Gun Control

Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. What does “the right to bear arms” mean?
2. Is it legal to carry a handgun in your state/province/country?
3. Should schools be “gun-free” zones?
4. Is it difficult to get a permit to carry a gun in the place where you live?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

1. penal colony   a) required
2. massacre       b) to be the one to lead something
3. initiate       c) a person or group on the other side of a conflict or debate
4. crackdown      d) a serious attempt to prevent future crime
5. swift          e) uncontrollable violent behavior
6. retrieve       f) to suddenly go up in numbers
7. skyrocket      g) a remote place for prisoners that is difficult to escape from
8. easy access    h) not difficult to get/find and use
9. mental illness j) sickness that affects one’s thinking and emotions
10. opponent      k) quick
11. rampage       l) the violent killing of many people
12. mandatory
Reading

1. On April 28, 1996, in a café in Tasmania, a young man pulled a semi-automatic weapon out of his bag and began shooting tourists and staff at the historic Port Arthur penal colony. By the time he was finished, he had killed 35 people. This was just one of several mass shootings in Australia between the ’70s and ’90s.

2. Following the 1996 massacre, Prime Minister Howard initiated a serious crackdown on gun ownership. Howard worked together with the Australian government. They made a swift decision to restrict gun ownership. The government also organized a program to buy back weapons that had already been sold. Over 600,000 guns were retrieved. Fifteen years later, there were still no new mass shootings to report in Australia.

3. It’s a different story in the US. Since the 1980s, mass shootings have occurred in several public places, including malls, schools, and places of worship. After a mass shooting, the sale of guns always skyrockets. Though studies prove that easy access to guns results in high murder rates, surveys show that many Americans still believe in the right to bear arms.

4. One of the worst massacres in US history took place at Virginia Tech University in 2007. A student suffering from mental illness killed 35 students. Opponents of gun control argued that the students and staff couldn’t protect themselves because they were in a gun-free “safe zone.”

5. In 2012, a week before Christmas, a young man entered Sandy Hook Elementary school in Connecticut and went on a shooting rampage. He killed six staff members and 20 first-graders with a legally purchased gun. US President Obama broke down in tears as he addressed the union. He called it the worst day in his presidency.

6. Like Prime Minister Howard, Obama immediately organized a team to address gun control laws. His proposals called for a ban on assault weapons and mandatory background checks for all gun buyers. Within one month of the school shooting, 1,000 more Americans had been killed by guns.

“So the gun lobby may be holding Congress hostage right now, but they cannot hold America hostage. We do not have to accept this carnage as the price of freedom.”

—US President Barack Obama, January 2015
Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs, and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What caused Prime Minister Howard to crack down on gun ownership in Australia?
2. What does the reading say about murder rates and gun ownership?
3. What do gun control opponents have to say about gun-free zones at schools?
4. What always happens in the US after a mass shooting?
5. What happened at an elementary school in Connecticut?
6. How did Obama’s reaction to the Sandy Hook massacre compare to Howard’s in the penal colony massacre?

Vocabulary Review

A. Word Forms

Look at the bolded word in each sentence. Is it a noun, verb, or adjective? Place your answer in the chart. Then look for this word in the main reading on page 2. Is the bolded word used in the same way in the sentences below as it is in the reading? Place a checkmark (√) for yes or no.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Word Form</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The teacher penalized the student for not handing his homework in on time.</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parents opposed the idea of having armed principals in school.</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is mandatory for gun owners to register their weapons.</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The government wants to crack down on drug crimes.</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The police retrieved several bags of stolen property from the home.</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The president initiated a series of talks about gun control.</td>
<td>verb</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vocabulary Review cont.

B. Writing

Choose five words from the vocabulary list on page 1 and write an example sentence for each.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

Discuss

Work with a partner or in small groups. Discuss the following questions.

1. Do you think people should have to have a permit to carry a gun?
2. Do you think it matters if the gun is concealed or visible?
3. Do you think the gun laws in your country/state/province are good?
4. Do you think people should be able to buy semi-automatic weapons?
5. Would you feel safer if you had a gun in your house to protect yourself?
6. Do you think the principal of a school should have access to a gun?

