

# ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS





**Episode #590**  
**The Unabomber**  
**16th Jan, 2026**

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## **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.

[00:00:21] I'm Alastair Budge, and today we are going to be talking about The Unabomber.

[00:00:27] It's a story of genius, terrorism, [isolation](#)<sup>1</sup>, technology, mathematics, and the most expensive [manhunt](#)<sup>2</sup> in FBI history.

[00:00:39] OK then, let's not waste a minute and get right into it.

[00:00:45] The 19th of September, 1995, was a busy day for American [newsstands](#)<sup>3</sup>.

[00:00:53] From the early morning, up and down the country, queues [snaked around](#)<sup>4</sup> the block as people waited in line for their chance to read what promised to be a [bombshell](#)<sup>5</sup> story.

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<sup>1</sup> being completely alone, with little or no contact with others

<sup>2</sup> a large search by police to find a dangerous person

<sup>3</sup> places in the street where newspapers and magazines were sold

<sup>4</sup> moved in long, winding lines

<sup>5</sup> shocking news that would surprise everyone

## The Unabomber

[00:01:08] The Washington Post and the New York Times had announced that they were going to publish, in full, the [manifesto](#)<sup>6</sup> of a terrorist killer known only as The Unabomber, a name that came from the FBI's internal code 'UNABOM', short for university and airline bombings..

[00:01:32] This decision to publish was unusual for several reasons.

[00:01:37] Firstly, newspapers don't [tend to](#)<sup>7</sup> publish terrorist [manifestos](#)<sup>8</sup>. The US government has a [stated](#)<sup>9</sup> policy of not cooperating with terrorists, and so agreeing to publish one's [manifesto](#) was unusual, to say the least.

[00:01:56] Secondly, the [manifesto](#) was 35,000 words long. Not exactly coffee shop reading.

[00:02:04] Thirdly, this [manifesto](#) was the first time the general public had heard anything from the Unabomber. For 17 years he had been sending anonymous bombs, and this was the first time not just the public, but also the authorities, would understand why.

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<sup>6</sup> a long written statement explaining beliefs or ideas

<sup>7</sup> usually do

<sup>8</sup> written statements explaining beliefs or ideas

<sup>9</sup> clearly said or written

## The Unabomber

[00:02:29] The agreement to publish the [manifesto](#), made with the full approval of the FBI, was a sign of [desperation](#)<sup>10</sup>. Whoever the Unabomber was, he had managed to [elude](#)<sup>11</sup> the authorities for [the best part of](#)<sup>12</sup> two decades. His bombing campaign had started in 1978, and had continued, [off and on](#)<sup>13</sup>, until 1995, killing 3 people and injuring an additional 23.

[00:03:02] And for the duration of the campaign, he had never made any requests, not a single demand, nor had he officially claimed responsibility for any of the attacks.

[00:03:16] To state the obvious, this is very unusual; typically a terrorist, or a terrorist group, will put forward demands, or at least they will come forward and claim responsibility for an attack, to try to [pressurise](#)<sup>14</sup> a government into taking a particular action.

[00:03:35] The Unabomber had done none of those things.

[00:03:39] Until now.

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<sup>10</sup> a feeling of having no good options left

<sup>11</sup> escape or avoid being caught by

<sup>12</sup> almost, or nearly

<sup>13</sup> happening sometimes, but not regularly

<sup>14</sup> force them to do something

## The Unabomber

[00:03:41] Earlier that year, earlier in 1995, he had written a letter to The New York Times promising to stop the bombings if either the Times or the Washington Post published his [manifesto](#).

[00:03:58] When this request was taken to the FBI, it was carefully considered.

[00:04:03] Sure, the United States does not cooperate with terrorists.

[00:04:08] But this wasn't exactly an impossible demand to agree to; he wasn't asking for prisoners to be released or for any major change to government policy. All he wanted was for his views to be published in a major newspaper.

[00:04:26] What's more, after 17 years and thousands of false [leads](#)<sup>15</sup>, the FBI was [at something of a loss](#)<sup>16</sup>. The bomber had taken [meticulous](#)<sup>17</sup> care to [cover his tracks](#)<sup>18</sup>, all sorts of psychological profiles had proven to be [fruitless](#)<sup>19</sup>, and despite spending today's equivalent of more than \$100 million on the investigation, they were no closer to finding him.

