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A Year Without "Made in China": One Family's True Life Adventure in the Global Economy

Sara Bongiorno

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Sara Bongiorno : A Year Without "Made in China": One Family's True Life Adventure in the Global Economy before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Year Without "Made in China": One Family's True Life Adventure in the Global Economy:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Great idea--but only enough good material for a magazine article, not a whole book. By EJ The best part of this book is when the author looked high and low for a lamp not made in

China and finally found one labeled "Made in U.S.A." But when it arrived, one of the parts was labeled "Made in China." The author called the company that sold it to her, and the guy on the phone told her that Chinese imports had forced American lamp producers out of business and that as a result certain parts could be found only in China. That was a chilling anecdote, which to me illustrated a powerful reason for a yearlong boycott of Chinese goods. If we don't support alternatives to Chinese products, there will no longer be any alternatives. And if the Chinese products are poorly made, dangerous, bad for the environment or even, eventually, expensive, we're just out of luck! But while plausible reasons for the boycott were everywhere in recounting of the author's daily life, she was frustratingly unable to clearly articulate, either to her family or to the reader, why she wanted to go without Chinese-made products for a year. When her five-year-old son Wes pressed her on the reasons for the boycott, the best she could muster was: "We want to give other countries a chance to sell us things." But is it really just about spreading the wealth elsewhere? Or is it about choice? And what about quality and safety, given the pet food melamine scandal and toxic chemicals found in clothing? And then, of course, there's the disposable culture; we buy stuff because it's cheap only to have to replace it a year or two later at additional expense and inconvenience. During the one-year narrative span of the book stuff all over the house broke: the DVD player, the CD player, the coffee maker. The author whined about the inability to find non-Chinese replacements (aka ones that fit her budget) but never seemed to put together the idea that the extraordinary number of household equipment failures in one year was in fact a great justification not to buy another Chinese one...boycott or not! To me that screamed "isn't there a lesson there? Why is all your stuff breaking?" Lacking a real articulation of the reasons for the boycott, no wonder the author cheated regularly with the "gift exemption" (the family could get Chinese-made products as gifts) and no wonder she got a lot of flak from her family. Much of the book, in fact, focused on tension in the author's family over the boycott, including with her husband, Kevin, who she calls "The Weakest Link" but who actually was a fairly good sport. The family interplay quickly became repetitive and I found it frustrating to see no change in the mindset which led her family to be a big buyer of Chinese goods and which mirrors the reasons for our nation's reliance on Chinese goods. One of the most striking examples of lack of realization of the real issues was that (while she boycotts Wal-Mart for reasons she didn't detail in the book), the author never once questioned her principal choice of shopping venues: the mall, Target and other major big box chains. These are the very retailers responsible for the growth of Made in China. And yet, she calls a little boutique German and Euro shop "snooty" and expresses glee when the store ultimately closes. Even if the salesclerk was snooty to her, does she not mourn that choice, at least for those who liked the store, has narrowed yet again? And never once, while boycotting Chinese goods, did she "discover" wonderful alternatives with great workmanship. The author sprung for \$200 worth of German toys for Christmas (a third of her holiday budget) but she does not appreciate them, and is certain before even wrapping them that her children won't like them. And of course that attitude virtually guarantees they won't. I understand that the family had a limited budget. But if you want to boycott China, and actually change yourself in the process, you need to live in a different way. That probably means buying a good CD player once that will last you ten years (mine is going on 15), but also going without other things you don't need, like light-up purple pumpkins for Halloween. It might mean thrift-shopping, which was never mentioned even though the family agonized for months over lost sunglasses--even to the point of The Weakest Link wearing a children's pair recovered from a lost-and-found bin. My local thrift store has a plethora of not-embarrassing choices in sunglasses; it also has a rack of decent shoes, another sore point in the book. The author did sew an inexpensive simple pretty pink tutu for her daughter; it seemed initially a failure (perhaps due to her own lack of conviction?) but the same outfit was later re-requested by her daughter. That seems to me to be a victory and a real change in attitude--and I wish there had been more of it in the book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Quick Read, hoped for more By Melanie R An interesting premise, but I wish the author would have taken her research deeper. She would write how she wondered what others thought-but never bothered to ask them and only wrote about her assumptions of what they thought. Even her husband's thoughts were filtered through her. But, if you're looking for a single family's POV book, this is it. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I loved this book By Queen of thorns I loved this book. I think I might read it again soon So informative and you'll love the author and her family

A Year Without "Made in China" provides you with a thought-provoking and thoroughly entertaining account of how the most populous nation on Earth influences almost every aspect of our daily lives. Drawing on her years as an award-winning journalist, author Sara Bongiorni fills this book with engaging stories and anecdotes of her family's attempt to outrun China's reach; by boycotting Chinese made products; and does a remarkable job of taking a decidedly big-picture issue and breaking it down to a personal level.

