Princess Diana's black dress to be sold

LEVEL B1



I. WARM-UP

1. What is the most famous outfit you can think of, and why?
2. Have you ever visited a museum or show about fashion?
3. Would you buy something at an auction? Why or why not?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

auction
a public sale where people bid money to buy an item

admit
to say that something is true, often something bad or secret

unfaithful
not loyal to a partner in a romantic relationship

iconic
very famous and widely recognised as a symbol

stylist
a person who helps someone choose clothes and looks

designer
a person who creates the style and shape of clothes

proceeds
the money that comes from selling something

catalogue
a printed list with details of items for sale

III. READING

Sotheby's will auction a black evening dress worn by Princess Diana, with an estimate of up to £220,000 ($300,000). The sale is due on 9 December in New York, after a tour to London, Hong Kong and Geneva.

The dress became iconic in 1994 when Diana arrived at the Serpentine Gallery the night Prince Charles admitted he had been unfaithful. It is the first time the piece has been at auction since 1997, when Diana sold 79 dresses to raise money for charities.

That year it was bought for £39,098 by Briege Mackenzie and her husband, who said they chose it because the proceeds helped Children First. Sotheby's said Diana showed how fashion could speak for her. The dress was by designer Christina Stambolian, and Diana's stylist later said she wanted to "look a million dollars".

Sotheby's added that a signed 1997 auction catalogue will be sold with it, and part of the proceeds will go to Royal Edinburgh Hospital via NHS Lothian Charity.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Princess Diana's 'revenge dress' goes up for...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the top price Sotheby's expects for the dress?
2. When and where is the dress due to be sold?
3. Why did the dress become iconic in 1994?
4. Who bought the dress in 1997, and why did they choose it?
5. What extra item will be sold with the dress, and who will get part of the proceeds?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Do clothes sometimes send a message? Share an example.
2. Should famous clothing be kept in museums or sold? Why?
3. What makes an item of clothing iconic to you?
4. Is it good to donate part of auction proceeds? Why or why not?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Reported speech

Use a reporting verb (said, told, added) + the reported words (no quotation marks). When we report, we often move tenses one step back (is → was, can → could, will → would, past simple → past perfect) and change pronouns (I → she).

"Sotheby's **said Diana showed** *how fashion could speak for her."*

"A visitor **said she loved** *the dress."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence in reported speech: put the words in brackets one tense back.

1. Sotheby's said the sale (is) ___ due on 9 December. _____
2. Auctioneers said the dress (can sell) ___ for up to £220,000. _____
3. Reports said Diana (arrived) ___ at the Serpentine in 1994. _____
4. Diana's stylist said she (wanted) ___ to look a million dollars. _____
5. Sotheby's added the catalogue (will be) ___ sold with the dress. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10–12 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach challenging words (auction, proceeds, catalogue, unfaithful) and practise saying the prices and dates clearly.
- Run a first skim for gist, then a detailed read for places, dates and prices. The story mentions adultery; start discussion in pairs and say students may talk about the news rather than their own lives.
- Differentiation: stronger students retell the tour route and sale details from memory; others use the text to support short answers.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Elicit quick examples (politicians, sports stars), then ask what message each outfit sent.
2. Take a show of hands, then pair students with someone who disagrees to exchange two reasons.
3. If answers stall, prompt features from the text (backstory, timing, pictures, designer).
4. Ask students to suggest one benefit and one risk of charity-linked sales, with examples.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: Write an 80-word auction listing for the dress and catalogue for Sotheby's website.

Role-play: In pairs, act as a Sotheby's specialist and a reporter; give and ask for sale details for 3 minutes.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Reported speech

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the top price Sotheby's expects for the dress?
   Up to £220,000 ($300,000).
2. When and where is the dress due to be sold?
   On 9 December in New York.
3. Why did the dress become iconic in 1994?
   Diana wore it the night Prince Charles admitted being unfaithful.
4. Who bought the dress in 1997, and why did they choose it?
   Briege Mackenzie and her husband, because the proceeds helped Children First.
5. What extra item will be sold with the dress, and who will get part of the proceeds?
   A signed 1997 auction catalogue; Royal Edinburgh Hospital via NHS Lothian Charity.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use a reporting verb (said, told, added) + the reported words (no quotation marks). When we report, we often move tenses one step back (is → was, can → could, will → would, past simple → past perfect) and change pronouns (I → she). (Example 2 constructed.)

> *"Sotheby's* **said Diana showed** *how fashion could speak for her."*
>
> *"A visitor* **said she loved** *the dress."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence in reported speech: put the words in brackets one tense back.

1. Sotheby's said the sale ___ due on 9 December. **was**
2. Auctioneers said the dress ___ for up to £220,000. **could sell**
3. Reports said Diana ___ at the Serpentine in 1994. **had arrived**
4. Diana's stylist said she ___ to look a million dollars. **had wanted**
5. Sotheby's added the catalogue ___ sold with the dress. **would be**