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<sup>15</sup> clues or pieces of information

<sup>16</sup> confused and unsure what to do

<sup>17</sup> extremely careful and detailed

<sup>18</sup> hide evidence

<sup>19</sup> producing no results

## The Unabomber

[00:04:56] So the publication of the manifesto was a **gamble**<sup>20</sup>—one last attempt to provoke a reaction, to **coax**<sup>21</sup> the killer into making a mistake, or to encourage someone, anyone, to recognise the voice behind the words.

[00:05:14] Perhaps, just perhaps, someone might read this **manifesto** and something might **click**<sup>22</sup>; a professor reading the style of a former student or a parent recognising their child's voice from the page.

[00:05:30] If it didn't work, well, this would be highly embarrassing for the FBI, but they had **run out of**<sup>23</sup> other options.

[00:05:41] The manifesto began with the now famous line: "The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race."

[00:05:53] And over the next 35,000 words or so, it went on to **spell out**<sup>24</sup> its author's worldview, and it was a worldview unlike anything most readers had ever seen printed in a daily newspaper.

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<sup>20</sup> a risky decision with an uncertain result

<sup>21</sup> gently persuade, entice

<sup>22</sup> suddenly make sense

<sup>23</sup> have none left

<sup>24</sup> explain very clearly

## The Unabomber

[00:06:09] It was **bleak**<sup>25</sup>, **uncompromising**<sup>26</sup>, and fiercely argued.

[00:06:16] The anonymous author—who signed his letters as “FC”, short for Freedom Club—he believed that modern technological society was not simply **flawed**<sup>27</sup>, but fundamentally **incompatible**<sup>28</sup> with human freedom.

[00:06:34] Technology, he argued, did not liberate us; it **enslaved**<sup>29</sup> us.

[00:06:40] The more complex our systems became, the more dependent we grew on them, and the more powerless the individual became in the face of governments, corporations, and machines.

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<sup>25</sup> very dark, negative, or hopeless

<sup>26</sup> not willing to change or soften ideas

<sup>27</sup> having serious problems

<sup>28</sup> unable to exist or work together

<sup>29</sup> controlled and made us unable to be free



## The Unabomber

[00:06:54] This wasn't the [disjointed<sup>30</sup>](#) [ramblings<sup>31</sup>](#) you might expect from a mad serial killer. It was disturbingly [rational<sup>32</sup>](#). Logical. [Eloquent<sup>33</sup>](#).

[00:07:08] This was clearly the work of a brilliant mind. Yes, someone prepared to kill, a murderer. But it was logically [set out<sup>34</sup>](#), touched on political theory, sociology, psychology, and history, and it displayed a truly [encyclopedic<sup>35</sup>](#) knowledge.

[00:07:29] The Unabomber was extraordinary in the literal sense of the word.

[00:07:35] The [manifesto](#) was published, and, [true to his word<sup>36</sup>](#), the bombings stopped. The FBI and the government had honoured their side of the deal, and the Unabomber honoured his.

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<sup>30</sup> badly organised and unclear

<sup>31</sup> long, confusing, and unfocused writing

<sup>32</sup> logical and reasonable

<sup>33</sup> clear and well-written

<sup>34</sup> organised and explained clearly

<sup>35</sup> showing knowledge of many subjects

<sup>36</sup> doing exactly what he had promised

## The Unabomber

[00:07:51] As the authorities hoped, the phones started [ringing off the hook](#)<sup>37</sup>. Every [lead](#)<sup>38</sup> was followed up on, but it came to nothing.

[00:08:02] However, in the small town of Schenectady, New York, one man read the [manifesto](#) and a terrible, [sinking feeling](#)<sup>39</sup> came over him.

[00:08:15] His name was David Kaczynski, and he had been persuaded to read the [manifesto](#) by his wife, Linda.

[00:08:24] See, David had an older brother, Theodore, or Ted, for short.

[00:08:31] Linda had never met Ted, but she had heard all about him. The two brothers had been very close, and although David hadn't seen Ted for a long time, they had kept in touch by letter.

[00:08:48] Ted, so David believed, was living as a [recluse](#)<sup>40</sup> in an isolated cabin in the wilds of Montana, [cut off](#)<sup>41</sup> from the modern world.

