

# Reading: Three English robberies

## 1 Lead-in

Discuss with your partner(s).

1. What crime stories have been in the news recently?
2. Which crimes are punished the most severely?
3. There is a saying, 'crime doesn't pay'. Do you agree?
4. Think of reasons why people become involved in crime.

## 2 Reading comprehension

Read the texts about three well-known robberies. Which robbers can you match with the sentence endings below, (A) the train robbers, (B) the Brinks-Mat robbers, or (C) the Hatton garden robbers?

- 1 found it difficult to sell the things they had stolen
- 2 had some sympathy from the public
- 3 got much more than they had expected
- 4 had many years of experience
- 5 preferred to go to jail rather than give up the money
- 6 were given valuable information beforehand
- 7 came across an unexpected problem during the robbery
- 8 were let down by someone

## 3 Vocabulary

Match the words in **bold** in the three texts with the words and phrases with similar meanings on the right.

tip-off	gold or silver bars
loot	stolen money or objects
sentence	hide a microphone to listen secretly to people
accomplice	secret information
vault	robbery
bullion	strong room for storing money etc.
gangland	go down a cliff or wall using ropes
heist	person who helps a criminal
abseil	related to violent crime
bug	give a punishment in court

## The Great Train Robbery of 1963



Night train

Pic: [Phil Sangwell \(CC\)](#)

The UK's best-known robbery took place on 8, August, 1963, when over two million pounds was stolen from a night mail train 50 km from London. It is a crime that has passed into English folklore and has been the subject of numerous books and movies.

Some months before the raid, a gang of professional criminals had received a **tip-off** from a postal worker that large quantities of used banknotes would be on the train. Such a prize proved irresistible, and they planned a military-style operation to get the money. Even the police thought it was brilliantly planned.

Stopping the train in the middle of the night with a false red signal, they unloaded the money bags into trucks and drove to a remote farmhouse which they had bought six weeks earlier.

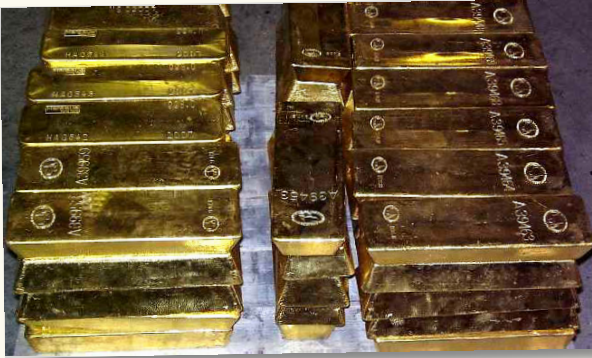
Here they shared out the **loot**, and the following day went their separate ways. But problems arose when a man they had paid to clean up the farmhouse cheated them and failed to show up. As a result, the gang's fingerprints were left at the farm.

Meanwhile, media attention put the police under intense pressure to make arrests. The robbers were all professional criminals, so they became prime suspects.

By Christmas, most of the gang had been caught, and two months later they were **sentenced** to over 300 years in prison. Many people were sympathetic to the robbers and thought the jail terms were too long. In the event none served more than 15 years while some managed to escape. Very little of the money has ever been recovered.

# Reading : Three English robberies

## The Brink's-Mat robbery



Gold bullion

Pic: [Bullion Vault \(CC\)](#)

On 6, November, 1983, six gunmen robbed a high-security warehouse near London airport in Britain's biggest ever armed robbery. Let into the building by an inside **accomplice**, they threatened to kill the guards if they didn't open the **vaults**.

Here, instead of the £3 million cash they were expecting, they stumbled upon £26 million worth of gold bars awaiting transit abroad. Hardly able to believe their good luck, they crammed the 3 tons of gold into their elderly van (designed to carry 900kg) and with its floor almost touching the ground, drove away.

When the story hit the news, the gold price increased and the loot gained another £1 million in value overnight. But the robbers had bitten off more than they could chew. They had no idea how to dispose of the **bullion** and had to get help from other criminals to turn the gold into cash.

