



What Happened Next?

Here are six short dramas. They can be used as a way of telling John Laing's life story to a class.

Each drama can be acted out by a group of five pupils. Each script is on its own page. Pupils can mime parts of the stories and use simple props.

The narrator needs to ask the audience halfway through, 'what do you think happened next?' before the drama continues.

At the end of the performance ask the audience a second question, "what have you learnt about John Laing's character or his values?" Let the audience offer suggestions.

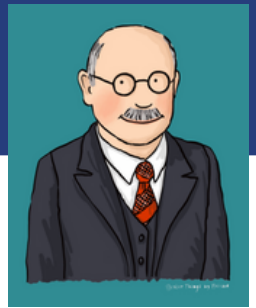
Please note: These six episodes are also supplied as readings that older pupils can convert into dramas for themselves.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





1. School

Narrator: The young John Laing was an intelligent pupil, who worked hard. He often finished his classwork first. One day the headmaster visited John Laing's classroom.

John Laing is sitting reading a book. Other pupils are working.

Headmaster: What are you doing boy? Why aren't you working?

Narrator: Two days later the headmaster visited the classroom again...

John Laing is sitting reading a book.

Headmaster: You are doing it again boy!

Narrator: asks the audience (could use a sign):

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



Narrator: John Laing had to appear in front of the whole school for a hearing.

Headmaster: Laing - why did I twice find you reading in class and not doing your work?

John Laing: Sir, I had completed my work. Why don't you give me some more work to do?

Headmaster: Oh. *(thinks)* Laing, I am going to move you up two classes!

Narrator: Some time later, John had a conversation with his grandmother.

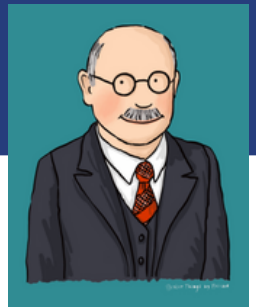
John Laing: I am going to leave school.

Granny: John please stay at school. You are doing so well.

John Laing: Sorry Granny, I have decided. I am going to be a builder. One day I will be the top contractor in the whole country!

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





2. Apprenticeship

Narrator: John Laing's father believed that his son should have three years of practical building training before he eventually took over the business. John Laing worked as an apprentice aged 15 – 18.

John Laing's father: Son, working as a builder will give you a knowledge of what the job of a builder involves. You'll learn to cope with the British weather! It will help you understand people and give you experience of overcoming the difficulties of doing the work.

John Laing: It isn't even light yet and it is throwing it down with rain. Off to work I go.

Narrator: Once, when he wasn't working hard enough...

Site Manager: Laing, 'I wouldn't like you to catch cold.' Work harder!

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



Narrator: Laing doubled his output. He even had a brick laying competition with another apprentice. They had 4 labourers bring them bricks and they worked for 9 hours, using 4000 bricks!

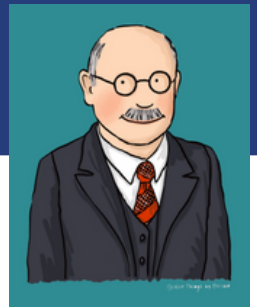
John Laing: Why are you carving that so carefully – it is going 100 feet up. No one will see it.

Bob Franklin: Do everything right. If I start being slovenly it might infect all my work.

Narrator: These were lessons John did not forget. John Laing developed a deep respect for the builders working on the sites. He often reminded the people working for him in warm offices that the builders were often working long hours and were cold, up to their ears in mud and soaked to the skin. He knew they were the company's greatest asset.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





3. Sewer

John Laing's father: Son it is time for you to take over the building firm I have started. I am going to retire.

John Laing: I won't let you down, father.

John Laing: *(To his workers)* We are going to take on the contract to build a sewer. It is not the sort of job we have tackled before.

Narrator: Things did not go smoothly.

Worker 1: This weather is terrible! The site is flooded!

Worker 2: Help! The quicksand is swallowing me up! Save my boots!

Narrator: Then, the owners of the land objected to the work and took Laing from court to court trying to get payment from him. John Laing worked very long hours, was very worried and often could not sleep. He thought the company might go bankrupt.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



John Laing: *(Praying)* I am sorry that I have worried my parents. Please help me and from now on I will run the company differently. Amen.