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<sup>37</sup> ringing continuously

<sup>38</sup> a piece of information that could help solve the case

<sup>39</sup> a sudden strong feeling of fear or worry

<sup>40</sup> someone who avoided other people

<sup>41</sup> separated, isolated

## The Unabomber

[00:09:00] From what Linda had heard about her brother-in-law, well, it sounded quite similar to what she had read in the press about the Unabomber.

[00:09:11] “Just read the [manifesto](#)”, she told her husband. “For me”.

[00:09:16] Reluctantly, David Kaczynski picked up the newspaper.

[00:09:20] Almost immediately, he recognised the voice, the [intense](#)<sup>42</sup>, almost [obsessive](#)<sup>43</sup> way of arguing, the [deep-seated](#)<sup>44</sup> hatred of technology, even certain specific and unusual expressions and [turns of phrase](#)<sup>45</sup> that he knew his brother used.

[00:09:40] His worst fears were confirmed; to David Kaczynski, it was [undeniable](#)<sup>46</sup> that the author of the Unabomber’s Manifesto and his older brother, Ted, were the same person.

[00:09:54] Instead of immediately going to the FBI, he decided to first hire a private investigator, then a lawyer. He didn’t want to go straight to the authorities; he knew his

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<sup>42</sup> very strong or serious

<sup>43</sup> thinking about something too much

<sup>44</sup> very strong and long-lasting

<sup>45</sup> specific ways of using words

<sup>46</sup> impossible to doubt

## The Unabomber

brother might be in a **fragile**<sup>47</sup> mental state, and he didn't want a **raid**<sup>48</sup> resulting in him getting shot.

[00:10:16] The private investigator compared writing samples, samples of Ted's letters to his brother with the Unabomber's manifesto. She determined that it was highly likely to be a match.

[00:10:30] Early in 1996, David presented the information to the FBI, but demanded **assurances**<sup>49</sup> that it would be an anonymous **tip-off**<sup>50</sup>; the last thing he wanted was for his brother to know that it was him.

[00:10:47] See, Ted and David had been very close, so close, in fact, that David still found it almost impossible to believe that the boy that he had grown up with—a **shy**<sup>51</sup>, brilliant child who had once spent hours teaching him maths puzzles—that this boy could be responsible for such **cold-blooded**<sup>52</sup> violence.

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<sup>47</sup> easily harmed or damaged

<sup>48</sup> a sudden police entry to search or arrest

<sup>49</sup> promises that it would be done

<sup>50</sup> secret information given to the police

<sup>51</sup> nervous and quiet around people

<sup>52</sup> cruel and without emotion

## The Unabomber

[00:11:09] So to understand why this was so painful, and what might have caused Ted Kaczynski to behave in this way, we need to go back to his early life.

[00:11:21] He was born in Chicago in 1942 into what seemed, from the outside, like a perfectly ordinary, hard-working, Polish American family.

[00:11:34] His parents ran a small sausage factory; they were not wealthy, but they put a high value on education and they quickly realised that their eldest son was not like other children.

[00:11:48] He was [off-the-charts](#)<sup>53</sup> intelligent.

[00:11:52] By the age of six, Ted was doing complex [arithmetic](#)<sup>54</sup> in his head.

[00:11:58] By eight, he was reading advanced scientific material for fun.

[00:12:03] By ten, he had scored so highly on an IQ test, getting a mark of 167, that psychologists recommended he [skip](#)<sup>55</sup> not just one year of school, but two.

[00:12:17] This decision would [shape](#)<sup>56</sup> the rest of his life.

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<sup>53</sup> extremely highly

<sup>54</sup> basic maths with numbers

<sup>55</sup> miss or move past

<sup>56</sup> strongly influence



## The Unabomber

[00:12:22] **Skip**<sup>57</sup> grades might have made academic sense, but socially it was a disaster.

[00:12:29] Ted was smaller, younger, and far more sensitive than the older boys in his new class. He struggled to **fit in**<sup>58</sup>, struggled to make new friends, and began to retreat into the one world in which he felt safe: mathematics.

[00:12:48] His teachers described him as “quiet”, “**withdrawn**<sup>59</sup>”, even “**timid**<sup>60</sup>”. But in maths class he came alive. Numbers somehow made sense when people did not.

[00:13:05] When he was just sixteen years old, he was encouraged to apply to, and was accepted into Harvard, becoming one of the youngest students ever admitted.

[00:13:17] For most families this would have been a dream come true.

