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Record bank robbery in Brazil

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Today's contents

The Article	2
Warm-ups	3
Before Reading / Listening	4
While Reading / Listening	5
After Reading	6
Discussion	7
Speaking	8
Listening Gap Fill	9
Homework	10
Answers	11

10 August, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Record bank robbery in Brazil

BNE: Bank robbers in Brazil have stolen over 88 million US dollars from a branch of the country's Central Bank. The gang of thieves tunneled 80 meters into the bank from a rented house several streets away. It took three months of digging. They strengthened the tunnel walls with wood and plastic and installed electric lighting. Neighbors reported nothing suspicious about the occupants of the house. They had no idea a tunnel was being excavated. A truck arrived every day, which was loaded with dozens of large plastic bags and then driven away.

Embarrassed bank officials admitted that the heist was Brazil's largest ever. It had taken place over the weekend and was discovered by bank workers on Monday morning. Most of the money was in small bills and is virtually impossible to trace. A Central Bank spokesperson reported that the bank had the most up-to-date alarm systems, complete with motion sensors. He also said the vault was encased in two-meter-thick concrete and steel. 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 leader stealing a country's wealth
- A CEO stealing workers' 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. Internet based bank robberies will be huge in the future.
- h. Bank robbers are the same as terrorists.
- i. I respect anyone who has the brains to do 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. Thieves tunneled 80 meters to get into the bank vault. | T / F |
| c. The tunnel had electric lighting and air-conditioning. | T / F |
| d. Neighbors saw trucks drive away with plastic bags full of cash. | T / F |
| e. Bank officials were red faced over the heist. | T / F |
| f. The money was in high value bills and will be easy to trace. | T / F |
| g. The bank branch had poor security systems. | T / F |
| h. A bank official said the bank must prevent copycat robberies. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| a. gang | detectors |
| b. thieves | residents |
| c. occupants | robbery |
| d. excavated | group |
| e. loaded | dug |
| f. embarrassed | find |
| g. heist | filled |
| h. trace | red-faced |
| i. sensors | prevent |
| j. avoid | robbers |

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

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| a. a branch of the country's | of large plastic bags |
| b. gang of | suspicious about the occupants |
| c. they strengthened the tunnel | to trace |
| d. neighbors reported nothing | alarm systems |
| e. loaded with dozens | thieves |
| f. the heist was Brazil's | in small bills |
| g. most of the money was | Central Bank |
| h. virtually impossible | in two-meter-thick concrete |
| i. most up-to-date | walls with wood |
| j. the vault was encased | largest ever |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Record bank robbery in Brazil

BNE: Bank robbers in Brazil have stolen over 88 million US dollars of a country's branch from the Central Bank. The gang of thieves tunneled 80 meters into the bank from a rented away streets house several. It took three months of digging. They strengthened the tunnel walls with wood and plastic and installed electric lighting. Neighbors suspicious about nothing reported the occupants of the house. They had no idea a tunnel was being excavated. A truck arrived every day, which dozens with loaded of was large plastic bags and then driven away.

Embarrassed bank officials the heist that was admitted Brazil's largest ever. It had taken place over the weekend and was discovered by bank workers on Monday morning. Most of the money was in small bills and trace is impossible to virtually. A Central Bank spokesperson reported that the bank had the most up-to-date alarm systems, complete with motion sensors. He encased the vault was also said in two-meter-thick concrete and steel. The bank will now immediately review its security systems at all branches copycat to avoid any 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:

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| • branch | • embarrassed |
| • gang | • weekend |
| • digging | • trace |
| • installed | • sensors |
| • excavated | • concrete |
| • loaded | • copycat |

DISCUSSION

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

- a. What did you think when you first saw 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 get away?
- f. Do you think bank robbery is one of the most serious crimes?
- g. Is bank robbery more serious than a diamond robbery or art theft?
- h. What kind of people do you think bank robbers are?
- 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?
- 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 embarrassed?
- 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 team. A bank robber is in the police station waiting to be interviewed. 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: Bank robbers in Brazil _____ over 88 million US dollars from a branch of the country's Central Bank. The gang of thieves _____ 80 meters into the bank from a rented house _____ streets away. It took three months of digging. They strengthened the tunnel walls with wood and plastic and _____ electric lighting. Neighbors reported nothing suspicious about the _____ of the house. They had no idea a tunnel was being excavated. A truck arrived every day, which was _____ with dozens of large plastic bags and then driven away.

_____ bank officials admitted that the _____ was Brazil's largest ever. It had taken place over the weekend and was discovered by bank workers on Monday morning. Most of the money was in small _____ and is virtually impossible to _____. A Central Bank spokesperson reported that the bank had the most up-to-date alarm systems, complete with motion _____. He also said the vault was _____ in two-meter-thick concrete and steel. 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 about 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. F d. F e. T f. F g. F h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:

a. gang	group
b. thieves	robbers
c. occupants	residents
d. excavated	dug
e. loaded	filled
f. embarrassed	red-faced
g. heist	robbery
h. trace	find
i. sensors	detectors
j. avoid	prevent

PHRASE MATCH:

a. a branch of the country's	Central Bank
b. gang of	thieves
c. they strengthened the tunnel	walls with wood
d. neighbors reported nothing	suspicious about the occupants
e. loaded with dozens	of large plastic bags
f. the heist was Brazil's	largest ever
g. most of the money was	in small bills
h. virtually impossible	to trace
i. most up-to-date	alarm systems
j. the vault was encased	in two-meter-thick concrete

WORD ORDER:

Record bank robbery in Brazil

BNE: Bank robbers in Brazil have stolen over 88 million US dollars from a branch of the country's Central Bank. The gang of thieves tunneled 80 meters into the bank from a rented house several streets away. It took three months of digging. They strengthened the tunnel walls with wood and plastic and installed electric lighting. Neighbors reported nothing suspicious about the occupants of the house. They had no idea a tunnel was being excavated. A truck arrived every day, which was loaded with dozens of large plastic bags and then driven away.

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