

Are we all criminals?

Have you committed a crime?

First answer the following questions on your own:

1. Have you ever stolen anything from a shop?
2. Have you ever taken something from your place of work or study – some paper or a pen?
3. Have you ever photocopied something at work or college without permission?
4. Have you ever not paid in a car park when you should have done?
5. Have you ever sent a private email while you were at work or used the office phone?
6. Have you ever kept something that you found?
7. Have you ever not declared something you should have done on your tax form?
8. Have you ever broken any traffic laws – speeding or parking, perhaps?

Now compare your answers with a partner.

Reading

1. Read the two articles and answer these questions:

1. What did Stacy Truman do with the money she found?
2. What did John and Darius Herbert do with the money they found?

CLEANER JAILED

Stacy Truman, 35, a cleaner at the Basingstoke branch of the Mid-West Bank, was jailed for ten months for the theft of £40,000 from the bank. Finding the safe open one morning, Ms Truman took the money in what she described in court as a 'moment of madness'. She then flew to France where she started spending the money. Two days later, stricken with guilt, she returned to Britain and gave herself up to the Basingstoke police, promising to pay back the money she had already spent. The judge said that her crime demanded an immediate prison sentence. Her solicitor described the sentence as harsh and said she would be appealing.

HONESTY PRAISED BY POLICE

Two boys who handed in a supermarket carrier bag containing £1,600 in cash were praised by the police yesterday. John Herbert, 11, and his brother Darius, 8, found the bag in a bush on their way to school and took it to the local police station. Police identified the bag from other contents as belonging to a local councillor. The boys were given a reward of £160, which they are intending to spend on football shirts and computer games.

Discussion

Discuss these questions in pairs or small groups:

1. If the boys had kept the money, would anybody have found out?
2. Do you think their reward was too much, too little, or about right? Why?
3. If the money the boys found had been yours, would you have given them a reward?
4. How did Stacy Truman think she would get away with her crime?
5. Do you think her prison sentence was too lenient, too harsh, or about right? Why?
6. What would you have done with the money in each situation?

Language 1

Match the phrases underlined in the sentences to the meanings in a-f below:

1. A woman answering to the thief's description was caught on CCTV.
2. The police are looking into a number of burglaries in the area.
3. The thieves broke into the warehouse and stole some valuable carpets.
4. We thought he would go to prison, but he got away with a fine.
5. As it was his first offence, the judge let him off with a warning.
6. I thought we'd lost that book, but it turned up in a box in the attic.

a. enter illegally

b. escape with a very light sentence

c. investigate

d. match

e. appear

f. let someone go free

Language 2

Complete this conversation with the correct form of the underlined verbs in 1 above:

- A: Have you heard? The police have caught the thieves who (1) Jack's house.
B: That's great. But it's been ages since the burglary – how did they catch them?
A: Well, the police were (2) a bank robbery that happened last month. They found a couple of guys who (3) the description that the bank clerk gave them. So they searched the flat where these guys were living. They didn't find any money from the bank, but unfortunately for these guys a video recorder and a CD player from Jack's house (4).
B: Wow! What's going to happen now?
A: Well, the thieves are saying that they don't know anything. The stuff was given to them by a friend who's gone to live in Australia.
B: That's not a very good story.
A: No, but I think they may (5) it. Apparently, the police want to them (6) with a warning. They don't think they'll win if the case goes to court.
B: That's terrible. They really should be going to prison. Jack was off work for weeks after it happened.

Discussion

Recent figures in Britain suggest that more than one in five people would not give information about a crime to the police. Numbers varied according to the type of crime. Nearly one in ten said they would not give information – even for a rape or a murder. Almost a third said they would not give details of people using drugs. Would you contact the police if you had information about the following crimes:

1. a murder?
2. a rape?
3. a burglary at a friend's home?
4. a burglary at the home of someone you don't like?
5. young people using drugs in the city centre?
6. the son of a friend who is using drugs?
7. children buying alcohol underage?
8. a shopkeeper selling alcohol to underage children?

Moral dilemmas

Discuss these questions with a partner:

1. You find a carrier bag full of money in a public toilet. Do you:
a) keep it?
b) leave it there?
c) take it to the police?
d) do something else?
2. You see a friend of yours removing a computer from your place of work/study. Do you:
a) assume she's stealing it, but say nothing?
b) assume she's borrowing it and say nothing?
c) tell the boss/principal?
d) ask her what she's doing?
e) do something else?
3. You see someone shoplifting in a supermarket. Do you:
a) tell one of the assistants?
b) tell the shoplifter to put it back?
c) do nothing?
d) do something else?
4. You discover a phone box that lets you make free international calls. Do you:
a) call all your friends who live abroad?
b) tell everyone you know about it?
c) tell the phone company?
d) do something else?

Compare your answers with other pairs.