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Reading Exam

ENGLISH FILE

EOI Exam Power Pack (Intermediate cycle)

PART 2

Read the article about shoplifting. For questions 1–5 choose the correct answer a, b, or c. Question 0 is the example.

QUESTION	0	1	2	3	4	5
ANSWER	c					

				TOTAL	

EOI Topic: Crime and punishment
See: *English File third edition* Intermediate
 File 10B, Grammar 5A

0 What happened to many British companies in 2009?

- a They managed to prevent a lot of theft in shops.
- b They struggled to make a profit because of the economic crisis.
- c Profits were reduced due to a rise in shoplifting.

1 What is the profile of a typical shoplifter?

- a young women
- b women who are professional criminals
- c There isn't one typical profile.

2 According to Peter Mather, why do some women start shoplifting in times of crisis?

- a because they work for professional criminals
- b because they have financial difficulties
- c because they enjoy the risk

3 Who are 'compulsive' shoppers / shoplifters?

- a Women with drug and alcohol addictions.
- b Women who started shoplifting at an early age and continue.
- c Young women who want all the latest products on the market.

4 What does Peter Mather say about compulsive shopping tendencies?

- a It only affects women between 14–18 years old.
- b It's a real problem and shows the darker side of a consumer society.
- c It mainly affects young women in Scotland and Spain.

5 What does Peter Mather say about prison and shoplifting?

- a Other programmes might be better than a prison sentence.
- b Many shoplifters don't complete their prison sentence.
- c It stops shoplifters from repeating the crime.

PART 2

Consumer crisis

In times of economic crisis, more and more people take desperate measures to get their hands on all the items and goods they are used to consuming, even if they don't have the money to buy them. According to a recent report by consumer psychologist Peter Mather, shoplifting is on the increase, and many shops and stores are battling to control a dramatic rise in theft. One British consumer organization concluded that, in 2009, UK companies lost up to 200 million pounds in profit because of shoplifting. While the British government takes a hard line on offenders, who can often end up in prison, psychologists and consumer experts are questioning how to deal with the problem on a deeper level. The key to the whole issue is finding the answer to this question: why do people become shoplifters in the first place?

Most studies agree that there is no typical shoplifter 'profile', although the vast majority of shoplifters are women. Women shoplifters have different motives for stealing and come from a variety of age groups. In his report, Peter Mather claims that in times of economic stability, women who shoplift tend to be in their teens or early twenties. Most don't consider shoplifting to be a serious crime and 'tried' it because they wanted to experience the 'thrill' of it, and to impress their friends. In times of economic recession, however, the motives for shoplifting are more complex. Mather states that women are often more directly affected by money problems than men, and that stealing from shops is simply a way to survive for them. This is particularly the case for single mothers who have hit hard times.

A more disturbing point outlined in Mather's study is the general increase in 'compulsive' shopping and shoplifting amongst teenage girls, regardless of good or hard times. The desire to possess more and more stuff is portrayed as normal by magazines, and is creating more 'shopaholics'. 50% of all young girls aged between 14 and 18, interviewed for the report in countries as far apart as Scotland and Spain, showed signs of shopping addiction. Mather claims that 'when they have no money they are increasingly willing to shoplift to get what they want.' He sums up by saying that this issue has to be taken seriously, since it clearly shows a sinister side to our consumer society. Our society creates pressure by insisting that 'the more we have, the better we are'.

As to whether prison sentences are the right response to increased shoplifting, Mather is sceptical. In his opinion, many shoplifters just go straight back to stealing after completing their time in prison. Most psychologists agree that it is necessary to consider alternatives to imprisonment, such as education programmes, vocational work, and community service for offenders.