

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



Episode #584
The Bologna Station Bombing
12th Dec, 2025

Transcript	3
Key vocabulary	23
Language spotlight	30
Quiz	34
Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions	34
True or False	36
Fill-in-the-Blank	36
Vocabulary Practice	37
Answers	39

Transcript

[00:00:05] Hello, hello, hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English, the show where you can listen to fascinating stories and learn weird and wonderful things about the world at the same time as improving your English.

[00:00:22] I'm Alastair Budge, and today it's part three, the final part, of our mini-series on the Years of Lead.

[00:00:31] In case you missed them, in part one, we [set the scene](#)¹ and talked about the Piazza Fontana bombing and the early years of this [tumultuous](#)² period.

[00:00:41] In part two, we talked about the Red Brigades and the kidnapping and murder of the former Prime Minister, Aldo Moro.

[00:00:49] And today, we are going to bring it to a close with the most deadly event of the entire period: The Bologna bombing.

[00:00:57] If you haven't listened to parts one and two yet, I'd recommend listening to those first, as I'll be referencing quite a bit from that.

[00:01:06] So, let's not waste a minute and get right into it.

¹ gave the background information before the main story

² full of trouble, chaos, or loud action

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:01:12] There are many wonderful things about the city of Bologna: fantastic food, a beautiful centre, a famous university and a [vibrant](#)³ cultural scene.

[00:01:23] One area where Bologna doesn't score so highly, however, at least compared to other Italian cities, is its weather, its climate.

[00:01:34] It's in the Po valley, surrounded by mountains on all sides.

[00:01:39] This means winters can be cold and [damp](#)⁴, and in summer, it's hot, [humid](#)⁵ and sticky, making it pretty uncomfortable.

[00:01:51] Fortunately, the sea isn't so far away, and in the summer months, a fair portion of the city [piles into](#)⁶ cars, buses and trains, heading east towards the Adriatic coast.

[00:02:06] August 1980 was particularly hot and unpleasant.

³ full of life and energy

⁴ wet, foggy

⁵ warm and wet in the air

⁶ quickly goes into

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:02:11] And on the Saturday of the first weekend of August, Saturday the 2nd, thousands of people were [piling into](#)⁷ the train station, no doubt looking forward to a refreshing day by the sea, away from the [stifling](#)⁸ heat of the city.

[00:02:30] The station waiting room was [jam-packed](#)⁹: families, children, grandparents, people [from all walks of life](#)¹⁰.

[00:02:39] None of them would catch their train that day.

[00:02:44] At precisely 10.25 am, there was a huge explosion that [ripped through](#)¹¹ the train waiting room. The roof [collapsed](#)¹². Windows were [blown to smithereens](#)¹³. Cars [overturned](#)¹⁴. The entire area around the station covered in [dust](#)¹⁵.

⁷ quickly going into

⁸ very hot and hard to breathe

⁹ completely full, very crowded

¹⁰ from many different types or jobs

¹¹ moved through with great force and caused damage

¹² fell down suddenly

¹³ broken into very tiny pieces

¹⁴ flipped upside down or onto their side

¹⁵ tiny dry bits of dirt

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:03:05] According to [eyewitness](#)¹⁶ accounts, in the immediate aftermath, there was an [eerie](#)¹⁷ silence.

[00:03:12] Then came the [groans](#)¹⁸ and [wails](#)¹⁹ from under the [rubble](#)²⁰. The [shrieks](#)²¹ of horror as people found the lifeless bodies of loved ones. Then the sound of police and ambulance [sirens](#)²².

[00:03:28] In total, 85 people were killed, and more than 200 were wounded.

[00:03:36] Initially, it was thought to have been an explosion of a gas pipe in the station, a tragic but innocent maintenance error.

[00:03:46] Shortly afterwards, it became clear it was something altogether more [sinister](#)²³.

¹⁶ someone who saw the event happen

¹⁷ strange in a scary way

¹⁸ low sounds made from pain

¹⁹ loud cries of sadness or pain

²⁰ broken pieces of the destroyed building

²¹ loud, high cries of fear

²² loud warning sounds

²³ seeming evil or dangerous

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:03:53] The cause was 23kg of explosives that had been placed in a suitcase in the waiting room, on a timer.

