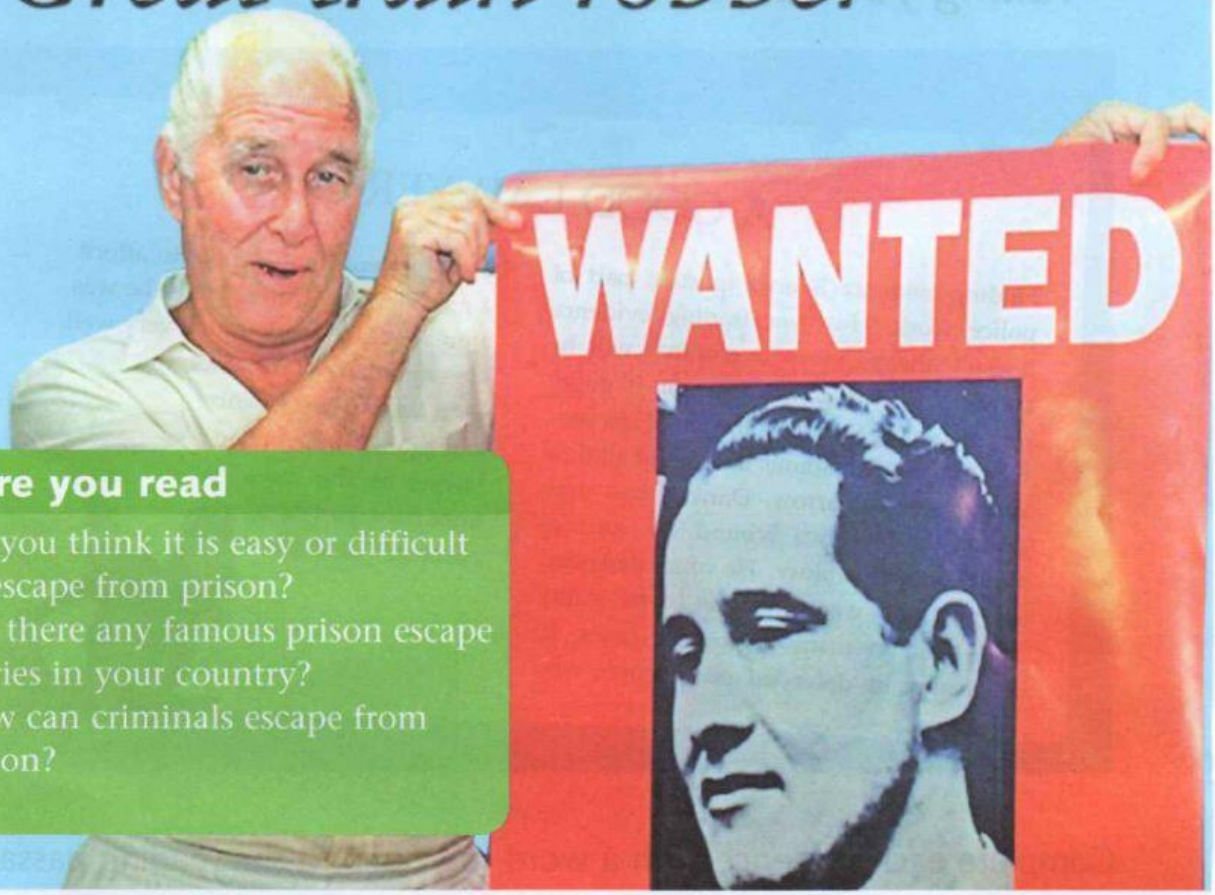
8 Great train robber



CRIME

Before you read

1. Do you think it is easy or difficult to escape from prison?
2. Are there any famous prison escape stories in your country?
3. How can criminals escape from prison?

Reading

1 On 7 May 2001 Ronnie Biggs arrived in Britain for the first time in thirty-five years. His return was the end of one of Britain's most famous crime stories, 'The Great Train Robbery'. In 1963 Biggs was in a gang that stole £2.6 million from a train travelling between London and Glasgow. The gang was caught quickly, and Biggs was sentenced to thirty years in prison. Many people thought that the sentence was too harsh. Biggs also thought it was too harsh, so he decided to escape.

2 Biggs was sent to Wandsworth Prison, a maximum security prison. It had one very high wall to keep the prisoners in, and some guards to watch them. One afternoon in July 1965, Biggs was in the prison yard. He had been in prison for just fifteen months. A tall van stopped outside the prison, and a ladder was placed against the wall. Then a rope ladder was thrown over the wall into the prison yard. Biggs climbed up the rope ladder, jumped down into the van and escaped!

3 From that time on Biggs lived on the run. After hiding in France, Spain and Australia, he finally settled in Brazil in 1970. He was a celebrity criminal. He appeared in rock videos and films, and he sold souvenirs to tourists who came to see him. But he missed his home in Britain and, at the age of seventy-one, decided to go home. He was met at the airport by family, friends – and police. He spent several years in prison but he was very ill and was released early. He got out of prison in August, 2009 – one day before his eightieth birthday.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Vocabulary

A. Complete each sentence with the correct word.

gang settled security harsh guard

1. My teacher gave me extra homework because I was talking in class. I think she was too _____. She didn't need to punish me for such a small thing.
2. This bank has very good _____. There are cameras and alarms to stop anyone robbing it.
3. My father is a _____ at a prison. He makes sure the prisoners don't escape.
4. A _____ is a group of people who do things together. Sometimes they are criminals.
5. My parents lived in many different countries when they were younger, but they _____ in Canada because they both found good jobs there.

