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## **Spies and Poisoned Sushi – The London Whodunnit**

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**1 December, 2006**

## THE ARTICLE

### **Spies and Poisoned Sushi – The London Whodunnit**

The mystery deepens in the killing of the ex-Russian intelligence agent Alexander Litvinenko. There are now enough theories about who poisoned him and why to make a dozen spy movies. A recent theory is that Litvinenko's former colleague, Boris Berezovsky, orchestrated the murder to get back at Russian authorities. This would strengthen claims made by Litvinenko himself that the Kremlin had ordered his death. Russia's *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* newspaper agreed, saying the death could have resulted from "joint actions between former Russian special service agents and the fugitive Boris Berezovsky". In the weeks before his death, Litvinenko stated numerous times that Russian agents were closing in on him and that he was living on borrowed time.

Mr. Litvinenko often said he had evidence that could damage the Russian government. In particular, he accused Russia's President Putin of ordering genocide in Chechnya. He also said he had important information about the killing last month in Moscow of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya — whose killing the ex-KGB spy had been investigating before his death. Rumors are circulating that he was close to providing the world with what he had discovered. However, those who wanted to stop him in his tracks had other plans. The most common story surrounding his death is that Mr. Litvinenko was poisoned by a radioactive substance called Polonium 210, which had been inserted in a piece of sushi in a Japanese restaurant in London. The world waits for the intrigue to unfold.

## START

**1. DICTATION:** The teacher will read to you slowly and clearly the first half of the first paragraph, repeating passages where necessary. Students will write down the speech. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again.

Self correct your work. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total no of errors. Less than 5 is very good. 10 are acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than 20 - we need to do some work!

**2. SPIES & POISONED SUSHI:** Walk around the class and briefly find out what people know about this London mystery story. Share your findings with new partners / the class.

**3. READING:** Get students to read the passage aloud. Swap readers every paragraph.

**4. VOCABULARY:** Students circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting (circle) and which are most boring (underline).

*KGB / Russian intelligence agents / KGB spies / spy movies / radioactive substances / Moscow / London / journalist / President Putin / Russian government / borrowed time*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

## 6. WHODUNNIT?

In pairs / groups, discuss who killed Alexander Litvinenko? Rank each one of the choices below (10 = highly likely; 1 = highly unlikely).

- A. It was suicide
- B. The KGB
- C. Britain's secret services
- D. Vladimir Putin
- E. Boris Berezovsky – the exiled Russian oligarch living in London.
- F. Akhmed Zakayev – a Chechen separatist.
- G. The FBI
- H. Another journalist
- I. Your choice \_\_\_\_\_

## 7. INTERNET MYSTERY QUIZ:

With your partner(s) **find and discuss** the answers to the following questions.

- a) Why is the British police so interested in this case?
- b) Why is the world so interested in the murder?
- c) How did Polonium 210 get into the UK?
- d) What and how dangerous is Polonium 210?
- e) Why was Litvinenko a critic of the Kremlin?
- f) Why did most of the Russian media barely cover the story when it was front page news in the majority of the world's press?
- g) Who do you think killed Litvinenko?
- h) Some reports in the Russian press accuse Litvinenko of a 'martyrdom operation' What do you think of this?
- i) Do you think other people could be affected by traces of polonium 210 found in his hotel, the restaurant where he ate and later when traces were found on a British Airways plane etc...?
- j) How did Litvinenko ingest (take into his body) the poison?
- k) Why did Alexander Litvinenko name the Kremlin as the source behind his poisoning?
- l) What was the name of the sushi bar Litvinenko was poisoned in?
- m) What was the name of the hotel Litvinenko was staying in?
- n) Do you think Litvinenko was murdered because he knew who killed his Russian journalist friend Anna Politkovskaya? (who was another murdered critic of the Kremlin.)
- o) Were the Russian press right to have reacted angrily to the implications that Moscow was involved in Alexander Litvinenko's death?
- p) Are you aware of a similar case of a man who was poisoned by a dart in the tip of a long umbrella back in 1978 in London?
- q) What is the FSB?
- r) What was Litvinenko's role in the FSB?
- s) Why did he meet Italian academic Mario Scaramella and two Russian men at the sushi bar in Piccadilly in London? Who were these men?
- t) Which hospitals treated Litvinenko?
- u) Was President Putin right to say that the former spy's death was a political provocation against Russia?
- v) What is the latest on this story? Discuss.

