

## 'Linen is meaningful in Belfast': how an old industry is weaving the city a new identity

### Level 1: Elementary

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

1. What are you wearing at the moment?
2. What are the clothes made from?
3. What country are the clothes from?

#### 2 Key words

a. Find these words in bold in the article. Then match them to the following definitions.

destroyed  
support

crease  
items

damage  
weaving

industry  
decades

mills  
runs

1. \_\_\_\_\_ : to have lines on clothes so they look untidy
2. \_\_\_\_\_ : harm done to something so that it doesn't work well
3. \_\_\_\_\_ : periods of ten years
4. \_\_\_\_\_ : completely broken or damaged so it can't be used again
5. \_\_\_\_\_ : all the businesses that make or produce the same thing
6. \_\_\_\_\_ : individual things
7. \_\_\_\_\_ : factories where materials like cloth or flour are made
8. \_\_\_\_\_ : manages a business
9. \_\_\_\_\_ : to give help to a person or project
10. \_\_\_\_\_ : making things such as linen and cotton on special machines

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. A fire \_\_\_\_\_ the old cinema.
2. My grandmother lived in the same house for three \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The farming project got \_\_\_\_\_ from the local government.
4. The old cotton \_\_\_\_\_ is now a museum.
5. There are ten \_\_\_\_\_ on the menu today.
6. Don't sit on my clothes! You will \_\_\_\_\_ them.
7. The film \_\_\_\_\_ is very important for the city of Los Angeles.
8. Belfast is famous for \_\_\_\_\_ some of the best linen in the world.
9. Cary \_\_\_\_\_ a small clothes shop in the city centre.
10. The storm caused a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ to the town.

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*Fabric that once defined Northern Ireland's capital is at heart of its stylish revival, embraced by designers, royalty and heritage farmers alike*

**Jess Cartner-Morley**  
**29 April, 2026**

- 1 Belfast, the capital city of Northern Ireland, was famous for its linen. In the past it was called Linenopolis because they made some of the best linen in the world there. Forty per cent of workers in Northern Ireland worked in the linen **industry**. But a hundred years ago, the industry disappeared. Now, however, people are making linen in the city again.
- 2 Amy Anderson, a 32-year-old designer, **runs** a company with her husband, Joel. "The city has changed over the last two **decades**," she says. Anderson's grandmother Winnie worked in the **mills**. "Most people here have relatives who worked in the linen industry."
- 3 There are important people who are trying to **support** the linen industry, such as the fashion designer Sarah Burton and the Prince and Princess of Wales. There is also the farmer Charlie Mallon. He is using his family farm to grow flax. Flax is the plant that people use to make linen.
- 4 Mallon bought old machines and uses them to make linen. They don't **damage** the linen so that it doesn't **crease** as much. Most modern linen comes from China and usually creases a lot more.

5 Last autumn, Amy and Joel Anderson met the Prince and Princess of Wales, who came to see Mallon's farm. The Princess talked about fashion to Mallon. Amy Anderson told a newspaper that the Princess "asked very good questions".

6 There is also an exhibition at the Ulster Museum. It is about a fire in 1976 that **destroyed** almost all of a fashion collection. There is a quilt from 1712, 18th-century dresses and more modern **items** by Irish designers, including Philip Treacy and the Dior designer Jonathan Anderson.

7 Amy and Joel plan to open a shop in central London. Joel says that businesses from Northern Ireland are lucky because they can sell clothes to the UK and also to European countries. "This is good for businesses like ours, and that's what makes this place different."

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First published in *The Guardian*, 29/04/2026

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Read the article and choose the correct answers.

1. Belfast is called 'Linenopolis' because ...
  - a. it is the capital city of Northern Ireland.
  - b. it was famous for making linen.
  - c. a lot of farmers lived there.
2. What did Amy Anderson's grandmother do?
  - a. She designed clothes.
  - b. She grew flax on a farm.
  - c. She worked in the mills.
3. What is flax?
  - a. a machine for making cloth
  - b. a plant that people use to make linen
  - c. a type of linen from China
4. Why is linen made on Mallon's old machines better than modern linen?
  - a. It doesn't crease as much.
  - b. It is cheaper to make.
  - c. It comes in more colours.
5. Where do Amy and Joel Anderson want to open a new shop?
  - a. in central London
  - b. in a European city
  - c. in Belfast

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#### 4 Key language

a. Complete the table with the simple past form of these verbs from the article.

Simple present form	Simple past form
buy	1)
come	2)
meet	3)
run	4)
say	5)
tell	6)

b. Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs from task a.

- Last night, my cousin \_\_\_\_\_ me she is getting married.
- When I was on holiday, I \_\_\_\_\_ my old school friend in a café!
- My dad \_\_\_\_\_ three fish and chip restaurants until he died in 2012.
- I usually \_\_\_\_\_ my clothes from the market because they are cheaper.
- Can you \_\_\_\_\_ to the cinema tomorrow night?
- The news reader \_\_\_\_\_ there was a big fire on the island of Malta.

#### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- Think of a town or city in your country.
- What is it famous for? What do people make or grow there?

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#### 6 In your own words

- a. You are going to design an outfit that represents your cultural heritage and present it to the class.

Think about ...

- what fabrics and materials you will use and why you have chosen these
- what patterns, colours or design features you will add
- what the outfit represents about your culture or identity

Your presentation should include ...

- a sketch or description of the outfit
- an explanation of the cultural significance of your choices
- a short 'catwalk commentary' as if you were introducing the outfit at a fashion show

- b. Present your outfit to the class. Be prepared to answer questions from other groups.