

# STUDENT'S HANDOUT



## Background Information

Nowadays, an increasing number of people try to consume more responsibly in order to avoid supporting abusive working conditions throughout the world, especially those imposed upon children. Many municipalities and school institutions now apply an ethical purchasing policy in order to purchase solely from companies who respect their employees through decent salaries and working conditions.



## Instructions

Read the story below and answer the questions that follow.

### Everything had begun just like a magnificent fairy tale!

1. "Great! Lion King PJs, that was one of my favourite movies! Thanks Sylvain!", says Yohan, celebrating today his ninth birthday.
2. Caroline, also present at the party, is thoughtfully watching the gift opening. Last night she watched a documentary with her parents, and the troubling images, still very fresh, are coming back to her mind. The movie showed the working conditions in certain Chinese factories. Shyly, she slowly reaches out to offer Yohan his gift. She made it herself.
3. "It's a really nice necklace Carol!" says Yohan as he quickly throws it on the table and runs to his room to try his new pyjamas.
4. The celebration continues, a light snack is served, and one by one Yohan's friends return home. Just before stepping out the door, Caroline sneaks a last peak at the table on which Yohan had left the necklace a few hours before. It is still there, unmoved. She returns home a little sad, remembering how much time and care she had spent choosing Yohan's favourite color combinations.
5. The next day in class, Yohan, Sylvain and Caroline are listening attentively to their teacher who is reiterating a few of the facts brought forward in the same documentary that Caroline had watched two nights ago about the working

conditions in some Chinese industries. Taking advantage of the movie's context, she also informs the class of the situation of child workers in the world. She mentions that in order to produce low priced clothes, games, and other consumer products, many large companies employ children, who often work in miserable conditions.

6. Yohan, who listens eagerly to the teacher's words, is intrigued by the term "sweat shop", which is often used to describe factories that employ children. He hopes to complete some internet research in order to satisfy his curiosity. Just before the bell, the teacher asks the students to prepare, in teams, projects with the goal of increasing awareness of the subject. They will present their projects to the class during the following weeks.

7. While at recess, the three friends are sharing their ideas regarding the awareness raising project. Sylvain suggests the creation of an educational comic strip, while Caroline would personally like to create a video about child exploitation, in the form of a theatre play. Yohan has in mind a fashion show where the models would show clothes that had been produced by exploited children, and where the show's animators would give information about the subject. The friends agree in the end to organise a fashion show, and to begin researching the subject by internet in the evening.

8. The information that Yohan discovers about workers in sweat shops during his evening of research shocks him. In fact, he learns that dozens of thousands of people throughout the world work more than 12 hours a day for a meagre salary just to help their family survive. For example, he reads that a few years ago numerous Pakistani children who were sewing soccer balls for 6 cents an hour had attracted, thanks to the media, the entire world's attention.

9. Yohan's face turns to his new pyjamas. He wonders under what conditions this gift, that until now he was wearing so proudly, had been created. Yohan is left pondering, "There must be solutions to such injustices."

10. A few days later, our friends find themselves in class with their fashion show, sharing the information that they found through their research. They finish the presentation by suggesting that the class pressure the school to adopt an ethical purchasing policy for various goods such as sport equipment and clothes. This would give the students the assurance that the school buys only from companies who offer decent salaries and who treat their workers well.

11. Before leaving school in the afternoon, Yohan takes the time to thank Caroline again for the necklace that he wore proudly all day.

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reading Comprehension Evaluation**  
**Youth Becoming Aware and Raising the Awareness of Others**

1. Name two reasons why Caroline leaves a bit sad from Yohan's birthday party.

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2. What do Caroline and her teacher have in common?

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3. Describe what the term "sweatshop" means.

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4. Match, in the following table, the emotions or feelings with the appropriate people.

Intrigued - Sad - Thoughtful - Impulsive - Curious - Shocked - Emotional - Embarrassed - Proud - Attentive

Yohan				
Sylvain				
Caroline				
Enseignante				

5. What is a synonym of the verb "to wonder" that is used in the text?

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6. What is the suggested solution in the text for avoiding child exploitation in sweat shops?

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7. The text mentions an event or situation that hit the headlines a few years ago. What was it about?

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8. Are you in favour of child labour? Briefly explain your reasoning.

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