## 8. PRESS: ROLE PLAY: SPEAKING 1

### 'Exclusive' TV interview with Alexander Litvinenko!

**Student A.** Imagine you are a BBC / CNN television **news reporter**. You have an 'exclusive' interview with ex-Russian intelligence agent Alexander Litvinenko hours before his death. Prepare five questions you want to ask him about what he might know and want to tell you.

**Student B.** You are **Alexander Litvinenko**! Think of five things (write them down) you want to mention to the world about your investigations in the forthcoming interview with student A.

**Role play:** Student A asks Student B (Alexander) your questions. Listen to his response. React to his comments.

The teacher will select some students to role play their situations in front of the class.

## 9. PRESS: ROLE PLAY: SPEAKING 2

### 'Exclusive' TV interview with British Home Secretary John Reid

**Student A.** Imagine you are a BBC / CNN television **news reporter**. You have an 'exclusive' interview with British Home Secretary John Reid. Prepare five questions you want to ask him about the latest situation on the investigation into who killed Alexander Litvinenko.

**Student B.** You are **British Home Secretary John Reid**. Think of five things (write them down) you want to mention to the world about you and your colleagues have found in the investigations into the killing of the ex-Russian spy in the forthcoming interview with student A.

**Role play:** Student A asks Student B (John Reid) your questions. Listen to his response. React to his comments.

The teacher will select some students to role play their situations in front of the class.

**10. SENTENCE STARTERS:** With your partner(s), finish these sentence starters. Talk about the sentences you made.

- a) The sushi bar \_\_\_\_\_
- b) The media \_\_\_\_\_
- c) President Putin \_\_\_\_\_
- d) The ex-KGB spy \_\_\_\_\_
- e) Alexander Litvinenko \_\_\_\_\_
- f) Polonium 210 \_\_\_\_\_
- g) Important information \_\_\_\_\_
- h) His killing \_\_\_\_\_

**11. ONE MINUTE:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you can associate with **Alexander Litvinenko**. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**12. FIVE MINUTES:** Choose three of these words. Write a sentence using each word. Try to associate them with **Alexander Litvinenko**. Discuss with your partner. Spend five minutes on this exercise.

### 13. SPIES

In pairs - Think of 6 famous **spies**. Discuss.

1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

The teacher will select some examples from the class

### 14. I SPY A SPY AGENCY

Swap pairs! – Name six famous spy agencies. Discuss.

1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

Do the above include the name of the spy organization in your country?

If not name it. \_\_\_\_\_

The teacher will select some examples to discuss with the class

## 15. THE NAME IS BOND – JAMES BOND

Swap pairs! – Name the actors who have played the role of the fictional British spy **James Bond 007**. Discuss.

1.	5.
2.	6.
3.	7.
4.	

The teacher will select some examples from the class

## 16. 007 MOVIES

In pair's think of 10 James Bond films. Fill in your findings below.

1.	6.
2.	7.
3.	8.
4.	9.
5.	10.

Discuss them. Ask your partner:-

- A Have you seen any of them?
- B Do you like spy movies?
- C Which is your favorite Bond movie?
- D Have you seen the new Casino Royale James Bond movie?
- E If you have – did you like it?
- F What was your favorite all time Bond clip?

