consumerism', which encourages us to make carefully thought-out purchases of local products produced in a sustainable, ethical way, has been gaining traction in recent years as a kick against the **rampancy** consumerism of the past century.





## Write two lists

**Write two lists of the positive and negative effects of consumersim.**

Positive effects

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Negative effects

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# Write a text

**Write a short text about your view of consumerism, using the words below.**

greed

## fulfilment

## proclivity

peers

rampant

disposable  
income

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