Narrator: The company won the court case.

John Laing: I'm not going to celebrate yet...I need to think...

Narrator: John went to his hotel room and wrote down how he would live.

John Laing: *(Writing)* 1. Being a Christian will be the most important thing in my life. 2. I will enjoy life and help others find enjoyment. 3. I will live on a small amount of money and give the rest away to my church or people in need or charities.

Narrator: John Laing called this plan his 'Programme for Life'. He followed it for the rest of his life.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





4. Canteen

Narrator: John Laing often visited building sites to check up on the progress of a building project and the standard of the work. One lunchtime John Laing was due to visit a building site.

Office Staff 1: The boss is visiting at lunchtime tomorrow. I will order some tasty food for him to eat.

Office Staff 2: I will bring in a nice tablecloth and some flowers.

Narrator: Meanwhile the builders were eating in a cold, building with the rain leaking through a hole in the roof and the food certainly could not be described as tasty. It was not at all tasty.

Builder: “I bet the boss isn’t eating this rubbish.”

Narrator: They were unaware that there was a man in a raincoat in the corner eating quietly and listening to their conversation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



Narrator: The man in the raincoat was John Laing, the boss! He left the canteen and went to his meeting in the office.

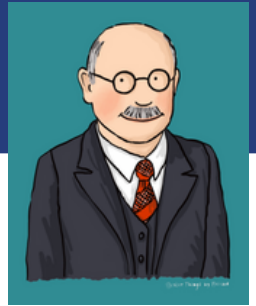
Office Staff 1: We have a lovely lunch for you.

John Laing: No thank you. I have already eaten in the canteen with the men.

Narrator: The only sign that the man in the raincoat in the canteen was John Laing was that the leak was fixed and food for the men in the canteen improved.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?





5. Lorry

Narrator: When John Laing started work in the building industry all the heavy lifting was done by horses and carts. As time went on the Laing Company started to use heavy machinery. One day John Laing was looking out of the window of a company office.

John Laing: Can you see that man and his lorry?

Employee: Yes, I see him. He is taking great care, isn't he?

Narrator: John Laing left his office and approached the man driving the lorry.

John Laing: My name is John Laing. What is your name?

Neville Reece: (*nervously*) My name is Neville Reece.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



John Laing: I like the careful way you look after that lorry of yours – would you like a job with me?

Neville Reece: With the Laing Company? Yes please!

Narrator: He became one of the firm's most trusted employees. Laing would seek Reece out to have a quick chat with him whenever he visited a site where he was working.

Neville Reece's wife: My husband, Neville Reece worked for The Laing Company for the rest of his life. The Laing Company was everything to him.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?



Christians and Sheffield Schools
connecting • encouraging • resourcing



Laing Family Trusts



6. Cathedral

Narrator: On 14th - 15th November 1940, during World War II, Coventry was bombed by the Germans. The bombing lasted 10 hours and 554 people were killed. 865 were seriously injured. A third of the city's houses were made uninhabitable. The cathedral was hit and largely destroyed.

Basil Spence: I am Basil Spence - the architect who won a competition to design a new cathedral. Coventry Cathedral is the first cathedral to be built for 300 years! It is a dream come true for me!

John Laing: I am John Laing. The Laing Company was the building company who were chosen to build the new cathedral! It is a building that needs to last for at least a thousand years. I am delighted to do this work for God. I have written to each employee to ask them to do their very best.

Narrator: It turned out to be a difficult job.

Builder 1: I've found a plague pit with lots of skeletons and bones.

Builder 2: This weather is really awful!

Narrator: The men building the cathedral had to use braziers (fires) and every heating device possible in order to keep the men warm.

WHAT DO YOU THINK HAPPENED NEXT?



Narrator: The Laing Company were seen as a great success – they were pleasant to work with, they were businesslike, superb craftsmen and they completed the work on time, in spite of all the problems and the bad weather.

John Laing: We decided we would cover our costs but wouldn't make a profit from building the cathedral. Don't tell anyone though.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT JOHN LAING'S CHARACTER?