[00:04:02] It would go down as²⁴ the deadliest terrorist attack not only of the Years of Lead, but also has the grim²⁵ distinction²⁶ of being the deadliest terrorist attack in Italian history.

[00:04:16] And to make matters worse, nobody has ever formally admitted to it, and many people believe that the true culprits²⁷ have never been found.

[00:04:29] It is, like the Piazza Fontana bombing and the kidnapping of Aldo Moro before it, one of those incidents where there is an official verdict, a legally guilty party²⁸, but there is a common belief that the whole story has never really come to light²⁹.

[00:04:48] So, let us remind ourselves a little bit about the Years of Lead up to this point.

[00:04:55] By the summer of 1980, Italy had lived through more than a decade of political violence.

²⁴ be remembered as

²⁵ very sad or serious

²⁶ a special mark or fact that made it different

²⁷ people who committed the crime

²⁸ group who did the crime

²⁹ become known

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:05:04] It had started, as we talked about in part one, with the Piazza Fontana bombing in 1969.

[00:05:11] That attack opened a [grim](#) new chapter in Italian history, where political violence became an almost daily reality. There were [clashes](#)³⁰ in the streets, bombs on trains, shootings, and kidnappings, and by the mid-1970s, Italy was experiencing hundreds of acts of political violence every year.

[00:05:37] Then came the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro in 1978, which we explored in part two.

[00:05:45] Moro's death marked a turning point.

[00:05:49] The dream of the “historic compromise” between the Christian Democrats and the Communists collapsed. The Red Brigades, who had [staged](#)³¹ the kidnapping, believed they were [striking a blow against](#)³² the state, but instead they found themselves increasingly [isolated](#)³³, hunted down by police, and losing [public sympathy](#)³⁴.

³⁰ fights or violent meetings between groups

³¹ planned and carried out

³² harming or attacking it to weaken it

³³ alone or cut off from others

³⁴ feeling of support or understanding from the general public

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:06:12] And within a few years, they would be completely [dismantled](#)³⁵.

[00:06:17] But that didn't mean the violence stopped.

[00:06:21] If anything, it shifted shape.

[00:06:25] On the far left, there were still extremist groups carrying out targeted assassinations, mostly against judges, journalists, and business leaders.

[00:06:36] On the far right, neofascist organisations continued their strategy of bombings, aiming to create fear and instability, to push Italy towards authoritarian rule.

As you may [recall](#)³⁶, this was part of what later came to be called the strategy of tension: the belief that terrorism itself could be used, or tolerated by elements of the state, to push Italy away from the left and towards authoritarian rule.

[00:07:08] So by 1980, Italy was a country still deeply [scarred](#)³⁷, still fearful, still [accustomed to](#)³⁸ waking up to headlines about kidnappings, bombs and [bloodshed](#)³⁹.

[00:07:23] Yet nothing could have prepared it for the horror of Bologna.

³⁵ taken apart or destroyed

³⁶ remember

³⁷ hurt in a way that left long-lasting pain or fear

³⁸ used to it

³⁹ killing or serious violence

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:07:28] See, despite the almost daily political violence, this was typically violence against politicians or people in positions of power.

[00:07:38] Or between rival political groups; the left against the right, and in fact much more frequently, the right against the left.

[00:07:46] Of course, these are generalisations, and you'd also have [factions](#)⁴⁰ on both sides even fighting each other, but the point is that the violence wasn't typically against "civilians", regular, ordinary people.

[00:08:02] Bologna was different; it didn't target politicians, judges, or symbols of power, it was aimed [squarely](#)⁴¹ at ordinary people: families, children, [pensioners](#)⁴², holidaymakers waiting for trains.

[00:08:20] It wasn't just another strike in Italy's political war; it was an attack on Italian society itself.

[00:08:29] As you can imagine, in the hours and days after the explosion, Bologna became a city of [grief](#)⁴³.

[00:08:37] The President travelled to the city almost immediately.

