

London riots: Tottenham residents seek answers

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Warmer

Tottenham and Hackney are ...

- a. ... Premier League football clubs. b. ... areas of London. c. ... brands of sports clothes.

2 Key words

Write the key words from the article next to the definitions below.

arsonist	stop and search	looting	cordon off	articulated
consumerism	torch (verb)	estate	agenda	atheism
deprivation	morality	opportunistic	superseded	makeshift

- stealing from houses or shops after a disaster or disturbance _____
- made using whatever is available _____
- someone who deliberately starts fires _____
- set fire to something _____
- an area where there are many houses, usually built at the same time by the same company; often owned by local government with cheap houses for poorer families _____
- followed or replaced by _____
- plan or aim _____
- a situation in which people do not have basic things that they need to live a comfortable life _____
- the belief or theory that God does not exist _____
- principles of right or wrong behaviour _____
- stop people from entering an area by putting something around it _____
- when thoughts and ideas are expressed clearly and effectively _____
- a procedure carried out by the UK police if they suspect that you have committed a crime _____
- buying lots of items in the belief that they are necessary or good for you _____
- used to describe something that is done in a way that takes advantage of a situation _____

3 Find the information

Look in the text and find the answers as quickly as possible.

- two types of crime (in addition to rioting): _____
- the jobs of the people quoted in the article: _____
- two chain stores: _____
- the incident that sparked the riots: _____

London riots: Tottenham residents seek answers

Level 3 • Advanced

London riots: frightened and angry, Tottenham residents seek answers

The reasons behind the violence and looting in London are complex and deep-rooted

Peter Beaumont

13 August, 2011

- 1 Night. The smell of smoke, and angry young men moving with makeshift weapons. There are cars and buildings ablaze and the threat of violence. For years, I have been confronted by such scenes as this abroad: Africa, the Middle East and the Balkans. But now it was on my own high street in Tottenham, a seven-minute walk from where I live.
- 2 Two days later, I am confronted by more violence in Hackney, 100 metres from the place where, until a few weeks ago, my son went to school.
- 3 Then, I discovered the answer to a question I have long asked myself about violence – what it feels like to run from where you live because you are afraid – when arsonists torched the council depot behind my house, and my wife and I were woken by the sound of gas canisters exploding, a column of dark smoke glittering with orange flame rising above our home.
- 4 It would be easy to write that I know these communities in north and east London where I have lived for more than 20 years. But that would not be true. There is another London I always knew existed, a place more familiar to my own teenage children who know its rules – the places that are dangerous, the streets to avoid.
- 5 What I know about the other London, I have read, learning about it as if a foreign place: reports about the social consequences of multi-generational urban poverty, the sociology of gang membership on UK estates. But being white, middle-aged and middle class, this has never been my London. Now, after the events that have unfolded, it is a London that I cannot ignore and have been forced to confront.
- 6 It is easy enough to describe the visible manifestation of recent events: the high street lit giddily by flames; the line of police made visible only by blue lights flashing on riot shields in the distance; the sensation of feet crunching on glass around the shell of police cars burned to paintless, tyreless shapes by those angry at the killing of Mark Duggan by police.
- 7 But even as I watched on that first night, a crucial negotiation was unfolding, a turning point almost utterly obscured by all that followed across London and other English cities, as those protesters who felt their point about Duggan's killing had been made were superseded by those with a different agenda. It was a group, some of whom had been part of the protest, defined not by anger but by self-interest.
- 8 What happened in the next few hours would set the pattern for the days that followed as more came from outside to join the violence. But what is harder to describe is 'why?' Every explanation seems unsatisfactory, designed to conform to an ideology or a theory. I hear social deprivation blamed, yet there are other poor areas of the country that didn't riot. Others blame atheism and the lack of morality. Yet I have never lived in a community in London where so many of my neighbours go to church. Even the simplest explanation of Conservative ministers that it is simply "criminality" is meaningless.
- 9 I meet Lorna Reith, my local councillor whose ward covers half of the High Road most badly affected by the rioting, who is also responsible for children's services. We are on a corner not far from Bruce Grove station. Ahead of us the road is still cordoned off as a burned-out building is demolished. There was a jeweller's once on the ground floor and flats above.
- 10 Reith has met many residents, people both frightened and angry. She is quick to dismiss the easy answers that some have attempted to supply to explain what happened first in Tottenham. "It is complex. There were different groups of people with different levels of involvement, many of them

London riots: Tottenham residents seek answers

Level 3 • Advanced

overlapping. There's the 13-year-old kid who heard about something happening on the High Road, who wouldn't usually get involved with criminal gangs. There were those with a more articulated political agenda, including those angry about police stop and searches. But the looting was not about politics, it was about consumerism – about people helping themselves to what they think they wanted."