From Publishers Weekly Journalist Bongiorni, on a post-Christmas day mired deep in plastic toys and electronics equipment, makes up her mind to live for a year without buying any products made in China, a decision spurred less by notions of idealism or fair trade--though she does note troubling statistics on job loss and trade deficits--than simply "to see if it can be done." In this more personal vein, Bongiorni tells often funny, occasionally humiliating stories centering around her difficulty procuring sneakers, sunglasses, DVD players and toys for two young children and a

skeptical husband. With little insight into global economics or China's manufacturing practices, readers may question the point of singling out China when cheap, sweatshop-produced products from other countries are fair game (though Bongiorni cheerfully admits the flaws in her project, she doesn't consider fixing them). Still, Bongiorni is a graceful, self-deprecating writer, and her comic adventures in self-imposed inconvenience cast an interesting sideways glance at the personal effects of globalism, even if it doesn't easily connect to the bigger picture. Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Journalist Bongiorni, on a post-Christmas day mired deep in plastic toys and electronics equipment, makes up her mind to live for a year without buying any products made in China, a decision spurred less by notions of idealism or fair trademdash;though she does note troubling statistics on job loss and trade deficitsmdash;than simply "to see if it can be done." In this more personal vein, Bongiorni tells often funny, occasionally humiliating stories centering around her difficulty procuring sneakers, sunglasses, DVD players and toys for two young children and a skeptical husband. With little insight into global economics or China's manufacturing practices, readers may question the point of singling out China when cheap, sweatshop-produced products from other countries are fair game (though Bongiorni cheerfully admits the flaws in her project, she doesn't consider fixing them). Still, Bongiorni is a graceful, self-deprecating writer, and her comic adventures in self-imposed inconvenience cast an interesting sideways glance at the personal effects of globalism, even if it doesn't easily connect to the bigger picture. (July)nbsp; (Publishers Weekly, August 6, 2007) "a wry look at the ingenuity it takes to shun the planet's fastest-growing economy." (Bloomberg News) "The West's dependence on Chinese exports was neatly summed up"nbsp; (The Telegraph, Sunday 12th August 2007) "What the year-long experiment did achieve, was to switch on Bongiorni as a consumer and make her alive to the complexities and shifting power of the international economy. (Financial Times, Saturday 25th August) "...a fascinating and entertaining look at just how much ofnbsp;a challenge an average consumer faces...to avoid buying Chinese goods."nbsp; (Supply Management, Thursday 31st January 2008)From the Inside Flap"The image of China as the beast of the Far East is well entrenched. But that doesn't necessarily mean the reality matches the popular perception. So, is China really the economic steamroller we think it is? Even more importantly, could we really live without Chinese goods? That is the question asked by Sara Bongiorni in her book, *A Year Without 'Made in China.'*" mdash;From the Foreword by Joel L. Naroff, PhD President, Naroff Economic Advisors, Inc. Chief Economist, Commerce Bank On January 1, 2005, Sara Bongiorni's family embarked on a yearlong boycott of Chinese products. They wanted to see for themselves what it would take, in will power and creativity, to live without the world's fastest growing economymdash;and whether it could be done at all. *A Year Without "Made in China"* chronicles this fascinating and frustrating journey, and provides you with a thought-provoking and thoroughly entertaining account of life in a vast and slippery global economy of infinite complexity. Drawing on her years as an award-winning journalist, Bongiorni fills this book with engaging stories and anecdotes of her family's attempt to outrun China's reach, and does a remarkable job of taking a decidedly big-picture issuemdash;China's emerging status in the global economymdash;and breaking it down to a personal level. Bongiorni's real-world adventure is filled with small human dramas. You'll learn how her boycott of China meant scrambling to keep her rebellious husband in line and disappointing her young son in stand-offs over Chinese-made toys. You'll also discover how shopping trips for mundane items like birthday candles as well as high-end designer clothing became grinding ordeals, while broken appliances brought on mini crises. *A Year Without "Made in China"* reveals how this manufacturing colossus is quietly changing our lives, but it also addresses the realities of globalization and, more importantly, where the world economy is heading. With low wages and government subsidies fueling China's rapid production of consumer goods, countries and companies around the world will soon face the inconvenient fact that they must rely on this economic giant in order to survivemdash;and this book offers a rare glimpse of what that could be like. See for yourself how the most populous nation on Earth influences almost every aspect of our daily lives and why this situation is both limiting and expanding our options when it comes to the products a majority of us take for granted.