Meanwhile, the police quickly narrowed down their list of suspects and found that one of them was the brother-in-law of a security guard at the warehouse. In 1984 two men were jailed for 25 years; the security guard got 6 years.

The rest of the gang were never caught, but arguments over the disposal of the **bullion** arose, and **gangland** shootings related to the robbery have continued to this day.

Much of the gold was melted down and turned into jewellery. But a third of the haul, worth £10m, has never been found.

## The Hatton Garden burglary



Safe deposit robbery

Pic: [Ptone805](#)

It was the biggest burglary in English legal history: £14 million in cash, jewels and valuables, stolen from a safe deposit facility in central London over the Easter weekend in 2015.

It soon became clear that the **heist** was the work of seven elderly men - the oldest was 76 - suffering from medical conditions that included diabetes and a heart problem. But the 'Bad Grandpas' were veteran criminals with histories stretching back to the 1960s.

On the evening before the Easter holiday, they entered the building and **abseiled** down a lift shaft to the basement, at one point activating an alarm. Fortunately for them, the police failed to respond.

They then drilled a hole through the half-metre wall of the vault, only to find their way blocked by a huge metal cabinet weighing over a ton. Two of them gave up and went home, but the others drove off to find a power tool that could push the cabinet over and returned the next day to finish the job. They eventually left with the contents of 73 safe deposit boxes stuffed into dustbins.

But carelessness was their undoing, and they were picked up on CCTV. The police then **bugged** their cars and listened to them chatting about their plans to spend the money. All were subsequently arrested and jailed.

Of the money, only around £4 million has been recovered. Some of the robbers, who have now served their sentences, have been jailed a second time for refusing to reveal where it is hidden.

# Word list

<b>abseil</b>	<i>verb</i>	go down a wall or cliff using ropes
<b>accomplice</b>	<i>noun</i>	somebody who helps a person commit a crime (or do some other bad thing)
<b>bite off more than you can chew</b>	<i>idiom</i>	try do to something that you later find to be too difficult
<b>bug</b>	<i>verb</i>	hide a microphone to listen to people secretly
<b>bullion</b>	<i>noun</i>	gold or silver bars
<b>burglary</b>	<i>noun</i>	crime of illegally entering a building and stealing things from it
<b>countless</b>	<i>adjective</i>	very many; too many to count
<b>folklore</b>	<i>noun</i>	popular stories and beliefs among a group of people
<b>gangland</b>	<i>noun</i>	people or places related to violent crime
<b>heist</b>	<i>noun</i>	robbery (informal)
<b>loot</b>	<i>noun</i>	stolen money or valuable objects
<b>narrow down</b>	<i>phrasal verb</i>	reduce the number of choices or possibilities
<b>sentence</b>	<i>noun and verb</i>	give a punishment in court (verb); a punishment given in court (noun)
<b>stuff</b>	<i>verb</i>	to fill something; to put something into a container, often quickly
<b>stumble upon</b>	<i>phrasal verb</i>	find a thing or meet a person by accident
<b>subsequently</b>	<i>adverb</i>	later, after other things happened
<b>tip-off</b>	<i>noun</i>	secret information
<b>undoing</b>	<i>noun</i>	the cause of someone's failure
<b>vault</b>	<i>noun</i>	strong room for keeping money and other valuables

# Answers

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## 2 Reading comprehension

1. (B) Brinks-Mat robbers
2. (A) Train robbers
3. (B) Brinks-Mat robbers
4. (C) Hatton Garden robbers
5. (C) Hatton Garden robbers
6. (A) Train robbers
7. (C) Hatton Garden robbers
8. (A) Train robbers

## 3 Vocabulary

### **tip-off**

secret information

### **loot**

stolen money or objects

### **sentence**

give a punishment in court

### **accomplice**

person who helps a criminal

### **vault**

strong room for storing money etc.

### **bullion**

gold or silver bars

### **gangland**

related to violent crime

### **heist**

robbery

### **abseil**

go down a cliff or wall using ropes

### **bug**

hide a microphone to listen secretly to people

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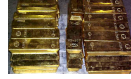
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**Phil Sangwell**

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