

Where Am I Wearing?

A Global Tour to the Countries, Factories, and People that Make Our Clothes

By Kelsey Timmerman

Freshman Connections Common Reader 2012 – 2013

Background Information

The author believes that if we reduce global issues to the stories of individual people, we can better see ourselves, our parents, our sons and daughters, and our hopes and struggles in one another.

Whether laughing at the world with garment workers in Cambodia or talking with college students in Indiana, discussing SCUBA diving with lobster divers in Nicaragua or addressing a nonprofit in Florida, playing PlayStation with students in Kosovo or challenging high school students in the U.S. to see the world differently, the author seeks to connect people through words and pictures.

In his first book, *Where Am I Wearing?* Kelsey traveled the world to find out where his clothes came from. Visiting garment factories in Asia and Latin America, he shared the stories of the people who make our clothes. From a 20-something t-shirt maker in Honduras to a single mother of two in Bangladesh, Timmerman humanizes the issues of globalization and provokes readers to check their tags and think about where their clothing came from.

If you would like to know more about the author you can visit his website, <http://whereamiwearing.com/>, or if you have questions for the author, please go to Twitter and tweet him @KelseyTimmerman.

Checkout the Facebook Page at BSU Freshman Connections.

Resources: Resources: Biographical Information from Amazon.com and from the author's website.

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Author Kelsey Timmerman

How Not to Be a "Touron"

Kelsey Timmerman is a freelance writer, and speaker who focuses on globalization, travel, the outdoors, adventure, and what it means to be a Touron (moron + tourist) in worlds of clashing cultures.

Other Publications

His writing has appeared in publications such as the Christian Science Monitor and Condé Nast Portfolio and has aired on NPR. He has spoken on subjects such as globalization, travel, and social responsibility at universities, high schools, and groups across the country.

His next book, *Where Am I Eating?*, will be published by Wiley in 2013. He is currently traveling picking bananas and chocolate, catching lobster, and working on coffee plantations.

Where Am I Wearing? - Sample Discussion Questions

1. Timmerman gives us the stories of real people around the world who work to make the clothing we wear. How do these stories make you feel? Why is it important to hear the stories of these workers?
2. Would you consider visiting a foreign country to learn more about a world issues that you were concerned about? What barriers might prevent you from traveling internationally?
3. Timmerman meets children who have to beg in the street or dig through trash at the city dump in order to make money for their families. These children would like to work in the sweatshops one day in order to have access to a better life and more money to send to their families. How does this dream differ from dreams of children here in the United States?
4. What do you think about the Anti-Sweatshop Protestors? How effective are those protestors in helping to improve conditions at these manufacturing plants?
5. How do you feel about the American “sweat shop” workers that Timmerman encountered?
6. How are you currently trying to live “glocally” (as a local and global citizen)?
7. After reading the book, what are your feelings about jobs being outsourced to different countries? What are the benefits and drawbacks of this practice?
8. The author discusses that in China, many factory workers were expected to work overtime without being paid or risk losing their jobs. Do you feel that this is an acceptable practice?
9. Timmerman includes himself and his thoughts in the narrative. What do we learn about Timmerman? What kind of person is he? Why do you think he includes his own voice?
10. Timmerman gives us information from a specific point of view. Are there any voices that are missing from the text? If you were going to research clothing labor practices, who would you talk to? Why?
11. This work has elements of autobiography and memoir. What are the benefits/risks of this approach?
12. Which elements of development and economic policy does the author fail to address?
13. What role does political structure play in the development of labor practices?
14. In what ways might our western post-industrial perspective bias our perceptions of these labor practices?
15. What psychological risks might the employees of these companies face?
16. Is it morally or ethically acceptable for the author to misrepresent his intentions in order to gain access to the factories?
17. Timmerman seems to question whether child labor in places such as Bangladesh is wrong. Timmerman states, “My own conclusion, after visiting Bangladesh, is that we should not be ashamed that our clothes are made by children, so much as ashamed that we live in a world where child labor is often necessary for survival”. How do you feel about his conclusion?
18. There has been a lot of discussion in the United States about labor practices and the strengths and weaknesses of unions. How did this book make you think about the need (or lack thereof) of labor unions in the United States’ garment industry?
19. What does environmental justice mean to you?
20. Several American Universities have their students sign a “sustainability pledge.” Harvard’s can be found here: <http://green.harvard.edu/pledge/students>. What are three things that you are going to commit to doing over this school year? Do you think BSU should adapt a pledge like this?

Where Am I Wearing? - Additional Resources

How smart is your phone?

