

7 *Death by poison*

Before you read

1. Have there been any famous criminal trials in your country?
2. What do you know about these trials?
3. What kind of evidence was used in these trials?

Reading

- 1 Ben Barton was a successful businessman in Aspen, Colorado, in the USA. In 1987 he married Gloria Heller. One day in 1994 Gloria called her friend Detective Jim Steele to tell him that Ben had disappeared. One month later, Detective Steele found Ben's body in the forest near Aspen. Ben had been poisoned.
- 2 Although Detective Steele and Gloria were friends, he soon began to suspect her of the murder. Instead of going to Ben's funeral, Gloria ran away. Detective Steele thought that this was a strange way for her to behave. Six years later, she was found living in another town with a man named Carl Thatcher. Detective Steele wanted to put her on trial for murder, but he had only one piece of evidence against her. A shopkeeper in Aspen had sold Gloria some rat poison two weeks before Ben's death. The most important thing was for Detective Steele to find a motive for the murder.
- 3 Detective Steele decided to interview Carl Thatcher. Carl was polite at first but became tired and angry after a few hours. Finally, he confessed. He told Detective Steele that he and Gloria had been having an affair while Ben was still alive. Carl and Gloria decided to murder Ben and get married. One evening in 1994, Gloria cooked a meal for Ben and poisoned him. Then Carl helped her to hide Ben's body in the forest. Six years after Ben Barton's death, Gloria Heller and Carl Thatcher were found guilty of murder and sentenced to fifteen years in prison thanks to Detective Steele's investigation.

Vocabulary

A. Complete each sentence with the correct word or phrase.

interviewed sentenced polite put you on trial having an affair

1. Brian is _____ with another woman. His wife would be very angry if she found out.
2. The police _____ Jack because they thought he had robbed a bank. They asked him where he was at the time of the robbery.
3. My brother was _____ to two years in prison for stealing a car.
4. If the police think you killed somebody, they will _____ and you might go to prison.
5. Petra is so rude. She never says 'please' or 'thank you'. Someone should teach her how to be _____.

B. Choose the correct word or phrase with the same meaning as the blue words in each sentence.

think killed with something that causes death when eaten
did it reason said she did it

1. James likes your bicycle, so he has a **motive** for stealing it.
2. The farmer **poisoned** the fox because it had killed some of his chickens.
3. At first Kelly said she didn't lose her sister's CD. But she later **confessed** and bought her sister a new CD.
4. Somebody stole my lunch this morning. I **suspect** it was Danny because he said he was hungry.
5. I didn't steal the money, but everybody thinks I **am guilty**.

In other words

A. What is the main purpose of the passage? Circle 1, 2 or 3.

1. To describe the life of Gloria Heller.
2. To tell the story of a criminal trial.
3. To explain how Detective Steele solved a murder.

B. Match each heading to the correct paragraph in the passage.

1. Paragraph ____ Detective Steele thinks Gloria Heller is the murderer.
2. Paragraph ____ The death of Ben Barton.
3. Paragraph ____ Carl Thatcher's confession.

General understanding

Circle T for true or F for false for each of the following statements.

1. Ben Barton was murdered. T / F
2. Ben Barton's body was never found. T / F
3. Detective Steele had a lot of evidence against Gloria Heller. T / F
4. Gloria Heller met Carl Thatcher after Ben Barton had been murdered. T / F

In detail

Write short answers to the following questions.

1. How was Ben Barton killed? _____
2. Where was Ben's body found? _____
3. Who was Gloria Heller living with when she was found? _____
4. What was Gloria's motive for killing her husband? _____
5. How did Gloria give Ben the poison? _____

In focus

Below are some numbers that appear in the text. Match them with the fact they are connected to.

1987	(years) the length of Gloria Heller's and Carl Thatcher's prison sentences
1994	(years) the length of time between Ben Barton's murder and Gloria Heller going on trial
2	the year Ben Barton was murdered
6	the year Ben Barton and Gloria Heller got married
15	(weeks) the length of time between Gloria Heller buying rat poison and Ben Barton's murder

Discussion

Discuss the following questions with a partner or in a group.

1. How could Gloria Heller have avoided being caught?
2. Why do you think Gloria murdered her husband instead of leaving him?
3. Do you think that murderers should be given the death sentence?
4. How would you describe Detective Steele?
5. Would you like to be a detective? Why or why not?

Taking you further

A GOOD LAWYER

Finding evidence is an important part of police work. However finding evidence doesn't always mean a criminal will be convicted. Proving that a person is guilty or innocent of a crime is the job of lawyers. One of the most famous lawyers of all time was Clarence Darrow. Darrow was very famous in America around the start of the twentieth century. He often defended people who were thought to be guilty and took on many unpopular cases. In particular, he defended poor people who

usually would not be able to afford a good lawyer. During trials, he was a great speaker and argued very well. He won many of his cases, even when the evidence was against him. A good lawyer is the most important part of a criminal's defence!



Complete each sentence with a word from one of the reading passages.

1. Gloria's strange behaviour made Detective Steele _____ that she had murdered Ben.
2. At first Detective Steele didn't know what Gloria's _____ was for killing Ben.
3. Carl Thatcher eventually _____ to Detective Steele.
4. Detective Steele needed _____ to prove that Gloria was guilty.
5. Gloria and Carl were found _____ of murder and were sent to prison.
6. Gloria and Carl were _____ to fifteen years in prison.
7. Clarence Darrow was a famous _____.
8. Clarence Darrow often _____ people who didn't have much money.
9. Clarence Darrow always argued well during _____.
10. A good lawyer can prevent a _____ from going to prison.