

Topic: Interconnections between the UK, Europe and the world

Lesson 1: The child labour debate	KS or Year Group: KS3
Resources: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Resource 1 – World map2. Resource 2 - Beijing Olympic Games3. Resource 3 – What pushes children into work?4. Resource 4 – Worker abuse in China5. Activity Sheet 1 – The child labour debate	Outcomes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students begin to understand the debate on child labour.• Students begin to question the impact of their consumerism.• Students start to understand some of the consequences of globalisation.

National Curriculum

Key concepts: 1.1b, 1.2b, 1.2c
Key Processes: 2.1a, 2.1b, 2.2b
Range and Content: 3a, 3b
Curriculum Opportunities: 3g

Lesson 1

This lesson looks at the economics of child labour, explicitly linking child labour around the world to consumer spending closer to home in the UK.

Starter

- Most clothes are labelled with their country of manufacture. Ask students to look at where the clothes they are wearing are made, e.g. their shoes, shirts, trousers, etc. They should write down where the products are made and note which, if any, are made in the UK.
- Write on the board the countries that make the clothes that the students wear and how many times these countries recur through the class.
- This is their introduction to 'globalisation'. Globalisation, in the economic sense, means the integration of national economies into a global economy through

The child labour debate

international trade, investment and market activity. Briefly discuss this definition with this class.

- Ask the students for examples of products from other countries, such as the food we eat and the films we watch. Can they give examples of globalisation that are not affected by the USA?
- Using **Resource 1 – World map**, ask the students to pinpoint the location of some of these countries on a world map, e.g. China, Indonesia, India, etc.

Main activity

- Ask the students to consider why some people are prepared to pay more for certain designer brands. Do they think that such clothes are better than cheaper versions in Asda or Tesco, for example? Suggest that the clothes may not necessarily be better made or, in fact, cost much more to produce.
- Distribute copies of **Resource 2 – Beijing Olympic games**. Briefly discuss whether this information changes their view about buying official Olympics merchandise.
- As a class, read **Resources 3 and 4**. Resource 4 opens the question of child labour into the wider context of worker abuse. Ask the students for their initial reactions to what they have read. Ask students to vote whether they are for or against child labour. Which side wins?
- Using **Activity Sheet – For and against child labour**, ask the students to now pay particular attention to the arguments for child labour. Divide the class into two, asking one side to argue 'for' and the other side to argue 'against'. Focus the discussion on the issues raised in Resources 2-4. Hold another vote on whether they are for or against child labour. Which side wins now? Has anybody changed their position? Ask them to explain why.

Plenary

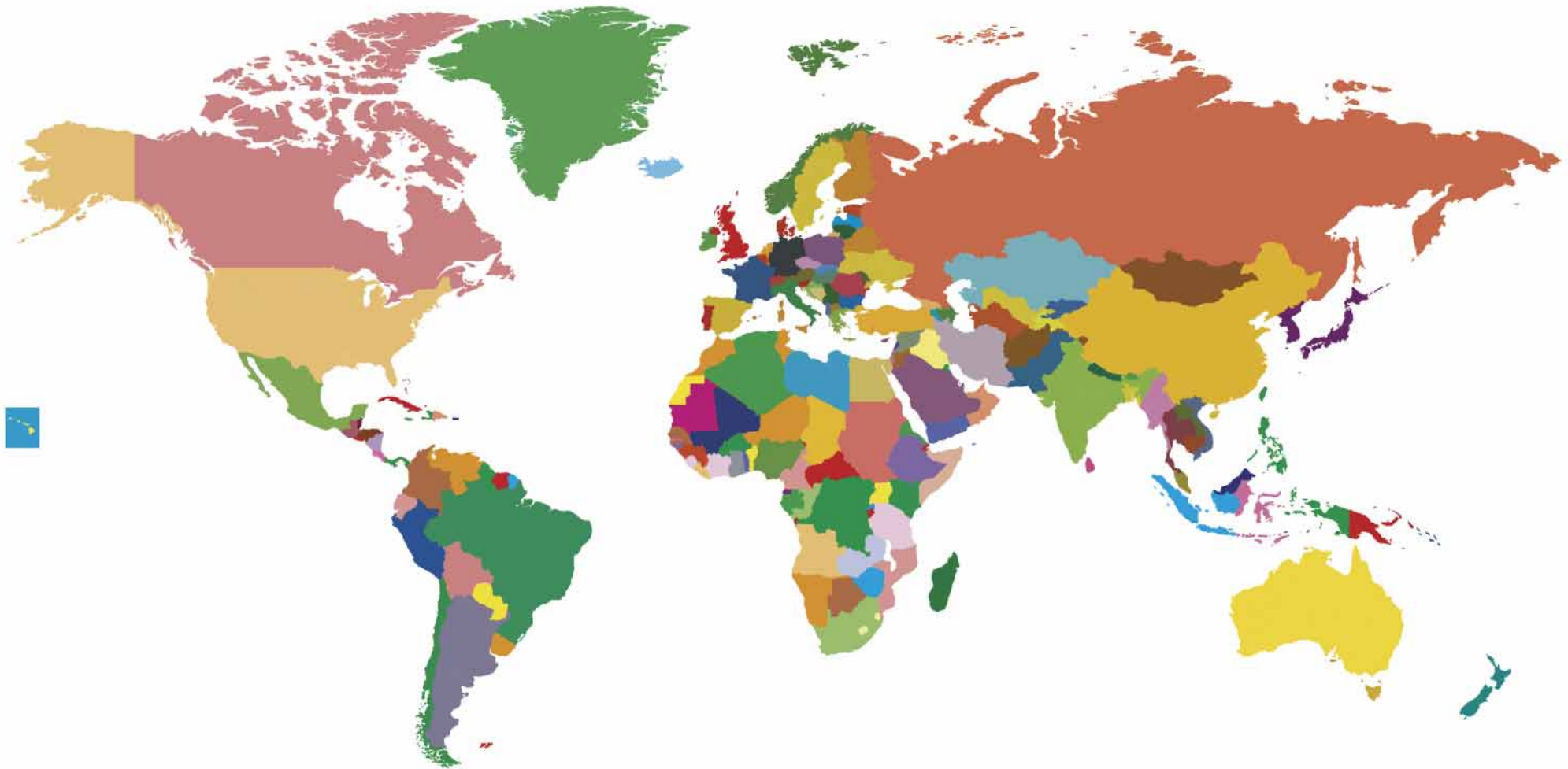
Summarise the main issues again, i.e. that what we pay for things is not necessarily linked to what is paid to the people making them, consumer spending in the UK is linked to waste of resources in certain circumstances and the child labour debate.