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. Alexander Litvinenko was poisoned in a fish and chip restaurant         | T / F |
| b. Litvinenko stated many times that Russian agents were closing in on him | T / F |
| c. The name of the poison that killed Litvinenko was Polonium220           | T / F |
| d. British Airways planes were found to have traces of the poison          | T / F |
| e. The article quotes from Russian newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda          | T / F |
| f. The world waits for the mystery to unfold                               | T / F |
| g. Litvinenko stated the Kremlin had ordered his death                     | T / F |
| h. Anna Politkovskaya was killed by an Indian hit squad                    | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |              |         |
|--------------|---------|
| a. spy       | unravel |
| b. movies    | murder  |
| c. killing   | mystery |
| d. intrigue  | gossip  |
| e. unfold    | find    |
| f. order     | shared  |
| g. rumors    | liquid  |
| h. discover  | agent   |
| i. substance | films   |
| j. joint     | command |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| a. There are now enough theories      | "joint actions between former Russian special services... |
| b. ...he was living                   | poisoned by a radioactive substance                       |
| c. However, those who                 | about who poisoned him                                    |
| d. The world waits                    | on borrowed time  |
| e. The death could have resulted from | damage the Russian government                             |
| f. In the weeks before his death,     | in the killing of the ex-Russian                          |
| g. Mr Litvinenko was                  | a dozen spy movies  |
| h. ...to make                         | wanted to stop him  |
| i. The mystery deepens                | for the mystery to unfold                                 |
| j. ...evidence that could             | Litvinenko stated numerous times...                       |



## GAP FILL: READING

Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

### Spies and Poisoned Sushi – The London Whodunnit

The \_\_\_\_\_ deepens in the killing of the ex-Russian \_\_\_\_\_ agent Alexander Litvinenko. There are now enough theories about who \_\_\_\_\_ him and why to make a dozen \_\_\_\_\_ movies. A recent theory is that Litvinenko's former colleague, Boris Berezovsky, orchestrated the murder to get back at Russian \_\_\_\_\_. This would strengthen claims made by Litvinenko himself that the \_\_\_\_\_ had ordered his death. Russia's *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* newspaper agreed, saying the death could have resulted from "joint actions between former Russian special service \_\_\_\_\_ and the fugitive Boris Berezovsky". In the weeks before his death, Litvinenko stated \_\_\_\_\_ times that Russian agents were closing in on him and that he was living on borrowed time.

*intelligence*  
*spy*  
*agents*  
*mystery*  
*poisoned*  
*authorities*  
*Kremlin*  
*numerous*

Mr. Litvinenko often said he had \_\_\_\_\_ that could \_\_\_\_\_ the Russian government. In particular, he accused Russia's President Putin of ordering \_\_\_\_\_ in Chechnya. He also said he had important information about the killing last month in Moscow of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya — whose killing the ex-KGB spy had been investigating before his death. Rumors are circulating that he was close to providing the world with what he had discovered. However, those who wanted to stop him in his \_\_\_\_\_ had other plans. The most common story surrounding his death is that Mr. Litvinenko was poisoned by a \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ called Polonium 210, which had been inserted in a piece of \_\_\_\_\_ in a Japanese restaurant in London. The world waits for the \_\_\_\_\_ to unfold.

*genocide*  
*sushi*  
*damage*  
*tracks*  
*intrigue*  
*radioactive*  
*substance*  
*evidence*

## GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### Spies and Poisoned Sushi – The London Whodunnit

The mystery deepens in the \_\_\_\_\_ ex-Russian intelligence agent Alexander Litvinenko. There are now enough theories about who poisoned him and why to make a \_\_\_\_\_. A recent theory is that Litvinenko's former colleague, Boris Berezovsky, \_\_\_\_\_ murder to get back at Russian authorities. This would strengthen \_\_\_\_\_ by Litvinenko himself that the Kremlin had ordered his death. Russia's *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* newspaper agreed, saying the death could have resulted from "joint actions between former Russian \_\_\_\_\_ and the fugitive Boris Berezovsky". In the weeks before his death, Litvinenko stated numerous times that Russian agents were closing \_\_\_\_\_ in on him and that he was living on \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr. Litvinenko \_\_\_\_\_ had evidence that could damage the Russian government. In particular, he accused Russia's President Putin of ordering genocide \_\_\_\_\_. He also said he had important information about the killing last month \_\_\_\_\_ Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya — whose killing the ex-KGB spy had been investigating before his death. Rumors are circulating \_\_\_\_\_ to providing the world with what he had discovered. However, those who wanted to stop him \_\_\_\_\_ had other plans. The most common story \_\_\_\_\_ is that Mr. Litvinenko was poisoned by a radioactive substance called \_\_\_\_\_, which had been inserted in a piece of sushi in a Japanese \_\_\_\_\_. The world waits for the intrigue to unfold.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**spy**' and '**poison**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text or subject in question.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |                |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| • sushi        | • newspapers             |
| • spies        | • Japanese restaurants   |
| • fugitives    | • radioactive substances |
| • The KGB      | • Litvinenko             |
| • Polonium 210 | • Anna Politkovskaya     |
| • The Kremlin  | • President Putin        |