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<sup>57</sup> missing or moving past

<sup>58</sup> feel accepted

<sup>59</sup> quiet and avoiding others

<sup>60</sup> shy and lacking confidence

## The Unabomber

[00:13:22] But for Ted, who was still very much a child on an emotional level, Harvard was not a dream. It was [overwhelming<sup>61</sup>](#), [isolating<sup>62</sup>](#), and sometimes [traumatic<sup>63</sup>](#).

[00:13:37] During his first year, he participated in a now-infamous psychological study run by a Harvard professor named Henry Murray. This study involved long, [aggressive<sup>64</sup>](#) [interrogation<sup>65</sup>](#) sessions designed to [break down<sup>66</sup>](#) the participants' beliefs. Kaczynski would later describe it as deeply [humiliating<sup>67</sup>](#), and subsequent commentators have suggested that it left lasting psychological [scars<sup>68</sup>](#) on the young man.

[00:14:12] From Harvard he moved on to graduate studies, eventually earning a PhD in mathematics at the University of Michigan when he was only 25 years old.

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<sup>61</sup> too much to handle

<sup>62</sup> making him feel alone

<sup>63</sup> causing deep emotional pain

<sup>64</sup> intense and forceful

<sup>65</sup> intense questioning

<sup>66</sup> destroy

<sup>67</sup> making him feel ashamed

<sup>68</sup> lasting emotional damage

## The Unabomber

[00:14:23] His [thesis](#)<sup>69</sup> was so advanced that, according to someone on his [dissertation](#)<sup>70</sup> panel, "maybe 10 or 12 men in the country understood or appreciated it."

[00:14:36] It seemed to his professors that he was destined to become one of the great American mathematicians of his generation.

[00:14:45] And yet, in 1969, something extraordinary happened.

[00:14:51] At the age of 27, after accepting a [prestigious](#)<sup>71</sup> teaching position at Berkeley, Ted Kaczynski suddenly [resigned](#)<sup>72</sup>. He walked away from a seemingly secure academic career, from a life that most people would consider incredibly successful.

[00:15:12] And he simply disappeared, or at least [withdrew](#)<sup>73</sup> completely from society.

[00:15:20] He moved to a [patch](#)<sup>74</sup> of remote land outside the tiny town of Lincoln, Montana, where he built, with his own hands, a tiny wooden [cabin](#)<sup>75</sup>. No electricity. No

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<sup>69</sup> long academic research paper

<sup>70</sup> final research paper for his degree

<sup>71</sup> respected and admired

<sup>72</sup> officially quit

<sup>73</sup> pulled away

<sup>74</sup> a small area of land

<sup>75</sup> a small, simple wooden house

## The Unabomber

running water. No telephone. No car. No neighbours. Just trees, mountains, and silence.

[00:15:43] It was here, in the solitude of the Montana woods, that Ted believed he could finally think clearly. Here, he would be free from the modern world he feared and hated. Here, he could live entirely independently, growing vegetables, [trapping](#)<sup>76</sup> animals, reading philosophy, and writing page after page of notes on the dangers of technology.

[00:16:12] But this [isolation](#) did not calm him; it [radicalised](#)<sup>77</sup> him.

[00:16:19] He watched the forests around him being cut down by developers; he saw aircraft flying [overhead](#)<sup>78</sup>, he heard the distant [hum](#)<sup>79</sup> of industrial progress, and grew convinced that technology was spreading like a disease.

[00:16:36] In his journals he wrote that the modern world was “robbing people of their freedom”, that industrial society was “[crushing](#)<sup>80</sup> the human spirit”.

[00:16:47] By the mid-1970s, Ted Kaczynski had transformed from a gifted mathematician into an ideological extremist.

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<sup>76</sup> catching animals in a trap

<sup>77</sup> pushed him towards extreme beliefs

<sup>78</sup> above in the sky

<sup>79</sup> a low, continuous noise

<sup>80</sup> destroying emotionally

## The Unabomber

[00:16:58] And in 1978, he made a decision that would change everything.

[00:17:05] He built a bomb.

[00:17:08] It was hand-crafted from metal [tubing](#)<sup>81</sup>, wood, batteries, and homemade [components](#)<sup>82</sup>, it was placed in a parcel and left in a hallway at Northwestern University.

[00:17:21] When it exploded, injuring a security officer, his 17-year campaign of violence had begun.