⁴⁰ smaller groups inside a larger group

⁴¹ directly; clearly

⁴² people who were retired and received a pension

⁴³ deep sadness

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:08:41] He walked among the **rubble** of the station, spoke to the **wounded**⁴⁴ in hospitals, and delivered an emotional **appeal**⁴⁵ for unity against terrorism.

[00:08:52] Pertini, the President, was an old **partisan**⁴⁶ fighter, a man who had resisted Mussolini, and his presence gave a sense of **dignity**⁴⁷ to the mourning.

[00:09:04] The **funerals**⁴⁸ were held in Bologna's Piazza Maggiore, the great square at the heart of the city.

[00:09:11] Thousands upon thousands of people stood in silence, **clutching**⁴⁹ photographs, waving black flags, demanding justice.

[00:09:23] But justice for whom?

⁴⁴ hurt or injured

⁴⁵ a strong request

⁴⁶ someone who had fought against fascists in Italy during WWII

⁴⁷ calm, respectful behaviour

⁴⁸ ceremonies held to bury the bodies

⁴⁹ holding tightly

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:09:26] No group has ever claimed responsibility⁵⁰ for the attack, and the list of potential culprits, well it was depressingly⁵¹ long.

[00:09:37] On the far left, the Red Brigades had not yet been completely crushed⁵², and their willingness to kill for political ends⁵³, well after Aldo Moro, that was evident for anyone to see.

[00:09:51] On the far right, neofascist groups had carried out⁵⁴ a string of⁵⁵ bombings in Milan and Brescia, and even attacks on trains.

[00:10:01] Almost immediately, the finger of blame⁵⁶ was pointed in both these very different directions.

[00:10:08] Some officials and newspapers suggested leftist anarchists must be responsible, as they had done after Piazza Fontana. For many, especially after Aldo

⁵⁰ said they did it

⁵¹ sadly; in a way that makes you feel unhappy

⁵² completely defeated

⁵³ goals or aims

⁵⁴ performed; completed

⁵⁵ a series of many

⁵⁶ responsibility for the crimes

The Bologna Station Bombing

Moro just two years before, the idea that anarchists were behind Bologna seemed to fit perfectly.

[00:10:27] But there was no evidence linking them to the attack.

[00:10:31] Attention soon shifted to the far right, in particular to a group known as the Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari, or NAR for short, the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei, as they're called in English.

[00:10:47] This was a violent neofascist organisation, formed by young extremists who rejected mainstream politics and embraced terror. They had links to older neo-fascist movements and were already suspected of earlier attacks, and their [fingerprints](#)⁵⁷ were all over Bologna.

[00:11:08] But the investigation was messy from the very beginning.

[00:11:13] Files disappeared. Evidence was [mishandled](#)⁵⁸. [Suspects](#)⁵⁹ [slipped through the cracks](#)⁶⁰.

[00:11:21] Two people were eventually convicted of the bombing: Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro.

⁵⁷ signs or marks of their actions

⁵⁸ managed badly or done in the wrong way

⁵⁹ people who might have done a crime

⁶⁰ were not noticed or caught

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:11:30] In Fioravanti's case, he was sentenced to 10 consecutive life sentences plus 250 years in prison, but he ended up only serving [a fraction⁶¹ of](#) that; he was allowed out [on day release⁶²](#) in the year 2000, and has been a completely free man since 2009.

[00:11:54] Even for Italy's famously forgiving justice system, this was a remarkably short [stint⁶³](#) in prison, given the [gravity⁶⁴](#) of the crimes he was convicted of.

[00:12:05] Now, for their part, Fioravanti and Mambro have always [maintained their innocence⁶⁵](#).

[00:12:11] They admit to their involvement with NAR, having been far-right activists and being behind other attacks, but say that they weren't responsible for Bologna.

[00:12:24] So if Valerio Fioravanti and Francesca Mambro had nothing to do with it, or if they were too young and unconnected to have been able to do it alone, who else was behind it?

⁶¹ a very small part

⁶² allowed to leave prison during the day but return at night

⁶³ period of time spent

⁶⁴ seriousness or importance

⁶⁵ kept saying they did not do it

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:12:38] Well, again, this is where it's easy to go down [rabbit hole](#)⁶⁶ after [rabbit hole](#) of Years of Lead conspiracy theories, which lead to masonic lodges, the mafia, Gladio, the “stay behind” NATO operation, and even to Carlos The Jackal, the Venezuelan political terrorist.

