



# THE CURIOUS CASE OF DB COOPER



Scan to review worksheet

Expemo code:

1BPH-I2EB-MQ55



1

## Warm up

In pairs, discuss the following questions.

1. How often do you fly? Are you a big fan of air travel?
2. Do you usually feel safe when you fly? Why/ Why not?
3. Why do you think people are afraid of flying?
4. Have you ever heard any mysterious stories about airplanes?





## 2

**Focus on keywords**

Match the underlined words to the definitions below.

**Group 1:**

1. The small light on his car was indicating that he had run out of gas.
  2. We were traveling at an unbelievable rate of knots, and I started to feel seasick.
  3. The bird took off and started to fly around our house.
  4. I was puzzled by the fact that I hadn't been able to find my car keys.
  5. We had been on the road for five hours, so we made a pit stop at a little burger place.
- a. (phr. v) leave the ground and begin to fly
  - b. (v) showing that something is happening
  - c. (adj.) unable to understand the reason for something
  - d. a stop during a long journey
  - e. (n) speed for measuring aircraft and boats

**Group 2:**

1. My mom is a pilot, so I have been interested in aviation since I was a little kid.
  2. I was wandering in the park, and I came across a little squirrel eating an acorn.
  3. The pilot moved to a higher altitude as soon as the flight got a little bumpy.
  4. The hijacking took place while they were flying over the Pacific.
  5. It was the middle of the night, but we joined the search and prayed that we would find someone.
- a. (n) use of violence or threats to take control of a vehicle, usually a plane
  - b. (n) the science of flying an aircraft
  - c. (n) height above sea level
  - d. (phr. v) find somebody or something by chance
  - e. (n) an attempt by a large group of people to find a missing person, animal, or thing



## 3

## Listening for predictions



Part A: You are going to listen to the podcast named "The Curious Case of DB Cooper". Look at the words below and with your partner try to predict the connection between each of the things, then listen to the first section of the podcast and see if your ideas were correct.

Washington

a note

a bomb

\$200,000

flight 305

Mexico City

parachutes

Part B: Read the sentences from the script and think about which words from the vocabulary section could go in the gaps, only five are needed. Afterwards, listen to the podcast and check your predictions.

1. ...on November 24th, 1971, and involved the \_\_\_\_\_ ...
2. ...what was to follow would go down in \_\_\_\_\_ history.
3. ...while in the air to remain at an \_\_\_\_\_ of less than 10,000 feet...
4. a red light flashed on in the cockpit \_\_\_\_\_ someone had opened a door...
5. Cooper, the money and one of the \_\_\_\_\_ were nowhere to be found.

## 4

## Listening for details

Listen to the podcast one more time and try to answer the following questions.

1. When did the DB Cooper hijacking happen?
2. Where was the first flight going to and from?
3. Who was the second note from DB Cooper for?
4. What was the problem with flying to Mexico City?
5. What did the crew discover when they landed in Reno?

## 5

## Talking point

Read through the questions then talk about them with your partner.

1. What were you most surprised about in this podcast?
2. Have you ever heard anything about this or any other hijackings before?
3. Do you think hijacking a plane was easier in past? Why is there more security at airports today?
4. What would you do if you were a passenger on a hijacked plane?



## 6

## Focus on vocabulary

Part A: Match the following vocabulary to the definitions.

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. case (n)                 | a. say something is not important or true                              |
| 2. deed (n)                 | b. being or looking like somebody or something                         |
| 3. <u>striking</u> (adj.)   | c. something someone does that is usually really good or really bad    |
| 4. <u>resemblance</u> (n)   | d. a person who is thought to be the most likely suspect by the police |
| 5. <u>testimonies</u> (n)   | e. interesting or unusual enough to attract attention                  |
| 6. sleuth (n)               | f. a person who investigates crimes                                    |
| 7. <u>discount</u> (v)      | g. formal statements people make when they know something is true      |
| 8. prime <u>suspect</u> (n) | h. a matter that is officially investigated                            |

