Crime News

TWO MEN FOUND GUILTY OF CHOPPING DOWN SYCAMORE GAP TREE

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The tree pictured in 2020

TWO men have been found guilty of chopping down the famous Sycamore Gap tree in Northumberland and causing damage to the historic Hadrian's Wall.

Lawyers said that Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, had travelled across the country from Cumbria on a "moronic mission" to cut the tree down for a "bit of a laugh", but then didn't have the guts to own up to it once they realised what outrage they had caused.

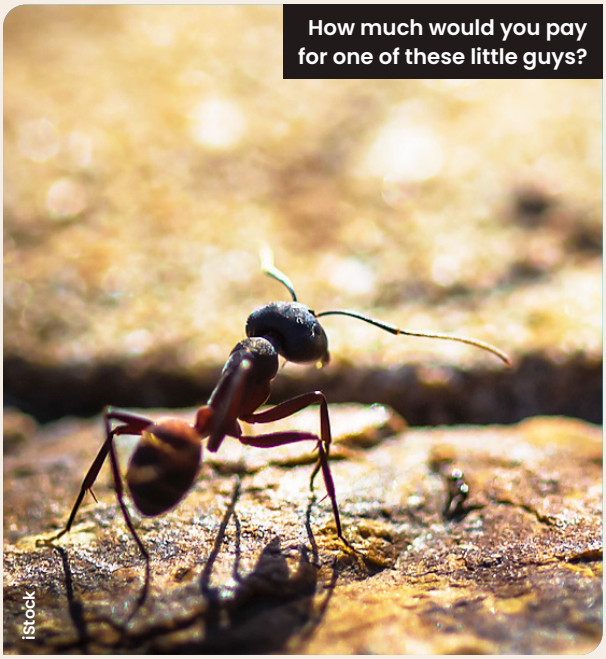
The tree had become popular with tourists and photographers, and had even featured in Hollywood films. It had stood since the late 1800s when it was planted as a landscape feature, but was chopped down in less than three minutes with a chainsaw.

When the tree came down, it fell on top of part of Hadrian's Wall and damaged it.

Graham and Carruthers both denied being involved, but the jury took just five hours to reach a verdict that they were both responsible.

The pair are due to be sentenced in July, but could go to prison for up to ten years for what the northeast's chief prosecutor called "a deliberate and mindless act of destruction."

KENYA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How much would you pay for one of these little guys?

Ant smugglers sentenced

A gang that tried to smuggle more than 5,000 live ants out of Kenya has been given a choice – either they spend a year in prison, or each pay a £5,800 fine. It's thought that the group (two teenage students from Belgium, one Vietnamese man and a Kenyan man) were going to try to sell the ants in Europe and Asia as exotic pets. Some of the ants they caught were giant African harvester ants, which certain UK dealers pay £170 each for. The gang told the court that they were collecting the ants as a hobby and didn't know that what they were doing was illegal.

GLOSSARY

verdict – an official judgement, typically one handed down by a court

prosecutor – someone who argues the case in court against people who have been charged with a crime

exotic – relating to something from a different country, typically a tropical one

Read the articles headed *Two men found guilty of chopping down Sycamore Gap tree* (page 3) and *Ant smugglers sentenced* (page 15) from issue 987 of *First News*. Then, answer the following questions.

Q1) Look at the second paragraph of the article about the Sycamore Gap tree.
Do you think the lawyers who were quoted were defending or prosecuting the men? Why?
(2 marks)

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.....

Q2) Look at the article about the Sycamore Gap tree.
How does the fact that the tree had featured in Hollywood films add to the story?
(**1 mark**)

.....

Q3) Look at the article about the Sycamore Gap tree.
...chopped down in less than three minutes...
Why was this detail added?
(1 mark)

.....

Q4) Look at the article about the Sycamore Gap tree.
How does it suggest that the guilty verdict was not a difficult decision for the jury?
(1 mark)

.....

Q5) Look at the caption for the photograph in the article about ant smugglers.
What is the effect of calling the ants *little guys*?
(1 mark)

.....

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Q6) Look at the article about the ant smugglers.
How does it imply that the Belgian gang members might be less responsible for the crime?
(1 mark)

.....

.....

Q7) Look at the article about the ant smugglers.
How much might certain UK dealers pay for each giant African harvester ant?
(1 mark)

Q8) Look at both articles.
a. Give one way in which the articles are similar. **(1 mark)**

b. Give one way in which the articles are different. **(1 mark)**

Extended response
The people who cut down the Sycamore Gap tree are facing a sentence of up to ten years in prison.
Do you think this would be a reasonable punishment for the crime? Use persuasive language to support your argument.

TEACHER ANSWERS

2a	Give or explain the meaning of words in context.
2b	Retrieve and record information or identify key details from fiction and non-fiction.
2c	Summarise main ideas from more than one paragraph.
2d	Make inferences from the text or explain and justify inferences with evidence from the text.
2e	Predict what might happen from details stated and implied.
2f	Identify and/or explain how information or narrative content is related and contributes to meaning as a whole.
2g	Identify and/or explain how meaning is enhanced through choice of words and phrases.
2h	Make comparisons within the text.

Q1)
Award **1 mark** for answers that merely state defending or prosecuting.
Award **2 marks** for answers that provide a reasonable explanation for the given answer.
For example, for prosecuting, they might suggest:
- They were trying to make the defendants look more guilty.
- They were outlining exactly why and how they committed the crime.
- They were trying to influence the jury against the two men.

For defending, they might suggest:
- Everyone knew the defendants were guilty, so they were trying to get them a lesser sentence by making them look silly or ashamed.

(NC content domain **2d**)

Q2) Award **1 mark** for answers suggesting that it emphasised the popularity, significance or high profile of the tree.
(NC content domain **2f)**

Q3) Award **1 mark** for answers noting that it provided a stark contrast to the fact that the tree had stood there a long time (since the late 1800s).
(NC content domain **2f**)

Q4) Award **1 mark** for answers referring to the way the article said that it took just five hours for the jury to reach a verdict.
(NC content domain **2d**)

Q5) Award **1 mark** for any relevant, plausible suggestion, such as:
- It creates sympathy for the ants.
- It makes the ants seem cute or appealing.
- It makes the ants seem harmless.

(NC content domain **2g**)

Q6) It refers to them as teenage students (whereas the other two are referred to as men).
(**1 mark**. NC content domain **2g**)

Q7) £170
(**1 mark**. NC content domain **2b**)

Q8)
a. Award **1 mark** for any relevant, plausible suggestion, such as:
- They are both about crimes against wildlife.
- The perpetrators were found guilty in both cases.
- The crimes both involved more than one person.

b. Award **1 mark** for any relevant, plausible suggestion, such as:
- One involves a crime against a plant, whereas the other is about a crime against animals.
- One involves destruction, whereas the other is about smuggling.
- The ant smuggling was motivated by money, whereas the tree cutting was not.
- The tree cutting also involved damaging a historic site, whereas the ant smuggling did not.

(NC content domain **2h**)

Extended response question
Accept any reasonable response that is persuasively argued and includes two or three detailed, relevant points.