

The Chant  
by gigi nelson



Advertising an auction on a dock from 1830 found [here](#)

VAKT materials list: Cardboard, pastels

When I say the word AUCTIONS, what comes to mind? Maybe nothing. Maybe an ANTIQUATED (old, ancient) setting, dusty, with cattle of some sort and a pot bellied auctioneer droning in the background. Or, it could be fancy people looking at nice stuff, whispering, and bidding on a piece of paper. Regardless of the images that pop up for you, the history and formation of auctions, as well as the underlying auction THEORY that informs them, is an intriguing pile of math, money, and a study of humans and what will make them bid just a bit more.

Spell: MIND THEORY IMAGES

What are we talking about today? AUCTIONS

What is the title of today's lesson? THE CHANT

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

What is another word for antiquated? OLD, ANCIENT

Paraphrase one of the examples given of what could pop into your mind when you hear the word “auctions.”

Give an animal example of cattle. COW, BULL, OXEN

Did anything pop into your mind when you heard the word auction? What was it?

An auction is a sales event where people compete for goods and services which are sold to the highest bidder. The concept of a buying competition dates back to 500 BC. In BABYLON, it wasn't just goods and services that were sold, but people! MAIDENS (an unmarried girl or woman) were auctioned off for marriage starting with those considered most beautiful and ending with the least. Can you imagine being bid on according to your looks?!

Spell: SALE      COMPETITION      PEOPLE

What is an auction? Paraphrase.

OR

An auction is a sales event where people compete for \_\_\_? GOODS, SERVICES

The auction concept dates back to \_\_\_? 500 BC

What is the location mentioned where people were auctioned off?

BABYLON

What word means an unmarried girl or woman? MAIDEN

OR

A maiden is an unmarried \_\_\_?

What does BC stand for in this context? BEFORE CHRIST

Auctions have EVOLVED (to change over time) significantly in the last 2500 years. The word auction itself comes from the LATIN, *augeō*, *auctus* which means “I INCREASE.” And that’s exactly how it works. If someone bids \$5 and then someone else bids \$10, the bidding keeps going higher and

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

higher until it's "going, going, gone!" Once the bidding stalls for a certain amount of time without an increase, the winnings go to the highest bidder.

Spell: BIDDING TIME LATIN

What word means to change over time? EVOLVED

Auctions have evolved in the last \_\_\_\_ years? 2500

Augeō, auctus means \_\_\_\_? I INCREASE

Describe in your own words how an auction works.

We would be REMISS (lax, negligent) without the mention of the conductor of the whole show. The AUCTIONEER. The auctioneer is the person responsible for noticing every twitch, wink, eyebrow wrinkle and finger raise (and they deserve their own full lesson). They maintain *the chant*, a continual chorus of numbers, fillers, mumbled encouragement and general sing songy cadence that lulls their spectators into a high stakes bidding trance.

Spell: SHOW TRANCE CONDUCTOR

What word means lax or negligent? REMISS

OR

What is another word for remiss? LAX, NEGLIGENT

The conductor of the whole show is called the \_\_\_\_? AUCTIONEER

The auctioneer is the person responsible for noticing every \_\_\_\_? TWITCH, WINK, EYEBROW, WRINKLE, FINGER RAISE

The chant is a continual chorus of \_\_\_\_? NUMBERS, FILLERS, MUMBLED ENCOURAGEMENT, GENERAL SING SONGY CADENCE

According to Wikipedia, the auction chant goes by several other names including, "big calling," "the auction cry," or the "cattle rattle." This method of auctioneering is common in North America but less PREVALENT (widely or commonly occurring) in other areas. The chant must include how much the current bid is, what a person needs to increase the bid to in order to take over the winning spot, and "filler words" to keep the audiences' attention.

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

Everyone makes their own style and there are even competitions to judge the auctioneers!

Spell: NAMES CURRENT PERSON

What is one example of another name for the auction chant? BIG CALLING, THE AUCTION CRY, CATTLE RATTLE

This method of auctioneering is common in \_\_\_\_? NORTH AMERICA

What word means widely or commonly occurring? PREVALENT

What is a definition for prevalent? WIDELY OCCURRING, COMMONLY OCCURRING, WIDELY OR COMMONLY OCCURRING

What is one thing the chant must include? HOW MUCH THE CURRENT BID IS, WHAT A PERSON NEEDS TO INCREASE THE BID IN ORDER TO TAKE OVER THE WINNING SPOT, FILLER WORDS TO KEEP THE AUDIENCES ATTENTION

Listen to [this short example](#) of an auctioneer belting the auction cry.



Annual Sheep auction at CLUN found [here](#)

The description of the audio is “An American auctioneer at the New York State Sheep & Wool Festival in RHINEBECK, NY conducting a livestock

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

auction most likely for a EWE. Audio slightly modified from original format for ease of listening and clarity.”

Spell: AUDIO      LIVESTOCK

The description says “An American auctioneer at the New York State \_\_\_\_\_ Festival...? SHEEP, WOOL, SHEEP AND WOOL

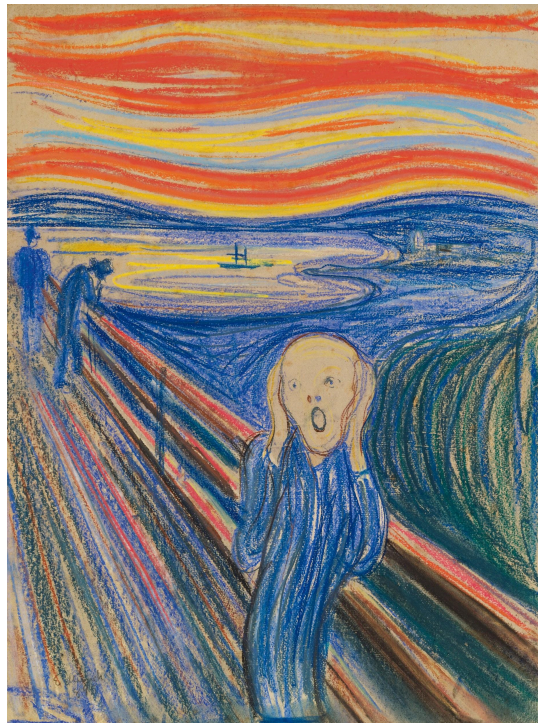
The festival took place in \_\_\_\_\_ NY? RHINEBECK

