

Wanted! The crime of the century

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Each age has its own crimes that hold a mirror up to that era.

What exactly is it that turns a crime into "the crime of the century"? In 1932, the darling baby of glamorous aviation hero Charles Lindbergh was kidnapped and later found to have been murdered. A German carpenter was tried, convicted and sentenced to death in the electric chair. But it remained unclear: Had the Lindbergh baby really been killed, and the kidnapper found? Mike Pilewski retells the story (Spotlight 2/2010) that made the world stop and stare.

Today, crimes against children are still the ones that make our collective blood boil. But in this week's exercises, read about a wide variety of very different cases that have captured public attention in the past one hundred years. Practise the passive as we review crimes of the century.

Anne Hodgson

Kidnapping the Lindbergh baby, 1932

1. An unknown person kidnapped the baby.
 - a. The baby was kidnapped
 - b. The baby was kidnapped by someone.
 - c. The baby was kidnapped from someone.

2. The baby was found to have been murdered.

This means:

 - a. Someone found the Lindbergh baby, and it had been murdered.
 - b. The authorities decided that the baby had been murdered.
 - c. Someone found the baby in order to murder it.

3. Bruno Hauptmann, a German carpenter, a. became b. got c. was tried, convicted and sentenced to death in the electric chair.

4. Had the baby really been killed,
 - a. and the true kidnapper found?
 - b. and the true kidnapper had been found?
 - c. and the true kidnapper was found?

Stealing the Mona Lisa for Italy, 1911

The Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci is the most recognizable work of art in the world. It cannot be stolen — you would think! Da Vinci took her with him from Florence when he was sent into exile in France. The French treated her as a national treasure. But in 1911, a Louvre employee, Italian nationalist Vincenzo Peruggia, decided to "take her back home to Italy".

5. France a. has been shaken b. was shaken c. has been shook d. was shook by the theft.

6. Enemies of traditional art, including Pablo Picasso, a. were b. have been c. was thought to be possible suspects.

7. The avant-garde poet Guillaume Apollinaire
 - a. was as a suspect arrested.
 - b. was arested as a suspect.

8. Peruggia felt he was "stealing the painting back" for Italy, so
 - a. he thought he would be given a hero's welcome.
 - b. he thought a hero's welcome would be given to him.

Ted Bundy, serial killer, ca. 1973-1978

9. Ted Bundy a. assumed killing b. is assumed to have killed c. is assumed having killed about 35 women, but it could be more.

10. He was one of five terrifying serial killers of the 1970s

- a. on who The Silence of the Lambs was based.
- b. on whom The Silence of the Lambs was based.
- c. on whom was based The Silence of the Lambs.

Kevin Mitnick, computer criminal, from 1979

11. Kevin Mitnick a. gets often named b. is often named c. has been often named today as an example of the master computer criminal. But in fact he now works on the right side of the law.

12. When he was released from prison,

- a. he was initially forbidden
 - b. it was initially forbidden to him
 - c. there was initially forbidden
- to use any communications technology other than a landline telephone.

Natascha Kampusch, in captivity 1998-2006

13. When she finally escaped from her perverted kidnapper, Wolfgang Priklopil, in 2006, Natascha Kampusch a. had been held b. was being held c. was held captive in a small cellar below his garage in Strasshof near Vienna for eight years.

14. However, a few times during the later years of her captivity, she

- a. used to being seen b. has been seen c. would be seen
- outside in the garden, all by herself — a sign that her captor was beginning to trust her. That provided her window of opportunity.

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Feedback and explanations

1. Since we don't know who did it — or "whodunnit"! — we think that it's better to leave out the unnecessary phrase "by..." in this case. – "By" is used to name the subject of the passive, person who did it. So in the authorities said the baby was kidnapped by Bruno Hauptmann.

2. "To have been" is the past form of "to be". To find sth. to be = etw. als ... befinden.

3. Most standard passive forms are made simply with the verb "to be".

4. The right word order for questions:

"Had the baby been killed and had the kidnapper been found?"

You can leave out the second set of auxiliaries (Hilfsverben):

"Had the baby been killed and the kidnapper found?"

5. Use the same tense you would in the active. This event took place long ago, it shook France, so it needs the past tense: France was shaken.

Irregular verb: Shake, shook, shaken = erschüttern

6. The plural and the past tense are needed here.

suspect = Verdächtige(r)

7. The passive verb should not be split by a descriptive (beschreibend) phrase.

8. The structure with the person as the subject is more common.

Note: This is only one interpretation of this unbelievable art heist (Kunstraub). Other historians believe that Perugia was in it for the money (auf Geld aus sein), but that his plans failed.

9. If something is assumed, people think it is true.

10. A more modern phrasing would be "who The Silence of the Lambs was based on".

The book by Thomas Harris (1988) was a bestseller, and the Oscar-winning 1991 film adaptation (Bearbeitung, Verfilmung) is still widely ranked among the best films ever made.

11. The word order is different for these two verbs:

* He is often named

* He often gets named

The rule: Adverbs like "often" and "even" go before regular verbs, but after auxiliaries and the verb "be".

12. "He was forbidden to use" means the same thing as "people forbade him to use" (es wurde ihm verboten).

release = entlassen

landline telephone = Festnetzanschluss

13. Using the past perfect shows that this had been going on before and up to the time of her escape.

14. "She would be seen" or "she used to be seen" means that it occurred (auftreten, passieren) rather regularly.

Natascha Kampusch's story is a unique (einzigartig) highlight in the past decades (Jahrzehnt) of a child surviving being held in captivity (Gefangenschaft).

captor = Kidnapper

window of opportunity = Chance, Zeitfenster

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