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Ready-to-use ESL / EFL Lessons

## **Record bank robbery in Brazil**

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**10 August, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Record bank robbery in Brazil**

**BNE:** Thieves have carried out a daring and audacious bank robbery in Brazil, making off with over 88 million US dollars. The stolen cash weighed in at a total of three point five tons. The gang of robbers tunneled 80 meters into a Brazilian Central Bank branch in the north of the country from a rented house several streets away. Over the course of three months, they shored up the tunnel walls with wood and reinforced plastic and installed electric lighting. Neighbors reported nothing suspicious about the house or its occupants, who were supposedly manufacturing artificial turf. They said a truck arrived every day, which was loaded with dozens of large plastic bags and then driven away. They had no inkling a tunnel was being excavated.

Red-faced bank officials in Rio de Janeiro admitted the theft, Brazil's largest, had taken place over the weekend and was discovered by bank workers on Monday morning. Apparently, the money was mostly in small bills and was to be withdrawn from circulation, making it virtually impossible to trace. The heist perfectly fits the storyline taken from a Hollywood movie. A Central Bank spokesperson reported that the bank had the most up-to-date alarm systems, complete with motion sensors, and that the vault was encased in two-meter-thick concrete and steel. He said he was "flabbergasted" by the ingenuity and resolve shown by the robbers. The bank will now immediately review its security systems at all branches to avoid any copycat robberies.

## WARM-UPS

**1. MY BANK HISTORY:** In pairs / groups, talk about your history with banks. How many have joined? Do you like banks? How has banking changed over the years? Have you tried E-banking? What things do you dislike about banks? What bank services do you use? What services would you like banks to offer?

**2. ROBBERIES:** In pairs / groups, compare the following kinds of robberies. Are they all equally bad or are some worse than others? Rank them in order of the most serious robbery.

- \$88 million bank robbery
- Robbery of famous painting
- Burglary of someone's house
- Armed robbery of a village post office
- A dictator stealing a country's wealth
- A CEO stealing employees' pension funds
- Children shoplifting
- Theft of luxury cars

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Thieves / banks / bank robberies / Brazil / tunnels / neighbors / bank workers / Hollywood bank robbery movies / alarm systems / copycats*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. CASH:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "cash". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**5. ROBBER OPINIONS:** In pairs / groups, talk about how far you agree with the following opinions on robbers and robberies:

- a. I love stories about big money bank robberies.
- b. Bank robbers do not seem like real criminals.
- c. Banks will never be able to stop bank robberies.
- d. I'm happy when bank robbers get away.
- e. Bank robbery should be made a much more serious crime.
- f. Armed bank robbery should be considered equal to murder.
- g. The biggest bank robberies are yet to come – Internet based robberies.
- h. Bank robbers are the same as terrorists.
- i. I respect anyone who has the brains to pull off a big bank robbery.

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A think banks are better than post offices. Students B think post offices are better than banks. Change partners often.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a. A \$100 million bank robbery has taken place in Brazil.              | T / F |
| b. The stolen cash weighed more than three tons.                        | T / F |
| c. Thieves tunneled 80 meters to get into the bank vault.               | T / F |
| d. Neighbors saw trucks drive away with plastic bags full of cash.      | T / F |
| e. Bank officials were left red faced over the heist.                   | T / F |
| f. The money was in high denomination bills and will be easy to trace.  | T / F |
| g. The bank branch had poor security systems.                           | T / F |
| h. A bank official said he was flabbergasted by the thieves' ingenuity. | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| a. carried out   | find          |
| b. audacious     | dug           |
| c. shored up     | embarrassed   |
| d. inkling       | inventiveness |
| e. excavated     | bold          |
| f. red-faced     | dumbfounded   |
| g. trace         | idea          |
| h. heist         | conducted     |
| i. flabbergasted | theft         |
| j. ingenuity     | strengthened  |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                               |                                  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. carried out a daring       | impossible to trace              |
| b. making off with            | with wood and reinforced plastic |
| c. over the course            | copycat robberies                |
| d. shored up the tunnel walls | of several months                |
| e. They had no inkling a      | bank officials                   |
| f. red-faced                  | tunnel was being excavated       |
| g. withdrawn                  | and audacious bank robbery       |
| h. virtually                  | two-meter-thick concrete         |
| i. the vault was encased in   | over 88 million US dollars       |
| j. avoid any                  | from circulation                 |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**WORD ORDER:** Put the underlined words back into the correct order.

### Record bank robbery in Brazil

**BNE:** Thieves have daring out a carried and audacious bank robbery in Brazil, making off with over 88 million US dollars. The stolen cash a total weighed in at of three point five tons. The gang of robbers tunneled 80 meters into a Brazilian Central Bank branch in the north of the country from a rented house several streets away. the over three months of course, they shored up the tunnel walls with wood and reinforced plastic and installed electric lighting. Neighbors reported about house the suspicious nothing or its occupants, who were supposedly manufacturing artificial turf. They said a truck arrived every day, which was loaded with dozens of large plastic bags and then driven away. They inkling had a tunnel no was being excavated.

in officials red-faced bank Rio de Janeiro admitted the theft, Brazil's largest, had taken place over the weekend and was discovered by bank workers on Monday morning. Apparently, the money was mostly in small bills and was circulation be from to withdrawn, making it virtually impossible to trace. The heist perfectly fits the storyline taken from a Hollywood movie. A Central Bank spokesperson reported that the bank had the most up-to-date alarm systems, motion with complete sensors, and that the vault was encased in two-meter-thick concrete and steel. He said he was ingenuity by the "flabbergasted" and resolve shown by the robbers. The bank will now immediately review its security systems at all branches to copycat any avoid robberies.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'copy' and 'cat'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. WORD ORDER:** In pairs / groups, compare and agree on your answers to this exercise.