For extension work, ask the students to list the number of items they have purchased in the last year and they no longer use. Ask them to try and add up the costs of these items.

Summary of key learning

- Learning key ideas about the concept of consumer spending
- Developing understanding about the child labour debate
- Linking into the topic of globalisation

Resource 1 - World map



Resource 2 – Beijing Olympic Games

'Their Actions Tarnish Olympic Ideal'

Monday June 11, 2007

Official goods bearing the logo of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games have been made in factories where child labour is "rife", the TUC has claimed.

The union organisation said children as young as 12 were producing Olympic merchandise in China.

Researchers said they also found adults earning 14p per hour (half the legal minimum wage in China) and employees who were made to work up to 15 hours per day, seven days a week.

The study was undertaken by the Playfair Alliance - represented in the UK by the TUC and Labour Behind the Label.

It investigated working conditions in four factories making 2008 Olympic bags, headgear, stationery and other products.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Children and adult workers are being grossly exploited so that unscrupulous employers can make more profit.

"Their actions tarnish the Olympic ideal and we don't want more of the same when the Olympics come to London.

"The International Olympic Committee must add respect for workers' rights to the Olympic charter."

Maggie Burns, chairman of Labour Behind the Label, added: "The London Olympics has just spent £400,000 on a logo.

"There is no reason why organisers cannot ensure a 'sweat-free' games, if they act now. Previous games have tried and failed to safeguard workers' rights.

"If London is to raise the bar, it will need to be creative and ambitious, but it will also need to put enough resources in place."

Courtesy of SKY News

Resource 3 - What pushes children into work?

POVERTY

The main reason why children start work instead of attending school is that their families cannot pay the basic costs of food and housing without their child earning something as well. But the reasons why families are poor vary enormously – some are global, some are national and some are historic. Around the world, the details vary but the story is the same. There is not enough money for families to survive without some or all of their children working.

FAMILY BREAKDOWN

Families break down for many reasons, leaving the household short of income. Sometimes divorce leaves one parent looking after more children than she or he can afford to feed.

The death of either parent precipitates economic disaster for many households. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in which almost one million people were murdered, left huge numbers of orphans.

HIV/AIDS

By 2001, the UN estimated that 13 million children around the world under the age of 15 had lost either one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. The result of the illness or premature death of one or both parents is that children take on the responsibility of seeking an income to support themselves and their younger siblings. In richer countries, government institutions generally play a role in protecting children against the impact of poverty. However, this sort of support is not available to most children in the world. The extended family plays a role in protecting orphans and other children in need, but traditional systems for providing protection buckle when vast numbers are involved.