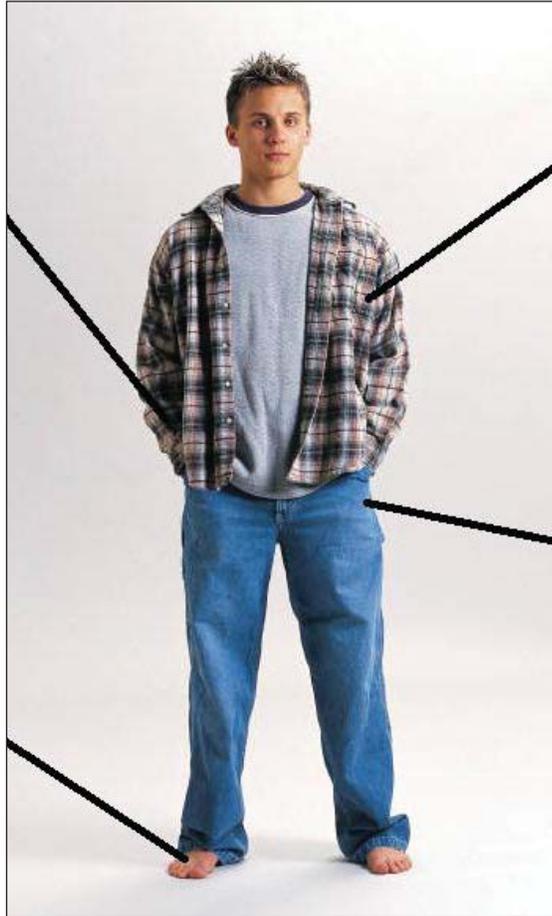
Many mobile phones, including the iPhone, are manufactured at the Foxconn factory in China which was reported to have dangerous, exploitive working conditions. In response to public pressure Apple conducted an internal investigation and is pressuring sub-contractors for improved conditions and higher wages.

BBC News

No Shoes?

Public outcry has caused Nike and other companies to stop many of their child-labor practices, however, some of their products come from sweatshops which are sub-contracted to local governments. Some of these sweatshops are engaged in unethical practices, such as a factory in Malaysia which was cited for confiscating passports of workers.

MSNBC News



Shirt: The GAP

In 2007, the Telegraph found children as young as eight working in a GAP sweatshop in India, where workers were forced to squat on the floor to embroider and stitch clothing. In response, The Gap modified its supply chain strategies to comply with new CA regulations.

The Telegraph

Jeans and options?

Hanes is listed on the laborrights.org "Sweatshop Hall of Shame 2010" for their sweatshops and forced child-labor practices. They are changing supply chain strategies to comply with new CA regulations.

Can you make money and pay a living wage?

Knight's Apparel is trying to do things differently in Dominican Republic where other companies have struggled.

NY Times

Before you shop, learn more...

Worldwide Responsible Apparel Production - www.wrapapparel.org/

National Labor Committee - www.globallabourrights.org/

UNITE - www.unionlabel.com/

California Transparency in Supply Chains Act of 2010 (SB 657) –

http://leginfo.ca.gov/pub/09-10/bill/sen/sb_0651-0700/sb_657_bill_20100930_chaptered.html

Sources:

www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-17584523

www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25970840/ns/business-world_business/t/nike-malaysian-factory-violates-major-rights/#.T3zQn9l2hI0

www.law.harvard.edu/programs/lwp/NLC_childlabor.html

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1567849/Gap-sweatshop-children-saved-in-India-raid.html

www.gapinc.com/content/csr/html/OurResponsibility/governance/SB657.html

www.nytimes.com/2010/07/18/business/global/18shirt.html?pagewanted=all

www.hanes.com/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/hanesa_CustomerService_11652_-1_11502

Where Am I Wearing? - Two Summer Assignments

#1 Discussion Group Preparation Assignment:

You will need to complete these questions as preparation for the book discussion groups on Sunday, August 19, 2012. One or more of these questions may be used to guide your discussion.

1. Take an inventory of the clothes you are wearing at this moment. Where are you wearing? Using the “Map Machine” feature on the National Geographic site, locate the countries
<http://maps.nationalgeographic.com/map-machine>
Bring your inventory to the discussion to share.

Item of Clothing

Country of Origin

2. Using the United Nations website, locate the UN Global Compact www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/index.html List and discuss the four universally accepted principles that specifically address labor.
3. The author will be on campus on Tuesday, September 18th and will present at 7:30 pm in Emens auditorium. What question would you like to ask him?

#2 Common Writing Experience Essay Assignment:

Once you’ve finished reading the book, log on to the Freshman Common Writing Experience Site at <http://cms.bsu.edu/About/AdministrativeOffices/FreshmanConnections/WritingExp.aspx> to learn more about the essay.

You will then log in to the InQsit section of the Ball State University website <http://www.bsu.edu/inqsit/> at any time beginning July 15 and before August 15. When you log in, enter “Freshman Connections” into the box and click on “Students and Respondents” you will receive a prompt asking you to compose an essay on one of two specific questions, ideas, or issues raised by the book. You will have two hours to complete the essay, so be sure that you have sufficient time and are ready to write when you log in. This data may be used for assessment purposes and will not affect your course placement. All students participating in Freshman Connections Common Reading Program are expected to complete this assignment, regardless of current placement in the Writing Program or prior credit (AP, dual-credit, transfer, or other) for one or more Writing Program courses; if you’ve received such credit, you will still receive credit for those courses.

If you have any questions please e-mail us Freshmanconn@bsu.edu.