CONSUMERISM

ACTIVITY 1 - MONEY RELATED EXPRESSIONS AND IDIOMS

First make quick sentences with these verbs in the past tense:

To buy To purchase To save To spend To cost

Now match these expressions to the definitions that your teacher will give you:

To save for a rainy day
To put money aside
To splash out
To waste money
To squander
To splurge
To scrimp and save
To pay through the nose



To do it on a shoe string
It costs an arm and a leg
It?s a rip off/ to rip someone off
I?m not made of money
Money doesn?t grow on trees
Good value for money
To haggle
Money burns a hole in one?s pocket

ACTIVITY 2 - CLASS SURVEY: ARE YOU A BIG CONSUMER?

Now write 3 questions using the above expressions to add to the survey below.

ACTIVITY 3 - CLASS SURVEY: ARE YOU A BIG CONSUMER?

Discuss the following questions with your partner. Use the new expressions that we just learnt.

1. For you, is shopping a pleasure or a pain?
2. Are you careful or frivolous with money?
3. Aside from the essentials and bills, what would you say that you generally spend your money on? (for example: entertaining friends or family, travelling, books, music, eating out, concerts, weekends away, cultural activities, etc.)
4. Do you look at prices before buying something or do you simply buy on impulse?
5. If you came home from a long day at work to find an empty fridge, what would you do?
6. Have you ever bought an item you don?t particularly needjust because it was in the sale?
7. If something was clearly overpriced but you really wanted it, would you buy it regardless?
8. How often do you go to the supermarket and/or clothes shopping?
9. What was the most expensive item that you have bought so far this year?
10. Do you prefer to buy expensive but good quality items that will last, or cheap items with a short life span?

ACTIVITY 4 - SONG: MONEY FOR NOTHING - DIRE STRAITS

Listen the song and try and put the images into the order that you hear them.

ACTIVITY 5 - READ THE TEXT AND ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

1. Taking a job where you work less and are paid less is called ?.
2. What do conservers do?
3. When we buy something, what can we usually choose?
4. How can we tell that the people who made a product were not paid well?
5. According to the article, how should we shop in the future?



ACTIVITY 6 - ARTICLE: A CONSUMER SOCIETY BY JULIE BRAY

?There is enough on earth for everybody?s need, but not for everyone?s greed.? Gandhi

If we only bought things we needed, there would be enough for everybody. What do we need? It depends on how old you are and your way of life. In pairs, number the things below from 1-16, 1 being the item you think we need the most. How many of the items could you live without?

-A coat
-A pair of trainers
-Levi?s jeans
-Water
-A CD player
-A pair of jeans
-A dental check-up



-Paper
-A restaurant meal
-A telephone
-Jewellery
-Gold-coloured laces in your trainers



-Food
-An appointment at the hair salon
-Paracetamol
-Shampoo
-An iPhone
-Beer or wine



-Toothpaste
-A bag of M&Ms
-Cushion covers
-Table mats which match the curtains
-A computer
-Shoes



If we need less, we can work less. We can take part-time jobs or reduce our working day from 8 to 6 hours. Some people are leaving well-paid jobs to live a healthier life in the country or an exciting life abroad. This is called ?downshifting?. Parents can spend more time with their children and the unemployed are given more opportunities to work.

If we start to respect saving the earth more than spending money, we will become ?conservers?. When we are conservers, we try to choose environmentally-friendly products which are durable and last a long time. We may find growing our own vegetables or making our own clothes more rewarding than buying them.

What was the best thing you bought last week? Could you choose from lots of different types? We like having a choice of what to buy. People who buy things are called consumers. Consumers have choices. We usually choose the colour, taste, smell or size, but there are other choices we can make.

Where was it made? If you don?t like the place it was made, you might decide not to buy that particular product. A lot of people don?t buy products from certain countries when they don?t like the way the country is run. Was it made in a factory or on a local farm? If the product was unbelievably cheap, the people who made it might not have been paid much.

Who made it? Do you know? If a friend made it, you probably like it more and you?ll want to keep it for a long time. If it was made by somebody who enjoyed making it, the quality and the design are probably better. Or does it look like it was assembled in a large factory?

What is it made from? At the airport?s duty-free shop next to the chocolate and cigarettes, there are beautifully-shaped bottles and compact boxes full of perfumes and creams which promise to make you look and feel more beautiful. If you look at the ingredients you will find that the perfumes are mainly alcohol and the creams are mainly made of petroleum!

Almost all products are sold in packaging. Some products have too much packaging, creating more rubbish and using up resources. Some use recycled packaging, which is better for the environment.

