Jeans in Every Closet

It took decades for Levi's pants to make it to your closet. At first, they were seen only as work clothes. But in the 1930s, Western movies became popular. Suddenly cowboys were cool. And cowboys wore jeans—at least in the movies.

In the 1950s, Hollywood gave jeans a bad reputation. Movies came out about motorcycle gangs and violence in schools. All the young troublemakers wore the same clothes: jeans and leather jackets. Before long, schools started banning denim pants.

From Work Clothes to Cool Clothes!

Blue jeans were invented as sturdy work pants for gold miners (left). But movie stars like James Dean turned them into a fashion trend.

In the end, it didn't matter. Teens liked wearing clothes their parents hated. In 1958, one article said that 90 percent of young people owned jeans. And they wore them almost everywhere.

Today, the average American owns seven pairs of jeans. And the company that started it all is doing pretty well. Levi's sells nearly $5 billion worth of clothes a year. Now that's a gold rush! •

Action Activity

How did jeans become so popular?

Write a paragraph to answer this question.
Get started by using facts from the article to finish the sentences below.

Remember to indent the first sentence!

Topic Sentence { In the past 150 years, jeans have gone from _____
The main idea of your paragraph: How have the reasons why people wear jeans changed over time?
_____

Detail 1 { Levi Strauss first made strong denim pants in 1873 to _____
What problem did Strauss's pants help solve?
_____

Detail 2 { Jeans started to seem cool in the 1930s, when _____
Who was seen wearing jeans in the 1930s?
_____

Detail 3 { In the 1950s, jeans became the uniform of bad kids in the movies, and _____
What did schools do?
_____

Conclusion { Banning jeans made them even more popular with teens, and today _____
How many pairs of jeans does the average American own?
_____

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