

## Problems with Barter in Colonial Williamsburg Simulation for Money Museum

*Props:* two metal spoons, leather shoes, basket, book, Colonial style hat, name tags for shopkeepers, copy or picture of a Spanish Milled Dollar

*Directions:* Explain the concept of barter and tell the students that throughout history whenever money was scarce, people bartered to get the goods and services they needed. The Colonial period in American history was one of those times. Tell them they will be acting out a skit that takes place in Colonial times.

Assign students to play the following roles: Colonial child, Silversmith, Milliner, Shoemaker, Basket maker, Printer. Other students can be the audience or apprentices. Give the silversmith the two spoons, the milliner a hat, the shoemaker the leather shoes, the basket maker the basket, and the printer the book. Give each of the players a nametag to wear. Before you begin, discuss what goods would have been produced in each shop.

### Part 1-The Problem with Barter

**Teacher** *Name of child* wants to buy a silver spoon for his/her mother for her birthday. Where would we go to buy a silver spoon? (Motion Child into the silversmith's shop.) Tell the silversmith what you would like to buy.

**Child** Silversmith, I would like to buy a silver spoon for my mother for her birthday.

**Teacher** Silversmith, do you usually give away spoons to anyone who wants them?

**Silversmith** No, people have to pay money for them so I can pay my helpers and buy the silver.

**Teacher** Silver spoons usually cost one Spanish silver dollar, but *Child* doesn't have any money. Can anyone tell me how Colonial people acquired goods and services when they didn't have money? *Someone says "barter"*. Silversmith, would you be willing to barter a new hat for a silver spoon.

**Silversmith** Bring me a new hat and I will give you a silver spoon.

**Teacher** Let's go to the milliner for a hat. (Motion Child into the milliner's shop.) Tell the milliner what you would like to buy.

**Child** Milliner, I would like to buy a hat to trade for a silver spoon from the Silversmith.

**Teacher** Do you have any money? *No*. What do you want to do then? *Barter*. Milliner, those are sneakers. Colonial merchants didn't wear sneakers. You need a pair of Colonial shoes. What will you barter a hat for?

**Milliner** I will barter a hat for a new pair of shoes.

**Teacher** Let's go to the shoemaker for a pair of shoes. (Motion Child into the shoemaker's shop.) Tell the shoemaker what you would like to buy.

**Child** Shoemaker, I would like to buy a pair of shoes to trade for a hat from the milliner to trade for a silver spoon from the silversmith. I don't have any money.

**Teacher** Shoes are usually one silver dollar a pair, but *Child* has no money. Shoemaker, would you barter a pair of shoes for a basket to keep your tools in.

**Shoemaker** I usually sell a pair of shoes for one silver dollar, but if you bring me a basket from the basket maker, I will give you a pair of shoes.

**Teacher** Let's go to the basket maker for a basket. (Motion Child into the basket maker's shop.) Tell the basket maker what you would like.

**Child:** Basket maker, please sell me a basket to trade for a pair of shoes from the shoemaker to trade for a hat from the milliner to trade for a silver spoon from the silversmith. I don't have any money.

**Teacher** (Remind the class to be sure to pay attention. Our trip around Williamsburg is getting complicated!) *Child* doesn't have any money but he/she knows how to barter, even though barter hasn't worked yet. Basket maker, will you barter a basket for a book?

**Basket maker** I can't sell you a basket if you have no money, but I will barter a basket for a copy of my favorite book from the printer.

**Teacher** Let's go to the printer. (Motion Child into the printer's shop.) Tell the printer what you want.

**Child** Printer, I would like to buy a book to trade for a basket from the basket maker to trade for a pair of shoes from the shoemaker to trade for a hat from the milliner to trade for a silver spoon from the silversmith. I don't have any money, but I am willing to barter.

**Teacher** Printer, I'll bet you are also willing to barter. In exchange for a book, I happen to know that you would like a silver spoon for your silver collection. Class, here is our dilemma: If we had a silver spoon, we could trade it for a book, trade that for a basket, trade that for a pair of shoes, trade that for a hat, and trade that for the silver spoon for *Child's* mother's birthday present. But if we had a silver spoon, we would have what we needed in the first place! What could we bring into this story that would make getting the silver spoon much easier?

## Part 2-Solving the Barter Problem

**Teacher** The answer is money. This is a Spanish silver dollar. British colonists weren't allowed to mint their own money so a lot of them used Spanish silver dollars. This is a copy. *Child* did some chores for me last week so I am going to use this dollar to pay him/her. What can *Child* do with the dollar?

*The Child can buy a silver spoon from the silversmith.*

**Teacher** Now what will the silversmith do with the silver dollar?

*The silversmith will use it to buy a hat from the milliner.*

**Teacher** What will the milliner do with the silver dollar?

*The milliner will use it to buy a pair of shoes from the shoemaker.*

**Teacher** What will the shoemaker do with the silver dollar?

*The shoemaker will use the dollar to buy a basket from the basket maker.*

**Teacher** What will the basket maker do with the dollar?

*The basket maker will use the dollar to buy a book from the printer.*

**Teacher** What will the printer do with the silver dollar?

*The printer will use the dollar to buy a silver spoon from the silversmith.*

**Teacher** Now everyone has the goods they need! Using money as a medium of exchange is a lot easier than bartering.