[00:12:57] See, the more the investigation [unfolded](#)⁶⁷, the less clear things seemed to become.

[00:13:05] Judges complained of obstruction from within the Italian secret services. Evidence went missing, false [leads](#)⁶⁸ were [planted](#)⁶⁹, and witnesses were [intimidated](#)⁷⁰.

[00:13:18] It was as if someone wanted the truth buried under the [rubble](#) of Bologna's station.

[00:13:25] And the evidence from earlier attacks suggested that this was not just a [paranoid](#)⁷¹ theory.

⁶⁶ a confusing set of ideas that is hard to escape from

⁶⁷ happened over time

⁶⁸ clues or hints

⁶⁹ secretly put somewhere to trick people

⁷⁰ frightened so they would not speak or act

⁷¹ unreasonably or obsessively suspicious or mistrustful

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:13:32] By this time, investigations into the Piazza Fontana bombing and others had uncovered links between far-right terrorists and elements of the Italian secret services. There were cases where extremists were [tipped off](#)⁷² before arrests, or evidence was destroyed to throw judges off the [scent](#)⁷³.

[00:13:53] And the Bologna bombing fit perfectly into this dark pattern.

[00:13:59] So when judges pointed to NAR as the culprits, and later on, when Fioravanti and Mambro were released after only serving a small [portion](#)⁷⁴ of their sentence, many Italians were left wondering.

[00:14:14] Were Fioravanti and Mambro really behind it?

[00:14:17] Were they simply [pawns](#)⁷⁵ in a larger game?

[00:14:22] The investigation into the Bologna bombing has [dragged on](#)⁷⁶ for decades.

⁷² secretly warned

⁷³ a trail or clue they followed

⁷⁴ part

⁷⁵ people used by others without knowing it

⁷⁶ continued (for a long time)

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:14:27] Fioravanti and Mambro had been [in custody](#)⁷⁷ since 1981, the year following the bombing. It took until 1988 for them, along with several other members of the NAR, to be [sentenced](#)⁷⁸.

[00:14:40] But, still, this wasn't the end of it.

[00:14:43] There were also convictions of secret service officials for obstruction of justice, accused of deliberately [derailing](#)⁷⁹ the investigation.

[00:14:52] [Appeals](#)⁸⁰, [retrials](#)⁸¹, and new [verdicts](#)⁸² followed for years.

[00:14:57] Even into the 2000s and 2010s, courts continued to re-examine evidence, uncover hidden documents, and issue new rulings.

[00:15:10] The result was a long, confusing judicial [saga](#)⁸³ that left many Italians unconvinced that the full truth had ever [come to light](#).

⁷⁷ kept in prison or by the police

⁷⁸ officially given a punishment in court

⁷⁹ stopping it from going forward

⁸⁰ requests to change a court decision

⁸¹ new court trials

⁸² final decisions made by the court

⁸³ a long and complicated story

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:15:22] Now, if you take a train from Bologna train station today, you might not immediately see any sign that this was not so long ago the site of Italy's most deadly terrorist attack.

[00:15:34] But if you look up at the clock, you'll [notice](#)⁸⁴ something.

[00:15:39] It is stuck at [precisely](#)⁸⁵ 10.25 am, the very moment of the [blast](#)⁸⁶.

[00:15:46] Somehow, the original clock wasn't completely destroyed; it remained stuck there, forever frozen in time, like the 85 people who lost their lives that day.

[00:15:59] If there is anything good to be taken from this tragedy, it's that it marked the worst point of The Years of Lead. There were still [isolated](#) killings throughout the 1980s, but the era of constant bombings and [spectacular](#)⁸⁷ acts of terror was over.

[00:16:19] After the best part of two decades, political violence—both by the right and the left—had failed to achieve its [stated](#)⁸⁸ goals, and public support on both sides was at all-time lows.

⁸⁴ see or observe

⁸⁵ exactly

⁸⁶ big explosion

⁸⁷ very big or dramatic

⁸⁸ said or explained clearly

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:16:34] But the shadow of those years still hangs over Italy.

