

# CLOTHING MATTERS

**Objective: To discover the natural resources that create our clothing.**

## A Few Facts

Clothes of the distant past were made from organic (living) materials. Almost all synthetic fabrics and materials used today are made from petroleum or natural gas.

Tennis shoes are a great example: Some of the rubber is natural (latex from trees), but most tennis shoe rubber is synthetic. Shoelaces can be both natural and man-made materials. The uppers can be of leather, canvas, vinyls or other man-made materials.

Almost all modern buttons are made of plastic. Thread and labels are generally cotton, polyester or blends of the two.

Recent years have seen a renewal of interest in clothing made of natural fibers, but those fibers are fertilized and grown, processed, sewn, packaged, and transported by processes and machines made of minerals and metals.

## Classroom Experience

Research the origins of the following clothing fibers:

Cotton, silk, rayon, nylon, polyester or acrylic fibers, ramie and wool.

How are these different materials colored and made into clothing?

Discover what your clothes are made of.

Ask each student to choose a partner, and taking turns, read the labels in one another's clothing. Students can then make a chart listing the different fibers they are wearing and the sources of those fibers.

Discuss the purpose of clothing labels.

- Which materials are man-made and which are natural?
- What properties of fiber make it attractive for clothing use?
- Analyze the "content" and "care" information. Determine the characteristics of different clothing materials. Why can some be washed in hot water, others only in cold? Why can't some be put in a clothes dryer or ironed? What about bleach?

### Dig A Little Deeper



- Make life-size replicas of the clothing worn at different times in the history of the country; Pilgrims and Indians, the Civil War, World War II; and label each piece of clothing and the origin of its fiber.
- Write an advertisement for a new line of clothing using only man-made (synthetic) materials.
- Levi's were "invented" for miners during the California Gold Rush. What other special clothes were necessary if you lived 100 years ago?

## Integrating the Curriculum

1. How much does a wool sweater weigh? In about the same style and size, how much does an acrylic sweater weigh? Do they use the same amount of space when folded?
2. What is the process that makes raincoats waterproof and how does it work?
3. Have students search their homes for other labels such as these: nutrition and health – cereal boxes and vitamins; safety – electric hair dryer; operating instructions – appliances.

**Let's Learn About Clothes**

What do you think clothes are made of?

**Clothes must be made from organic or inorganic natural resources.**

You can find out by reading the label sewn into your clothes. All clothes that come from a store must have a label to tell you what materials were used to make the clothes.

Some organic materials used to make clothes are **cotton**, **wool**, and special **animal skins**. Like leather and fur. **Silk** is also an organic material used to make clothes. Things that are made from organic materials are called "Natural Materials."

Many clothes are made from special minerals that are inorganic. Cloth made from inorganic minerals is called **synthetic**. Synthetic materials are made by man. If the label on your clothes says "Man Made," it is synthetic.

*Polyester, Acrylic, Rayon, and Nylon* are names of "Man Made" materials that are used in clothes. All **plastics** are synthetic materials.

Look at your shoes. Do you think they are made of "Natural Materials" or "Man Made" materials? Or both?

With a friend, read the labels on your clothes. List the materials written on the labels. Are they natural or man made? Are they made from, plants, animals, or minerals?

Type of Clothing Shirts, pants, shoes, coat	Natural or Man Made Organic or Inorganic	Plant, Animal, or Mineral Some can be all three

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### Read More About It!

- Check out these children's books for your class:
- *Cotton* by Millicent Selsam; Morrow Junior Books
  - *The Keeping Quilt* by Patricia Polacco; Simon & Schuster
  - *The Rag Coat* by Lauren Mills; Little Brown
  - *18th Century Clothing* and *19th Century Clothing* by Bobbie Kalman; Crabtree Publishing
  - *Cotton in Your T-Shirt* by Aline Riquier; Young Discovery Library