

Daniel Dancer the Miser of Harrow!



Literacy Resource Pack

Daniel Dancer the Miser of Harrow!

Could the inspiration for Charles Dicken's famous miser – Scrooge actually be Harrow's Daniel Dancer?

Daniel was born in Harrow Weald in 1716 and was the oldest of four children. He was not always an eccentric miser; in fact, he started off as respectable farmer. It wasn't until he inherited property (including Waldo's Farm, at Hatch End) that he started to display some rather odd behaviour. He soon decided to leave his land fallow in order to save costs, and his poor old horse was only allowed shoes for his back hooves.

Daniel's interesting lifestyle, (which included the decision to wash in puddles and never use soap), didn't stop him having friends and family around him. You can't help but feel sorry for his sister who shared his tumble-down home. Every Sunday she cooked one piece of beef and fourteen dumplings, and that food lasted the siblings for the whole week! Although once Daniel found a dead sheep, and despite not knowing what had killed it, had his sister make the whole carcass into mutton pies.

Sleeping arrangements at the Dancer household didn't involve unnecessary luxuries such as beds! The siblings slept on piles of straw. The challenge of keeping warm in a house where fires were not lit was met by wrapping the straw around their legs. In fact one day the lack of fires was highlighted when a neighbour, Lady Tempest, gave the household a gift of a trout. How do you heat a fish to eat it without a fire? Daniel merely sat on the dish until he believed it warm enough to eat!

Daniel Dancer, earlier in his life had been a respected overseer of the poor. Despite his extremely odd behaviour villagers still looked to him whenever there were any attacks on their rights over Harrow Weald Common.

Eventually Miss Dancer fell ill, and her brother with typical cheapskate style refused to pay for the doctor, and unfortunately his sister died without making a will. It is thought she wished her share of the property to go to Lady Tempest in return for her kindness. Her two other brothers claimed her estate, but Daniel fought them in court, claiming £30 per year for the thirty years he had 'looked after her' but he also wanted £100 for the last two years of her life because: 'during that time she has done nothing but eat and lie in bed'

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Incredibly Daniel was awarded over one thousand pounds (a considerable sum of money) for looking after his sister during her lifetime! Both this, and rumours of other money made Daniel Dancer's home a target for local thieves. The miser made the decision to board up the bottom half of his house, meaning he had to enter and leave his house by ladder (which he pulled up after him).

Daniel died in 1796, aged 78, and this is when the house yielded up its treasures:

£600 in a cracked teapot (with a note saying 'not to be hastily overlooked')

£200 found up the chimney

£2500 found in a dung heap (we hope this was coins rather than notes!)

In those days that all added up to a considerable sum of money, but the discoveries didn't end there. In locked chests the following items were found: plates, table clothes, 24 sheets and lots and lots of clothes!

All of Daniel Dancer's property was left to his neighbour Lady Tempest, but unfortunately, she died three months after the miser's demise. Rumour had it that she contracted her fatal illness from visiting Daniel on his deathbed!

Stories regarding this colourful local character have been told and retold down the ages, with many colourful embellishments added along the way no doubt!

This Learning Pack gives you literacy ideas to explore using this most eccentric of local tales!

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High-class Haiku

A haiku is a short poem, originally from Japan.

It has a three lines and a set number of syllables.

Follow these instructions to write a very simple haiku.

Write the first line of your haiku.

It must be 5 syllables and must describe Daniel

eg

mis -er -ly and mean
1 2 3 4 5

stingy

tight-fisted

penny-pinching

frugal

careful

shabby

Now write line 2.

It must be 7 syllables and should be something Daniel did

eg:

He sat on food to warm it
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Finally write line 3.

It must have 5 syllables.

Say how you feel about Daniel or his life

eg,

Bet it tast- ed bad!
1 2 3 4 5

I would share my cash

What a strange lifestyle

Wish I were as rich

Hope he was happy

Why was he so mean?

Miserly and mean
He sat on food to warm it
Bet it tasted bad!

Challenge: Can you include a metaphor?
You could write one as the last line, eg, 'A scruffy scarecrow'.

Tip
Find ways to play around with numbers of syllables-eg by using commas instead of 'and'.

Features

Line 1: 5 syllables

Line 2: 7 syllables

Line 3: 5 syllables

Haiku do not need to rhyme.

Traditionally they often have a reference to nature.

