



HEPTONSTALL MUSEUM

“Weight in Gold”

Short film for Schools Education

Who were the Cragg Vale Coiners?

The Cragg Vale Coiners were a band of counterfeiters based in Cragg Vale, near Hebden Bridge, West Riding of Yorkshire. They produced fake gold coins in the 1760s to add to the small amount of money they made from handloom weaving.

The gang’s leader was David Hartley, nicknamed ‘King David’. The coiners borrowed real gold coins on the promise that they could return the money plus new coins that they had made. They did this by clipping the edges of the borrowed money, smelting down the shavings to produce a blank gold piece that could be stamped with the engraving of the face of a coin. Most of the counterfeit coins had French, Spanish or Portuguese designs.

Questions for discussion

Recap on the plot in the film...what happens? What are the events, what decisions did characters need to make, and how have they been changed?

Activities

- What happens next? At the end of the film, improvise the scene after the final scene.
- Are there any other scenes you would like to rewrite? How would that change things? For example...
 - Supposing Harry had interrupted when he was eavesdropping?
 - Suppose Harry had been discovered listening?
 - Supposing Thomas wanted nothing to do with David Hartley’s plan to make money?

Interview a character:

What do the characters think of one another? Think of a character in the film, and in their voice, write down their opinion of another character. How they behave, their past, and their personality. Do they think that character tells the truth?

Group discussion:

Can anyone think of an example in which someone is aware of something wrong happening around them, but is frightened of speaking out? It can be anytime, past or present, and anywhere. It can be a situation that happened or it can be fictional.

Working in pairs or more, describe a fictional situation where a young person comes across something they believe to be wrong or dangerous but don't know who to tell.

Dramatise some or all of the scenes. Maximum of three scenes.

What Happened to the Cragg Vale Coiners? ...