ATTITUDES TO GIRLS

In most parts of the world, gender is also a crucial factor: girls are discouraged from staying at school beyond puberty (sometimes being withdrawn much earlier) and are propelled into adulthood much younger than boys, either into work or an early marriage. UNICEF estimated that, at the end of 2003, 121 million children of school age were not attending school: well over half (65 million) were girls.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MINORITY GROUPS

Some children also leave school and start work earlier than others because of their origin or identity. In Latin America, indigenous children start work first. In South Asia, the caste system determines that children from dalit families (who have low status in the caste hierarchy) start work first or do not attend school at all.

A CASE STUDY

“I am the only working child in the family. My elder brother can't work since he goes to school full time. It was my mother who asked me to work, saying that I would help the family if I worked instead of staying home. So my father gave me the money to buy a shoe shining box. I worked as a shoe shiner for three years, then shifted to washing cars.”

10-year-old Ethiopian boy

Resource 4 – Worker abuse in China

Worker abuse is still commonplace in many of the Chinese factories that supply Western companies, according to labour rights groups. The groups say that some companies shortchange their employees on wages, withhold health benefits and expose their workers to dangerous machinery and harmful chemicals, like lead, cadmium and mercury.

While American and European parents worry about exposing their children to Chinese-made toys coated in lead, Chinese workers, including children, face far more serious hazards. In the Pearl River Delta region, for example, factory workers lose or break about 40,000 fingers on the job every year.

In 2007, factories that supplied more than a dozen corporations, including Wal-Mart, Disney and Dell, were accused of unfair labour practices, including using child labour, forcing employees to work 16-hour days on fast-moving assembly lines, and paying workers less than minimum wage (Chinese minimum is about 55 cents an hour).

Huanya Gifts, a factory in Guangzhou makes Christmas tree ornaments for Wal-Mart. Two workers interviewed outside Huanya's huge complex in late December said that they were forced to work long hours to meet production quotas in harsh conditions. "I work on the plastic molding machine from 6 in the morning to 6 at night," said Xu Wenquan, a tiny, baby-faced 16-year-old whose hands were covered with blisters. Asked what had happened to his hands, he replied, the machines are "quite hot, so I've burned my hands." He and his brother say they worked 12 hours a day, six days a week, for \$120 to \$200 a month, far less than they are required to be paid by law. "At Wal-Mart, Christmas ornaments are cheap, and so are the lives of the young workers in China who make them," the National Labour Committee report said.

"The factories have improved immeasurably over the past few years," says Alan Hassenfeld, chairman of the toy maker Hasbro. "But let me be honest: there are some bad factories. We have bribery and corruption occurring but we are doing our best." Some factories are warned about audits beforehand and some factory owners or managers bribe auditors. Inexperienced inspectors may also be a problem. Chinese suppliers regularly outsource to other suppliers, who may in turn outsource to yet another operation, creating a supply chain that is hard to follow — let alone inspect.

As long as life in the cities promises more money to young migrant workers than in rural areas, they will brave the harsh conditions in factories. And as long as China outlaws independent unions and proves unable to enforce its own labour rules, there is little hope for change. There is little that any Western company can do about those issues, no matter how seriously they take social responsibility — other than leaving China.

Adapted from an article in the International Herald Tribune by David Barboza, January 4 2008

Activity Sheet: The child labour debate

Many children in the UK have worked by the time they are 16. They are protected by law but in many other countries these laws do not exist or are not enforced. It is not a simple issue because work can give children more opportunities and stop families living in poverty. Use the chart below to help decide what side of the debate you are on.

The case against

- About 218 million children around the world are at work.
- Over half are doing dangerous jobs such as mining, prostitution, or working with chemicals. They are at risk of long-term damage to their health.
- Employers recruit children because their wages are lower than adults and are more submissive.
- Children work because of poverty and the lack of primary education.
- Often the goods bought in the UK are made by child labour in other countries.

What is your conclusion on Child Labour – is it a good or bad thing?

Is child labour always a bad thing?

- With their earnings, children are sometimes able to pay for a tutor/school books and get an education that their parents would not otherwise be able to afford.
- In the absence of a public school programme, if the children do not work their parents may be forced to leave work themselves to look after their children at home.
- A child's earnings are sometimes a vital part of the rent for their family home, helping the entire family stay in shelter.
- Childhood work may help them get better jobs as adults.
- Child labour helps the economy, thus it may help to lift the entire country out of poverty.

The UN says

It's difficult to get information about the number of children who work because countries want to disguise what is happening. Many countries do not keep statistics about child labour, because they know it's not supposed to exist. Even those who try to keep records have a problem because much child labour is 'invisible'. By this, the UN means that the work children do takes place in the home or in fields, so it is hard to find out about. Millions of girls work as domestic servants and unpaid household help and are especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

The largest numbers of working children aged 5 to 14 are found in the developing world.

- In Africa, it's 29% or 48 million
- In Asia and the Pacific, it's 19% or 127.3 million
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, it's 16% or 17.4 million
- In the Middle East and North Africa, it's 15% or 13.4 million