

Where Am I Wearing?

Part IV – My Flip-Flops: Made in China

Chapters 18-25

1. In Chapter 18, Timmerman finds it nearly impossible to locate the factory where his flip flops were made. In fact, his quest seems unusually difficult. Why do you think there is such secrecy among Decker employees?
2. Chapter 19 is less than two pages long and seems to be solely focused on Timmerman's flip-flop wearing habits. What is the purpose of this chapter? Is it a coincidence that it falls between a long chapter on Decker and an equally long chapter about two shoe factory workers? How does this chapter function?
3. Timmerman makes a comparison between Three Gorges Dam in China to Lake Cumberland's Wolf Creek Dam in the U.S. From what you've read, what do you think Timmerman's opinion is of Eminent Domain [*The power to take private property for public use by a state, municipality, or private person or corporation authorized to exercise functions of public character, following the payment of just compensation to the owner of that property.* Source: *The Free Dictionary* by Farlex]. How do you feel about eminent domain? Has your property or the property of someone you know ever been taken for the public good?
4. In "The Real China" that Timmerman discovers in Chapter 22, he points out the differences between those living in rural China and those living in the metropolitan areas. Do you see any similarities between rural Americans and Americans living in the big cities? How have the people in China been changed by their move to the city? Do you know someone who grew up in a rural area and then relocated to a metropolitan area? What did that person gain? lose?
5. Midway through Chapter 23, when Timmerman is trying to spend only \$3 a day on food, he asks "If we consider the world's population as our society, what role do I play in it?" (200). How would you answer his question?
6. At the end of Chapter 24, Timmerman refers to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in New York. Spend a minute or two doing a Google search on this fire. Does it take a disaster to change the way things are done?
7. If China continues to thrive economically, do you see the possibility that its workers may be in a better bargaining position in terms of pay, workers rights, working conditions, etc.? Consider Wal-Mart in your assessment and its influence on Chinese workers.
8. Timmerman reminds his readers of the 2007 story of Thomas the Tank Engine toys imported from China that were made with lead and subsequently recalled as well as the toxic fish and dog and cat food that killed US pets. He notes that "To save face, China executed a former chief of their food and drug agency, as if executing a former bureaucrat would remedy the damage done" (213). What do you understand about Chinese culture that would explain their actions?