8.3 Reading and Vocabulary

The right punishment?

A fair punishment

Imagine that you're a police officer. What would you do if you saw some teenagers shoplifting? A kind police officer's decision helped Lisa and her brother Ian out of a difficult situation.

When Lisa was fifteen and Ian was seventeen, they were arrested for stealing from a shop. The police officer who caught them did an unusual thing: he gave them a choice. Did they want to go to a normal court, where an adult judge would decide their punishment? Or did they want to go to a youth court, where a group of young people would decide their punishment?

For Lisa and Ian, the answer was easy. They knew they had done something illegal and it was impossible to avoid punishment, but they hoped young judges might understand their situation better. That's why they chose to go to a youth court.

But what is a youth court? It's a place where the jury – the group of people who make decisions – is made up of people aged 12–19. Young people who are in trouble with the law have a chance to explain their story, be judged and get back on the 'right track'. There are now thousands of these courts around the world, including Europe, Asia and the USA. Of course, normal courts still deal with serious crimes.

At the court, Lisa and Ian, who were very nervous, were given three punishments. First, they both had to write an apology to the shop owner. Then they had to do forty hours of 'community service'. In other words, they had to help other people in their local area. Finally, they had to volunteer at the youth court themselves. The brother and sister both felt this was fair. They didn't want to be irresponsible any more. As volunteers, they have learned how the court works. They have both helped to choose fair punishments for other young people too.

1 Look at the photos and title of the article. Describe the photos. What do you think the article is about?

2 8.8 Read the article and check your answers to Exercise 1. What kind of court did Lisa and Ian choose? What countries have such courts?

3 Read the article again and choose the correct answer.

1 What did the police officer do that was surprising?
   - a He arrested Lisa and Ian for stealing.
   - b He sent Lisa and Ian to a youth court.
   - c He asked Lisa and Ian to choose where to go.
   - d He gave Lisa and Ian something from the shop.

2 Why did Lisa and Ian choose to go to a youth court?
   - a They thought it was difficult to understand adults.
   - b They believed their actions were legal.
   - c They wanted to make their own choices.
   - d They wanted to be heard by people of their own age.

3 Which of these statements is true about youth courts?
   - a You listen to stories about all kinds of crimes.
   - b You are heard by people who are a similar age.
   - c You can choose a punishment that works for you.
   - d You meet young people from around the world.

4 How did Lisa and Ian react to their punishment?
   - a They agreed it was appropriate.
   - b They were quite unhappy.
   - c They wanted to change it.
   - d They thought it was hard work.

4 8.9 Study the Vocabulary box. Find more adjectives with negative prefixes in the article and write the missing words. How do these prefixes change the meaning of an adjective?

VOCABULARY Word building: negative adjectives

un-	unhappy, uninteresting, unimportant, uncomfortable, unkind, unfair, _____
im-	impatient, _____
il-	illogical, _____
ir-	irregular, _____

YOUR WORLD

5 Do you think youth courts are a good idea? Why?/Why not?

LIVEWORKSHEETS