Part B: Put the vocabulary from Part A into the correct gaps in the following sentences. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The similarities in the appearance of both sisters are really \_\_\_\_\_.
2. They had to give a \_\_\_\_\_ in court, and it was a very difficult process for them.
3. I helped someone across the road last week, it was my good \_\_\_\_\_ for the day.
4. He was the victim's partner so that made him the \_\_\_\_\_ from the very start.
5. He had been a suspect in the \_\_\_\_\_ for over 10 years, but the police could never charge him.
6. I love reading old stories about \_\_\_\_\_ as they are often so exciting.
7. The banks did not want to \_\_\_\_\_ the fact that the economy was still not stable.
8. There is no real \_\_\_\_\_ between the original novel and the new movie.



## 7

## Listening for detail



Listen to the information about three of the main suspects in the case and fill in reasons for suspicion for each suspect, you should write three reasons for their suspicion. Compare your answers with your partner and then come to an agreement on who you think the prime suspect is and why.

- Richard Floyd McCoy:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

- Sheridan Peterson:

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

- Robert Rackstraw:

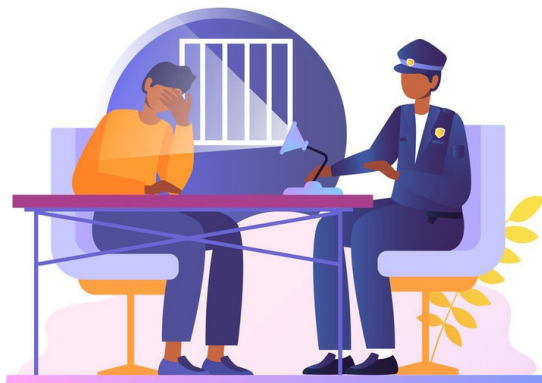
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

## 8

## Talking point

Look at the questions and discuss them with your partner.

1. What did you think about the story of DB Cooper? Did you find it interesting?
2. Why do you think they have never arrested someone for this crime?
3. Do you think it is possible that DB Cooper is still alive and living a happy life somewhere?
4. Why do you think people are so interested in mysterious stories like this one?





## 9

**Vocabulary for conversation**

**Part A:** Look at the examples of natural language from the podcast with your partner and from the context and try to guess the meaning of each one.

1. ... and even a big-budget movie is rumored to be in the mix.
2. ... that would last for decades and one that would lead them down countless dead ends.
3. Unfortunately for him, his freedom was to be short-lived.

**Part B:** To help you remember the expressions, have a chat with your partner and use them to talk about your life.

1. Have you ever been in the mix to get a really good job? What happened?
2. Have you ever been in a situation at work or at university where you felt you were led down a dead end?
3. Why do you think that feelings of joy are often short-lived?

## 10

**Extension task/homework**

There are many more people to be suspicious of in the case of DB Cooper and it is your task to try and find more potential suspects.

Using the Internet, find three more candidates who could have committed the crime. Make notes about who the candidates are and why you think they are suspicious. Present your ideas to your class and see if you can all agree on the number one suspect.

You can use the following websites to help you:



1) Wikipedia



2) Newsweek



3) What Culture



# Transcripts

## 3. Listening for predictions

- Speaker:** The story of DB Cooper is probably one of the most intriguing and puzzling riddles that you are ever likely to hear. It is a story that has inspired countless books, two high-profile documentaries and even a big-budget movie that is rumored to be in the mix.
- Speaker:** The event in question occurred in the state of Washington on November 24th, 1971 and involved the hijacking of Northwest Orient Airline's flight 305. On that day, a man who called himself Dan Cooper boarded a flight from Portland to Seattle, quietly took his seat and ordered himself a bourbon and soda, what was to follow would go down in aviation history.
- Speaker:** At around about 3 P.M, Cooper handed the flight attendant a note in which he made it clear that he had a bomb and that she should sit down beside him. After Cooper had shown her what looked like a bomb, the flight attendant found herself hurriedly heading to the cockpit with a new note, a note for the pilot.
- Speaker:** In the second letter, Cooper demanded \$200,000, in \$20 bills and four parachutes, in exchange he would let the 36 innocent passengers go free when they landed in Seattle.
- Speaker:** With the passengers safely off the plane, Cooper ordered the pilot to take off again and while in the air to remain at an altitude of less than 10,000 feet and to fly no faster than 150 knots, around 170 mph. Cooper told the pilot that his desired destination was Mexico City but the pilot communicated that it would be too far to make on the current fuel load. They agreed that refueling would be needed and that Reno, Nevada would be the best place for a quick pit stop.
- Speaker:** While in the air, Cooper ordered the entire flight crew to remain in the cockpit and not to come out until the plane had landed in Reno. There were no cameras on the plane, so the crew had no idea what Cooper was up to but at 8 P.M. a red light flashed on in the cockpit indicating someone had opened a door in the main section of the plane.
- Speaker:** At 10:15 P.M. the plane landed safely in Reno and after a while the crew slowly emerged from the cockpit. What they came across was an almost completely empty plane. Cooper, the money and one of the parachutes were nowhere to be found.
- Speaker:** As soon as news of the crime had been communicated to the police an immediate search was planned. However, there was particularly awful weather that night so they were unable to start looking for Cooper as quickly as they would have liked. When the search finally began, they had no idea that it would be one that would last for decades and one that would lead them down countless dead ends.



## 7. Listening for detail

**Speaker:** Richard Floyd McCoy

**Speaker:** McCoy was arrested for a hijacking six months after the DB Cooper flight and this hijacking included many similar characteristics to the Cooper case. McCoy demanded \$500,000, several parachutes, and in a way that echoed Cooper, it was all communicated to a flight attendant via a hand-written note.

**Speaker:** McCoy also ordered the pilot to fly to Mexico but when he was somewhere over Utah he jumped out of the plane. Unfortunately for him, his freedom was to be short-lived. The FBI arrived at his house where they found parachutes and almost half a million dollars in cash. He was sentenced to 45 years in prison for that hijacking, but the similarity in the crimes has pushed some to suggest that McCoy and Cooper are the same people.

**Speaker:** Sheridan Peterson

**Speaker:** Sheridan Peterson was 44 years old in 1971, the exact age of DB Cooper. He served in the Marine Corps in World War II, worked for Boeing, and was an experienced skydiver who had friends who described him as a bit of a risk-taker.

**Speaker:** Around the time of the hijacking, Peterson stood out as the one most likely to have done the deed. A strong reason for the suspicions surrounding Peterson was due to the striking physical resemblance, a drawing done of Cooper from witness testimonies looked almost identical to Peterson.

**Speaker:** Peterson remained a suspect until his death in 2021, and Eric Ullis, an amateur sleuth based in Phoenix who had studied many of the DB Cooper suspects for years was 98% convinced that Peterson was the main man.

**Speaker:** Robert Rackstraw

**Speaker:** Rackstraw was another army veteran, an experienced helicopter pilot he didn't become a proper suspect until the late seventies, many years after the crime had occurred.

**Speaker:** Suspicions around Rackstraw grew when he was approached by a number of journalists over the years but would never flat-out deny that he was Cooper.

**Speaker:** He was once asked by a reporter if he was Cooper and Rackstraw replied with "I wouldn't discount myself." This reluctance to clear his name made him the prime suspect for a number of people. However, one thing to take into consideration is the fact that in 1971 Rackstraw was only 28 years old, a lot younger than Cooper was said to have been at the time.





# Key

## 1. Warm up

5 mins.

This gives the teacher an opportunity to set the context and allows the students time to talk about their previous knowledge in relation to air travel and unsolved stories involving airplanes. Monitor and provide on-the-spot feedback when appropriate.

## 2. Focus on keywords

5 mins.

Make sure students can correctly pronounce the target vocabulary. Ask them to complete the task by themselves first, and then compare answers with a partner.

**Group 1:**

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

**Group 2:**

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

## 3. Listening for predictions

**Part A:**

5 mins.

Put the students in pairs and ask them to make connections that might appear in the story from the podcast. They listen to the first part of the podcast to check and then share their answers with the class.

**Part B:**

5 mins.

