

Reading Comprehension – Reinforcement

English as a Foreign Language

Name:

Date:

Third BGU “D”

Reading

The Great Train Robber

After more than 35 years on the run in Australia and Brazil, British criminal Ronnie Biggs, one of the world's most notorious fugitives, was arrested in 2001. He could have easily stayed in exile until the end, but penniless and in bad health, he was forced to return to the UK in search of medical help. Biggs was part of the gang who took part in what is now known as the Great Train Robbery of 1963.

Born in London on 8th August, 1929, Biggs spent much of his childhood during World War Two as an evacuee in Cornwall, South West England. He was first arrested at the age of 15 for stealing pencils from a shop and again when he was 21 for a failed robbery on a betting shop. Nine years later, he was approached by Bruce Reynolds, a man he had met previously in prison, with an invitation to take part in a much bigger crime - a train robbery.

On 8th August, 1963, the gang ambushed the Glasgow to London mail train as it passed through the Buckinghamshire countryside and seized £2.6 million. Biggs' role in the robbery was to arrange another train driver to help move the train. However, the retired train driver could not master the controls, and the real driver, Jack Mills, was hit over the head with an iron bar and forced to move the train.

Biggs' fingerprints were found at the gang's hideout and 11 weeks after the robbery all 11 gang members were arrested. However, he only served 15 months before he escaped by climbing a wall with a homemade rope and getting away in a furniture van.

Biggs escaped to Paris where he spent £40,000 of his £143,000 share of the stolen money on plastic surgery. There he spent three years with his wife and children, but when the authorities started getting suspicious, he fled to Brazil.

In February 1974, detective inspector Jack Slipper of Scotland Yard managed to track him down and arrested Biggs in Rio de Janeiro. However, police had difficulty bringing him back to England because Biggs had had a child with his Brazilian girlfriend.

At the age of 71, he was finally brought back to the UK by the Sun newspaper on a private plane. He was sent to a high- security prison but in 2007, after strokes and heart attacks left him seriously ill, he was transferred to a specially designed prison for elderly inmates on life sentences. Then in 2009, after a long campaign for freedom, the then Justice Secretary Jack Straw decided to free Biggs, saying that medical evidence showed his health had deteriorated and he was not expected to recover. He lived in freedom for another four years before his death in 2013.

Instruction: Read and choose the correct answers for the questions about “The Great Train Robber”.

1. Why did Ronnie Biggs return to the UK in 2001?

- A) Because he missed his family.
- B) Due to poor health and needing medical help.
- C) To plan another robbery.
- D) To evade the authorities.

2. What was Ronnie Biggs' role in the Great Train Robbery?

- A) He arranged for an alternate train driver.
- B) He was responsible for assaulting the train driver.
- C) He organized the gang's hideout.
- D) He coordinated the police's response.

3. How did Ronnie Biggs escape from prison after being arrested for the robbery?

- A) He climbed over the prison walls with a homemade rope.
- B) He bribed the guards.
- C) He dug a tunnel.
- D) He disguised himself as a guard.

4. Where did Ronnie Biggs spend a portion of his stolen money?

- A) Paris
- B) Brazil
- C) London
- D) Switzerland

5. Who eventually managed to track down Ronnie Biggs in Brazil?

- A) His Brazilian girlfriend
- B) Detective Inspector Jack Slipper
- C) International law enforcement agents
- D) The Brazilian president

6. What difficulty did the authorities face when trying to extradite Biggs from Brazil?

- A) Lack of evidence
- B) Biggs' citizenship status
- C) Biggs' poor health
- D) Lack of cooperation from the Brazilian government

7. What ultimately led to Ronnie Biggs' release from prison in 2009?

- A) A successful escape attempt
- B) A presidential pardon
- C) Medical evidence showing his health was deteriorating
- D) Completion of his sentence

8. What happened to Ronnie Biggs in 2013?

- A) He escaped from prison.
- B) He was released from prison.
- C) He died.
- D) He committed another crime.

9. Match the numbers on the left to the appropriate letters on the right.

1. The Great Train Robbery of 1963	A. Location where Ronnie Biggs spent a significant portion of his time in exile.
2. Detective Inspector Jack Slipper	B. Amount of money seized during the Great Train Robbery.
3. Ronnie Biggs	C. Criminal who organized the gang for the Great Train Robbery.
4. £2.6 million	D. Method used by Ronnie Biggs to alter his appearance in Paris.
5. Brazil	E. Individual who managed to track down Ronnie Biggs in Rio de Janeiro.
6. Medical evidence	F. Evidence cited as a reason for Ronnie Biggs' release from prison in 2009.
7. Bruce Reynolds	G. Notorious British criminal involved in the Great Train Robbery.
8. Plastic surgery	H. Historic robbery involving the ambush of a Glasgow to London mail train.