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "BANK ROBBERY" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about banks and bank robberies.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| • daring     | • red           |
| • tunneled   | • circulation   |
| • course     | • storyline     |
| • suspicious | • encased       |
| • artificial | • flabbergasted |
| • inkling    | • copycat       |

## DISCUSSION

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What were your initial thoughts on this headline?
- b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- c. Do you like reading stories about bank robberies?
- d. What do you think of bank robbers?
- e. Do you ever hope the bank robbers can avoid being captured?
- f. How serious a crime is robbing a bank?
- g. Is bank robbery more serious than a diamond robbery or art theft?
- h. What kind of minds do you think bank robbers have?
- i. Have there been any famous bank robberies in your country?
- j. Do you have any suspicious neighbors?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What adjectives would you use to describe this story?
- d. If you found a bag of cash from a bank robbery containing \$5 million, what would you do with it?
- e. What prison sentence should the robbers receive if they are caught?
- f. Have you ever been robbed of anything?
- g. Have you ever stolen anything?
- h. What's the best bank robbery movie you've ever seen?
- i. When was the last time you were flabbergasted by something?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

## SPEAKING

### INTERVIEW:

Students A are police officers from Brazil's bank robbery investigation squad. A suspected robber is in police custody. Write down the eight most important questions you need to ask him.

Students B are Hollywood scriptwriters. You think the bank robbery story would make a great movie. You have secret access to one of the robbers. Write down the eight most important questions you need to ask him.

Students C are security experts working for the bank. You need to find out how the bank robbers got into the vault so you can improve security. You have secret access to one of the robbers. Write down the eight most important questions you need to ask him.

### QUESTIONS FOR BANK ROBBER:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

2. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

3. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

4. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

5. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

6. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

7. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

8. \_\_\_\_\_ ?

In pairs / groups, show each other your questions and explain why they are important. Take turns in playing the bank robber and the interviewer.

After you have finished, talk about the role plays and what you thought of each other's questions and answers.



## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Record bank robbery in Brazil**

**BNE:** Thieves have carried out a daring and \_\_\_\_\_ bank robbery in Brazil, \_\_\_\_\_ with over 88 million US dollars. The stolen cash weighed in at a total of three point five tons. The gang of robbers \_\_\_\_\_ 80 meters into a Brazilian Central Bank branch in the north of the country from a rented house \_\_\_\_\_ streets away. Over the course of three months, they \_\_\_\_\_ the tunnel walls with wood and reinforced plastic and \_\_\_\_\_ electric lighting. Neighbors reported nothing suspicious about the house or its occupants, who were supposedly manufacturing \_\_\_\_\_ turf. They said a truck arrived every day, which was loaded with dozens of large plastic bags and then driven away. They had no inkling a tunnel was being \_\_\_\_\_.

Red-faced bank officials in Rio de Janeiro \_\_\_\_\_ the theft, Brazil's largest, had taken place over the weekend and was \_\_\_\_\_ by bank workers on Monday morning. Apparently, the money was mostly in small bills and was to be withdrawn from \_\_\_\_\_, making it virtually impossible to trace. The heist perfectly fits the storyline taken from a Hollywood movie. A Central Bank spokesperson reported that the bank had the most \_\_\_\_\_ alarm systems, complete with motion sensors, and that the vault was \_\_\_\_\_ in two-meter-thick concrete and steel. He said he was "\_\_\_\_\_ " by the ingenuity and resolve shown by the robbers. The bank will now immediately review its security systems at all branches to avoid any \_\_\_\_\_ robberies.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on famous bank robberies. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

**3. LETTER:** Write a letter to the CEO of your bank explaining your thoughts on the bank's service. Tell the CEO all of the things you are very happy or unhappy with. Include recommendations on how the bank can improve its service. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

**4. DIARY / JOURNAL:** Imagine you are one of the Brazilian bank robbers. Write your diary / journal entry for the day of the robbery. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

a. F      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. T      f. F      g. F      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

a. audacious	bold
b. shored up	strengthened
c. turf	grass
d. inkling	idea
e. excavated	dug
f. red-faced	embarrassed
g. trace	find
h. heist	theft
i. flabbergasted	dumbfounded
j. ingenuity	inventiveness

### PHRASE MATCH:

a. carried out a daring	and audacious bank robbery
b. making off with	over 88 million US dollars
c. over the course	of several months
d. shored up the tunnel walls	with wood and reinforced plastic
e. They had no inkling a	tunnel was being excavated
f. red-faced	bank officials
g. withdrawn	from circulation
h. virtually	impossible to trace
i. the vault was encased in	two-meter-thick concrete
j. avoid any	copycat robberies

### WORD ORDER:

#### Record bank robbery in Brazil

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