

WHY HAD SHE BROKEN THE LAW?



READING AND VOCABULARY:

TEEN COURT A SECOND CHANGE

Reading tips:

If you need to understand the details of an article, you may need to read intensively.

- Try to read the text from start to finish. Make a note of words you don't understand, but don't stop reading to look them up.

- After you've read the text, look up any words you didn't know.

The 15-year-old **defendant** stood to answer questions in a New York **court**. She had stolen a dress from a shop and the judge and **jury** wanted to know the motive. Why had she done it? She explained what had happened and then the jury considered the evidence.

The defendant's parents hoped that the court could help their daughter avoid future problems, but she hadn't listened to people in authority before. However, this courtroom was different to other courts. For a start, before the **trial** started, a volunteer lawyer had sat next to the defendant to help and support her in court.

Furthermore, the judge, lawyers, jury, witnesses and defendant all had something in common: they were all teenagers.

Teen courts have existed in the US for nearly 25 years. They hear cases that involve crimes such as vandalism and shoplifting by first-time offenders and hope to help them avoid becoming second-time offenders. When the young jury members question a defendant, they often ask about their future plans instead of their crime. They want the defendant to think about their situation and how to improve it. To encourage them, if defendants accept the jury's decisions, the court doesn't give them a criminal record.

The young girl in the New York courtroom stands to hear the sentence. The jury has decided she will have to do community service and write a letter of apology to her victim, the shop owner. She will also have to become a member of the jury for future cases. The big question for some people is, will this work? Will this sentence stop her from offending again?

The answer is yes, it will probably will. Teen courts are a success and only 11% of their defendants have problems with the law again, compared with 25% of teens who appear in normal courts. So why do they work? The experts believe that teenagers find it easier to accept advice from their peers, especially when they know that some were also once defendants. Returning to court, but as a good guy, is a second chance that most want to take.

1. Choose the correct answers:

a) Why was the 15-year-old in court?

To answer questions

Because she was a burglar

Because she had stolen a dress

Because she was a teenager

b) What was different about the court?

Her parents thought the court would make her change.

It was in New York and it was very big

People were close to her

They had something in common. They were teenagers

c) What teen courts try to do?

They try defendants obey

They try defendants become jury

They try defendants not to be
second time offenders

They try defendants say sorry to their
parents

d) Why does the jury ask the defendants about their future?

They want the defendant think
about how to make his/her life
better in the future

They want the defendant think what they
want to be in the future

e) What 3 things has the defendant have to do?

Write a letter to a shop assistant

Write an apology to the shop owner

She won't have to do it again

Become a member of the jury

Community service

Become a judge

f) What makes easier for teenage defendants to accept the decisions of the jury in teen courts?

They accept advice from other teens

They are accompanied by a volunteer
lawyer who support them.

The decisions are easy to take

They know teen courts are a success

2. Who do you think said the following sentences?

a) *I want to work in the fashion industry*

The judge

b) *She just took it and ran out of the shop*

The jury

c) *Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?*

The witness

d) *I'll be here to explain anything you don't understand*

The defendant

e) *I hope she learns a lesson from this*

*The defendant's
parents*

3. Answer the questions with the correct words

COURT

DEFENDANT

JURY

OFFENDER

PEER

TRIAL

- a) What is the process to decide if someone is innocent or guilty?
- b) What's the building criminals, judges and lawyers go to?
- c) What's the group of people who decide if someone is guilty?
- d) Who is the same age as you?
- e) Who commits crimes?
- f) Who has to answer questions in court about where they were when a crime happened?

4.

Complete the text with the correct form of the highlighted words from the article.

In the UK, there are youth (1) _____ for young (2) _____ between the ages of 10 and 17. They are different to youth courts in the USA. The (3) _____ takes place with a judge and lawyers but they don't choose a (4) _____ of ordinary people to listen to the evidence. When the judge and lawyers speak to the (5) _____, they use his or her first name but they are not his or her (6) _____; they are all adults.