

Pre-Reading Activities

A: Discussion

1. The teacher says, "Where's your homework?" but you haven't done your homework. What will you say to the teacher?
2. An excuse is *something that you say or write to explain why you have done something wrong*. Here are some excuses that students have used when they haven't done their homework. Have you used any of them?

- The dog ate it.

- I did it but I left it at home.

- My mother made me cook dinner, so I didn't have time.

- A strange man stole my bag on the way to school.

- I was very ill last night.

B: Vocabulary

Here are some words from today's article and their meanings. Read them and then fill the gaps in the sentences with the correct word.

Words and Meanings:

compulsory - Something that must be done.

court - A place where a judge decides if someone has done something wrong and what the punishment will be.

fine - Money that you have to pay because you have done something wrong.

appear in court - To go to court to answer charges or give information for something you may have done wrong.

Sentences:

1. In my country it is to wear a seatbelt in a car. Everyone has to do it.
2. If you drive too fast, the police may catch you and you will have to pay a .
3. My friend drank four glasses of wine and then drove his car. He had to go to .
4. When he ed in court, the judge took away his license.

Reading Activities

A: Understanding the Main Idea

Read the first paragraph of today's article and answer the questions.

1. What excuse do some students in Houston give when they haven't done their homework?
2. Who may be asked to go to court?
3. Why do you think they will be asked to go to court? (Use your own ideas.)

HOUSTON (Reuters) - "The dog ate my homework." If students at a Houston middle school say this to their teachers, their parents may be asked to go to court.

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B: Choose the Best Answer

Read the second paragraph of the article and choose the best answer for each question.

1. What do the students have to do?
 - a. Finish their homework.
 - b. Go to an afterschool program at the school.
 - c. Both a. and b.
2. How often do the students have to finish their homework?
 - a. Always.
 - b. Never.
 - c. Regularly.
3. When do the parents have to go to court?
 - a. When their children have done their homework.
 - b. When their children haven't regularly done their homework and haven't gone to the afterschool program.
 - c. When their children have lied to their teachers.

When students at Houston's North Shore Middle School **regularly** do not finish their homework and miss a compulsory afterschool program, their parents are ordered to come to court, school officials said on Thursday.

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Word: regularly - something that happens again and again

C: Matching Information

Read the third and fourth paragraphs of the article and match these phrases from it with the correct description. (One is done for you as an example.)

Descriptions

1. the name of the Justice of the Peace
2. the school gave these to the parents of students who hadn't finished their homework and had missed the afterschool program
3. the fine that parents might have to pay
4. what Mike Parrott talked about in court
5. the name of the place where the parents were ordered to appear

Phrases

- a. 48 tickets
- b. a Harris County court
- c. Mike Parrott
- d. \$185
- e. the importance of finishing homework

Example: 1. c.

The school this week gave out 48 tickets to the parents of some students. The tickets ordered parents to appear in the court of Harris County **Justice of the Peace** Mike Parrott. The tickets could have meant a fine of up to \$185.

Parrott did not give anyone a fine but talked in the court

about the importance of finishing homework.

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Words: justice of the peace - an officer of a town or county, etc. who has the legal power to punish people for breaking minor laws, e.g. traffic laws.

D: True or False?

Read the whole article and decide whether these statements are true T or false F.

1. This rule about homework at North Shore Middle School is for students from the first grade to the eighth grade.
2. If students do not finish their homework once, their parents will be given a ticket.
3. The program the students have to go to is after school.
4. 48 parents had to pay a fine of \$185.
5. Parrott thinks that it is important for parents to finish their homework.

No Homework at Texas School? Tell It to the Judge

HOUSTON Fri December 13 (Reuters) - "The dog ate my homework." If students at a Houston middle school say this to their teachers, their parents may be asked to go to court.

When students at Houston's North Shore **Middle School** regularly do not finish their homework and miss a compulsory afterschool program, their parents are ordered to come to court, school officials said on Thursday.

The school this week gave out 48 tickets to the parents of some students. The tickets ordered parents to appear in the court

of Harris County Justice of the Peace Mike Parrott. The tickets could have meant a fine of up to \$185.

Parrott did not give anyone a fine but talked in the court about the importance of finishing homework.

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Words: middle school - a school for students in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Discussion

Answer these questions in small groups.

1. What do you think of the school's rule about homework? Is it a good idea? Why or why not?
2. Do you think parents should be punished if their children do something wrong?
3. How would you feel if your parents had to attend court because of you?
4. "It's always good to tell the truth." Do you agree? When you were at school, did you always tell your teachers the truth?

B: Making Excuses

Part One: Work in pairs and think of some other excuses like the ones in **Pre-Reading Activity A**. Write them down and then share them with your classmates.

My mother made me cook dinner so I didn't have time.

Part Two: Work in pairs and do this role play. One of you is **Student A**, the other **Student B**.

Student A: You are a teacher at North Shore Middle School. Student B is your student. Ask Student B for his / her homework. (If you do not believe Student B's excuse, talk about the school rules for homework.)

Student B: You are a student at North Shore Middle School. Student A is your teacher. You haven't done your homework. Give Student A an excuse. Use any of the sentence beginnings below if you wish.

I'm sorry I couldn't do it because...

I know it is important but I had to...

I'm very sorry but...

C: Language

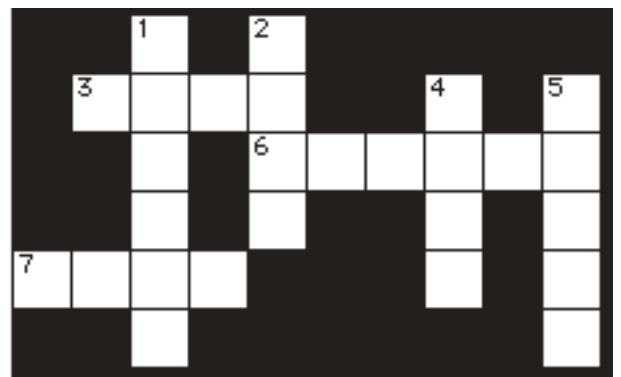
Part One: Here are some meanings of some verbs from today's article. Read the article again and find the verbs with the correct meanings to complete the crossword.

Clues Down

1. to stop doing something
2. to have as a meaning
4. to give information to someone by speaking
5. to tell someone they must do something

Clues Across

3. to provide somebody with something so they can have it
6. to go to a court to answer charges
7. you do not go to something or take part in it



Part Two: Write sentences with four of the verbs above to show their meanings.

TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Pre-Reading Activities

B: Vocabulary - Answers

1. compulsory, 2. fine, 3. court, 4. appear.

Reading Activities

A: Understanding the Main Idea - Answers

1. "The dog ate my homework."
2. The parents of the students.
3. Answers will vary.

B: Choose the Best Answer - Answers

1. c, 2. c, 3. b.

C: Matching Information - Answers

1. c, 2. a, 3. d, 4. e, 5. b.

D: True or False? - Answers

1. **F** (The students at a middle school are in the sixth, seventh and eight grades.)
2. **F** (If they regularly don't finish it and miss the afterschool program.)
3. **T**
4. **F** (Parrott did not give anyone a fine.)
5. **F** (He thinks it is important for students to finish their homework.)

Post-Reading Activities

C: Language - Notes

If you think this activity will prove too challenging for your students, you could make it easier by asking them to work quickly and find all the verbs in the article first. They should make a list of these. After checking with you and talking about the meanings of the verbs, they can then attempt the crossword.

C: Language - Answers

Part One:

Answers Down: 1. finish, 2. mean, 4. tell, 5. order.

Answers Across: 3. give, 6. appear, 7. miss.