

A Slap of the Hand - Hereford Cattle Market Teacher's Pack



Drama Activities for Key Stage One and Two

Section 3 - Auction Stories

All activities start with a discussion of the story or memory.

All activities are suitable for Primary aged children; Key Stage One and Two and can be either developed or simplified depending on the needs and abilities of each group.



In this section there are six stories about how the auctions work at Hereford Cattle Market. Each story is a memory from someone who has used Hereford Cattle Market over his or her lifetime. The memories give an insight into what auctions are like and some of the things that happen.

Each story is provided here as a transcript but an audio file is also available on the website, that can be downloaded and listened to, at www.herefordshirelore.org.uk.

All of the stories in this section give children the knowledge of how to create their own auction or cattle sales.

Auction Story 1 - More to auctioning than ...

Auction Story 2 - And you had to learn ...

Auction Story 3 - You couldn't bribe ...

Auction Story 4 - Different bids

Auction Story 5 - Signs

Auction Story 6 - Loudest



Listen to tracks 16 - 20

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Auction Story 1 - More to auctioning than ...

David Probert: "There was more to auctioning than getting up and shouting and waving a gavel about. That was the easy part to be honest with you. There's the administration of the whole thing and latterly actually getting the stock in the market. Previously you didn't worry about chasing stock to come to your market because the whole thing was full up all the time in any case. You didn't really want to get in any more honestly. You had more than enough to handle, but the turnover in that market at its height would have been £80 million (a lot of money not to have in the county). The money probably isn't here in fact. All that money was coming from outside the county. A lot of money."

DISCUSSION

Have you ever been to an auction?

What happened?

What was being sold?

Have you ever watched the auctions at Hereford Cattle Market?

What are some of the things you might need to be careful about at an auction?

DRAMA - Auction practice

In small groups of five or six children ask the children to try to recreate their own auction.

You will need one auctioneer, 3 or 4 bidders and the owner of the item being sold.

Decide what is being sold; it could be livestock or it could be anything.

Get the children to improvise an auction - it may happen very quickly; this is fine as the next few exercises will build up their knowledge of what happens at an auction.



Listen
to

David Probert
track 16



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Auction Story 2 - And you had to learn ...

Listen to Auction Stories 2 and 3 together

Sarah: And you had to learn the trade of auctioneering on the job.

Mr. Manning: Yes, you did. I mean, in those days, nowadays people have a lot of examinations, we had... really the test was whether you were successful or not!

Sarah: Did some people try it and not get on with it?

Mr. Manning: People either took to it or they didn't take to it really. It was a fairly cruel sort of world. You'd have your leg pulled in no uncertain terms.

Sarah: So they used to give you a hard time!

Mr. Manning: In a quiet way, yes, and yet at the end of the day, particularly the younger ones, were treated with sympathy. But when they got to the stage that they got bit confident and thought they knew it, then they were taken down a peg.

Sarah: If you missed a bid, they would remind you...

Mr. Manning: They'd remind you, no doubt about that. You'd have glasses taken off and 'would you like these?'

Sarah: You'd be standing in the ring?

Mr. Manning: Or on the plank. That was the thing. You would walk the plank. It wasn't covered in those days, so if you'd got a Wednesday morning that was very cold, the plank would be icy. You'd need to walk fairly carefully!

Sarah: And would you have other farmers around you?

Mr. Manning: Oh yes, the Alfred Hammond picture shows you how closely people gathered round. Quite honestly, quite a lot of the bidding was done by tapping your leg with a stick or pinching your leg or these sorts of things, you know.



Listen to Mr Manning, track 17

DISCUSSION - see Auction Story 3
DRAMA - see Auction Story 3

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Auction Story 3 - You couldn't bribe ...

Reg and Peter Bayliss: "You couldn't bribe the auctioneer, no. When the auctioneers were selling them, the farmers used to stand up in the ring, that's where the auctioneer used to stand. Well the farmers would walk on through and stand by him, so as the auctioneer was bidding, so they might stand like that and if they didn't think he was getting it, they'd knock 'em, wouldn't they father?"

