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America's smallest town sold online

7th April, 2012

<http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

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THE ARTICLE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

The town of Buford, Wyoming, population one, was sold on Thursday for \$900,000. The buyers are two unidentified men from Vietnam. Buford was advertised online as the smallest town in the USA. It is located between the Wyoming state capital Cheyenne and Laramie. It is on the Interstate 80 road that runs from New York to San Francisco. The buyers now own a gas station and convenience store, a schoolhouse built in 1905, a cabin, a garage, 10 acres of land, and a three-bedroom house. The online bidding for the town started at \$100,000 and attracted bidders from 46 countries. The winning bidders flew to Wyoming especially for the auction. They had read about the town online.

Buford's one former inhabitant was Don Sammons, aged 61. He bought the town in 1992 to settle down in the countryside. He decided to sell his property to be closer to his son. Mr Sammons said he would retire from his position as the unelected "mayor" of the town. He expressed his sadness at moving on from his home of three decades, saying: "When the gavel drops and the guy says, 'sold,' I might break down." He added: "I'm happy and I'm sad all at once. But I'm more happy than sad because...I can continue and start the next chapter of my life." He was surprised at the global interest in the sale. "I've lived here for more than 30 years and nobody knew it. Now I'm leaving and the world knows it," he said.

WARM-UPS

1. AUCTIONS: Walk around the class and talk to other students about online auctions. Change partners often. Sit with your first partner(s) and share your findings.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

population / unidentified / advertised online / capital / online bidding / \$100,000 / former inhabitant / countryside / property / retire / three decades / next chapter

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

3. BIDDING: What's the most you would bid for these things? Complete this table and share what you wrote with your partner(s). Change partners and share again.

	How much?	What / Who with?	Why?
A small town			
A painting			
A CD			
A T-shirt			
A date with ???			
A book			

4. OWN TOWN: Students A **strongly** believe it would be great to have your own town; Students B **strongly** believe it wouldn't. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

5. MY OWN...: What would you most like to own? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners and share again.

- small town
- private jets & helicopters
- desert
- tiny island in the South Pacific
- chocolate factory
- fashion label
- sports team
- Nobel Prize

6. ONLINE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'online'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Some Vietnamese guys bought America's smallest town. | T / F |
| b. The town is not a real one but a cyber one online. | T / F |
| c. The closing bid was nine times higher than the opening price. | T / F |
| d. People from 16 different countries bid for the small town. | T / F |
| e. Only one person lives in the small town. | T / F |
| f. The inhabitant of the town is also its officially elected mayor. | T / F |
| g. The man who sold the town expressed only sadness at its sale. | T / F |
| h. The man is surprised so many people in the world know about him. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article.

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. unidentified | a. shack |
| 2. located | b. ex- |
| 3. runs | c. lured |
| 4. cabin | d. situated |
| 5. attracted | e. conveyed |
| 6. former | f. stage |
| 7. expressed | g. anonymous |
| 8. break down | h. curiosity |
| 9. chapter | i. burst into tears |
| 10. interest | j. leads |

3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. two unidentified | a. sadness at moving |
| 2. advertised | b. bidders |
| 3. 10 acres | c. of land |
| 4. a three- | d. online |
| 5. The winning | e. inhabitant |
| 6. former | f. in the countryside |
| 7. settle down | g. men from Vietnam |
| 8. He expressed his | h. chapter of my life |
| 9. start the next | i. in the sale |
| 10. global interest | j. bedroom house |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

GAP FILL: Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The town of Buford, Wyoming, (1) _____ one, was sold on Thursday for \$900,000. The buyers are two (2) _____ men from Vietnam. Buford was advertised online as the smallest town in the USA. It is (3) _____ between the Wyoming state capital Cheyenne and Laramie. It is on the Interstate 80 road that (4) _____ from New York to San Francisco. The buyers now (5) _____ a gas station and convenience store, a schoolhouse built in 1905, a cabin, a garage, 10 acres of (6) _____, and a three-bedroom house. The online bidding for the town started at \$100,000 and (7) _____ bidders from 46 countries. The winning (8) _____ flew to Wyoming especially for the auction. They had read about the town online.

land
unidentified
bidders
runs
attracted
population
own
located

Buford's one former (9) _____ was Don Sammons, aged 61. He bought the town in 1992 to settle down in the countryside. He decided to sell his (10) _____ to be closer to his son. Mr Sammons said he would retire from his position as the (11) _____ "mayor" of the town. He (12) _____ his sadness at moving on from his home of three (13) _____, saying: "When the gavel drops and the guy says, 'sold,' I might (14) _____ down." He added: "I'm happy and I'm sad all at once. But I'm more happy than sad because...I can continue and start the next (15) _____ of my life." He was surprised at the global (16) _____ in the sale. "I've lived here for more than 30 years and nobody knew it. Now I'm leaving and the world knows it," he said.

unelected
interest
property
break
expressed
inhabitant
chapter
decades

LISTENING – Listen and fill in the gaps

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

The town of Buford, Wyoming, _____, was sold on Thursday for \$900,000. The buyers are _____ from Vietnam. Buford was advertised online as the smallest town in the USA. It is located between the Wyoming state capital Cheyenne and Laramie. It is on the Interstate 80 _____ New York to San Francisco. The buyers now own a gas station and convenience store, a schoolhouse built in 1905, a cabin, a garage, 10 _____, and a three-bedroom house. The _____ the town started at \$100,000 and attracted bidders from 46 countries. The winning bidders flew to Wyoming _____ auction. They had read about the town online.

