

Fach: Englisch

Musteraufgaben

Kurs: G/S-OK und Externe

Bearbeitungszeit: 150 Minute

Hilfsmittel: einsprachiges Wörterbuch

## TEXT:

### The Global Toothbrush

by Ralf Hoppe

Mary Ann Cole turns off her alarm clock and slips from between the covers. Quietly, so as not to wake her two sisters with whom she shares her bed. (...)

5 Mary Ann Cole, 28, is an assembly operator\* at Integrated Microelectronics Inc., a Philips supplier. She is only a "foot soldier" in the empire of the toothbrush, one of 4,500 workers of two dozen nationalities. But she knows what globalization is all about. Globalization means business. And business means competition. Every day, you need to swim. Or you sink.

"Is globalization unfair, Mary Ann?" "How so?" She lowers her gaze.

"Isn't it unfair, for example, that you earn less than your counterparts in the United States or Germany for doing the same work?"

10 "Unfair?" She fidgets in her chair and glances toward the interpreter. She is probably thinking: What a strange question. Unfair? What's the point? "I like my work. It's a very big opportunity."

15 The globalization process began 600 years ago, when Europeans discovered the world in order to appropriate it – by means of cartography, religion, violence, economics and transportation. What we are now experiencing is the final act of this drama: a world completely conquered, in which commodities, goods and information circulate freely with no place beyond their reach.

20 Philips and its suppliers produce the electronic toothbrush "Sonicare Elite 7000" at 12 locations and in five time zones. Once or twice a week, some 100,000 fully-functioning circuit boards\* leave the Manila factory where Mary Ann works. From Manila's cargo airport they are flown to Seattle. A half day's delay can wreak havoc\* in the entire system, which operates with extremely tight timelines.

A tour through the precision machine that is "Oral Healthcare Philips" is an odyssey through a globalized universe – a realm almost purged\* of Europeans with their romantic ideals of justice and ugly, expensive strikes. The relocation to Asia is nearly complete.

25 The toothbrush is essentially comprised of 38 components. The parts for the energy cell, a rechargeable nickel-cadmium batterie, are supplied by Japan, France and China. The circuit board, its electronic heart, comes from Zhuhai in the Pearl River delta of southeastern China. The copper coils\* originate from the Chinese industrial city of Shenzhen, not far from Zhuhai. They are wound by armies of women with bandaged fingers. Globalization is largely a female phenomenon.

30 The 49 components on the board – transistors and resistors the size of match heads – come from Malaysia. They are soldered\* and tested in Manila by Mary Ann and her co-workers. Then they are flown to Snoqualmie on the West Coast of the U.S., the site of the parent plant. Meanwhile the more complicated plastic parts are trucked from Austria to Germany. Special blades are produced in Sweden. A freighter from Bremerhaven takes the half-finished brushes across the Atlantic to

35 New Jersey. From there they cross the United States by train. And in Snoqualmie, a 40-minute drive from Seattle, the final product is assembled and packaged.

By this time the components have traveled a full 27,880 kilometers, two-thirds of the Earth's circumference.

(510 words; abridged and slightly changed version)

Source: Spiegel Special International Edition 7/2005: Globalization – The New World

**\*Vocabulary:**

**assembly operator** – here: s.o. who puts different parts (e.g. of a machine) together

**circuit board** – here: part of the inside of an electronic toothbrush

**to wreak havoc** – to cause chaos

**to purge** – to clear

**copper coil** – an electrical component that can store energy; German: Kupferspule

**to solder** – two or more metal items are joined together by melting; German: löten

## 1. Comprehension

*Outline the information the reader gets about Mary Ann.*

Refer to the text, but use your own words.

## 2. Analysis

*Show what the author thinks about globalization and analyze the language devices he uses to convey his attitude to the reader.*

## 3. Comment

*Is globalization unfair? Please reflect on this question.*

**You are required to write a minimum of 500 words altogether.  
Please count your words.**