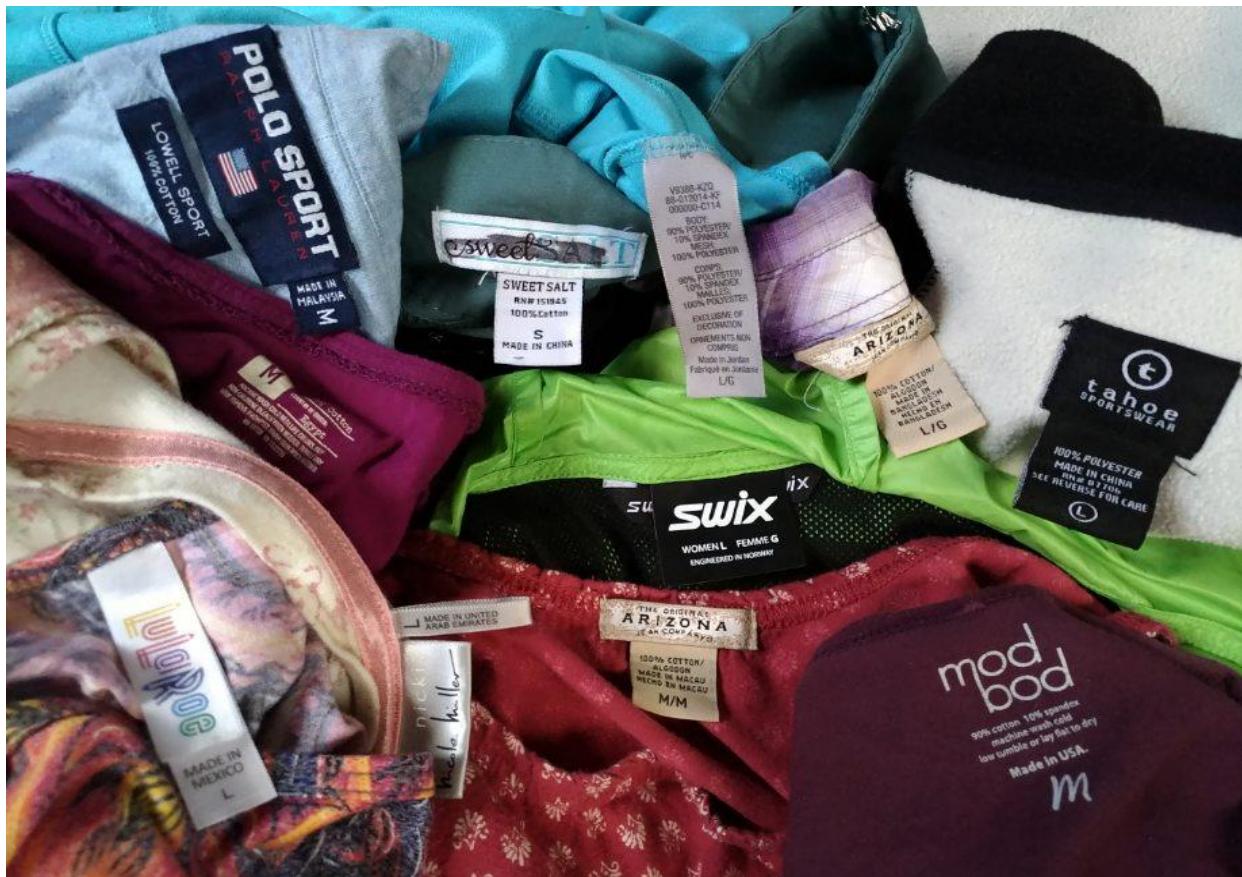


## **He's Got the Whole World in His Hands, But I've Got Half the World in My Closet!**

By Linda Butler

Have you thought much about your clothes? Well, more than how they fit and do they match? Have you thought about where they've come from? How far they've had to travel to get to you? You can take quite a world tour by looking at the labels on your clothes!

Look through your shirts, blouses, skirts, dresses, pants, and coats and pay careful attention to the little label that's usually on the shirt back by the neck, by the pants waistband, and occasionally on one of the side seams of a blouse or skirt. These little tags usually give the composition of the fabric (cotton, rayon, acrylic, spandex, etc.), care instructions, and where the garment was made.



Make a list of these places. It may be good to work as pairs, one person reading the labels and the other recording where they came from. This list of countries is your data and you can learn some interesting things from it.

First, how many different countries are represented by your wardrobe?

Were some of these countries unexpected? Any that you have never heard of? Look up some of these countries to learn a bit more about them.

Which country produced the most of your clothes?

One way to visualize the origin is to provide a world map and have everyone put pins or stickers on each country represented by your clothes.