[00:16:39] The violence left [⁸⁹scars](#): deep [⁹⁰mistrust](#) of institutions, a political culture where conspiracy theories [⁹¹thrive](#), and a [⁹²lingering](#) sense that the state has not told its people the full story.

[00:16:55] And as for Italian politics today?

[00:16:58] The Christian Democrats, which had dominated the country during the Years of Lead, no longer exist as a party.

[00:17:05] The Communist Party, once the largest in the West, is also gone.

[00:17:11] And the Italian political scene is not much less [⁹³fragmented](#). There were 15 different political parties in the 2022 election, the most popular of which was Fratelli d'Italia, a party with roots in the post-fascist right.

⁸⁹ long-lasting marks from hurt or pain

⁹⁰ not trusting

⁹¹ grow or do well

⁹² staying for a long time

⁹³ broken into many small parts

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:17:29] And of course, this is all very recent stuff: Giorgia Meloni, almost every member of her government, and any Italian over the age of 45 was alive during the Years of Lead.

[00:17:44] So, these memories, whether they are first-hand from people who were teenager activists during the Years of Lead, or, like Meloni, their memories are likely second-hand, from parents and older relatives, well they are still fresh, and are part of the political DNA of modern Italy.

[00:18:08] Now, to [wrap up](#)⁹⁴ Bologna, and indeed this entire mini-series, it's very easy to visit Italy and get distracted by the beautiful city centres, art, history, and restaurants.

[00:18:23] You probably don't think of bombs, kidnappings, and murder, or if you do, it's in the context of organised criminals, not political actors.

[00:18:36] The story of The Years of Lead isn't very often told outside Italy, but it is as fascinating as it is confusing and [murky](#)⁹⁵.

[00:18:47] It's hard to understand, partly because there was no clear, unifying, [villain](#)⁹⁶.

⁹⁴ finish or conclude

⁹⁵ unclear and hard to understand

⁹⁶ the "bad guy"

The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:18:54] There wasn't a single external, foreign enemy plotting to destroy Italy. The violence came from within, by people who were convinced that they were acting in the best interests of their country.

[00:19:08] The bombers, the kidnappers, the police, the politicians — they all believed, in some [warped](#)⁹⁷ way, that they were defending the Republic, protecting freedom, fighting for workers' rights, or preserving order.

[00:19:24] It is perhaps a reminder that when it comes to political violence, there are rarely any winners.

[00:19:33] OK, then, that is it for today's episode on the Bologna bombings, and with that comes an end to this three-part mini-series on this fascinating but [haunting](#)⁹⁸ period of Italian history, the years of lead.

[00:19:46] If you've made it this far, let me tell you something that might be interesting.

[00:19:50] I spent quite a lot of my last year at university studying this period, and my professor was a guy called John Foot, who is, incidentally, probably the best-known English-language historian on the Years of Lead.

[00:20:05] I never imagined that the courses I did would have any practical use, but almost 20 years later, they were more useful than I thought.

⁹⁷ strange or twisted in a wrong way

⁹⁸ sad and unforgettable in a troubling way

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #584
The Bologna Station Bombing

[00:20:14] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:20:19] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

Word	Definition
Set the scene	gave the background information before the main story
Tumultuous	full of trouble, chaos, or loud action
Vibrant	full of life and energy
Damp	wet, foggy
Humid	warm and wet in the air
Piles into	quickly goes into
Piling into	quickly going into
Stifling	very hot and hard to breathe
Jam-packed	completely full, very crowded
From all walks of life	from many different types or jobs
Ripped through	moved through with great force and caused damage
Collapsed	fell down suddenly
Blown to smithereens	broken into very tiny pieces

The Bologna Station Bombing

Overtaken	flipped upside down or onto their side
Dust	tiny dry bits of dirt
Eyewitness	someone who saw the event happen
Eerie	strange in a scary way
Groans	low sounds made from pain
Wails	loud cries of sadness or pain
Rubble	broken pieces of the destroyed building
Shrieks	loud, high cries of fear
Sirens	loud warning sounds
Sinister	seeming evil or dangerous
Go down as	be remembered as
Grim	very sad or serious
Distinction	a special mark or fact that made it different
Culprits	people who committed the crime
Guilty party	group who did the crime

