

11 Not Guilty

Going through the Customs is a **tiresome** business. The strangest thing about it is that really honest people are often made to feel **guilty**. The hardened professional smuggler, on the other hand, is never **troubled** by such feelings, even if he has five hundred gold watches hidden in his suitcase. When I returned from abroad **recently**, a particularly **officious** young Customs Officer **clearly** regarded me as a smuggler.

'Have you anything to declare?' he asked, looking me in the eye.

'No,' I answered confidently.

'Would you mind unlocking this suitcase please?'

'Not at all,' I answered.

The Officer **went through** the case with great care. All the things I had **packed** so carefully were soon in a **dreadful mess**. I felt sure I would never be able to close the case again. Suddenly, I saw the Officer's face light up. He had spotted a **tiny** bottle at the bottom of my case and he pounced on it with delight.

'Perfume, eh?' he asked sarcastically. 'You should have declared that. Perfume is not **exempt** from import duty.'

'But it isn't perfume,' I said. 'It's hair-oil.' Then I added with a smile, 'It's a strange mixture I make myself.'

As I expected, he did not believe me.

'Try it!' I said encouragingly.

The officer **unscrewed** the **cap** and put the bottle to his **nostrils**. He was greeted by an unpleasant smell which **convinced** him that I was telling the truth. A few minutes later, I was able to hurry away with **precious** chalk-marks on my baggage.

Vocabulary

Tiresome (adj.) = annoying, boring

Guilty (adj.) = shamefaced

Troubled (v.) = disturbed

Recently (adv.) = not long ago

Officious (adj.) = bossy

Clearly (adv.) = obviously

Went through (v.) = searched, checked

Packed (v.) = filled, loaded

Dreadful (adj.) = awful

Mess (n.) = untidy state

Tiny (adj.) = very small

Exempt (adj.) = free

Unscrewed (v.) = removed

Cap (n.) = cover

Nostrils (n.) = external openings of noses

Convinced (v.) = satisfied

Precious (adj.) = valuable

Comprehension and précis

1. Did the writer have anything to declare or not?

The writer had nothing to declare.

2. What did the Customs Officer make him do?

The Customs Officer made him unlock his suitcase.

3. Did the Customs Officer search the case carefully or not?

The Customs Officer searched the case carefully.

4. What did he find?

He found a tiny bottle at the bottom.

5. What did he think was in the bottle?

He thought there was perfume in the bottle.

6. What did the writer tell him the bottle contained?

The writer told him the bottle contained hair oil.

7. Who made it?

The writer had made it himself.

8. Did the Customs Officer believe him or not?

The Customs Officer didn't believe him.

9. What did the writer encourage the Officer to do?

The writer encouraged the Officer to try the oil.

10. What convinced the Officer that the writer was telling the truth?

The unpleasant convinced the Officer that the writer was telling the truth.

11. Did the Officer let the writer pass through the Customs or not?

The Officer let the writer pass through the Customs.

Composition

Imagine that a man tries to smuggle something valuable through the Customs. Expand the following into a paragraph of about (150 words).

When the Customs Officer _____ the man said that he had nothing to declare. The Officer asked the man to _____. Although the case contained only _____ and _____ it was very heavy. This made the Officer suspicious, so he _____ the case was soon empty and when the Officer _____ he found that _____. The officer examined the case carefully and saw that _____ he _____ and removed the bottom part of the case which contained _____. While the Officer was looking at _____ the man tried to _____. For a moment, the man disappeared among _____ but he was soon _____ and placed under arrest.