

Anastasia Deftalinskij

## Pencil Graphite Handout

Dixon Ticonderoga is a pencil company that has been in business for 227 years. They specialize in making their wooden, number 2 lead pencils that have one of the top chosen writing utensils for decades. The production factories moved overseas and Sri Lanka is where the graphite is mined for these pencils. Graphite is a rock that is mined and then it's crushed down to powder mixed with clay to make the pencil lead. The lead is then shipped to China, where wood from California and rubber from Australia is also shipped and the pencils are assembled there. From there, China is the main distributing country to the rest of the world of these pencils. Though Sri Lanka has an abundance of graphite, the country is severely underpaying their workers. The machines are outdated, and the workers make just about \$2 a month mining for the crystal and transforming it into powdered lead. The workers have tried to protest but the country is not listening to them. The production of graphite is also a climate issue because the carbon emission from burning the kilns for the lead is destroying the ozone layer, which scientists say we have a decade to fix. The U.S. also is trying to keep all these social issues under the old free trade deals because under them, they can get past the labor laws and continue to mass produce for cheap. There are ways we can help the people under this corrupted business. We can protest Ticonderoga products so their demand for supplying goes down. We can donate money to non-profit organizations that will help fund these underpaid workers. Though for us, pencils are inexpensive and easily accessible, there are other brands that can be supported that do not mistreat their workers. Pencils are important but this shady company is exploiting all these international countries for raw material and gain financially on their own.