**SWEATSHOPS IN OUR LIVES?**

**Age Range:** Can easily be customized for use with middle school and high school age students.

**As a result of this lesson, students will understand that**

- Many of the clothes students wear have been made in sweatshops
- Sweatshops are prevalent in the production of clothing
- There are many different steps and processes in the creation of a finished product
- There are arguments for and against sweatshops

**As a result of this lesson, students will know that**

- Sweatshops are responsible for making much of the clothes in the world today
- Sweatshops exist around the world
- Sweatshops affect many countries, communities, and individuals

**As a result of this lesson, students will be able to**

- Discuss what a sweatshop is, and how they are involved in clothing production
- Identify where clothes are made
- Make a map of where their clothes are made around the world

**Materials Needed**

- Writing materials
- Butcher paper
- Sticky Notes
- World Map

**LESSON**

This is an introductory lesson to get learners involved, knowledgeable, and more conscious about the existence and prevalence of sweatshops in our everyday lives. Students don’t need to have extensive knowledge about sweatshops or economics for this lesson. This lesson can work very well as a way to connect a study of the Industrial Revolution or child labor to the modern day, or can be easily connected to a discussion of global economics, supply chains, and labor history.

Note: If you want to provide your students with some background on what sweatshops are, you should give a brief overview of what they are. If images or graphics will help, feel free to use the links below:

Infographic on Temp positions in the US [http://s.coop/1ms6w]

Informational, Interactive Walk-through about child labor [http://s.coop/1ms72]

Infographic on Child Labor and Slavery [http://s.coop/1ms75]
Journal Entry Activity - 10 - 20 Minutes

Before students arrive in the classroom, prepare handouts using the two quoted excerpts in Appendix A, or write them on the board.

Next, have the students spend 5-10 minutes doing a journal entry that responds to the below prompts (which should also be written on the board before students arrive). Let them know that they will have a chance to share their thoughts at the end of the activity, and that you will be reading their entries as an in-class assignment:

Prompts:

What do you know about sweatshops? What are they and where do you think they exist?
How do the two excerpts contrast each other?
What is your opinion on sweatshops? Why do you feel the way that you do?

After the students are done with their journal entry, see if anyone wants to share their thoughts. Encourage students to share, and allow them to speak fully before anyone responds or asks questions. Be sure to be supportive and make sure that no one is hostile to each other. That said, challenge their viewpoints, and try to prompt them to go deeper.

T-shirt Activity - 10 - 15 Minutes

Next, have the students get in pairs. Have each student look at the tag of their partners shirt or jacket, and write down the name of the company and where the item was manufactured. Next, have the students come up to the map at the front of the classroom and put a pin in the country where their piece of clothing was manufactured. They should also lead a string from the pin to a sticky note where they will write down the location where the item was manufactured and the name of the company that made it. In addition, have the students estimate the distance the item had to travel to get to them, how it got there, and who produced the items under what conditions.

Group Discussion - 10 - 15 Minutes

After the students have completed the T-shirt activity, move to a full group discussion with them. Focus on what they observed from the activity, and how their thoughts on sweatshops are evolving. Below are some prompts to help generate a discussion.

What did you notice about the map we made?

What clothing companies were included?
   Were you surprised?

Where were the items made?
   Did you notice any trends or patterns?
   Were they formerly colonized nations?

Why do you think the factories were in these locations?

What kind of conditions do you think the people who produced the items work in?
Why do you think this is the case?

What kind of effects do you think sweatshops could have on the communities where they are located?

On the environment?

Families?

Locally owned businesses?

Where do you think the majority of profit and money goes from a sweatshop factory?

Do you think sweatshops provide opportunities for those who are workers? Why or why not?

What if it was you, or your child who was working, would you feel the same?

**Homework/Take Home Activity**

Have the students do this take home activity to further their study on the role of global manufacturing and labor. You could also have the students choose one product from the list to do more focused research on. See homework worksheet below.
Take some time to find 10 items in your household. They could be toys, clothing, shoes, really anything that has a label saying where the item was made, and who made it. Take some time to record this information, like you did in class, and fill in the notes section with your thoughts on patterns, environmental effects, etc.

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In his New York Times Magazine article titled Two Cheers for Sweatshops, columnist Nicholas Kristof endorsed sweatshops by explaining that when he first moved to Asia, "like most Westerners," he was outraged at the sweatshops, but eventually came to appreciate them as "a clear sign of the industrial revolution that is beginning to reshape Asia." He pointed out that Asian workers would be aghast at the hint of American consumers boycotting certain toys or clothing in protest. The sight of Asian workers being locked in the walled factory compound for all but a total of 60 minutes a day for meals, not to mention being regularly punched and hit, would be to buy more from sweatshops, not less. "The least way to help the poorest Asians would be to buy more from sweatshops," he says. Liu, a worker, also found that Chun Si's 900 workers were locked in the walled factory compound for all but a total of 60 minutes a day for meals, after he and about 60 other workers descended on the local labor office to protest. "Chun Si's latest offenses: requiring cash payments for dinners and a phony factory trip set up to take workers on a whistle-stop tour of Wal-Mart's auditorios. In this pocket was a total of $6 for three months of 90-hour weeks--an average of about one-half cent an hour." Workers there face a life of "hun and beating," says Liu. "Excerpt from: Dexter Roberts & Aaron Bernstein, Bloomberg Businessweek, 2000. [http://s.coop/tms7d]