- 11 It explains, she believes, why the shops targeted were ones most familiar, where they choose to shop, such as Aldi and JD Sports. The places where some of them might work. While she is firm that those responsible should be punished, she is also worried that some caught up in a moment of opportunistic looting will be criminalized.
- 12 What worries her most is not only those who looted while failing to think of the consequences, but others involved in more serious crimes such as arson.

- 13 But there is something else beyond all the social and political issues. "It was exciting for some of these kids, what happened. It turned into a giant playground. When you have anger and then add to it looting it all gets so much worse."
- 14 I catch youth worker Alvin Carpio, 23, on the phone as he is leaving a hastily organized meeting at Methodist Central Hall to discuss the implications of the riots. He says that while a lot of the debate has focused on self-discipline and responsibility, what it has failed to acknowledge is that within the groups at the forefront of the trouble – criminal street gangs and local groups of youths who describe themselves as being in "gangs" – a sense of responsibility and loyalty does exist; it is simply misdirected.

© Guardian News and Media 2011

First published in *The Guardian*, 13/08/11

4 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the information in the article.

1. In which order did these events take place?
 - a. arson and looting / peaceful protests / fatal shooting by police
 - b. peaceful protests / fatal shooting by police / arson and looting
 - c. fatal shooting by police / peaceful protests / arson and looting
2. The author feels personally involved because ...
 - a. ... his son was injured in the riots.
 - b. ... a nearby arson attack forced him to leave his home.
 - c. ... he has reported from areas of unrest around the world.
3. They author says that urban poverty and social deprivation ...
 - a. ... are the reasons for the riots.
 - b. ... cannot be the only reasons for the riots.
 - c. ... have nothing to do with the riots.
4. Looters probably targeted Aldi and JD Sports because ...
 - a. ... the stores are owned by the government.
 - b. ... the stores and brands are familiar to them.
 - c. ... they both sell designer clothes for kids.
5. The riots ...
 - a. ... also happened in other cities in the UK.
 - b. ... were contained in London.
 - c. ... were started by racist groups.

London riots: Tottenham residents seek answers

Level 3 • Advanced

5 Collocations

Match the words so that they make collocations from the article. Use them to give a summary of the article.

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1. makeshift | a. membership |
| 2. high | b. playground |
| 3. urban | c. shields |
| 4. gang | d. street |
| 5. riot | e. weapons |
| 6. social | f. crimes |
| 7. political | g. poverty |
| 8. opportunistic | h. deprivation |
| 9. serious | i. agenda |
| 10. giant | j. looting |

6 Discussion

- How and why do you think the rioting spread across the UK so quickly?
- What does Alvin Carpio mean when he says “a sense of responsibility and loyalty does exist; it is simply misdirected”?
- Do you think rioting like this could happen where you live? Why? Why not?

7 Webquest

1. Research these companies on the internet and talk about why they were targeted by looters and what action (if any) the companies are taking now.

JD Sports

Currys

PC World

Dixons

Sony

Aldi

Tesco

2. Read this newspaper editorial for an overview of what happened in the UK riots:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/12/urban-riots-seven-days-britain>

London riots: Tottenham residents seek answers

Level 3 • Advanced

KEY

1 Warmer

b

2 Key words

1. makeshift
2. arsonist
3. torch
4. estate
5. superseded
6. agenda
7. deprivation
8. atheism
9. morality
10. cordon off
11. articulated
12. stop and search
13. looting
14. consumerism
15. opportunistic

3 Find the information

1. looting; arson
2. local councillor; youth worker
3. Aldi; JD Sports
4. the killing of Mark Duggan by police

4 Comprehension check

1. c
2. b
3. b
4. b
5. a

5 Collocations

1. e
2. d
3. g
4. a
5. c
6. h
7. i
8. j
9. f
10. b