

Blue Jeans

"Jeans represent democracy in fashion."

—Giorgio Armani, fashion designer



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What is your favorite brand of jeans, and why?
2. How often do you wear jeans?
3. When or where are blue jeans inappropriate?
4. Why do so many people like wearing blue jeans?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.
Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| ___ 1. durability | a) to disallow or remove |
| ___ 2. patent | b) an act of resistance against authority |
| ___ 3. sturdy | c) strength |
| ___ 4. rebellion | d) togetherness |
| ___ 5. ban | e) a personal expression made through one's clothing |
| ___ 6. solidarity | f) to obtain a license to the rights of one's unique invention |
| ___ 7. sloppy | g) loose |
| ___ 8. fashion statement | h) strong |
| ___ 9. designer | i) made by well-known fashion brands |
| ___ 10. baggy | j) unkept, not tidy |

Reading

1. Some people wear jeans because they think it makes them look cool. Others wear jeans for comfort or **durability**. Regardless of the reason, jeans, also known as denim*, are popular and fashionable around the world.
2. The first Americans to wear blue jeans were miners and ranchers in the West. In the 1860s, jeans were known as “waist overalls” and were made by Levi Strauss & Co. Levi Strauss was a German-born New Yorker who moved to California during the gold rush. In 1873, he partnered with Jacob Davis to **patent** pants with rivets. Rivets are the tiny metal buttons on the pocket seams of jeans. The purpose of the rivets is to make the seams **sturdier**.
3. During World War II, women wore denim overalls while working in factories. “Rosie the Riveter” was a song about a woman who did her part for the American war effort. Rosie became an icon who inspired women to work while the men were away. In posters and ads, Rosie was usually dressed in denim overalls.
4. In the 1950s, blue jeans were associated with **rebellion**. When schools began **banning** jeans, this style of pants became even more attractive to young people. Actor Marlon Brando sported jeans in *The Wild One*, while James Dean wore them in *Rebel Without a Cause*. At this time, the word jeans** became very popular. Nobody called these pants overalls anymore.
5. In the 1960s, wearing blue jeans was a sign of **solidarity** between America’s working class and middle class. The middle class wanted to show the government that they didn’t support the Vietnam War. Many college students also wore jeans while protesting.
6. In the ‘50s and ‘60s, American women were criticized for dressing **sloppily** if they wore jeans. In the 1970s, many women began wearing denim again. For some it was an act of rebellion. For others it was a **fashion statement**. Many different styles of jeans emerged, including flares and bell-bottoms.
7. The 1980s was the era of **designer** jeans. Since then, many fads have come and gone. Today, many designers have adopted an “anything goes” attitude. Jeans are designed for different genders, sizes, ages, body types, and purposes. While some people love wearing jeans that fit tightly to their bodies, others prefer **baggy** styles. Today’s jeans are also available in any color imaginable. Styles and washes that went out of fashion have come back in.

*Note:

The word “denim” comes from the French town of de Nimes where jean material originated.

**Note:

The word “jeans” comes from Genoa, Italy, where sailors first wore indigo-dyed clothing.

Comprehension

A. Write Questions

Create your own comprehension questions about the reading using the following question words. Quiz a partner.

1. Who?

3. Where?

5. Why?

2. Who?

4. When?

6. How?

B. Timeline

Place the following in chronological order (1-8). One item is not mentioned in the reading. Place a star beside it and guess where it belongs.

_____ Designer jeans became popular.

_____ James Dean wore jeans in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

_____ Rosie the Riveter inspired women to go to work.

_____ Bell-bottom jeans became a popular '70s style.

_____ Many men left America to battle overseas in World War II.

_____ College students protested the Vietnam War in jeans.

_____ Levi Strauss opened a business with his brothers in California.

_____ Levis Strauss & Jacob Davis co-patented riveted trousers.

Vocabulary Review

Circle the error in each sentence below. Rewrite the sentence in your notebook to make it correct. Use the vocabulary on page 1 to help you.

1. Many workers enjoy wearing jeans because the material is sloppy.
2. In the 1980s, people all over the world were sporting designing jeans.
3. Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss worked together to ban riveted trousers.
4. James Dean and Marlon Brando were actors who were associated with rebellious.
5. My sister likes skinny jeans, but I prefer jeans that are bags.
6. He is making a fashion sentence with those '80s-style, acid-wash jeans.

