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AMANCIO AND HIS SEWING MACHINE

THE STORY OF THE POOR BOY WHO STITCHED HIS OWN DESTINY TO BECOME ONE OF THE RICHEST PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.





A letter from the publisher

Dear Reader,

This playful book-series is a publication of AlligatorZone[®], where students meet startups, an impact initiative as well as a community of life-long learners who explore the world through the eyes of an entrepreneur.

AlligatorZone[®] is proud to present this series of stories and related playful learning activities designed to surface the delightful conversationalist that lurks within each of us, and to shine a light on our charismatic side, while we explore the world of future careers, and perhaps find our true calling, sooner than later.

This activity book can be enjoyed by late-elementary school students as well as middle and high-school students. In fact, any life-long learner can enjoy this book.

If you choose to read this book aloud, enunciate like your favorite TV newscaster, actor or YouTuber. If you post it online outside of AlligatorZone, tag @alligatorzone or even #alligatorzone. If reading aloud, slow down so that audiences of all backgrounds may understand you clearly. This exercise fine-tunes our personality, making people pause and listen when we speak. That's because the knowledge in this book series will appeal to most people, and this exercise powers up style with substance.

These stories and activities will make you look at the world through the eyes of an entrepreneur and observe opportunities to solve problems everywhere around you. Included with this story, is a set of questions to jog your thinking, and an activity for you to go on a journey of discovery, like an investigative journalist. After you read this book, you can continue learning about more lessons drawn from this book through additional programs offered by AlligatorZone online.

LIFE-LESSONS: In this activity-book and program, you will understand, among other things, that

- opportunities to improve things and make a difference exist all around us
- industries require a variety of skills
- there is something to learn even from the most mundane things around us
- the world is an encyclopedia, when we don't hesitate to ask questions
- with practice, one can learn to ask the right questions and solve problems
- persistent efforts can accumulate to grand outcomes despite humble beginnings
- your voice matters — smart companies will consider your opinions seriously
- even learning to think like a startup makes one a standout leader
- mindfulness is possible in everyday activities, and
- understanding a company and its leaders helps us become wiser as consumers.

Enjoy more advanced activities and collaborative learning that we bring to you extending lessons from this book to an online environment, as a premium member. Visit AlligatorZone.org for more.

Have fun with this story and activity.

Ramesh Sambasivan
Instructional Designer
AlligatorZone[®] Academy
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The story of Amancio and his sewing machine.

(To be read aloud to an audience at home, in school, or online)

Amancio Ortega was born in 1936 in northern Spain. With just a sewing machine, he and his business partner Rosalia Mera started a clothing store. This is his fascinating story.

Mr. Ortega was born in poverty. His father was a railroad worker. It is said that one day, Amancio heard his mother pleading with the local store to let her pay later for some essentials.

Young Amancio couldn't bear to see his mother's plight. So he quit school to start working at the age of 14. In his very first job as a shop assistant at a local company called Gala, Amancio learned a skill upon which he built an empire over the next several decades — the skill to make clothes by hands.

Eventually he joined with Rosalia Mera to open their first store in the city of A Coruña, in Spain in the year 1975. It made Mr. Ortega the 6th richest man in the world, at the time we wrote this story.

The name of their clothing store was inspired by the name of a movie. After naming their store Zorba, they learned that the name Zorba was being used by another business down the street. Since they had already made a store sign with alphabets for 'Zorba', they wanted to change the least number of alphabets and still have a name that's easy to say and remember.

Mr. Ortega gathered several brands under a single company and took it public. He owns most of the company, which makes him very wealthy. They are said to open one new store each day somewhere in the world. The company has over 7,000 stores worldwide, at the time of the writing of this story.

Mr. Ortega is known for making the first brand that created fast-fashion. Like fast-food, fast fashion allows clothing companies to design and sell fashionable items in a very short period of time. Just like fast-food, there is a movement against fast-fashion because of some of its unpleasant characteristics such as high levels of wastage during the making of the clothes, excessive quantities of clothes being trashed and ending up in landfills, and extremely stressful working conditions for workers in the industry who have to make clothes fast to keep creating new fashions for very little money.

As a way to protect the environment, Mr. Ortega's company, which now owns several famous brands, has made a promise to stop sending anything from their companies to any landfills, by the year 2020.

Do you know the name of the fashion brand that Mr. Amancio Ortega built?



Quiz your audience.

(Your audience could be a family member, a classmate, teacher or viewer).

How many years ago was Mr. Amancio Ortega born? (Don't use a calculator).

What is the word used to describe 'the privilege to pay at a later time the money which we owe someone'. Use that word in a sentence. (Hint: Some people carry a card to prove that they have the privilege)

What was the skill that young Amancio learned, using which he started his journey of building a fashion empire over the next several decades? (Hint: There is a startup company that is trying to get a robot to learn this skill)

Which well-known publication keeps a ranking of extremely wealthy individuals, and what is that list called?