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Diary Entry

Dear Diary,
Another freezing cold day
today so I shall wrap extra straw
around me! I'm not wasting
money buying clothes!

Features

- 1st person (I, me, my)
- Feelings
- Informal
- Time conjunctions
(after that, later, yesterday, soon)

Imagine being miserly Daniel Dancer.

Write a diary entry about your day.

What did you do? How did you spend your day?

What money-saving, penny-pinching ideas did you come up with today?

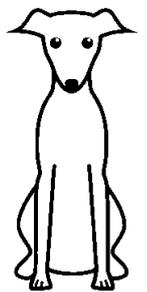
Read about Daniel and include some of these facts.

You can also use them to inspire you to invent more details of your own.

Why not try and write from someone else's point of view?

How about Daniel's dog, Bob?

Dear Diary,
Today I fancied a nice
bite of juicy sheep,
but...



Or even his house?



Dear Diary,
My poor old roof needs
fixing but my owner is
too mean to pay for it!

Think about the features
you need to include. Don't
forget to say what you
think and feel, as well as
what happened. You could
end by thinking about what
tomorrow will bring.

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Imagery

Close your eyes and imagine what it would be like inside Daniel Dancer's house.

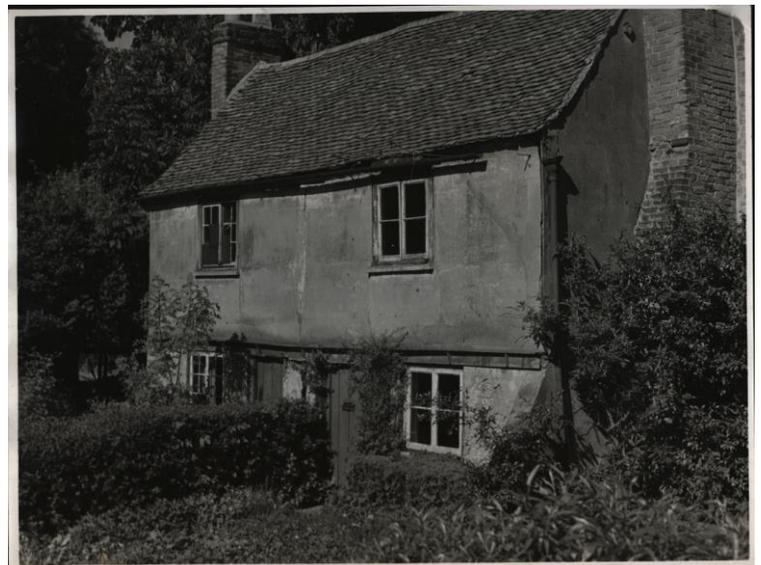
Draw a picture of what you see.

You might choose to draw the outside of the house, or even Daniel himself.



[Daniel Dancer](#)

by Unknown artist
pen and ink and wash, late 18th-
early 19th century
NPG D2132
© National Portrait Gallery, London



Maybe Daniel's house looked like this
old cottage in Pinner?

Daniel Dancer the Miser of Harrow!

Now annotate your drawing with some figurative language.

You could start by thinking of your 5 senses- what can you see, hear, feel, smell, taste? Now use the ideas below to write more words and phrases.

<p><u>Adjectives</u> eg dingy</p> <p><u>Adverbs</u> eg lifelessly</p>	<p><u>Similes</u> eg as cold as... or like...</p>	<p><u>Metaphors</u> eg an Aladdin's cave of treasure</p>
<p><u>Personification</u> eg walls groaned</p>	<p><u>Alliteration</u> eg bare broken boards</p>	<p><u>Onomatopoeia</u> eg creaked</p>

Features

adjectives describe the noun

adverbs describe the verb

similes compare two things using 'as' or 'like'

metaphors compare two things without using 'as' or 'like'

alliteration is two or more words starting with the same sound

personification gives something human characteristics

onomatopoeia is a sound effect word

You could now use all your ideas to write a descriptive paragraph. Remember to vary your sentence openers.

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In the hot seat!

What an interesting character Daniel was!
I wonder why he hated to spend money.
I would love to know more about him.

What makes you
happy?

What would you ask him if you could meet him?
And what would he reply?

Do you have many friends?

Do you ever feel hungry?

Aren't you worried
about becoming ill
from rotten food?

