

“It’s cooler to hang Lennon’s guitar than a Picasso”: pop culture wins out at auctions

Level 3: Advanced – Teacher’s notes

Article summary: The article describes how items belonging to pop stars are becoming popular at auctions.

Time: 60 minutes

Skills: Reading, Speaking, Writing

Language focus: Vocabulary

Materials needed: One copy of the worksheet per student

1. Warmer

- a. The purpose of this activity is to introduce the concept of auctions and the kind of items that are sold at them. It also focuses on the types of things that people are willing to spend large amounts of money on. Ask students to match the items with the amounts of money that people paid for them. When you check the answers, ask if they are surprised by any of the amounts (e.g. the amount paid for a small piece of paper, the postage stamp).

Key:

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. e
5. b

2. Key words

- a. Ask students to do the exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs or small groups. Point out artefacts are usually valuable objects that were made in the past and have some historical meaning and are often found in museums (e.g. items found in the Egyptian pyramids or in Roman ruins) while memorabilia are not necessarily valuable (e.g. sporting memorabilia could be old tickets, photos or pieces of sports equipment). You could also explain that a legacy is not always positive. Notorious dictators or rulers from the past can also leave a legacy (a very negative one).

Key:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. auction | 9. bidder |
| 2. flux | 10. cachet |
| 3. iconic | 11. estimate |
| 4. artefact | 12. outfit |
| 5. monied | 13. Grammy |
| 6. millennial | 14. lyrics |
| 7. memorabilia | 15. legacy |
| 8. cardigan | |

3. Comprehension check

- a. The answers given are only suggested answers, and students may correctly answer the questions in different ways, e.g., in number 3, they may say “the dress that Marilyn Monroe wore when she sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to President Kennedy” or similar.

Key:

1. It trades exclusively in celebrity items.
2. in the 1980s
3. Kurt Cobain’s guitar
4. over 600,000 dollars
5. It was looked down on.
6. Because she was still alive (She thought these auctions were only for the belongings of dead people.).
7. Because she is a very private person.
8. by appearing on screen at her auction to thank her fans for attending
9. It increases the value of items associated with the performance.
10. They help them to build their legacy.

4. Key language

- a. Students could be asked to do this exercise individually and then compare their answers in pairs. Ask students to refer back to the text to see the verbs in context.

Key:

1. c
2. e
3. a
4. f
5. b
6. d

“It’s cooler to hang Lennon’s guitar than a Picasso”: pop culture wins out at auctions

Level 3: Advanced – Teacher’s notes

5. Discussion

- a. Allow students time to note down their ideas about each statement and encourage them to say why they agree or disagree with each one.

6. In your own words

- a. Ask students search online for *celebrity memorabilia sold at auction* or *celebrity auctions*. They should try and find an item that is either surprising (because of what it is or the person it belonged to) or one that sold for an extremely large amount of money. The task could also be done as a homework and students could present their reports to the class.