## DISCUSSION

### **STUDENT A's QUESTIONS** (Do not show these to student B)

1. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
2. What do you think of Litvinenko's poisoning?
3. Do you think the UK authorities will find out who killed him?
4. Have you ever heard of polonium 210 before?
5. Do you think the Kremlin was behind the killing?
6. What do you think the friends of the dead man think of his murder?
7. Have you ever heard of anything like this before?
8. Do you eat sushi?
9. Have you ever been to London
10. Was Litvinenko a traitor?

### **STUDENT B's QUESTIONS** (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Who was Litvinenko meeting when he was poisoned?
- d. Who was Anna Politkovskaya?
- e. Do you like spy stories?
- f. Have you ever read any spy stories?
- g. What do you think the British Prime Minister thinks of it all?
- h. Do you think they will find out whodunit?
- i. Have you been following this story on the TV?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

## HOMEWORK

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet. Find out information about **Alexander Litvinenko** and **Anna Politkovskaya**. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. POISONING MYSTERY: NEWS ARTICLE:** You are a reporter for **The Times** newspaper. You have been assigned to cover the story of the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko. Write a feature on what you have found. (Minimum 100 words) Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Which entry was best and why?

**4. LETTER:** Write a letter to **The Times** Newspaper. Discuss your thoughts on the poisoning of Alexander Litvinenko. Suggest who might have killed him and why. Ask three questions on the mystery. Show your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Your classmates will answer your questions.

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. F      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. T      h. F

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |              |         |
|--------------|---------|
| a. spy       | agent   |
| b. movies    | films   |
| c. killing   | murder  |
| d. intrigue  | mystery |
| e. unfold    | unravel |
| f. order     | command |
| g. rumors    | gossip  |
| h. discover  | find    |
| i. substance | liquid  |
| j. joint     | shared  |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| a. There are now enough theories      | about who poisoned him                                    |
| b. ...he was living                   | on borrowed time  |
| c. However, those who                 | wanted to stop him  |
| d. The world waits                    | for the mystery to unfold                                 |
| e. The death could have resulted from | "joint actions between former Russian special services... |
| f. In the weeks before his death,     | Litvinenko stated numerous times...                       |
| g. Mr Litvinenko was                  | poisoned by a radioactive substance                       |
| h. ...to make                         | a dozen spy movies  |
| i. The mystery deepens                | in the killing of the ex-Russian                          |
| j. ...evidence that could             | damage the Russian government                             |

### GAP FILL:

#### Spies and Poisoned Sushi – The London Whodunnit

The **mystery** deepens in the killing of the ex-Russian **intelligence** agent Alexander Litvinenko. There are now enough theories about who **poisoned** him and why to make a dozen **spy** movies. A recent theory is that Litvinenko's former colleague, Boris Berezovsky, orchestrated the murder to get back at Russian **authorities**. This would strengthen claims made by Litvinenko himself that the **Kremlin** had ordered his death. Russia's *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* newspaper agreed, saying the death could have resulted from "joint actions between former Russian special service **agents** and the fugitive Boris Berezovsky". In the weeks before his death, Litvinenko stated **numerous** times that Russian agents were closing in on him and that he was living on borrowed time.

Mr. Litvinenko often said he had **evidence** that could **damage** the Russian government. In particular, he accused Russia's President Putin of ordering **genocide** in Chechnya. He also said he had important information about the killing last month in Moscow of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya — whose killing the ex-KGB spy had been investigating before his death. Rumors are circulating that he was close to providing the world with what he had discovered. However, those who wanted to stop him in his **tracks** had other plans. The most common story surrounding his death is that Mr. Litvinenko was poisoned by a **radioactive substance** called Polonium 210, which had been inserted in a piece of **sushi** in a Japanese restaurant in London. The world waits for the **intrigue** to unfold.