Hot Seat

Choose someone to pretend to be Daniel Dancer
and take it in turns to ask him questions.
Imagine what his replies would be.

Written interview

Set out your questions and answers with the names
first, like this:

Interviewer: or Q:
Daniel: A:

You could act out your interview as if it was for TV,
maybe for a news report, or chat show.
You could also interview his sister, or neighbour.
Why not film it?

Tips

- Don't forget question marks.
- What do you already know about Daniel? Use this to ask interesting questions.
- Think about Daniel's character and personality when giving his answers. What would he say?
- Avoid questions that require only a yes or no answer.
- Do you think you should be formal or informal when you speak to Daniel?

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Read all about it!



Daniel Dancer, the local miser, has died, and incredible discoveries have been made in his old house!

Write a newspaper article to report on the findings.

What state was the house in?

What clues are there as to how Daniel lived?

What was found hidden everywhere?

What do people know about Daniel?

Did anyone meet him or know him?

What did they think about him?

What will happen now to all his possessions?

Daniel was a very interesting character and I'm sure local people would love to hear all the interesting details! It will give them something to gossip about!

So make your report fascinating and sensational!

Remember to use interesting vocabulary, such as powerful nouns, verbs and adjectives.

Here are just a few examples of some interesting words you could use:

incredible **terrible** **appalling** **frightful** **miserly** **hidden** **concealed**
eccentric **stench** **amazing** **secretive** **private** **wealthy**

Use commas and embedded clauses to extend your sentences and make them more fluent:

Daniel Dancer died.
He lived in Harrow Weald.
He was a miser.
He was 78.



Daniel Dancer, 78-year-old local miser, died in Harrow Weald last night.

Features

- Answer the 5Ws- who, what, when, where, why?
- Tell the main story in the opening sentence.
- Use commas and bedded clauses to extend sentences.
- Include direct and reported quotes from relevant people.
- Include powerful vocabulary to interest the reader.
- End by saying what will happen next to the house.

You could include pictures with captions. (You will have to draw them-they didn't have cameras in 1796!)

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Persuasive Penny Pinching

Daniel had some very interesting ways of saving money!
Can you list some of them?

What could YOU do to save money, in school or at home?

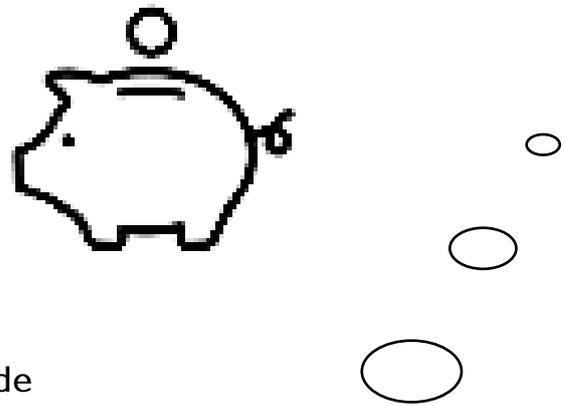
What do we spend the most money on in our lives? What gets wasted most?

How can we cut down on this? Think of sensible ways to stop wastage and save resources.

Make a poster of your top 5 money-saving tips.

Features

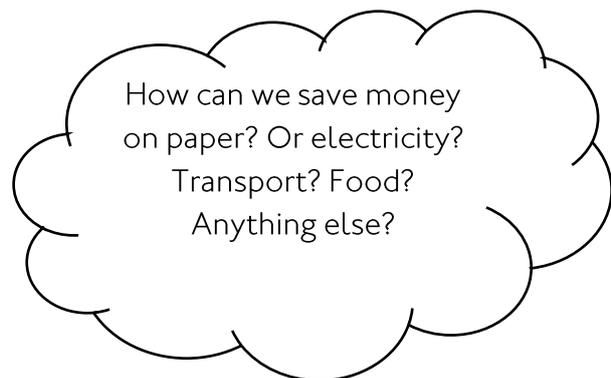
- catchy slogan
- short phrases or sentences
- eye-catching layout
- clear message



Write a letter to your headteacher to persuade them to follow one of your money saving ideas.

Features

- emotive language
- personal pronouns
- imperative verbs
- reasons to support your point
- conjunctions
- rhetorical questions



Firstly

Surely

Also

If...the...because

Furthermore

For these reasons

In addition

On the whole

Of course

I feel that

Remember to make your point,
explain your reasons, then
summarise.