The auction was mostly likely for a \_\_\_\_? EWE

What is a ewe? FEMALE SHEEP, SHEEP, GIRL SHEEP

Audio is to ears as visual is to \_\_\_\_? EYES

What words would you use as some of your filler words if you were an auctioneer?



One of several versions of *The Scream*. This version, executed in 1895, sold for a record breaking hundreds of millions in 2012. Pastel on cardboard. Found [here](#).

There are several famous auction houses including SOTHEBY’S, CHRISTIE’S, and newcomer HERITAGE Auction. Sotheby’s was founded

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

in 1744 and is the 4th oldest in the world. It is also the oldest company on the New York Stock Exchange. With offices in 40 countries, Sotheby's is truly an international force. In 2012, they handled the sale of *The Scream* by EDVARD MUNCH seen above which sold for a record breaking \$119,922,500.

Spell: FAMOUS STOCK INTERNATIONAL

What is the name of one of the auction houses listed? SOTHEBYS, CHRISTIES, HERITAGE AUCTION

When was Sotheby's founded? 1744

How long ago was Sotheby's founded? (Your year)  $2024 - 1744 = 280$  YEARS AGO

What was the name of the painting that sold for hundreds of millions of dollars? THE SCREAM

Name the artist who painted *The Scream*. EDVARD MUNCH

Trace your finger laterally along the red of the sunset in the picture above.

So, why would someone pay hundreds of millions of dollars for something? Well, besides the fact that they can, and are probably an art CONNOISSEUR (a person with expert training or knowledge especially in the fine arts)... In an article entitled *Why do we pay more than we should at auctions*, author TOM STAFFORD explores some factors that may cause people to pay more than they planned. These factors combined can be called "COMPETITIVE AROUSAL."

Spell: MILLIONS ARTICLE PAY

What is a person with expert training or knowledge especially in fine arts called? CONNOISSEUR

Define connoisseur (can be in your own words).

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

Who wrote the article mentioned above? TOM STAFFORD

The factors combined can be called \_\_\_\_? COMPETITIVE AROUSAL

Name something else a person could be a connoisseur of. WINE, GOOD FOOD

In a short sentence or two, make a guess at what a factor may be in “competitive arousal.”

The article by Stafford on BBC.com links to a scientific study about “auction fever.” (Yes, it’s a real thing). There they list things that contribute to competitive arousal.

1. RIVALRY - a competition or fighting between people
2. Social Facilitation - “an improvement in the performance of a task in the presence of others (audience, competitor, co-actor) compared to their performance when alone.”
3. Time pressure - being in a rush or feeling that time is running out
4. The “UNIQUENESS of being first”

The study says that these factors combined lead to an arousal state that “impairs decision making.”

Spell: FACILITATION    UNIQUENESS    RUSH

What is a competition or fighting between people? RIVALRY

OR

Rivalry is a \_\_\_\_ between people? COMPETITION, FIGHTING

What is social facilitation? Paraphrase.

What did we call number 3? Being in a rush or feeling that time is running out? TIME PRESSURE

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved

I'll end with a quote by A. ALFRED TAUBMAN which says, "God help us if we ever take the theater out of the auction business or anything else. It would be an awfully boring world."

ps. Taubman was convicted in 2002 of price-fixing plan with the top two US auction houses.

Who said the quote above? A ALFRED TAUBMAN  
Summarize the quote from above.

Vaktivity: Make your own *The Scream* using pastels and cardboard!

Creative Writing:

1. Do you agree or disagree with Taubman's quote? Why or why not?
2. Do you feel like you have seen or experienced "auction fever" outside of an auction? In what setting did that occur? Which of the four points do you think contributed? Do you think that it led to impaired decision making? Give a summary of your thoughts on competitive arousal.
3. People used to be judged (and sold) based on their looks. Have you ever been judged on a physical feature or attribute? Describe the situation and how that made you feel. What do you think would help people "evolve" and move away from that sort of superficial judgement?

Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved



## References:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auction\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auction_theory)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auction>

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J.\\_Howe\\_%26\\_Co.\\_auction.\\_1830.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:J._Howe_%26_Co._auction._1830.svg)

<https://news.artnet.com/market/going-11-top-auctioneers-tell-us-special-gavel-brings-good-luck-1928416>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Autioneer.ogg> Auction Cry

<https://news.artnet.com/market/going-11-top-auctioneers-tell-us-special-gavel-brings-good-luck-1928416>

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Annual\\_sheep\\_auction\\_at\\_Clun\\_\(1295081\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Annual_sheep_auction_at_Clun_(1295081).jpg)

Link to License: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en> No changes made.

<https://www.thecollector.com/top-5-auction-houses-in-the-world/>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20120907-why-we-overpay-at-auctions>

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Scream\\_Pastel.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Scream_Pastel.jpg)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0749597804000925>

<https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-facilitation.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.\\_Alfred\\_Taubman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._Alfred_Taubman)

## Question Type Key

KNOWN - SEMI OPEN - PRIOR KNOWLEDGE - MATH - OPEN - VAKT

©Gigi Nelson 2024 All Rights Reserved