Next time you go shopping, think about what you really need to buy. Make a list before you go out, to avoid being influenced by adverts or promotions. If it is dearer to buy goods which don?t have much packaging and things which are more durable, buy less. If you can choose to work less, decide which things you would like to make, do or grow yourself. Even though you have less money, your life will become richer!



ACTIVITY 7 - CLIP: BIG IDEAS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD - CONSUMERISM

Watch the first 6 (or 9) minutes of the clip and answer the following questions.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZ29DQvopZo

1. Which big ideas does the narrator say have struggled to dominate the planet?
2. Who is the narrator and what has he been doing for the last 30 years?
3. Where did his career begin?
4. According to the video, where does consumerism put consumption?
5. What types of things exist to persuade us to try to consume more? Give three examples.
6. What is really the big idea behind all these different messages?
7. He talks about consumers not knowing the real cost of things. What example does he give about his own daughter?
8. What does he suggest we do and why?
9. What does he say about the impact of consumerism and population growth on the environment?
10. How does he think the problem arose?
11. Why did poor people accept their misfortune without questioning it?
12. In his book, The Wealth of Nations, what does Adam Smith say is the best way to encourage economic growth, and where did this supposedly lead us?

ACTIVITY 8 - ROLE PLAY

You and your sibling were brought up in the same way, your parents really teaching you the value of money. However, while you are very careful (some would say stingy) with your money, your sibling is the opposite and spends like there is no tomorrow. When he/she comes to you (not for the first time) asking to borrow some money, you feel that it is time to tell him/her how you feel.
Use as many of today?s expressions as possible!

ACTIVITY 9 - BLOG ARTICLE ? CONSUMERISM: FRIEND OR FOE?

Let?s finish with a blog article on œonsumerism. Do you agree with the blogger?s viewpoint?

The London riots or what is now known as the UK riots has come and gone but it has left behind more questions than answers for commentators, politicians, pundits and society in general to ponder. A lot has been said and written on the aftermath of the four days of madness that lit up the streets of London with flames of violence.

The focus of this piece is not to repeat what has already been blogged or commented about in various media. However, I want to take a look more deeply into the issue of a consumer culture that was a constant recurrence in most of the debate I watched and listened to. A culture that over time has led to a consciousness to demand and foster an undying desire to purchase goods and services in ever greater quantities. This in turn has created a society where people are increasingly being judged by what they can consume and own. I watched one particular debate where a pundit raised what I consider a valid point; he asked, why wasn't a bookshop raided? Well we now live in a society where what you know is not as important as whether you own an iPad or the latest 3D large flat screen TV.

In Nigeria, this consumer culture which we often describe as materialistic culture has been around for a while now. There's now the blackberry craze, whereby owning a 'bb' today in Nigeria has now become some sort of status symbol. In fact there was a Nollywood movie made this year I think to reflect this blackberry culture and in stereotypical fashion, women where cast as the villains. Despite my self-imposed protest about what I consider a movie industry that has refused to grow up, I managed to watch this film and couldn't stop laughing. But seriously, I haven't got an issue with new technology, fashion, cars and all the goods and services that are driving this push in a way perhaps we have never seen before, at least in my lifetime.

I have an issue with society's response to the behaviour of people in the way they embrace the sorts of lifestyle that are fanning the embers of consumerism. Like always, I'm more concerned about what we teach our young people and the moral values we set them. I find it hard to understand why some parents are buying very expensive gadgets for children as young as 11, something I see around me all the time. Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to be judgemental or educate people on what they should or should not buy for their children. The point I'm trying to make is that if we keep giving young people the wrong idea that they can be given whatever they want, what happens when mum or dad are no longer able to do so? Your guess is as good as mine.

We could use these life's luxuries to motivate our young people, making them understand that if they work hard they could stand a chance to own those goods they crave for. I remember sometime last term some of my students saw me using an iPhone and they were like 'sir, how come you own an iPhone?' and I was like, 'I own one because I work hard to able to save up and buy one'. I understand young people are now born into a generation where more than ever before they are constantly bombarded with consumer goods but I think society has a responsibility to make them understand they cannot get something for nothing.

Whilst there is nothing wrong in my view for people to look forward to enjoy these luxuries of life, we should never fail to let the values of hard work and contentment to get lost in the scramble for what modern day consumer culture seems to be throwing at us all the time.

Consumerism, no matter what side of the fence we sit, is here to stay. It can be our friend but at the same time could be our foe depending on what we make of it.

