



HEPTONSTALL MUSEUM

Interactive Storytelling Workshop

Examining the main themes in the story of the Coiners

Duration:	1 hr
Group size:	15 children
Layout:	5 circular mats on the floor of the main room (3 children per mat.)

Resources: Resource box in the centre of the mat containing:

- Objects that can be sorted to represent the lifestyles of the rich and poor.
- Character description pack (detailing job, economic status, map with location of home.)
- Primary source about the arrest of coiners / Murder of Dighton.
- Gold Coin

Input from workshop lead:

Do any of the children know anything about the Yorkshire Coiners already?

Today we will learn a bit more about their story and why the upper Calder Valley was a perfect place for coining to flourish.

What was coining?

- Coining was where people took a coin that was already in circulation and clipped the edges off. They collected the metal (Gold in this instance) until they had enough to make a new coin. They then melted down the metal and stamped a design on so the coins looked like the real thing. The Coiners also helped the local community as they would pay people to 'borrow' their coins so they could clip the edges. The coiners literally 'made' more money for themselves and their families and the people providing the coins also got paid. Coining benefitted many people in the community and this is one of the reasons that people did it.
- However, Coining was an offence and classed as High Treason which was a crime that was punishable by death. Making new coins could affect the economy of the whole country because when there were more coins in circulation it reduced the value of real coins, because there were so many in circulation.



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- Coining had taken place for years in different places around the country but it was run by individuals spread out around the country. Here in the upper Calder Valley, coining became a large and organised enterprise. But why?

Activity 1: Differences in the lifestyles of the rich and poor in 17th century West Yorkshire.

- Children have 2 objects in their boxes per group. Can they decide which represents the lifestyle of a richer household and a poorer one?
- Call up the children with the objects from the richer household. Discuss.
- Call up children with an object from a poorer household. Discuss.
- Children should be stood in two groups representing richer/poorer.

How could living in a poorer household have led to families becoming involved coining?

Input from workshop lead:

There is evidence that the poorer families were suffering financially at this time. The 7 years war had left the country in a recession and less cloth being made by such families in their homes was being sold. There was also less need for cloth for uniforms. Those families that lived in farmsteads had nothing to supplement their income. The farms often didn't provide enough money and food to live on. Many people associated with coining had a link to the weaving trade and Several coiners were debtors or had been declared bankrupt which supports this theory.

And so financial pressures lead people to become coiners. In addition to this, there were very few people to police the area for crime. There were two unpaid constables in Halifax which were 7 miles away and the nearest magistrate was in Bradford. This was at a time where people had to travel along tracks or roads and by foot or horse if they were lucky. It was not so easy to keep your eye on what was happening! The coiners also often lived in remote farmstead meaning they were hard to catch as they could see anyone approaching from miles away. The only way to catch the coiners was to use informants. Those that would report to the authorities they had seen someone committing the crime and were often paid for the information that they could provide.



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Activity 2: Would you be an informer or a coiner or someone who supplied the coins?

Look in their resource box. Ask the children to read the character profile, look at the map of where the person lives and read the primary source material about arrests. The children have to discuss and make a decision on whether they would become a coiner or an informer based on their circumstances. Can they reach a decision as a group?

- Do you live on a remote farmstead or have lots of neighbours or people in the village who might notice coining activity?
- What is your financial status. Read the info – have you been bankrupt before? Are you able to supply coins to coiners for money?
- Would you have access to gold coins that you could supply to the coiners for payment? Would you take this risk?
- Read the primary sources – would you risk this outcome to become a part of the gang? Do you have any choice?

When groups have discussed and made their choice hold up a gold coin if they have chosen to join the Coiner's gang.

Input from workshop lead:

What made the Yorkshire Coiners stand out from coiners who operated in other parts of the country is the fact that they became an organised gang. 'A nest of notorious clippers and coiners.' It became such a widespread thing that in 1769 two men began making attempts to identify the coiners in the area. Samuel Lister and John Stanhope took matters into their own hands. They employed informers James Crabtree and William Hayley to detect and inform against the coiners. These men began to make depositions – give information against the coiners and the methods that they used. Then the person accused would make a deposition back!

William Dighton continued to pursue the Coiners with an aim in bringing them to justice. He was the supervisor of excise (taxes on goods) in Halifax. He employed Broadbent as an informer, he was employed to infiltrate the gang and subsequently informed on Hartley and Jagger and they were both arrested. King David Hartley was the leader of the gang and as a result of his arrest, members of the gang took their revenge.

Coiners took their revenge against Dighton. Isaac Hartley (David's brother) Paid Robert Thomas and Matthew Normanton and they shot Dighton using a pistol in Halifax.

Which groups chose to be a Coiner before, Would you change your mind now you know that murder was committed by members of the gang?



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Any time left, let the children self-guide around the exhibition. Can the children find out about the fate of David Hartley and the other Coiners that were sent to York Gaol?