

20

What's Your Verdict?

	Your verdict	Guess the court's verdict
<p>1 Scott, a 15-year-old, broke into his neighbor's house, burgled the house, locked the eighty-year-old woman in her bathroom, and escaped in her car. At the trial, the defense pleaded not guilty to the charges by reason of temporary insanity caused by Scott watching too much television. He watched more than six hours a day, loved crime programs, and had just watched a movie which contained scenes similar to the crime he had committed. Was Scott GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of burglary and false imprisonment?</p>		
<p>2 Mike went to a second-hand car dealer named Harry and told him that he only wanted a car that had air conditioning. Harry said OK and pointed out a car. Mike took the car for a test drive and then bought it without checking to see if it had air conditioning. When he got the car home, he discovered that the knob marked "air" was for ventilation only. Mike sued Harry for fraud and demanded compensation. Was Harry GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of fraud?</p>		
<p>3 Bill had been unemployed for over two years and needed a new suit to wear at job interviews. However, he did not have enough money. He happened to have the same name as the richest man in town, so he went to a men's store and put a new suit on the other man's account, simply by signing his own name. He was charged with forgery, but he argued that he had not forged anyone's signature by signing his own name. Was Bill GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of forgery?</p>		
<p>4 Police began searching a suspected thief's home but couldn't find any of the stolen goods they were looking for. During the search, a police officer secretly took aside the thief's five-year-old son and said he would pay ten dollars if the boy showed him where the stolen goods were hidden. The boy accepted the money and took the police to the hiding place. When the police charged the boy's mother with burglary, she stated that the stolen goods should not be used as evidence. She accused the police officer of bribing her child. Were the police GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of bribery?</p>		
<p>5 The manager of a store was informed by a customer that a woman had taken something off a shelf and put it in her bag without paying for it. When he investigated, the manager saw articles similar to those for sale in the store in the woman's clear plastic bag. At the cashier's counter, the manager accused her of shoplifting. However, when the woman emptied her bag and the manager saw that she possessed no stolen items, he apologized. She pressed charges against him for slander. Was the store manager GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of slander?</p>		
<p>6 Debra reversed her car out of her driveway and accidentally ran over her roommate's dog which was sleeping in the car's path. The dog was badly injured and had to be treated by a vet. Debra's roommate Jody sued her for \$1,000 in damages to compensate for the vet's fee. Jody argued that Debra had driven recklessly because she knew that the dog would often sleep in the driveway. She also knew the dog could not hear the car because he was deaf. Should Debra be ordered to pay compensation?</p>		
<p>7 In New York in the 1970s, a young woman whose surname was Cooperman went to court to have her name changed to Cooperperson. She was an active member of the Women's Rights Movement and because of this, she wanted to have a name which reflected human equality. Should Ms. Cooperman be allowed to change her name?</p>		
<p>8 Tina consulted a plastic surgeon who told her that he could make her nose smaller and "more harmonious with her other features." After three operations, it looked much worse than before. Tina sued the surgeon. Should the surgeon be ordered to pay compensation?</p>		
<p>9 A male teacher who wore diamond earrings to work was fired from his job. He claimed that he had been fired because the school administration thought it was inappropriate for a male teacher to wear diamond earrings. He accused the school of sexual discrimination. Was the school GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of sexual discrimination?</p>		
<p>10 During local government elections, a newspaper printed profiles of all the party candidates, but the profile of the Green Party candidate was completely unintelligible. Kathy, a member the Green Party, thought that the newspaper had done it on purpose and so she wrote an angry letter to the editor. In order to make sure it was printed, she paid for it to be published as an advertisement. The newspaper printed it, and then sued Kathy for libel. Was Kathy GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of libel?</p>		

What's Your Verdict? Worksheet 20

ACTIVITY

Groupwork: reading, speaking

AIM

To read court cases and say whether you think people are guilty or not guilty.

To guess the court's verdict.

GRAMMAR AND FUNCTIONS

Modal verbs

Talking about obligation: *must, have to, should, had to, should have*

Talking about prohibition: *mustn't, can't, shouldn't, shouldn't have*

Talking about what is right or wrong: *should, shouldn't, should have, shouldn't have*

Talking about what someone did, although it was unnecessary: *needn't have*

VOCABULARY

Crimes: law and order

PREPARATION

Make one copy of the worksheet for each group of three to five students.

TIME

30 to 40 minutes

PROCEDURE

1. It is a good idea to introduce this activity by mentioning any well-known court cases in which many people's opinions were not necessarily in line with the court's final verdict.
2. Explain that the students are going to read about ten people who have been charged with different crimes and found guilty or not guilty. Before you tell them the court's verdict, they are going to decide what they think, and also guess what the court's verdict was.
3. Ask the students to work in groups of three to five, and give one worksheet to each group.
4. Tell the students to take turns reading a case to the rest of their group, and writing in their group's answers in the columns marked "Your verdict" and "Guess the court's verdict."
5. When they have discussed the ten cases, compare the different groups' answers and tell them the court's verdict for each case.

ANSWERS

1. The court found Scott guilty, stating that there was no evidence that television was responsible for his inability to distinguish between right and wrong.
2. The court found Harry not guilty because Michael should have checked the air conditioning for himself.
3. The court found Bill guilty of committing forgery.
4. The court found the police not guilty, and stated that they pay for information all the time.
5. The court found the store manager guilty, and ordered him to pay the woman damages.
6. Yes, the court found Debra guilty of negligence.
7. No, the court ruled against a change of name, saying that they would then have to accept all requests of this nature. For example, Jackson would become Jackchild and Manning would become Peopling.
8. Yes, the court ruled that the surgeon had broken his contract to improve Tina's appearance.
9. The court found the school not guilty of sexual discrimination. Although the law prohibits dismissal based on gender, it does not protect against discrimination against inappropriate appearance.
10. The court ruled against the newspaper because it didn't need to agree to print Kathy's advertisement.