

The irresistible rise of Alex Consani

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Winning look: Accepting her ground-breaking British Fashion Council Model of the Year award, American transgender model Alex Consani (above) expressed gratitude to her parents for supporting both her modelling aspirations and a transition that began in early childhood.

Is fashion a force for good? A pioneering transgender woman has been named Model of the Year. Some think fashion should lead the way in fighting prejudice.

What's happening?

This week, Alex Consani made fashion history. On Monday night the 21-year-old Californian was named British Fashion Council's Model of the Year. She is the first **transgender** model to be honoured with the prize.

Consani is a trans **pioneer**. She started modelling at 12 years old, making her the youngest trans model in the world. She is also a TikTok phenomenon, with four million followers for her account @captincrook.

Her victory could **empower** other trans people. It might show that fashion can be used to increase the acceptance of trans identities throughout society.

Find out more

High fashion is often ahead of the curve when it comes to representation. British supermodel Naomi Campbell is a long-term activist against racial bias and fashion has long embraced queer people.

Yet it does have a dark side. Fashion history is full of truly nasty people. Coco Chanel dated a Nazi agent and tried to use **anti-Semitic** laws to remove a Jewish business

partner from her perfume company.

Fashion also promotes unrealistic ideals of beauty and glamour, convincing people — especially women — that they need to look a certain way to be attractive.

To become very slim, models often starve themselves. Risking their lives, just to sell clothes and make-up.

Is fashion a force for good?

Some say

Yes! Great fashion is a thing of beauty and beautiful things make the world a better place for everyone.

Others think

No! The fashion industry is built on body shaming, exclusivity and prejudice, and the clothes we wear are often produced in brutal sweatshops at an enormous environmental cost.

Six steps to discovery

Some people say

"Fashion is a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months."

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Do you buy many clothes? Do you consider yourself fashionable?

2. Wonder

Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900), Irish writer and wit

Empty heading

What do you think?

What questions do you have? - For example: Who are the most famous models in history? When did fast fashion become available?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - The fashion industry accounts for 8.1% of global greenhouse gas emissions. How does this compare with other sectors, for example agriculture, or transport?

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Your best friend asks for fashion advice. What do you tell them?

5. Express

What do others believe? - In groups, discuss what you like and do not like about today's fashion.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Design and draw an outfit that you wish you could wear.

Glossary

Transgender - Someone whose gender identity (what they feel inside) does not match the gender identity they were assigned at birth (based on their biology).

Pioneer - A person who is among the first to explore or settle a new country or area of activity.

Empower - Give someone power, or make someone feel strong and confident.

anti-Semitic - Showing hatred or prejudice towards Jewish people.