Or they'd kick you. They'd do that, and you'd think ... and then you'd click on that they were running him. If you had a farmer that only had one person who was bidding, he'd knock 'em to go on again. He'd think someone else was bidding look. You'd see it going on, wouldn't you dad?"

Sarah: Was there respect for the auctioneers?

"Whatever they said, it went and that was it. Once the hammer went down, that's it. If there was any dispute, they'd bring 'em back and sell 'em again. If one said 'oh, I didn't bid on that,' 'bring it back and we'll sell it again.'"



DRAMA

In the same small groups, re-improvise your auction scene using the information you have just heard in this latest story. Ask the children to consider:

What are some of the checks that the farmer selling his livestock would need to do?

What are some of the tricks you might need to watch out for?

What are some of the less obvious ways that people would bid?

Can some of the buyers have a joke with the auctioneer?

What would the auctioneer do if someone complained?



Listen to Reg and Peter Bayliss,
track 18

DISCUSSION

What were some of the ways that the farmers used to bid?

Can you imagine being a young auctioneer and all the farmers pulling your leg?

Would you find it difficult?

Why do you think the farmer used to stand so close to the auctioneer?

Why would a farmer sometimes kick an auctioneer?

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Auction Story 4 - Different bids

Reg and Peter Bayliss: "Different farmers will have different ways of bidding. You don't realise someone might have bought it, 'cause they twitch their finger or flick their eye, or just nod their arm, so many different ways of ... someone could just do that ... (small movement) and that's a bid! 'Cause if you've got all farmers competing for the same thing, or butchers when they were selling the lambs, and they don't want him to know you want it, 'cause if you want something and I want something, you keep pushing the price up. So the cheaper you ..."

Sarah: So the auctioneer must have to be really observant?

Peter: "He's got be really on the ball. And you've got to watch them sometimes, 'cause the auctioneers can be crafty – they can run you. And if you're not careful, you think 'well, who's...?' They'll slip an odd one in to push the price up. That's been known on more than one occasion! Then they take their commission out of it, their toll, their commission out of it."



Listen to Reg and Peter Bayliss, track 19

DISCUSSION

Why do the auctioneers need to be really observant during the auction?

DRAMA 1 - Bidding

Whole group activity:

Ask all the children to chose their own way of bidding for an item at auction.

Start off with quite big obvious gestures.

Get the group to stand in a circle with the teacher in the middle and each child takes a turn at showing their way of bidding.

Now ask the group to make these gestures smaller and more subtle.

Get them to practice this in pairs to see if their bid can still been see or have they got too subtle!

DRAMA 2 - Bidding

In small groups of five, ask one child to be the auctioneer; they need to practice being observant.

The rest of each group is to bid on an item that the auctioneer is selling.

Let the groups improvise these auctions to see how subtle they can be and how observant the auctioneer must be.



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Auction Story 5 - Signs

Graham Baker: "We had a chap who used to come from Leominster called Bunter Fletcher and he'd lost his voice. And when the animals came out of the ring they used to mark them for a particular buyer. Say for instance they might cut the hair off the bottom of their tale or he might put a scissors mark up on there flank but then he'd have to shout to the chap at the far end of the alley 'This is so and so's beast' and because he hadn't got a voice; we had a firm called Cheltenham Butchers and Bunter Fletcher used to go like this (Graham now makes the hand/arm sign for drinking a pint of alcohol) as if he was drinking a pint of beer because there was the old Cheltenham and Hereford brewery.

And then we had another firm called Evans Campion and Blakemoor from Wolverhampton and because he couldn't say that to the next porter down the alley to pen it up, he used to pretend to kick a football, Wolverhampton. And that was exactly how they communicated because he had a problem with his throat."



Listen to Graham Baker, track 20

DISCUSSION

The auctioneers had lots of different signs they used as an easy way of letting people know whose animals belonged to who.