[00:17:30] Over the next decade and a half he mailed or delivered a series of increasingly sophisticated bombs, each designed to [maim](#)<sup>83</sup> or kill, each carefully constructed to leave almost no usable [forensic](#)<sup>84</sup> evidence.

[00:17:49] And his methods were [meticulous](#).

[00:17:53] He [sanded off](#)<sup>85</sup> fingerprints.

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<sup>81</sup> hollow metal pipes

<sup>82</sup> separate parts

<sup>83</sup> seriously injure

<sup>84</sup> related to crime investigation

<sup>85</sup> rubbed away



## The Unabomber

[00:17:55] He used handmade wooden parts to avoid [traceability](#)<sup>86</sup>.

[00:18:00] He built explosive [components from scratch](#)<sup>87</sup>.

[00:18:03] He included false [clues](#)<sup>88</sup>, [misleading](#)<sup>89</sup> markings, fake [initials](#)<sup>90</sup>, random pieces of metal or hair he had found in public bathrooms, all [intended](#)<sup>91</sup> to [confuse](#)<sup>92</sup> investigators.

[00:18:18] Some bombs were [disguised](#)<sup>93</sup> as parcels, others as pieces of scientific equipment.

[00:18:26] One of his early devices was planted on an American Airlines flight, causing smoke to fill the cabin and nearly forcing an emergency landing.

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<sup>86</sup> ability to track where they came from

<sup>87</sup> from the beginning, from nothing

<sup>88</sup> signs or hints

<sup>89</sup> designed to trick

<sup>90</sup> first letters of his name

<sup>91</sup> planned or meant

<sup>92</sup> make them unsure

<sup>93</sup> hidden by making them look like

## The Unabomber

[00:18:36] Another killed a computer store owner in Sacramento. Another left a university professor permanently disabled.

[00:18:45] The authorities at first couldn't figure out the connection between these people. Professors, airline executives, computer store owners, there seemed to be nothing linking them.

[00:19:00] The connection was technology; these were people Kaczynski believed were responsible for advancing the technological society he so [despised](#)<sup>94</sup>.

[00:19:12] When it became clear that this was the work of a sophisticated terrorist, the FBI launched what would become the longest and most expensive [manhunt](#) in its history. And yet, for years, they had nothing.

[00:19:29] No suspect. No [motive](#)<sup>95</sup>. No pattern they could reliably identify.

[00:19:36] To the authorities, the Unabomber was not simply dangerous; he was invisible.

[00:19:44] And it probably would have stayed that way if not for the publication of the [manifesto](#), and the moment David Kaczynski recognised the voice of his brother.

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<sup>94</sup> hated strongly

<sup>95</sup> reason or cause

## The Unabomber

[00:19:56] Now, when the FBI received the [tip](#)<sup>96</sup>, they were initially [skeptical](#)<sup>97</sup>.

[00:20:03] They had received thousands of similar [leads](#) over the years—tips from people suspecting neighbours, colleagues, or even family members—and all had been [dead ends](#)<sup>98</sup>.

[00:20:16] But this one was different.

[00:20:19] The FBI had a number of letters and documents written by the Unabomber, and when they compared them to the old letters and academic papers written by Ted Kaczynski, the similarities were [striking](#)<sup>99</sup>.

[00:20:35] They used a technique called [forensic](#) linguistics, which is the study of language in a legal context, and the experts noted identical usages of certain uncommon words and specific, [idiosyncratic](#)<sup>100</sup> grammatical constructions.

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<sup>96</sup> small piece of information

<sup>97</sup> doubtful

<sup>98</sup> efforts that had led nowhere

<sup>99</sup> very noticeable

<sup>100</sup> unusual and personal

## The Unabomber

[00:20:54] With mounting<sup>101</sup> evidence, the FBI obtained a search warrant for Ted Kaczynski's cabin in Montana. They knew that they had to catch him red-handed<sup>102</sup>; other than the similarities in writing styles, they had nothing concrete<sup>103</sup> linking him to the crimes. The cabin was their last hope.

[00:21:17] On April 3, 1996, a team of FBI agents arrived on the scene.

[00:21:25] Posing as<sup>104</sup> forestry workers, they knocked on the door. A dishevelled<sup>105</sup> but importantly unarmed Kaczynski opened, and was swiftly<sup>106</sup> arrested.