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

small truck highest possible running away from the police
things to help me remember my holiday famous people

1. The robber spent six months on the run, but eventually he was caught.
2. I bought lots of souvenirs in Australia. I bought a toy kangaroo, a boomerang and a T-shirt with a picture of a koala on it.
3. My family is moving to a new house next week. We have to hire a van to move our furniture.
4. I saw lots of celebrities in New York, including models, actors and singers.
5. I scored fifteen on the test today. The maximum score was twenty, so I got 75 per cent.

In other words

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

1. To describe the security at Wandsworth Prison.
2. To tell the story of the Great Train Robbery.
3. To tell the story of a famous escaped criminal.

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

1. Paragraph ___ Ronnie Biggs's escape from prison.
2. Paragraph ___ Ronnie Biggs's life after his escape.
3. Paragraph ___ The Great Train Robbery.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

General understanding

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

1. Ronnie Biggs spent thirty-five years in prison. T / F
2. Most people thought that Ronnie Biggs's prison sentence was fair. T / F
3. Somebody helped Ronnie Biggs to escape. T / F
4. Ronnie Biggs lived secretly in Brazil. T / F

In detail

Write short answers to the following questions.

1. How much money did Ronnie Biggs steal? _____
2. Which prison was Ronnie Biggs sent to? _____
3. How long was Ronnie Biggs in prison? _____
4. When did Ronnie Biggs settle in Brazil? _____
5. How old was Ronnie Biggs when he returned to Britain? _____

In focus

Below are five sentences about Ronnie Biggs. Look in the text and find the passive forms of the sentences. Write the passive sentences on the right.

ACTIVE	PASSIVE
1. The police caught the gang quickly.	The gang was caught quickly.
2. A judge sentenced Biggs to thirty years in prison.	
3. The judge sent Biggs to Wandsworth Prison.	
4. Somebody placed a ladder against the prison wall.	
5. Somebody threw a rope ladder over the wall.	

Discussion

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

1. Do you think that Ronnie Biggs's sentence was too harsh? Why or why not?
2. Do you think he should have gone back to Britain? Why or why not?
3. Do you know of any other famous criminals?
4. What makes people become criminals?
5. How can we reduce the crime rate?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Taking you further

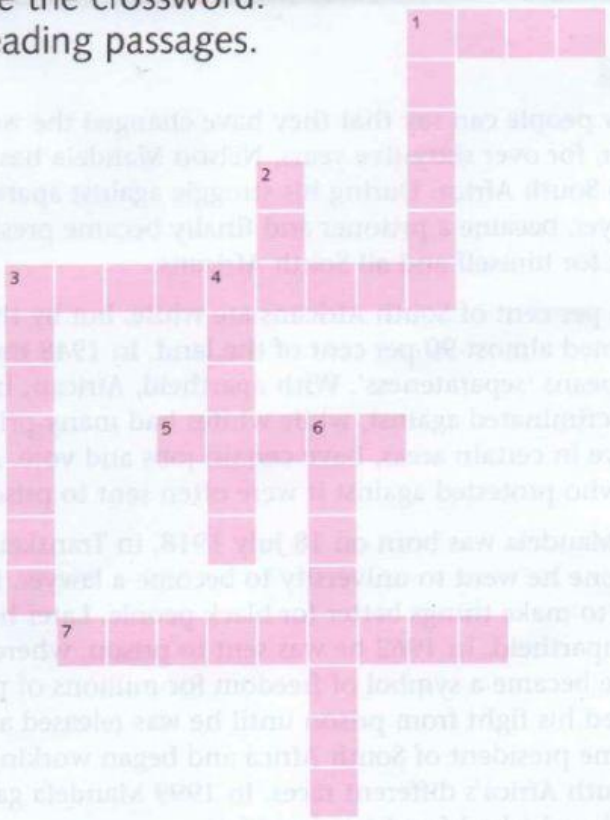
ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ

Although Ronnie Biggs escaped from prison quite easily, it is usually very difficult. One of the most famous prisons in the world is Alcatraz, which is on an island in San Francisco Bay, in the USA. Alcatraz was a prison from 1934 to 1963 and, in that time, thirty-six men tried to escape. Twenty-three were caught, six were shot and killed, and two drowned while trying to swim to San Francisco. Nobody knows for certain what happened to the other five men, but they were never seen again. Did they drown or did they escape? Perhaps we will never know.



Crossword

Read the clues and complete the crossword.
All the answers are in the reading passages.



Across

1. a group of criminals
3. things you bring back from a holiday
5. cruel; too strong
7. a famous person

Down

1. some of the people who work in a prison
2. a small truck
3. made a place your permanent home
4. to get away
6. protection

LIVEWORKSHEETS