

## Building Language Skills with The Seattle Times

May 5, 2016

**Article: “Food theft may not be illegal in Italy, court rules”**

**Wednesday, May 4th, 2016** in the e-Edition of The Seattle Times, **Main, page A7.**

### **Pre-Reading:**

Consider the following question: *If a person steals a loaf of bread because he/she needs to feed his/her starving family, do you think he/she should be punished? Why/why not?*

### **Vocabulary:**

As you read, look for the following vocabulary words that appear in today’s article. Write down what you think the words mean based on the “context,” or how the words are used in the sentence in which they appear. Next, look up the definitions in a dictionary and see how close your guess was for each word.

*Acquitted*

*Appeal*

*Circumstances*

*Conviction*

*Court*

*Defendant*

*Fine*

*Lenient*

*Nonviolent*

*Nourishment*

*Precedents*

*Prosecutor*

*Sentenced*

*Supreme Court*

*Theft*

### **Comprehension:**

1. Where did the theft in the article take place?
  2. Who committed the theft in the article?
  3. Why did this person decide to steal?
  4. In your own words, what does the following sentence mean: *“The condition of the defendant and the circumstances in which the merchandise theft took place prove that he took possession of that small amount of food in the face of immediate and essential need for nourishment”*
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5. In contrast with \_\_\_\_\_, the decisions of the Court of Cassation do not necessarily create binding \_\_\_\_\_ for lower courts to follow. **(Fill in the blanks)**
6. What would have been different about the theft if it had been violent or a robbery?
7. **Bonus Question: What is the significance of this case? What might the decision in this case lead to in the future?**

### **Post-Reading:**

**“Stealing food from a supermarket may not be a crime in Italy if you are homeless and hungry, the nation’s highest appeals court has ruled.”**

What do you think a crime is? Do you think that the intent or the action of a crime is more important? Who decides what is and isn't a crime? How might this crime be viewed differently in the U.S.? How do you think it would be viewed in other areas of the world? Why do you think some laws are different around the world? Are there any laws that are the same in all countries? Why?

### **Language Skills:**

Role play a trial as a class. You can either create your own script or use one that you find online (many websites such as <http://www.justiceeducation.ca/resources/Advanced-Mock-Trials>, have these available). Reflect on the trial process afterwards. How did the trial change your view of justice? Are trials important? How did you feel in your role? How would you have felt in a different role— as the judge, a lawyer, or the defendant? Did this experience change your view at all about the crime that was committed in the article or about the justice system?

### Comprehension Question Answers:

1. Who committed the theft in the article? **A homeless man from Ukraine named Roman Ostriakov.**
2. Where did the theft in the article take place? **The theft took place in a store in Genoa, Italy.**
3. What did this person steal? **Ostriakov stole cheese and sausage from the store.**
4. In your own words, what does the following sentence mean: *“The condition of the defendant and the circumstances in which the merchandise theft took place prove that he took possession of that small amount of food in the face of immediate and essential need for nourishment.”* **The man stole because he needed to eat. Answers will vary.**
5. In contrast with the **U.S. legal system**, the decisions of the Court of Cassation do not necessarily create binding **precedents** for lower courts to follow. **(Fill in the blanks)**
6. What would have been different about the theft if it had been violent or a robbery? **They wouldn’t have acquitted him.**
7. Bonus Question: What is the significance of this case? What might the decision in this case lead to in the future? **It might lead to a more frequent application of the state of necessity linked to poverty situations.**