Which company is known as the pioneer of fast fashion? (Can you name other industries or companies trying the fast-lane?)

What is the name of Mr. Ortega's publicly listed company? What would it cost to own one share of Mr. Ortega's company?

Next?

Continue to the next page for participating in a field activity, as part of the premium AlligatorZone plan. Not yet a premium member? Visit our website <https://alligatorzone.org>





AlligatorZone[®] Activity

(for life-long learners who are members of AlligatorZone)

1. When you get a chance, spend time in a clothing store nearby, or look through your closet.
2. Choose three items of clothing (or apparel) for your activity.
3. Observe the labels. Take a picture of the clothing labels, unless photography is prohibited by the store.
4. Take notes on where each piece of clothing was manufactured. (Once at home, look up the country on the map and think of the oceans which the clothes might have crossed to reach the store (You may be able to find the shipping routes).
5. Look at the various components that have gone into the making of the item of clothing. The collar, the cuffs, the buttons. Get a feel for the quality of the stitching and see if there are any defects in the stitching or the weaving of the fabric. Look for a sticker that the quality tester must have placed. Think of how many hands might have worked on that piece of clothing. Do the clothes get washed and pressed before being shipped to stores?
6. If you are able to visit a store, ask the store manager or sales person to tell you how they decide which apparel gets displayed where in the store.
7. Think of what might be an unintended use of the items you chose? Make a note of that.
8. Summarize your findings and observations.
9. Share your findings by getting on a premium plan of AlligatorZone and learn more, and learn collaboratively with a community of life-long learners.
10. Visit AlligatorZone.org for other more advanced learning activities and programs.

Not yet a premium member of AlligatorZone[®].
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Tips for a Parent, Teacher or Mentor

(For mentors and coaches of the younger members on AlligatorZone's Premium Plans)

Here are time-tested tips for mentors who may want to steer the at-home learning.

- 1) **Keep it simple.** Try slipping the field activity into a routine trip to a store or a mall, and make it an 'oh-by-the-way-let-us-stop-and-look' kind of detour on an errand, rather than making a special trip for it. The idea is to remove any semblance of pressure to perform and focus purely on the joy of learning something new in a shared experience for a child with the parent.
- 2) **Go Improv.** Avoid planning and scheduling it in advance. Our goal with the activities is to help children make learning a life-long pursuit and a hobby, not a checklist item that will result in angst until it is completed and cleared.
 - Where an activity involves having a conversation with a stranger at a facility or a manager, consider making it a walk-in experience.
 - This improv-like approach, we believe, teaches the child to be comfortable with uncertain outcomes ("Sorry, the manager is out sick.") and improvise. They learn to play the hand they are dealt in the project (just like in life). They learn to find alternative sources of information and piece things together.
 - We believe it helps them learn how to focus on things they can control and not worry about things beyond their control.
 - We believe that it teaches them to find insights amid chaos and stay focused on the task at hand despite distractions.
- 4) **Learning, not shopping.** We strive to design activities that do not require making purchases. We strive not to make field activities specific to any particular brand. Use on-site observation to complete the learning with your child. Do not make a purchase for this purpose.
- 5) **Feel free to make a script, if it helps.** If you prefer to schedule a meeting in advance with a store's manager or supervisor, prepare a script and encourage your child to be part of the initial phone request while you stay on the call. Let the child own the process. In our recent summer workshop under the coach's supervision and guidance we had the 11-year old student conduct a market research. He told us later that it was the first time he had left a voice message and his first time on a business call. The sense of accomplishment and the confidence gained, is priceless.
- 6) **Let the child lead the conversation.** If the child is not yet ready to speak and start a discussion on topics in our activities, try making it a 3-way conversation and keep it casual, referring decision-making to the child ("What do you think?" or "Does that sound reasonable?") so everyone knows that the child is in charge of the discussion. After the first few times we often see kids lead and handle conversations with aplomb. Let there be no pressure on the child to produce a certain result. Let there be no pressure to use big words or business jargon. If a store owner or employee uses industry parlance or acronyms, seek clarification so the child knows there are no dumb questions.
- 7) **Going off-script is perfectly fine.** Allow the child to find alternative sources of information *under your supervision*, and let them piece things together for their learning. They might find something on TV or Netflix, Youtube, Pinterest or TikTok (if they already use those sites and apps) and be able to connect the dots to fresh insights for improved findings.

Last, but not the least, no matter what, keep it light-hearted and make it a spontaneous and shared experience for both, you and the child.



Sources

(These are the publicly available sources used for this story)

Sources:

1. <https://www.bloomberg.com/billionaires/profiles/amancio-ortega-gaona/>
2. <https://astrumpeople.com/amancio-ortega-gaona-biography/>
3. <https://www.rd.com/culture/how-zara-got-its-name/>