[00:21:38] And a search of the cabin revealed everything the FBI was looking for.

[00:21:44] They found a wealth of<sup>107</sup> evidence, including four fully constructed and ready-to-mail bombs, and the original, handwritten draft of the 35,000-word manifesto.

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<sup>101</sup> increasing

<sup>102</sup> in the act of doing something illegal

<sup>103</sup> clear and solid

<sup>104</sup> pretending to be

<sup>105</sup> untidy and messy

<sup>106</sup> very quickly

<sup>107</sup> a large amount of

## The Unabomber

[00:21:57] Alongside this, there were detailed journals containing the formula and process for every single one of the 16 bombings the Unabomber had carried out.

[00:22:09] These weren't written in plain English, though. Kaczynski had [encrypted<sup>108</sup>](#) them using an incredibly [sophisticated<sup>109</sup>](#) system of codes, but fortunately for the authorities, the [ciphers<sup>110</sup>](#), the codes to [decipher<sup>111</sup>](#) the system, were also found in the [cabin](#).

[00:22:28] Ted Kaczynski was arrested. The man who had been the subject of the most complex, long-running, and expensive investigation in US history was finally [in custody<sup>112</sup>](#).

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<sup>108</sup> written in secret code

<sup>109</sup> very advanced and complex

<sup>110</sup> secret codes

<sup>111</sup> decode, work out

<sup>112</sup> held by the police



## The Unabomber

[00:22:41] But the story doesn't end there. The [trial](#)<sup>113</sup>, and the ultimate [fate](#)<sup>114</sup> of this boy-genius-turned-terrorist, would raise [profound](#)<sup>115</sup> questions about responsibility, mental health, and the very nature of modern society.

[00:23:00] Ted Kaczynski never denied being The Unabomber, but his legal defense was complicated.

[00:23:08] His lawyers wanted to argue that he was mentally ill and therefore not responsible for his actions. They wanted him to [plead](#)<sup>116</sup> "not guilty by reason of [insanity](#)<sup>117</sup>."

[00:23:22] In other words, he was crazy.

[00:23:25] Kaczynski, however, fiercely objected to this strategy.

[00:23:31] He saw himself not as a madman, but as a rational revolutionary.

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<sup>113</sup> examination of the case in a court of law

<sup>114</sup> what would finally happen to him

<sup>115</sup> very deep and serious

<sup>116</sup> officially say in court

<sup>117</sup> severe mental illness

## The Unabomber

[00:23:38] To be declared **insane**<sup>118</sup> would **invalidate**<sup>119</sup> his **manifesto** and his entire political philosophy, and the entire reason he had **embarked on**<sup>120</sup> his bombing campaign was for his views to be taken seriously.

[00:23:54] He was so **determined**<sup>121</sup> that he eventually tried to **fire**<sup>122</sup> his own defense team and represent himself in court.

[00:24:02] In the end, he avoided a potentially lengthy and highly publicised **trial** by accepting **a plea bargain**<sup>123</sup>.

[00:24:10] On January 22, 1998, Ted Kaczynski **pleaded guilty**<sup>124</sup> to all charges. In exchange for avoiding the death penalty, he was sentenced to eight consecutive life sentences without the possibility of **parole**<sup>125</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> seriously mentally ill

<sup>119</sup> make it no longer valid, cancel

<sup>120</sup> begun (something important)

<sup>121</sup> very firm and decided

<sup>122</sup> remove from the job

<sup>123</sup> agreement to avoid trial by pleading guilty

<sup>124</sup> admitted to the crimes in court

<sup>125</sup> early release from prison

## The Unabomber

[00:24:29] He was transferred to the Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado, where he [lived out](#)<sup>126</sup> the remainder of his days, much of it in [solitary confinement](#)<sup>127</sup>, before finally killing himself in June of 2023, at the age of 81.

[00:24:45] And there is another [twist](#)<sup>128</sup> to this story.

[00:24:49] His bombing [spree](#)<sup>129</sup> started in 1978, in a world we might today consider relatively free from technology.

[00:25:00] Today, where technology is [infinitely](#)<sup>130</sup> more [entrenched](#)<sup>131</sup> in every aspect of our lives than 50 years ago, his anti-technology message is able to [spread](#)<sup>132</sup> ever further and faster, and is reaching more people than ever before.

