All the rage: clothes and fashion

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 zeitgeist ____	**a** the spirit or defining mood of a particular period
2 conspicuous consumption ____	**b** the visible display of wealth through possessions, including clothing
3 sartorial semiotics ____	**c** the study of how clothing choices signal meaning
4 haute couture ____	**d** high-end, custom-made fashion, often exclusive and expensive
5 anachronistic ____	**e** belonging to a different, often earlier, time period than the context suggests
6 subversive ____	**f** intended to undermine or challenge established norms
7 homogenise ____	**g** to make increasingly similar, reducing distinctiveness
8 ephemeral ____	**h** lasting only a short time; fleeting
9 provenance ____	**i** the origin or history of an item
10 aesthetic austerity ____	**j** a deliberately restrained, unadorned visual style

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 The defining mood of a fashion era is its zeitgeist / footnote.

2 Buying visibly expensive items to display wealth is conspicuous consumption / thrift.

3 A style that seems to belong to an earlier period is anachronistic / contemporary.

4 A style intended to challenge norms is subversive / conformist.

5 Making trends increasingly similar across markets is to homogenise / to diversify.

6 A fleeting, short-lived trend is ephemeral / enduring.

7 The traceable origin of a garment is its provenance / its price.

8 A restrained, unadorned visual approach is aesthetic austerity / maximalism.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 signal ____	**a** social status

All the rage: clothes and fashion

2 subvert ____	**b** conventional norms
3 democratise ____	**c** access to high fashion
4 commodify ____	**d** cultural identity
5 codify ____	**e** dress codes
6 appropriate ____	**f** a marginalised style
7 romanticise ____	**g** a bygone era
8 dictate ____	**h** prevailing trends

All the rage: clothes and fashion

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4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

aesthetic austerity | anachronistic | conspicuous consumption | ephemeral | haute couture | homogenise | provenance | sartorial semiotics | subversive | zeitgeist

Fashion theorists studying 1 _____ argue that clothing choices function as a coded language, communicating status, identity and allegiance without a word being spoken. A garment's 2 _____ - who made it, where and under what conditions - increasingly matters to consumers wary of 3 _____, the visible display of wealth once considered the primary purpose of luxury fashion. Meanwhile, global retail chains have been accused of beginning to 4 _____ style across markets, eroding regional distinctiveness even as niche designers pursue deliberately 5 _____ or period-inappropriate references to earlier decades. Some designers describe their work as 6 _____, intended to unsettle rather than flatter, while others champion a form of 7 _____, stripping garments back to their essential form. Whether any single collection captures the broader 8 _____ of an era remains debatable, given how 9 _____ most trends prove to be, in contrast to the enduring prestige of true 10 _____.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

Fashion, meaning and consumption

Scholars of material culture argue that clothing operates simultaneously as a functional object and a communicative artefact, encoding messages about status, belonging and aspiration that are read almost instantaneously by others. This dual function complicates efforts to analyse fashion trends purely in economic terms, since a garment's price rarely accounts fully for its social significance. The rise of conspicuous consumption in luxury markets, for instance, cannot be explained by material utility alone; rather, it reflects a desire to signal social position within a particular cultural moment. Critics of the fast fashion industry extend this analysis further, arguing that the homogenisation of style across global markets risks eroding the very distinctiveness that once made clothing a meaningful form of self-expression.

1 How does clothing operate simultaneously, according to scholars? _____

2 What does this dual function complicate? _____

3 What does a garment's price rarely account for fully? _____

4 What does conspicuous consumption reflect, rather than material utility? _____

5 What do critics of fast fashion argue homogenisation risks? _____

6 What did clothing distinctiveness once provide, according to the text? _____

All the rage: clothes and fashion

6 **Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.**

1 The outfit seemed to belong to an earlier decade. _____

2 She bought the bag mainly to display her wealth. _____

3 The design was intended to challenge conventional norms. _____

4 The trend lasted only a very short time. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how fashion functions as a form of communication and social signalling, distinguishing observation from inference and evaluating economic and cultural explanations.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 zeitgeist 2 conspicuous consumption 3 anachronistic 4 subversive 5 homogenise 6 ephemeral 7 provenance 8 aesthetic austerity

3 Academic collocations

1 a signal social status 2 b subvert conventional norms 3 c democratise access to high fashion
4 d commodify cultural identity 5 e codify dress codes 6 f appropriate a marginalised style
7 g romanticise a bygone era 8 h dictate prevailing trends

4 Analysis

1 sartorial semiotics 2 provenance 3 conspicuous consumption 4 homogenise 5 anachronistic
6 subversive 7 aesthetic austerity 8 zeitgeist 9 ephemeral 10 haute couture

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 As a functional object and a communicative artefact.
2 Efforts to analyse fashion trends purely in economic terms.
3 Its social significance.
4 A desire to signal social position within a particular cultural moment.
5 Eroding the distinctiveness that once made clothing a meaningful form of self-expression.
6 A meaningful form of self-expression.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 anachronistic 2 conspicuous consumption 3 subversive 4 ephemeral

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.