The Bologna Station Bombing

Come to light	become known
Clashes	fight or violent meetings between groups
Staged	planned and carried out
Striking a blow against	harming or attacking it to weaken it
Isolated	alone or cut off from others
Public sympathy	feeling of support or understanding from the general public
Dismantled	taken apart or destroyed
Recall	remember
Scarred	hurt in a way that left long-lasting pain or fear
Accustomed to	used to it
Bloodshed	killing or serious violence
Factions	smaller groups inside a larger group
Squarely	directly; clearly
Pensioners	people who were retired and received a pension
Grief	deep sadness

The Bologna Station Bombing

Wounded	hurt or injured
Appeal	a strong request
Partisan	someone who had fought against fascists in Italy during WWII
Dignity	calm, respectful behaviour
Funerals	ceremonies held to bury the bodies
Clutching	holding tightly
Claimed	said they did it
responsibility	
Depressingly	sadly; in a way that makes you feel unhappy
Crushed	completely defeated
Ends	goals or aims
Carried out	performed; completed
A string of	a series of many
Blame	responsibility for the crimes
Fingerprints	signs or marks of their actions
Mishandled	managed badly or done in the wrong way

The Bologna Station Bombing

Suspects	people who might have done a crime
Slipped through the cracks	were not noticed or caught
A fraction of	a very small part
On day release	allowed to leave prison during the day but return at night
Stint	period of time spent
Gravity	seriousness or importance
Maintained their innocence	kept saying they did not do it
Rabbit hole	a confusing set of ideas that is hard to escape from
Unfolded	happened over time
Leads	clues or hints
Planted	secretly put somewhere to trick people
Intimidated	frightened so they would not speak or act
Paranoid	unreasonably or obsessively suspicious or mistrustful
Tipped off	secretly warned

The Bologna Station Bombing

Scent	a trail or clue they followed
Portion	part
Pawns	people used by others without knowing it
Dragged on	continued (for a long time)
In custody	kept in prison or by the police
Sentenced	officially given a punishment in court
Derailing	stopping it from going forward
Appeals	requests to change a court decision
Retrials	new court trials
Verdicts	final decisions made by the court
Saga	a long and complicated story
Notice	see or observe
Precisely	exactly
Blast	big explosion
Spectacular	very big or dramatic

English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #584
The Bologna Station Bombing

Stated	said or explained clearly
Scars	long-lasting marks from hurt or pain
Mistrust	not trusting
Thrive	grow or do well
Lingering	staying for a long time
Fragmented	broken into many small parts
Wrap up	finish or conclude
Murky	unclear and hard to understand
Villain	the “bad guy”
Warped	strange or twisted in a wrong way
Haunting	sad and unforgettable in a troubling way

Language spotlight

1. Set the scene

- **Meaning:** To give background information so someone can understand a situation.
- **Synonyms:** provide context, give background, prepare the ground
- **Antonyms:** leave out details, confuse the situation
- **Examples:**
 - Before talking about the accident, the journalist **set the scene** by describing the weather and traffic conditions.
 - The teacher **set the scene** for the story by explaining what life was like in Italy in the 1970s.

2. To bring it to a close

- **Meaning:** To finish something; to end an event, activity, or series.
- **Synonyms:** finish, conclude, wrap up
- **Antonyms:** start, open, begin

The Bologna Station Bombing

- **Examples:**

- The speaker **brought the conference to a close** with a short thank-you message.
- After three lessons on the topic, we can now **bring it to a close**.

3. Ripped through

- **Meaning:** To move violently and cause great destruction, usually used for explosions, storms, or disasters.
- **Synonyms:** tear through, blast through, devastate
- **Antonyms:** leave untouched, avoid, spare
- **Examples:**
 - The hurricane **ripped through** the town, destroying hundreds of homes.
 - The explosion **ripped through** the building, leaving smoke and dust everywhere.

