



**Kassandra Castillo Cruz**

**Kavani Handmade  
Rebag  
New York/Vieques**

***Stone Soup for a Sustainable World:  
Life-Changing Stories of Young Heroes***

***From Recycling to Resale: Rebag***  
**Kassandra Castillo Cruz**  
**Kavani Handmade & ReBag**  
**Vieques, Puerto Rico/New York City**

When Kassandra Castillo Cruz was 14 years old, a friend invited her to join a new youth leadership program, the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative (VYLI). When she was asked, “What is your dream for your life, your island, and your community?” Kassandra declared that she wanted to become a top model – a dream that due to her persistence and hard work eventually came true. But that wasn’t her main goal: her main goal was to get a good education and then return to her island so she could help others find ways to realize their dreams too. Today she is head of operations for Rebag Infinity, a \$50 million worldwide resale retailer that gives consumers the chance to buy and sell back their luxury handbags, giving them a much longer life, and keeping them out of the trash.

**Values Vision Determination Persistence Generosity Environmentalism**

**Lessons Learned:**

- Dreams *can* come true through effort, hard work, and creativity.
- Building - or rebuilding - a home is a community effort that will benefit the whole community. The same is true for a country and for the world.
- You can find treasures everywhere, if you are willing to look in places others may regard as being worthless.

**Language Arts:**

- What is the impact of the fashion industry on the environment? Choose one branch of this industry – make-up, clothing, handbags, shoes, accessories, etc. – and write a research essay about the manufacturing and distribution practices in the industry, and their cost to the environment.
- Create a series of Tik Tok videos in which you explain how to keep up with fashion in an environmentally responsible way. Offer advice and resources, from websites where you can exchange or repurpose merchandise, to practices that can extend the life of a purse, shoes, or clothing.
- Hurricane Maria was a devastating event for the island of Puerto Rico. Create a presentation in which you explain the ecological damage caused by the hurricane and how it affected the economy, culture, and social fabric of the island. Finish your presentation by suggesting ways in which people can help in the ongoing reconstruction efforts.
- Create a presentation on the effects the U.S. military base has had on the island of Vieques: How did the base affect the island’s environment, its economy, and the people who lived there? What efforts were necessary to end the use of the island as a military base? What is being done to restore the island, its economy, and its people?

## STEM Activities:

- Even if you aren't interested in fashion or shopping, you are part of the fashion industry because you wear clothing every day, and will buy and wear a large number of clothes throughout your lifetime. Many natural resources are used to produce our clothes. Watch this [video on the lifecycle of a basic t-shirt](#). How can the industry be regulated to be more sustainable?
- Collect data about your clothing at home, then use the data you collected to calculate approximately how many resources went into making the clothes (water, land, and carbon). How much of the world's resources have gone into creating the clothes you *don't* wear? What could you do with them to keep them in use and to minimize their environmental impact?
- In September 2017, Hurricane Maria became regarded as the worst natural disaster to ever hit Puerto Rico, causing billions of dollars' worth of damages and leaving many of its people without power. In this activity, students will investigate the connection between climate change and extreme weather events. What are some ways that the fashion industry and consumer habits are contributing to climate change, and ultimately the formation of some of these natural disasters?

## Sustainability Innovations:

- These companies have followed paths similar to Cassandra's, by developing sustainable advancements in the fashion industry:
  - [Mango Materials](#) produces bio-polyester that can be used as an alternative to the polyester currently being used in the fashion industry.
  - [Orange Fiber](#) is an Italian-based company that created the first sustainable fabric by reusing citrus-based by-products.
  - [Paptic](#) uses sustainably sourced wood fibers to create a sustainable alternative to the plastic used in packaging.
  - [BioGlitz](#) is a company that has created the world's first biodegradable glitter.
- In addition to sustainable products, some companies have also pledged to take action in their communities and help the environment. [Patagonia](#) is one of the global leaders among businesses who prioritize the materials they use, and environmental and social responsibility programs.
- The world of fashion needs more companies to promote reuse and sustainability within the industry. This article by [The Good Trade](#) highlights 10 impactful ways to recycle and repurpose clothing.

## Sustainable Career Pathways

- **Reused Retail.** Did you know [there are more than 25,000 resale stores in the United States](#), and that selling used stuff is an \$18 billion industry? Reselling is not only a useful business, but a sustainable one too—helping to keep good clothing, furniture, books, and other items out of the garbage and in people's hands and homes. Working for a company like ReBag or ThredUp, setting up a consignment store, or managing a thrift shop are all good ways to help your community and the planet. Curious to learn more? [Here's an article about what it's like to work at a thrift store](#).
- **Resilience Officer.** As climate change intensifies, more cities, regions, and islands have hired chief resilience officers (CROs) to oversee adaptation to and mitigation of the effects of climate change, such as hurricanes, coastal flooding, fires, and increased migration. If this sounds interesting to you, [read more about what CROs do here](#).
- **Sustainable Fashion Industry.** New clothes will continue to be made, of course, but they can be made sustainably. Materials like organic cotton or recycled plastics can be used, and designed in a way that the clothing at the end of its (ideally long) lifespan can be recycled or composted (for example, by not mixing natural and synthetic fibers). [Here is a great introduction to the field](#). And [an article on the many ways sustainability is shaping the future of the fashion industry](#).