Debate

Below are four topics to debate in small groups or pairs. Your teacher will tell you if you will be debating for or against the idea. You will have ten minutes to prepare your arguments.

**TOPIC #1**
No one other than a law enforcement officer should be permitted to carry a handgun.

**TOPIC #2**
One day the US will pass similar laws to Australia, and thousands of Americans will turn in their guns.

**TOPIC #3**
There should be an armed officer in each school to protect students in case of a mass shooting.

**TOPIC #4**
The names and photos of mass murderers should not be released in the media. This will prevent mentally ill people from trying to seek fame through crime.

Write

Choose one of the questions from the Discuss section. Then write a paragraph in your notebook stating your own opinion.
Gun Violence Around the World

A. Reading

Read these crime stories out loud with a partner or group.

Crime A

One of the worst killing sprees in history took place in South Korea in 1982. A police officer went on a rampage after having a fight with his girlfriend. He gathered an arsenal of weapons while officers were in a meeting. He avoided capture for eight hours as he killed 56 innocent civilians in several villages.

Crime B

In 1986, a young Vietnam war veteran in Colombia stabbed his mother to death and set her on fire. He then killed several people at their apartment building before going to an expensive restaurant and killing many of the guests.

Crime C

On December 6, 1989, a twenty-five-year-old man entered a classroom in a Montreal university and separated the males from the females. He shot all nine of the women. He then moved about the university targeting women. Before he killed himself, he told the students he was fighting feminism.

Crime D

On April 20, 1999, two senior students from a high school in Colorado tried to set off a bomb in their cafeteria. When it failed to go off, they used guns to murder 12 students and one teacher. They also injured many others before committing suicide. The killers targeted jocks and “popular” students.

Crime E

A massacre took place on July 22, 2011, on an island in Norway. After setting off a car bomb near government buildings in Oslo, a gunman went on a killing rampage at a labor party youth camp. Some of his victims were tricked into believing he was a policeman. The killer told the court he wished he had killed the whole government and everyone at the camp.

Crime F

On July 12, 2012, a man dressed up as “the Joker” entered a theater in Aurora, Colorado. The new Batman film was playing. The gunman filled the theater with tear gas. Then he shot and killed 12 people and injured more than 50 others. He was captured by police.

B. Discuss

Now work with a partner and discuss the following questions:

1. Were you familiar with any of these stories of gun massacres?
2. Were there any words that you didn’t know in the stories? (Look them up in a dictionary.)
3. Can you find a common denominator* in all of these crimes?
4. How do these crimes differ from one another?
5. Choose one of the crimes and do some research. Find out three more facts about this example of gun violence. Share your findings with your class.

*Note:
A common denominator is a common characteristic or theme that occurs in all the stories.
Useful Expressions and Transitions for Debating

Agreeing and Disagreeing
- That doesn't take away from the fact that...
- That's beside the point.
- With all due respect...
- I agree with you there.
- I agree with ---- (name).
- We're going to have to agree to disagree.
- I get/see where you're coming from, but...
- I agree to some extent, but...
- I disagree with you there.
- Pardon me for disagreeing, but...

Interrupting / Asking to Contribute
- I hate to interrupt, but...
- If I may come in here...
- I'd like to raise a point.
- If I could speak for a moment...
- I'd like to cut in here.
- You haven't answered my question.

Persuading
- Can you see where I'm coming from?
- I challenge you to give this a try/chance.
- I want you to see it my way.
- Put yourself in my shoes.
- Am I getting through to you?

Expressing an Opinion
- In my honest opinion...
- It is my belief that...
- From my experience...
- From where I look at it...
- From my point of view...

Clarifying / Rephrasing
- Let's be clear here...
- I think you misunderstood what I said.
- What I meant to say was...
- (rephrase something in a way that is clearer)
- In other words...
- What I was trying to say before I was interrupted is that...

Summarizing / Concluding
- So let me get this straight. You think...
- To conclude...
- I'd just like to summarize by saying...
- Finally, I'd like to reiterate that...
- It's time to take stock of what we've heard today.
- Both sides have some valid points.
- The stronger argument/team today is...