4. Slipped through the cracks

- **Meaning:** To be overlooked, forgotten, or not dealt with properly, often because of mistakes or a disorganised system.
- **Synonyms:** be overlooked, be missed, go unnoticed
- **Antonyms:** be noticed, be caught, be properly handled
- **Examples:**
 - The missing documents **slipped through the cracks**, and nobody realised for months.
 - Many small problems **slip through the cracks** when there is poor communication.

5. To go down a rabbit hole

- **Meaning:** To spend a lot of time exploring something complicated or confusing; to follow details that lead to more and more details.
- **Synonyms:** get lost in details, get sidetracked, dive deep into something
- **Antonyms:** stay focused, keep it simple, stay on track
- **Examples:**

- I started reading about one historical event and **went down a rabbit hole**, clicking on link after link for hours.
- It's easy to **go down a rabbit hole** when researching conspiracy theories.

Quiz

Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions

1. Why were so many people at Bologna train station on August 2nd, 1980?

- a) They were attending a political rally
- b) They were travelling to the seaside to escape the heat
- c) They were waiting for an important politician to arrive
- d) They were protesting against the government

2. What was the cause of the explosion?

- a) A bomb hidden inside a suitcase
- b) A malfunctioning gas pipe
- c) A fire that spread in the waiting room
- d) An electrical short circuit

3. What happened during the investigation into the bombing?

- a) It was completed quickly and smoothly

The Bologna Station Bombing

- b) Investigators found clear evidence on the same day
- c) Important files went missing and evidence was mishandled
- d) The suspects confessed immediately

4. How did President Pertini respond after the bombing?

- a) He stayed in Rome and made a TV speech
- b) He refused to comment for several days
- c) He travelled to Bologna immediately and visited the victims
- d) He blamed the attack on foreign terrorists

5. What does the presenter say about Italian politics today (in the context of the episode)?

- a) The Communist and Christian Democratic parties are still dominant
- b) Italy's political scene is united under one main party
- c) Modern politicians rarely think about the Years of Lead
- d) The political landscape remains fragmented, with many parties

The Bologna Station Bombing

True or False

6. The Bologna bombing killed 85 people and injured more than 200. (True/False)
7. The Red Brigades claimed responsibility for the bombing. (True/False)
8. The Bologna bombing marked the beginning of the Years of Lead. (True/False)
9. Fioravanti and Mambro served full life sentences in prison. (True/False)
10. The Years of Lead involved violence from both far-right and far-left groups.
(True/False)

Fill-in-the-Blank

11. The station waiting room was jam-packed: families, children, grandparents, people from all _____ of life.
12. The roof collapsed. Windows were blown to _____.
13. The Red Brigades, who had staged the kidnapping, believed they were _____ a blow against the state, but instead they found themselves increasingly isolated.
14. No group has ever _____ responsibility for the attack, and the list of potential culprits, well it was depressingly long.
15. The result was a long, confusing judicial saga that left many Italians unconvinced that the full truth had ever come to _____.

Vocabulary Practice

16. “**Grim**” (as in “grim new chapter”) means:

- a) Cheerful and happy
- b) Serious, depressing, or unpleasant
- c) Bright and colorful
- d) Ordinary and boring

17. “**Dismantled**” means:

- a) Destroyed or taken apart
- b) Built up
- c) Protected
- d) Hidden

18. “**Eerie**” means:

- a) Strange and unsettling
- b) Very noisy

c) Extremely funny

d) Completely safe

19. “**Pawns**” (used metaphorically) means:

a) People who control everything

b) People who are used by others for their own purposes

c) People who refuse to participate

d) People who win a competition

20. “**Lingering**” (as in “lingering sense”) means:

a) Brief

b) Quickly disappearing

c) Forgettable

d) Lasting for a long time

Answers

1. b) They were travelling to the seaside to escape the heat
2. a) A bomb hidden inside a suitcase
3. c) Important files went missing and evidence was mishandled
4. c) He travelled to Bologna immediately and visited the victims
5. d) The political landscape remains fragmented, with many parties
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. False
10. True
11. walks
12. smithereens
13. striking
14. claimed
15. light
16. b) Serious, depressing, or unpleasant
17. a) Destroyed or taken apart
18. a) Strange and unsettling
19. b) People who are used by others for their own purposes
20. d) Lasting for a long time