Ask students to read the sentences from the transcript and discuss with their partners where they think each word from the vocabulary section goes. Play the first part of the podcast and ask the students to check their predictions.

1. hijacking                      2. aviation                      3. altitude                      4. indicating                      5. parachutes

*Sources for listening:*

<https://www.popsugar.com/entertainment/who-is-db-cooper-48860250>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D.\\_B.\\_Cooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._B._Cooper)

<https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/db-cooper-hijacking>

<https://www.crimemuseum.org/crime-library/cold-cases/d-b-cooper/>

## 4. Listening for details

5 mins.

Tell students that they are going to listen to the podcast again, ask them to answer the questions and then compare their answers with their partners.



1. "...November 24th, 1971..."
2. "...from Portland to Seattle..."
3. "... with a new note, a note for the pilot..."
4. "...that it would be too far to make on the current fuel load ..."
5. "...almost completely empty plane..."

## 5. Talking point

5 mins.

Students discuss talking points from the first part of the podcast, share their opinions and think about what might be coming up in the second part.

## 6. Focus on vocabulary

### Part A:

5 mins.

Ensure students can correctly pronounce the target vocabulary. Ask them to complete the task by themselves first, and then compare answers with a partner.

1. → h.    2. → c.    3. → e.    4. → b.    5. → g.    6. → f.    7. → a.    8. → d.

### Part B:

5 mins.

Ask students to identify which parts of speech could fill the gaps before completing the exercise. Circulate and help as needed.

- |             |              |             |                  |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|
| 1. striking | 2. testimony | 3. deed     | 4. prime suspect |
| 5. case     | 6. sleuths   | 7. discount | 8. resemblance   |

## 7. Listening for detail

5 mins.

Ask the students to listen to the second half of the podcast and complete the table below, play as many times as necessary. Review the answers as a class and then let them decide who they think the prime suspect is and why. Each pair then shares their ideas with the class.

### Suggested answers:

#### Richard Floyd McCoy

- a. Committed a similar crime to Cooper
- b. The crime was committed six months after Cooper's crime
- c. Found parachutes and cash in his house

#### Sheridan Peterson

- a. Worked for Boeing
- b. Experienced skydiver
- c. Looked almost identical to Cooper

**Robert Rackstraw**

- a. Experienced helicopter pilot
- b. Never denied that he was Cooper
- c. "I wouldn't discount myself"

Sources for listening:

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/what-happened-db-cooper-theories-27462226>

<https://www.bustle.com/entertainment/who-was-db-cooper-theories>

<https://www.abc4.com/news/d-b-cooper-the-real-mccoy-part-2/>

<https://www.oregonlive.com/history/2021/01/charming-db-cooper-suspect-sheridan-peterson-dies-at-94-spent-years-dedicated-to-political-causes.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2019/07/10/he-died-claiming-be-disabled-veteran-many-believe-he-was-hijacker-db-cooper/>

<https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2019/07/robert-rackstraw-db-cooper-suspect-with-various-bizarre-oregon-connections-dies-at-75.html>

**8. Talking point**

5 mins.

Students discuss talking points from the podcast and share their opinions with each other about DB Cooper, they also link it to their own lives.

**9. Vocabulary for conversation****Part A:**

5 mins.

Ask students to look through the sentences together and try to guess the meaning, monitor to support.

*be in the mix* - have the opportunity to succeed or be thought of as better than others

*lead down a dead end* - taken to a point where progress is impossible

*be short-lived* - only lasted for a short amount of time

**Part B:**

5 mins.

Allow them to personalize the vocabulary with a quick discussion.

**10. Extension task/homework**

15- 20 mins.

The task below can be done in class or set for homework.

It asks students to do research into three other suspects in the DB Cooper case.

Students use the Internet to find out more information and then make a list of the three suspects they are most suspicious of and their reasoning. Students can then present what they found to the class.

Links:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D.\\_B.\\_Cooper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._B._Cooper)

<https://www.newsweek.com/db-cooper-suspects-identity-hijacking-rob-rackstraw-dick-briggs-1726313>

<https://whatculture.com/offbeat/10-most-compelling-suspects-in-the-d-b-cooper-hijacking>