

imaginary journey

M1 Text for teachers

Instructions: All students sit down on the floor. Each student is given a toothpick (= embroidery needle) to hold in their hand. The teacher projects the slide showing the clothing label onto the wall. Sounds of Indian street traffic are played in the background.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQyhILUvMMM>).

Imagine you are living in a city in India. For several hours, you have been sitting in the same place, in the same uncomfortable posture, working on clothes that are being sold in Europe.

You continue embroidering clothes. For 14 hours a day, you add ornaments to various pieces of clothing. You are working just like the other children next to you in a stinking cellar, surrounded by piles of half-finished pieces of clothing. There are no chairs for you to sit on or rest.

Anil, who is working next to you, has fresh wounds on the backs of his legs. Your supervisor sits on a chair by the entrance. He is a thin man who smells awful and usually holds a rod in his hand.

Your boss is called Amal. Once a day, he stops by to pick up the finished clothes. Your supervisor shows respect towards Amal. So do you. Even so, you still feel that Amal treats you well.

Yesterday, an unknown man from another company stopped by. Amal was there too. The stranger, Amal and the supervisor had a lively conversation. After that, the stranger asked Anil, the boy sitting next to you, about his age.

"Fifteen," Anil replied. You know that this was a lie. The supervisor stood next to Anil while he strongly denied that he had been beaten.

"I really want to work here," Anil said. "If I work here, I have a place to sleep."

Your back hurts from the uncomfortable posture. Sometimes you hear children playing outside.

"It is my duty to work here," Anil explains to you. "My parents needed the money for other family members and sold me."

You think about your mother. You miss her. She would never sell you. However, she made sure that after working here for three years, you would have earned enough money for the dowry needed for a good marriage.

The room where you are working smells of faeces and urine. The toilet in the corridor has overflowed. The small window lets in very little daylight. If you are working late, you have to light a candle in order to continue working.

“These children are not slaves. They support their families,” Amal said yesterday.

“They are treated well. They receive food and can sleep here. And they can leave if they want to.”

Then the stranger left again. The supervisor tells you that one of the boys who worked here ran away and is now in prison. There is a large padlock on the door.

When it is time to eat, you receive mashed potatoes and some curry served in dirty metal bowls. After eating, you wash your hands and return to work.

Your eyes are burning. You concentrate on sewing small beads onto a jacket. The label you are about to sew onto the jacket says “170/176”.

(Text in Anlehnung an Schmitz 2007)