I wish I hadn't ...

Four young people talk about getting into trouble

ISEL

A Martin



I was always good at computers and I used to break codes and hack into secure sites. It didn't occur to me that it was illegal. It seemed just a bit of harmless fun.

There was a group of us who used to compete with each other to be more and more daring. I got onto a mobile phone site and I got the number of a famous person's mobile and managed to get all the addresses of their famous friends. I boasted about it to everyone I knew, so eventually, I was caught and charged. I thought I'd go to prison but at the trial, the jury decided I was innocent because the police didn't produce enough evidence. But I know now I shouldn't have done it. The court case created a lot of bad publicity for the famous person. I was so caught up in hacking that I forgot I was ruining someone's private life. I wish I had never got involved in it now.

B Brad



We all used to play truant from school. In fact, truanting was a big problem at our school. I was always in trouble from when I was small. We did it because there was nothing else to do – a mate of mine was the ringleader and we just copied him. But I was quite rebellious, so I think I would have done it on my own anyway. Of course, in reality it wasn't exciting at all. But it's not a serious crime, like if you rob someone or vandalise something, so I don't think you get punished with a sentence, but they can make you pay a fine. In the end, I realised that I needed to pass my school exams and that's what I'm trying my best to do at the moment. My old friends still want me to join them but I've left all that behind and I'm studying hard.

C Louise



I'm prepared to talk about my story because if it stops one person from doing what I did, then it will be worth it. I was popular at school, so I created this little gang around me, who went along with whatever I had in mind – I was too scared to act alone. At the weekend sometimes we would go shoplifting – just small things, but still very wrong. One day someone caught us and we were all arrested. My parents were so upset, especially when the witness turned out to be a neighbour. I went to court and was found guilty but I was let off because my lawyer argued that it was the first time I had done something like this and that I had learned my lesson. I was so frightened it made me change my ways. I wish I could make it up to my parents. I should have thought of them in the first place.

D Steve



I was always very good at art at school and I saw graffiti art as an extension of that. I didn't realise it was actually something you could be imprisoned for, though obviously I knew we weren't supposed to be doing it. My friends and I formed a group and we each had our own signature. We used to paint graffiti on walls at night when no one was around. Soon everybody locally knew who we were, which gave us some respect. But one night we got caught and the punishment the judge gave us was to wash all the walls we had painted, so I spent three months doing that and thinking if only I had used washable paint! I still think graffiti livens up city walls and is a way of expressing yourself. I wish I was still a graffiti artist – I felt it was like making art. Ideally, I'd like to go to art college, but it may be difficult because of my conviction.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

4 Read the article again. Match the questions (1–16) with the people (A–D).

Which person

1 doesn't feel sorry about what they did? D
2 did something wrong because they were bored? .....
3 was unaware that they were doing something wrong? .....
4 told other people about their crime? .....
5 felt scared about the results of what they had done? .....
6 enjoyed the fact that they were famous? .....
7 was influenced by a friend? .....
8 suggested rule-breaking ideas to friends? .....
9 mentions the difference in their life now? .....
10 mentions the need to be part of a group? .....
11 got less pleasure from their wrongdoing than they expected? .....
12 says how they were punished for their crime? .....
13 wants others to learn from their mistakes? .....
14 did something that was very common at the time? .....
15 mentions the difficulties their behaviour has created for their future? .....
16 mentions the struggle to leave their old life behind? .....

5 Find words in the article that match these definitions.

1 secretly find a way of getting information from someone else's computer (text A)
2 not allowed by law (text A)
3 someone who leads a group that is doing something wrong (text B)
4 opposing someone in authority or the rules of society (text B)
5 a punishment that a judge gives to someone guilty of a crime (text B)
6 a group of young people, especially that often cause trouble or fights (text C)
7 someone who sees something happen, especially an accident or crime (text C)
8 your name written the way you usually write it (text D)
9 something that someone has when they have been found guilty of a crime (text D)

LIVEWORKSHEETS