[00:25:16] Whether it's simply that his [manifesto](#) is easily accessible online, or that people are making TikToks about "Uncle Ted was right", his worldview and philosophy

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<sup>126</sup> spent the rest of life

<sup>127</sup> being kept alone in prison

<sup>128</sup> an unexpected change

<sup>129</sup> a period of repeated actions

<sup>130</sup> to an extremely large degree

<sup>131</sup> deeply fixed and hard to change

<sup>132</sup> reach more people

## The Unabomber

is becoming more and more well-known through the very technology he [sought<sup>133</sup>](#) to destroy.

[00:25:35] OK, then, that is it for today's episode on The Unabomber.

[00:25:39] I hope it's been an interesting one and that you've learnt something new.

[00:25:43] As always, I'd love to know what you thought of this episode.

[00:25:46] For the members among you, you can head right into our community forum, which is at [community.leonardoenglish.com](http://community.leonardoenglish.com) and get chatting away to other curious minds.

[00:25:55] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds by Leonardo English.

[00:26:00] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

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<sup>133</sup> tried to

## **Key vocabulary**

Word	Definition
Isolation	being completely alone, with little or no contact with others
Manhunt	a large search by police to find a dangerous person
Newsstands	places in the street where newspapers and magazines were sold
Snaked around	moved in long, winding lines
Bombshell	shocking news that would surprise everyone
Manifesto	a long written statement explaining beliefs or ideas
Tend to	usually do
Manifestos	written statements explaining beliefs or ideas
Stated	clearly said or written
Desperation	a feeling of having no good options left
Elude	escape or avoid being caught by
The best part of	almost, or nearly
Off and on	happening sometimes, but not regularly



## English Learning for Curious Minds | Episode #590

### The Unabomber

<b>Pressurise</b>	force them to do something
<b>Leads</b>	clues or pieces of information
<b>At something of a loss</b>	confused and unsure what to do
<b>Meticulous</b>	extremely careful and detailed
<b>Cover his tracks</b>	hide evidence
<b>Fruitless</b>	producing no results
<b>Gamble</b>	a risky decision with an uncertain result
<b>Coax</b>	gently persuade, entice
<b>Click</b>	suddenly make sense
<b>Run out of</b>	have none left
<b>Spell out</b>	explain very clearly
<b>Bleak</b>	very dark, negative, or hopeless
<b>Uncompromising</b>	not willing to change or soften ideas
<b>Flawed</b>	having serious problems
<b>Incompatible</b>	unable to exist or work together

## The Unabomber

<b>Enslaved</b>	controlled and made us unable to be free
<b>Disjointed</b>	badly organised and unclear
<b>Ramblings</b>	long, confusing, and unfocused writing
<b>Rational</b>	logical and reasonable
<b>Eloquent</b>	clear and well-written
<b>Set out</b>	organised and explained clearly
<b>Encyclopedic</b>	showing knowledge of many subjects
<b>True to his word</b>	doing exactly what he had promised
<b>Ring off the hook</b>	ringing continuously
<b>Lead</b>	a piece of information that could help solve the case
<b>Sinking feeling</b>	a sudden strong feeling of fear or worry
<b>Recluse</b>	someone who avoided other people
<b>Cut off</b>	separated, isolated
<b>Intense</b>	very strong or serious
<b>Obsessive</b>	thinking about something too much

## The Unabomber

Deep-seated	very strong and long-lasting
Turns of phrase	specific ways of using words
Undeniable	impossible to doubt
Fragile	easily harmed or damaged
Raid	a sudden police entry to search or arrest
Assurances	promises that it would be done
Tip-off	secret information given to the police
Shy	nervous and quiet around people
Cold-blooded	cruel and without emotion
Off-the-charts	extremely highly
Arithmetic	basic maths with numbers
Skip	miss or move past
Shape	strongly influence
Skipping	missing or moving past
Fit in	feel accepted

## The Unabomber

<b>Withdrawn</b>	quiet and avoiding others
<b>Timid</b>	shy and lacking confidence
<b>Overwhelming</b>	too much to handle
<b>Isolating</b>	making him feel alone
<b>Traumatic</b>	causing deep emotional pain
<b>Aggressive</b>	intense and forceful
<b>Interrogation</b>	intense questioning
<b>Break down</b>	destroy
<b>Humiliating</b>	making him feel ashamed
<b>Scars</b>	lasting emotional damage
<b>Thesis</b>	long academic research paper
<b>Dissertation</b>	final research paper for his degree
<b>Prestigious</b>	respected and admired
<b>Resigned</b>	officially quit
<b>Withdrew</b>	pulled away