Buford's one _____ was Don Sammons, aged 61. He bought the town in 1992 to settle down in the countryside. He decided to sell his _____ to his son. Mr Sammons said he would retire from his position as the unelected "mayor" of the town. He expressed his _____ on from his home of three decades, saying: "When the gavel drops and the guy says, 'sold,' I might break down." He added: "I'm happy and I'm _____. But I'm more happy than sad because...I can continue and start _____ of my life." He was surprised at the _____ the sale. "I've lived here for more than 30 years and nobody knew it. Now I'm leaving and the world knows it," he said.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'state' and 'capital'.

state	capital
--------------	----------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• one• between• runs• own• 46• flew	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• down• closer• retire• three• sold• 30
--	--

ONLINE AUCTIONS SURVEY

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

Write five GOOD questions about online auctions in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper. When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

ONLINE AUCTIONS DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'auction'?
- c) What do you think of the online auction of Buford?
- d) What do you think the two men will do with the town?
- e) Do you think \$900,000 is a good price to pay for a town?
- f) If you were rich, would you like to have bid for the town?
- g) What would you do if you owned your own town?
- h) Is it really a town if only one person lives there?
- i) Do you think this could start a new craze in selling small towns?
- j) What do you think of online auctions?

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ONLINE AUCTIONS DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What three adjectives best describe this article and why?
- c) What would it be like to be the only inhabitant in a town?
- d) Do you think it would be difficult to move from a place you've lived in for 30 years?
- e) Would you be sad if you moved away from your current home?
- f) Would you be more happy than sad in Don Sammons' position?
- g) What's the next chapter of your life?
- h) How different do you think Don Sammons' life will be after he moves?
- i) Have you ever taken part in an online auction such as eBay?
- j) What questions would you like to ask the new owners of the town?

LANGUAGE – MULTIPLE CHOICE

From <http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com/1204/120407-auction.html>

The town of Buford, Wyoming, population (1) _____, was sold on Thursday for \$900,000. The buyers are two unidentified men from Vietnam. Buford was advertised online as the smallest town in the USA. It is (2) _____ between the Wyoming state capital Cheyenne and Laramie. It is (3) _____ the Interstate 80 road that (4) _____ from New York to San Francisco. The buyers now own a gas station and convenience store, a schoolhouse built in 1905, a cabin, a garage, 10 acres of land, and a three-bedroom house. The online (5) _____ for the town started at \$100,000 and attracted bidders from 46 countries. The (6) _____ bidders flew to Wyoming especially for the auction. They had read about the town online.

Buford's one former inhabitant was Don Sammons, aged 61. He bought the town in 1992 to settle (7) _____ in the countryside. He decided to sell his (8) _____ to be closer to his son. Mr Sammons said he would retire from his position as the unelected "mayor" of the town. He expressed his sadness (9) _____ moving on from his home of three decades, saying: "When the gavel drops and the guy says, 'sold,' I might (10) _____ down." He added: "I'm happy and I'm sad all at once. But I'm more happy than sad because...I can continue and start the next (11) _____ of my life." He was surprised at the global interest in the (12) _____. "I've lived here for more than 30 years and nobody knew it. Now I'm leaving and the world knows it," he said.

Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1. | (a) one | (b) only | (c) once | (d) on |
| 2. | (a) location | (b) locates | (c) located | (d) locate |
| 3. | (a) in | (b) of | (c) at | (d) on |
| 4. | (a) ruins | (b) runs | (c) runes | (d) rues |
| 5. | (a) lidding | (b) ridding | (c) kidding | (d) bidding |
| 6. | (a) won | (b) winners | (c) winning | (d) wins |
| 7. | (a) by | (b) down | (c) at | (d) up |
| 8. | (a) property | (b) prosperously | (c) properly | (d) productively |
| 9. | (a) at | (b) to | (c) that | (d) this |
| 10. | (a) crack | (b) track | (c) break | (d) tweak |
| 11. | (a) verse | (b) poem | (c) paragraph | (d) chapter |
| 12. | (a) sales | (b) sale | (c) sell | (d) sold |

HOMework

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find out more about online auctions. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. ONLINE AUCTIONS: Make a poster about online auctions. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

4. SMALL TOWN: Write a magazine article about a town with a population of one. Include an imaginary interview with the person who lives in the town

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

5. LETTER: Write a letter to the buyers of the new town. Ask them three questions about their purchase. Give them three ideas about what to do with the town. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T b. F c. T d. F e. T f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. unidentified | a. anonymous |
| 2. located | b. situated |
| 3. runs | c. leads |
| 4. cabin | d. shack |
| 5. attracted | e. lured |
| 6. former | f. ex- |
| 7. expressed | g. conveyed |
| 8. break down | h. burst into tears |
| 9. chapter | i. stage |
| 10. interest | j. curiosity |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. two unidentified | a. men from Vietnam |
| 2. advertised | b. online |
| 3. 10 acres | c. of land |
| 4. a three- | d. bedroom house |
| 5. The winning | e. bidders |
| 6. former | f. inhabitant |
| 7. settle down | g. in the countryside |
| 8. He expressed his | h. sadness at moving |
| 9. start the next | i. chapter of my life |
| 10. global interest | j. in the sale |

GAP FILL:

America's smallest town sold online

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LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a 2 - c 3 - d 4 - b 5 - d 6 - c 7 - b 8 - a 9 - a 10 - c 11 - d 12 - b