

The Universal Market

Flowers in all their colours covering an area the size of 125 soccer fields are what you see if you visit the world's largest flower market, in the Dutch village of Aalsmeer. The scale is astounding. Seven million roses, three million tulips, two million chrysanthemums, and eight million other flowers and potted plants pass through on a typical morning. Some two thousand buyers bid \$5 million for them. The flowers are flown in from as far away as Colombia, Kenya and Zimbabwe. While shipping flowers to the Netherlands might seem akin to taking coals to Newcastle, the Dutch today are in the business of running the global flower trade. The marketplace is organised so expeditiously that the flowers are still fresh when they reach their ultimate destinations all around the world.

A worldwide market in cut flowers, delicate and perishable as they are, could not exist without modern technology. It was not until the late 1980s that countries like Kenya became significant suppliers. Efficient air transportation and telecommunication are needed to move roses from a grower near Nairobi to Aalsmeer and then on to a buyer, say, in Seoul, all in less than a day. Electronic devices keep track of the flowers as they move through the auction house. The 'Dutch clock' method of bidding allows the thousands of auctions to run in a few hours. A gigantic clock, to which every bidder is wired, dominates the front of each auction hall. As each lot of flowers is towed by, the clock's hand starts at a high price and rotates through lower prices until one of the bidders stops it with a push of a button. Computers then automatically organise the flowers delivery to the buyers address. Sophisticated as its processes are the core of the global flower market- competitive buying and selling, is as old as civilisation.

The markets flourished every weekend, it was a place for many types of people, rich and poor, young and old, girl and boy, happy and sad. It was only popular because of its diversity in flowers and then in people. People from all backgrounds and households would gather to buy the flowers they could afford, or would put back the ones they could not. The constant voices of bargaining, arguing for a cheaper price, laughing, yawning, speaking on the phone, combined together to form this unique and truly extraordinary market.

Reading Test:

Fluency: ___/5 Pronunciation: ___/5 Understanding: ___/5 Meaning: ___/5

Comments: _____

Q. Write and learn the spellings of the underlined words in the text.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

Q. Write the meanings of the following words in the spaces provided.

a. astounding _____

b. expeditious _____

c. perishable _____

d. civilisation _____

e. flourish _____

f. ultimate _____

Q. Answer the following questions to the text 'The Universal Market' in full sentences.

a. What is the universal market and how is it described?

b. How does the writer indicate the diversity of the flowers?

c. How is the market different to other markets? What is different in its quality?

d. What does the writer say is essential to maintain such quality?

e. How are the biddings in the market organised?

f. What else is admired about the market?

g. How else does the writer describe the atmosphere of the market?