**Call to Action:** Invest in young people to help them realize their dreams. Visit the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative: [www.vyli.org](http://www.vyli.org). Check out Cassandra's company on Instagram: kavani\_handmade.

## Standards

### California:

- **ELA**
- **RI.11-12.7:** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **RST.11-12.7:** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **SL.11-12.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. a. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas. b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed. c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- **SL.11-12.2:** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
- **SL.11-12.4:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence (e.g., reflective, historical investigation, response to literature presentations), conveying a clear and distinct perspective and a logical argument, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks. Use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation. CA a. Plan and deliver a reflective narrative that: explores the significance of a personal experience, event, or concern; uses sensory language to convey a vivid picture; includes appropriate narrative techniques (e.g., dialogue, pacing, description); and draws comparisons between the specific incident and broader themes. (11th or 12th grade) CA b. Plan and present an argument that: supports a precise claim; provides a logical sequence for claims, counterclaims, and evidence; uses rhetorical devices to support assertions (e.g., analogy, appeal to logic through reasoning, appeal to emotion or ethical belief); uses varied syntax to link major sections of the presentation to create cohesion and clarity; and provides a concluding statement that supports the argument presented. (11th or 12th grade) CA
- **SL.11-12.5:** Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- **W.11-12.1:** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. f. Use specific rhetorical devices to support assertions (e.g., appeal to logic through reasoning; appeal to emotion or ethical belief; relate a personal anecdote, case study, or analogy). CA
- **W.11-12.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. a. Introduce a topic or thesis statement; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. CA b. Develop the

topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic. c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts. d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic. e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

- W.11-12.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- W.11-12.10: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- **STEM**
- HS-ESS3-2: Evaluate competing design solutions for minimizing impacts of developing and using energy and mineral resources, and conserving and recycling those resources, based on economic, social, and environmental cost-benefit ratios. Clarification Statement: Examples include developing best practices for agricultural soil use, mining (for metals, coal, tar sands, and oil shales), and pumping (for petroleum and natural gas).
- HS-ESS3-4: Evaluate or refine a technological solution that reduces impacts of human activities on natural systems.
- HS-ETS1-1: Analyze a major global challenge to specify qualitative and quantitative criteria and constraints for solutions that account for societal needs and wants.
- HS-ETS1-3: Evaluate a solution to a complex real-world problem based on prioritized criteria and trade-offs that account for a range of constraints, including cost, safety, reliability, aesthetics, and maintenance, as well as social, cultural, and environmental impacts.

#### **Massachusetts:**

- RI.11-12.3: Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
- RI.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- RCA-H.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
- RCA-H.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- RCA-H.11-12.9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.
- SL.11-12.2: Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
- SL.11-12.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, vocabulary, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks. (See grades 11-12 Language Standards 4-6 for specific expectations regarding vocabulary.)
- SL.11-12.5: Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
- W.11-12.1: Write arguments (e.g., essays, letters to the editor, advocacy speeches) to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- W.11-12.1.a: Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

- W.11-12.1.e: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.
- W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts (e.g., essays, oral reports, biographical feature articles) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- W.11-12.2.a: Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include text features (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
- W.11-12.2.b: Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.
- W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in Writing Standards 1-3.)
- W.11-12.6: Use technology, including current web-based communication platforms, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.
- W.11-12.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- W.11-12.8: When conducting research, gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation
- W.11-12.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support written analysis, interpretation, reflection, and research, applying one or more grades 11-12 standards for Reading Literature or Reading Informational Text as needed.
- **STEM**
- 9-12.DTC.c.2: Perform advanced searches to locate information and/or design a data-collection approach to gather original data (e.g., qualitative interviews, surveys, prototypes, simulations).
- HS.ESS.3.2: Evaluate competing design solutions for minimizing impacts of developing and using energy and mineral resources, and conserving and recycling those resources, based on economic, social, and environmental cost-benefit ratios. Clarification Statement: Examples include developing best practices for agricultural soil use, mining (for metals, coal, tar sands, and oil shales), and pumping (for petroleum and natural gas).
- HS.ETS.1.1: Analyze a major global challenge to specify a design problem that can be improved. Determine necessary qualitative and quantitative criteria and constraints for solutions, including any requirements set by society. Clarification Statement: Examples of societal requirements can include risk mitigation, aesthetics, ethical considerations, and long-term maintenance costs.
- HS.ETS.1.3: Evaluate a solution to a complex real-world problem based on prioritized criteria and trade-offs that account for a range of constraints, including cost, safety, reliability, aesthetics, and maintenance, as well as social, cultural, and environmental impacts.

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