

## Woman wins \$23 bn from tobacco company

22<sup>nd</sup> July, 2014



A court in the USA has ordered the tobacco giant R.J. Reynolds to pay a woman \$23.6 billion in damages. Cynthia Robinson filed a lawsuit against

R.J. Reynolds in 2008 and fought for six years for compensation. Her husband Michael died of lung cancer in 1996 after two decades of smoking. He started smoking when he was 13 and died when he was 36. Mrs Robinson argued that the company was negligent in not informing her husband that nicotine is addictive and that smoking can lead to lung cancer. She said tobacco companies knew in the 1950s that smoking was potentially lethal and should have been more active in telling people. Johnson's lawyer said: "He couldn't quit. He was smoking the day he died."

A lawyer for R. J. Reynolds, America's second-largest tobacco company, said the compensation was disproportionate. He said: "The damages awarded in this case are grossly excessive and impermissible under state and constitutional law." He added: "This verdict goes far beyond the realm of reasonableness and fairness and is completely inconsistent with the evidence presented." Mrs Robinson's lawyer Chris Chestnut said jurors looked at R.J. Reynolds' aggressive marketing, particularly campaigns aimed at young people. He said: "[ R.J. Reynolds] lied to Congress, they lied to the public, they lied to smokers and tried to blamed the smoker." He added that the jury's decision was "courageous".

Sources: CNN / Reuters / Washington Post

## Writing

Smoking should be made illegal. Discuss.

## Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*court / damages / lawsuit / compensation / smoking / negligent / addictive / quit / lawyer / excessive / verdict / fairness / marketing / campaigns / public / courageous*

## True / False

- The court case took place in the USA. T / F
- The court case was first filed in 2008. T / F
- A woman's husband died after more than 30 years of smoking. T / F
- Tobacco companies didn't know smoking could kill until the 1960s. T / F
- The tobacco company is the second-largest in the USA. T / F
- The tobacco company's lawyers said the damages award is too high. T / F
- Jurors looked at marketing campaigns aimed at children. T / F
- A lawyer said smokers lied to the tobacco company. T / F

## Synonym Match

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. ordered          | a. irresponsible |
| 2. lawsuit          | b. forceful      |
| 3. negligent        | c. give up       |
| 4. lethal           | d. given         |
| 5. quit             | e. instructed    |
| 6. disproportionate | f. area          |
| 7. awarded          | g. brave         |
| 8. realm            | h. legal action  |
| 9. aggressive       | i. unequal       |
| 10. courageous      | j. deadly        |

## Discussion – Student A

- Do you think cigarettes will always be for sale?
- Do tobacco companies have a duty to help addicts?
- Do governments leave tobacco companies alone because they get a lot of tax from cigarette sales?
- How does a court put a value on someone's life?
- Are there enough warnings on cigarette packets?
- Do you think tobacco companies lie? What about? Why?
- What was "courageous" about the jury's decision?
- What questions would you like to ask the CEO of R.J. Reynolds?

# Breaking News English - The Mini Lesson

## Phrase Match

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. pay a woman \$23.6 billion   | a. addictive             |
| 2. fought for six years         | b. aimed at young people |
| 3. nicotine is                  | c. the day he died       |
| 4. smoking was potentially      | d. disproportionate      |
| 5. He was smoking               | e. are grossly excessive |
| 6. the compensation was         | f. in damages            |
| 7. damages awarded in this case | g. was "courageous"      |
| 8. beyond the realm             | h. lethal                |
| 9. campaigns                    | i. of reasonableness     |
| 10. the jury's decision         | j. for compensation      |

## Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of the compensation award?
- Should R.J. Reynolds pay the damages?
- What does this award tell the tobacco industry?
- Why do you think the award was so high?
- Do you think other people will get awarded this much?
- Should R.J. Reynolds have told people smoking could be lethal?
- How do you think tobacco company executives feel knowing their product kills?
- Should governments do more to discourage smoking?

## Spelling

- \$23.6 billion in madeasg
- fought for six years for centnomoaips
- two daecsed of smoking
- the company was ningelegt
- nicotine is acdt dieiv
- etioaplynlt lethal
- A erlayw for R. J. Reynolds
- grossly icxveesse
- beyond the elram of reasonableness
- cnnitnetssoi with the evidence presented
- grieasgvse marketing
- the jury's decision was aursoeugco

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. e	2. h	3. a	4. j	5. c
6. i	7. d	8. f	9. b	10. g

## Role Play

### Role A – Smoking

You think smoking is the worst addiction. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why the other addictions aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): alcohol, gaming or fast food.

### Role B – Alcohol

You think alcohol is the worst addiction. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why the other addictions aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): smoking, gaming or fast food.

### Role C – Gaming

You think gaming is the worst addiction. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why the other addictions aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): alcohol, smoking or fast food.

### Role D – Fast food

You think fast food is the worst addiction. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why the other addictions aren't so bad. Also, tell the others which is the least harmful of these (and why): alcohol, gaming or smoking.

## Speaking – Addictions

How bad are these addictions and how can we help people? Complete this table with your partner(s).

Addiction	How bad?	How to help?
Smoking		
Heroin		
Gaming		
Shopping		
Alcohol		
Fast food		

### Answers – True False

a	T	b	T	c	F	d	F	e	F	f	T	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.