Why do you think they did this?

DRAMA - Name signs

Ask the children to get into pairs and to think of a really creative gesture that could describe them. Call the gesture a "name-sign."

Children can use their surname if it can be made into a name sign like the auctioneers did for some of the farmers or they can use something that they like doing, i.e. a kicking gesture for a football fan. It could be something about them physically - ie curly hair, spikey hair, tall, freckley etc. Each

member of the group needs to have a different sign - don't end up with 15 footballers.

Get the children to think about something that distinguishes them from the rest of the group and makes them an individual. It's important that signs are chosen by individuals and not imposed by others to avoid unpleasantness.

Get the children to teach their name sign to their partner and then get the pairs to join with another pair. Teach all signs to the four.

Experiment with the name signs to make games with. Get the children to perform their name sign to the rest of the group and the group has to guess why they have chosen that sign.

Get someone from the four to perform a name sign that isn't their own to the rest of the group and the group try to guess whose name sign it is.

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Auction Story 6

David Probert: "About two years ago, I had a letter from the Health and Safety Executive in Worcester saying they understood that my voice was so loud when I was selling chickens that it could indeed be a danger to human health and hearing. If it had been 1st April I would have definitely thought that this is a really good joke. They wanted me to respond and tell them what my problem was and I thought I don't actually have a problem and I don't want to respond to that. So I ignored it.

I had another letter, a little bit more pushy this time, saying you've got to respond to our letter, we wrote to you before. So I phoned them up and I said, 'Now look, you're saying my voice is so loud it's a danger to human health. This is absolutely ridiculous. I said 'What criteria, what decibels is the legal limit?' And the guy said that it rather depends on what the circumstances are. I said, 'What circumstances?' He said, 'How long you're there, how many people are there, how close you are' and all of this sort of nonsense. 'Send me the regulations then,' I said. We won't do that, we'll send you a little booklet, and then can respond to us and explain to us why you're being so loud, and what you're going to do about it. I said, 'Well I'm not going to do anything and I'm not going to write to you because it's a waste of time and money but if you want to send me the booklet, fine enough, but I'm just ignoring this, it's so stupid, if you want to make the effort you've got to take it yourselves, I'm not going to be active in this.

And do you know what Trading and Standards said to me? I said I'm not that loud and he said you obviously are as people have complained about it and that you should think about taking steps to lessen the problem. Why don't you get ear defenders for all your clients? And I go what? So they can't hear me you mean. The whole point of an auction is that people hear what I'm



saying. I said to him 'Have you ever been to Hereford Market?' He said, 'Oh no, no.' 'Perhaps you should come here. Have you ever been to an auction?' 'No, no, no.' Oh God, I give up. They must investigate they say.

But surely anybody with a bit of common sense would have made a quick visit and realised that this was nonsense. Or he would have taken a value judgement and thought, Good God – auctions all over the country. The implications of me doing this guy, if he is over the top, means that we would have a massive closedown of auctions all over the country, because there are louder auctioneers than me out there, a lot louder. So we never heard from them again. Public time and money. It was a total, total nonsense."

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DRAMA - see page 30

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Auction Story 6 (continued)

DRAMA 1 - What happened next?

In groups of 3 ask the children to recreate the scene of the man, his car, the table and David.

Then ask them to make the scene of what they think happened next.

DRAMA 2 - Loudest auctioneer

In small groups of 5 or 6 create a scene of David auctioning the poultry.

Get the bidders to make the poultry noises to build the atmosphere and to help the person playing David be louder and louder.

DRAMA 3 - Auction

Using all of the skills and knowledge the group have gained during this section ask the children to stage their own auction.

Include subtle bidding, name signs, kicks and a loud auctioneer.



DISCUSSION

Do you remember hearing about this story when it happened?

Why do you think David got the letter in the first place?

Why do you think he never heard from the Health and Safety people again at the end of the story?

Credits

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