

Law and order, crime and punishment

Study and practice

Below you see the story of an extraordinary **case** in British **legal** history. The affair started in 1949 and was finally closed in 1966.

At the moment, there are a number of gaps in the story. Use the words below to complete it.

trial	confessed	court	custody	guilty
convicted	enquiry (x 2)	sentenced	jury	execution
arrested	innocent	charged	appeal	dropped
pardon	judges	plea	apprehended	hunt
suspect	tried	executed	statements	denied

The story began when a man called Timothy Evans was ... for the murder of his wife and baby. He was ... with the double murder, but a short time later one of the charges was ... and he was ... for the murder of his daughter only. During the ... Evans accused the man whose house he had been living in, John Christie, of the crimes, but no attention was paid to him. The ... found Evans ... and he was ... to death. An ... was turned down and and he was ... in 1950.

Some time later, more women's bodies were discovered in Christie's house: two, three, four, five, six. John Christie was the police's chief... and they started a nationwide ... for him. He was soon Alleged ... by Christie while he was in ... cast doubt on the Evans hanging. When he went to ... , Christie ... that he had murdered Mrs Evans, but in private it was said that he ... to that crime. His ... of insanity with regard to other murders was rejected and he was ... of killing his wife.

Soon afterwards there was an ... into the ... of Timothy Evans. The ... decided that justice had been done and Evans had been rightly hanged. It was only in 1966 that another ... was set up. This time it was decided that Evans had probably been ... and he was given a free Better late than never, as they say.

Quiz

Now a quiz on some **points of law** — English style. The answers may well be different in your country. Simply answer the questions *Yes or No*. The answers according to English law are printed at the end of the quiz.

- 1 **Is it a crime** to try and kill yourself?
- 2 **Is it illegal** to help somebody to **commit suicide**?
- 3 **Can you be executed** for **murdering** a policeman?
- 4 If, after a murder, all the **victim's** relatives plead: 'Please don't **prosecute!**' can **charges** against the **suspected culprit** be **dropped**?
- 5 If two **armed thieves break into** a house, guns in hand, and one of them shoots and kills the house-owner, is his **accomplice guilty of murder**?
- 6 If I surprise an **intruder** in my lounge at night stealing my millions, have I a **legal right to assault** him with a **weapon**?
- 7 **If I set a trap** - a fifty-kilo weight just above the front door — for any **burglars** who might try and enter the house, am I **breaking the law**?
- 8 After a **divorce or legal separation**, can a wife be required to pay **alimony** to her ex-husband?

- 9 If I promise to marry my girlfriend and then change my mind shortly before the wedding, can she **take me to court**?
- 10 If you said to your teacher in the middle of one of his lessons: 'You don't know the first thing about teaching!' could he **bring a civil action** against you?
- 11 Would I be in danger **of committing an offence** if I put an advertisement for my school in the paper saying: 'Male white teacher required'?
- 12 If, **as a defendant (or the accused)**, I am not satisfied with the way my **barrister has handled my defence**, can I **sue** him?
- 13 If you were in my house - uninvited - and the ceiling, which had had a large crack in it for some time, caved in and broke your leg, would it be a good idea to **consult your solicitor**?
- 14 Can a person **suspected of and charged with rape** be allowed **bail**?

Answers

- 1 No, not any more.
- 2 Yes, even **mercy-killing (euthanasia)** is **against the law**.
- 3 **No. Capital punishment was abolished** in the 1960s.
- 4 No. Murder is a **crime against society** (this involves **criminal law**) and not just a **civil matter** between individuals.
- 5 **Yes. Joint guilt. In the eyes of the law**, both are guilty.
- 6 No - at least, only in **self-defence**.
- 7 Yes.
- 8 Yes.
- 9 No, not now. Some years ago she could have **sued** me for **breach of promise**.
- 10 Yes, he could claim it was **slander (or libel, if you wrote it in a newspaper)**. He probably wouldn't, though, because of the **legal costs**.
- 11 Yes, because of the Sex **Discrimination Act** and the **Race Relations Act**.
- 12 No.
- 13 Yes. You could sue me for **negligence** and I would probably have to pay damages.
- 14 Yes.

Practice 1

There are many **crimes and offences** apart from the few mentioned above. Explain, define or give examples of the offences listed below.

blackmail
kidnapping
arson
trespassing
manslaughter
smuggling
forgery
bigamy
baby- or wife-battering
conspiracy
fraud

driving without due care and attention
mugging - robbery with violence
drug peddling
espionage - spying
shoplifting
treason
hijacking
obscenity
bribery and corruption
petty theft

Which of the above would or could involve the following?

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| 1 counterfeit money | 4 a ransom | 7 state secrets |
| 2 pornography | 5 heroin | 8 contraband |
| 3 hostages | 6 a traitor | 9 a store detective |

- 2 Here is the story of a very unfortunate, irresponsible man called Mr N.E. Body. Imagine that he was stopped by the police at each and every point of the drama. Read about what happened and, after each piece of information you receive, decide what **punishment** he deserves. Here are some of the sentences you might wish to hand out:

You might feel the **death penalty** is in order, or **life imprisonment**, even **solitary confinement**. You could put him **on probation**, give him **community service** or **impose a fine** - anything from £10 to £1,000. You might consider **corporal punishment** (a short, sharp shock), a shortish **prison sentence** or, of course, you could make that a **suspended sentence**. You might make him pay **compensation**, or would you like to see him **banned from driving**? No? Well, his **licence** could be **endorsed**. Or would you **dismiss the case**, **find him not guilty** of any crime, **acquit** him, find the case **not proved**?

- 1 Mr Body drank five pints of beer and five single whiskies in a pub, got into his car and drove away.
- 2 He did not drive dangerously but **exceeded the speed limit** as he wanted to catch up with a friend who had left his wallet in the pub.
- 3 As he was driving along, a little girl ran into the road and he knocked her down.
- 4 There was no way he could have stopped, drunk or sober.
- 5 The little girl suffered only bruises and superficial injuries.
- 6 Mr Body's wife had left him two days before.
- 7 Six months later, it was clear that the little girl was to suffer from after-effects of the accident and would stutter for many years.
- 8 Mr Body had never previously received any **summons for traffic offences**.
- 9 The little girl admitted that it was all her fault.
- 10 The passenger in Mr Body's car was killed outright as he went through the windscreen.

- [3] Write or discuss the answers to these questions.

- 1 Which aspects of the law seem unsatisfactory to you?
- 2 What punishments would you, as a judge, give for the crimes in Practice 1? You may need to specify cases and give particular instances.
- 3 How have criminals been portrayed in films you have seen recently? Were the criminals portrayed as heroes, idiots or evil individuals?
- 4 What - in detail — would happen to you in your country if you were caught:
 - a **speeding** in your car?
 - b **in possession of soft drugs**?
 - c with a gun in your pocket?
 - d **breaking into a house**?

- [4] Write a **judge's summing up** after a trial, reminding the **jury** of the **witnesses' testimony** and advising them on how to **reach their verdict**.

- [5] You have just read an article supporting corporal punishment with the headline 'A short, sharp shock is the only answer for most of today's criminals'. Write to the newspaper, putting the opposite view and criticising what was probably in the article.

Add here any other words or expressions about crime, punishment and the law that you may meet.