Hi, my name is Max. I'm 17, and I'm a judge in a teen court in the USA. You may think it's impossible for a young person like me to try other teenagers in a court of law. [1] Teen courts, also known as youth courts or peer courts, operate in most states. They deal with young, first-time offenders who have committed small, non-violent crimes such as painting graffiti or shoplifting. [2] They can only work on the cases in which the teenagers have already said they are guilty.

How does it all work, then? [3] All the teenagers at my court are volunteers who are trained in the roles of judges, members of the jury or lawyers. We have trials by jury, we listen to eyewitnesses' evidence, give our verdict and sentence the offender. The punishments usually include either community service or an official apology to the victim. [4] You may be surprised but putting your ideas on paper makes you think a lot about your life!

You may wonder why I'm doing this. Well, first of all, I got involved because I believe that a teenage jury will understand another teenager better than any adult jury. Teenagers listen to teenagers after all, don't they? [5] We don't get paid for our work, but we're learning a lot about the legal system – and what's more important, we show our peers that there's more to life than crime!

Read the text and complete gaps 1–5 with sentences a–g. There are two extra sentences.

a Well, it looks more or less the same as in a traditional court.
b Another reason is the fact that it's a very responsible job, and everyone takes it very seriously.
c Sometimes the offender has to write an essay to explain why their behaviour was wrong.
d However, here in the USA, it's quite common.
e What's more, the criminals never get any punishment.
f These courts cannot decide if someone is guilty or not.
g The crime can sometimes be very serious.

Put the questions in the order that the answers appear in the text.

a What types of crimes do teenagers who appear in teen courts commit?
b What are the advantages of working for a court of law?
c What are the synonyms for 'teenage court'?
d How are teenagers punished in teen courts?
e What was the author's motivation to become a judge?
f How are the teenage courts organised?

Complete the sentences with the information from the text. Write up to three words in each gap.

1 It is not _____ in the USA to try other young people in court.
2 You _____ teen courts in most states.
3 Teen courts do not deal with _____ such as murder.
4 Writing an essay about your crime is supposed to make _____ about your crime.
5 Teenage judges _____ for their work. It's done on a voluntary basis.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Who usually does these things? Match the words below with phrases 1–11. Sometimes more than one answer is correct.

criminal	police officer	lawyer	judge	jury
witness	suspect	investigator	prosecutor	

Who ...?

1 commits a crime
2 arrests a suspect
3 works on a legal case
4 gives evidence in court
5 sentences the criminals
6 gets punished
7 tries people in a court of law
8 gives the verdict
9 can be found guilty or innocent
10 investigates a crime
11 accuses the criminal of his/her crime in court

Complete the text with some of the verbs from the previous exercise.

Silk was a very popular British legal drama series which is now available on DVD. The drama follows the daily lives of a group of lawyers who [1] on different legal cases and deal with people who [2] various crimes. The series is exciting because there are many courtroom scenes where you can see witnesses who [3] evidence in court and hear judges [4] their final verdicts. You never know if the person will be [5] guilty or innocent until the last moment, and if guilty, how they will [6] punished. Definitely worth watching!

LIVEWORKSHEETS