Grammar Review

COMPARATIVE ADJECTIVES

More or **-er**? Write the correct answer from inside the brackets on the line to complete each sentence.

1. My new jeans are sturdy. They are _____ than my old pair.
(sturdier / more sturdy)
2. Your jeans are baggy. They are _____ than mine.
(more baggy / baggier)
3. Her sewing is getting sloppy. Her seams are _____ than they used to be.
(sloppier / more sloppy)
4. This brand makes clothes that are _____ than the other designers.
(durabler / more durable)
5. My old jeans are _____ than these ones.
(cozier / more cozy)
6. James Dean was _____ than Marlon Brando.
(cuter / more cute)

You Be the Designer

Work together with a partner or group to design a new kind of jeans. Your jeans can be traditional pants, shorts, a skirt, a jacket, etc. Add any **embellishments** that you please! Draw the jeans and describe them to your class. Whose jeans look the coolest/cutest/craziest/coziest?

Class Survey

MY KIND OF DENIM

Walk around your class and find out what kind of jeans your classmates prefer. Write their names in the chart under their answers.

Example Questions:

- Which type of leg opening do you prefer?
- What is your favorite style of waistline?
- Which fit do you find the most comfortable?
- Which do you like better, a button fly or a zipper?
- What is your favorite brand of jeans?

LEG OPENING					
boot-cut	bell-bottom	flare	straight	narrow	
FIT					
straight-leg	relaxed	skinny	baggy	carpenter	jegging <i>tight & stretchy</i>

Class Survey cont.

WAIST							
hipster <i>super low</i>		low-rise		mid-rise		high-rise	
WASH							
stone <i>vintage</i>	dark	light	black	white	gray	dyed <i>colored</i>	acid
FLY							
	button fly					zipper fly	
BRAND							

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

In this lesson, students read about the history of blue jeans. The lesson includes a reading, a comprehension check, a vocabulary review, and a class survey.

LEVEL: High Int

TIME: 1.5–2 hours

TAGS: jeans, denim, blue jeans, fashion, American history

Pre-Reading

A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Discuss as a class, in pairs, or in small groups. Answers will vary.

B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

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

Comprehension

A. WRITE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

Answers will vary.

Check that students are forming questions correctly.

B. TIMELINE

- 8 Designer jeans became popular.
- 5 James Dean wore jeans in *Rebel Without a Cause*.
- 4 Rosie the Riveter inspired women to go to work.
- 7 Bell-bottom jeans became a popular '70s style.
- 3 Many men left America to battle overseas in World War II.
- 6 College students protested the Vietnam War in jeans.
- 1* Levi Strauss opened a business with his brothers in California.
- 2 Levis Strauss & Jacob Davis co-patented riveted trousers.

Vocabulary Review

1. Many workers enjoy wearing jeans because the material is **sturdy**.
2. In the 1980s, people all over the world were sporting **designer** jeans.
3. Jacob Davis and Levi Strauss worked together to **patent** riveted trousers.
4. James Dean and Marlon Brando were actors who were associated with **rebellion**.
5. My sister likes skinny jeans, but I prefer jeans that are **baggy**.
6. He is making a fashion **statement** with those '80s-style, acid-wash jeans.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Grammar Review

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. sturdier | 3. sloppier | 5. cozier |
| 2. baggier | 4. more durable | 6. cuter |

Review the basic rules about comparative adjectives:

- If the adjective has one syllable, add *-er*.
- If the adjective has two syllables and ends in *-y*, change *-y* to *-i* and add *-er*.
- If the adjective has two or more syllables (and doesn't end in *-y*), add "more".

Learn why "fun" isn't usually "funner" in our editor's blog post:

<http://blog.esllibrary.com/2012/06/06/answering-students-grammar-questions-why-cant-we-say-funner/>

Find a printable comparative adjectives chart and more examples on our sister site's blog:

<http://blog.sproutenglish.com/comparative-adjectives/>

You Be the Designer

Try this optional fun activity if time permits.

Class Survey

Have students survey their classmates about their denim preferences. Invite them to be themselves or a famous person for this activity. Help them with proper question formation.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Favorite*, *License*, *Gray*, and *Color*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Favourite*, *Licence*, *Grey*, and *Colour*. Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.