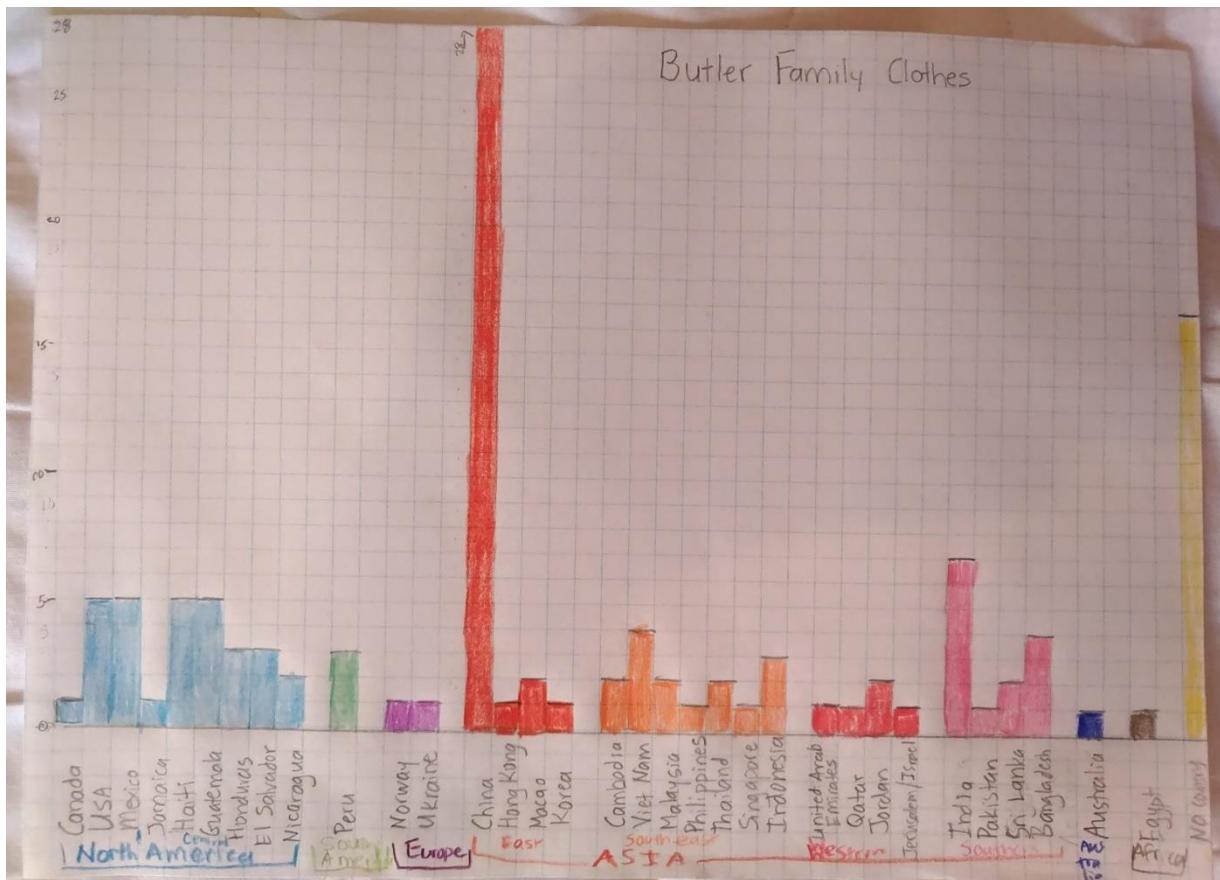
Which areas/continents produce the most clothes? Why do you think this is so?

Do you have clothes from 6 of the 7 continents? (Incidentally, Antarctica doesn't manufacture clothing.)

Use your clothes data to compile lists, charts, and graphs. Investigate and explore the countries where your clothes come from. Are most of your clothes from China? India? Which areas or continents produce most of your clothes? Why do you think that is?

Are there any unique stories about any of your clothes?

We counted 123 garments from three closets and two drawers. Our clothes came from 32 countries, and every continent was represented! China was by far the leader with 31 items. Second was India with 7; then USA, Mexico, Haiti, Guatemala tied with 5.



We weren't surprised that most of our clothes came from China, but we were surprised to find a wool sweater from Australia, snow pants that had been made in Qatar (on the hot, arid Arab peninsula). We owned several wool sweaters that family members had purchased in Peru, and a blouse that a friend had brought back from Jerusalem.

We didn't buy or acquire these in their respective countries, but it seemed natural to have a nice exercise jacket from Norway and a heavy calf-length wool coat from Ukraine. Most of the items from India were embroidered or decorated cotton fabric.

Some of our clothes are dual-nationals—such as a shirt that was assembled in Honduras from US fabric. Thinking about the cultures these countries have and the distances these clothes have traveled can be a gateway into exploring and understanding this wonderful and intriguing world. Knowing that you're wearing something that came from Jamaica, China, Thailand, or Egypt can ignite a fascinating study of worldwide countries and cultures. We have enjoyed the stories and cultures that have come to us through our clothing. We really do have much of the world in our closets!

The Pleasant Grove Library has several books about clothes: "Clothes" by Jon Richards shows how fashions change; Learn the Spanish words for your clothes in "Clothes=Ropa" by Kathleen Petelinsek; "Clothes; La Ropa" by Clare Beaton; or "My Clothes=Mi Ropa" by Rebecca Emberley. The library also has many variations on the favorite folktale, "The Emperor's New Clothes."