## The Unabomber

<b>Patch</b>	a small area of land
<b>Cabin</b>	a small, simple wooden house
<b>Trapping</b>	catching animals in a trap
<b>Radicalised</b>	pushed him towards extreme beliefs
<b>Overhead</b>	above in the sky
<b>Hum</b>	a low, continuous noise
<b>Crushing</b>	destroying emotionally
<b>Tubing</b>	hollow metal pipes
<b>Components</b>	separate parts
<b>Maim</b>	seriously injure
<b>Forensic</b>	related to crime investigation
<b>Sanded off</b>	rubbed away
<b>Traceability</b>	ability to track where they came from
<b>From scratch</b>	from the beginning, from nothing
<b>Clues</b>	signs or hints

## The Unabomber

<b>Misleading</b>	designed to trick
<b>Initials</b>	first letters of his name
<b>Intended</b>	planned or meant
<b>Confuse</b>	make them unsure
<b>Disguised</b>	hidden by making them look like
<b>Despised</b>	hated strongly
<b>Motive</b>	reason or cause
<b>Tip</b>	small piece of information
<b>Skeptical</b>	doubtful
<b>Dead ends</b>	efforts that had led nowhere
<b>Striking</b>	very noticeable
<b>Idiosyncratic</b>	unusual and personal
<b>Mounting</b>	increasing
<b>Red-handed</b>	in the act of doing something illegal
<b>Concrete</b>	clear and solid

## The Unabomber

<b>Posing as</b>	pretending to be
<b>Dishevelled</b>	untidy and messy
<b>Swiftly</b>	very quickly
<b>A wealth of</b>	a large amount of
<b>Encrypted</b>	written in secret code
<b>Sophisticated</b>	very advanced and complex
<b>Ciphers</b>	secret codes
<b>Decipher</b>	decode, work out
<b>In custody</b>	held by the police
<b>Trial</b>	examination of the case in a court of law
<b>Fate</b>	what would finally happen to him
<b>Profound</b>	very deep and serious
<b>Plead</b>	officially say in court
<b>Insanity</b>	severe mental illness
<b>Insane</b>	seriously mentally ill

## The Unabomber

<b>Invalidate</b>	make it no longer valid, cancel
<b>Embarked on</b>	begun (something important)
<b>Determined</b>	very firm and decided
<b>Fire</b>	remove from the job
<b>A plea bargain</b>	agreement to avoid trial by pleading guilty
<b>Pleaded guilty</b>	admitted to the crimes in court
<b>Parole</b>	early release from prison
<b>Lived out</b>	spent the rest of life
<b>Solitary confinement</b>	being kept alone in prison
<b>Twist</b>	an unexpected change
<b>Spree</b>	a period of repeated actions
<b>Infinitely</b>	to an extremely large degree
<b>Entrenched</b>	deeply fixed and hard to change
<b>Spread</b>	reach more people
<b>Sought</b>	tried to



## **Language spotlight**

### **1. Cover his tracks**

- **Meaning:** To hide evidence so that no one can discover what you have done.
- **Synonyms:** hide evidence, erase traces, conceal actions
- **Antonyms:** leave evidence, reveal actions, give oneself away
- **Examples:**
  - He tried to **cover his tracks** by deleting all his emails.
  - The criminal failed to **cover his tracks**, and the police caught him quickly.

### **2. At something of a loss**

- **Meaning:** Confused and unsure what to do next.
- **Synonyms:** confused, unsure, out of ideas
- **Antonyms:** confident, certain, clear-headed
- **Examples:**

## The Unabomber

- The police were **at something of a loss** after following so many false leads.
- I was **at something of a loss** when asked to explain the problem.

### 3. Run out of (options)

- **Meaning:** To have no choices or possibilities left.
- **Synonyms:** have no options left, reach a dead end
- **Antonyms:** have many options, have choices
- **Examples:**
  - The investigators had **run out of options** and needed a new strategy.
  - When negotiations failed, the company **ran out of options**.

### 4. True to his word

- **Meaning:** Doing exactly what you promised to do.
- **Synonyms:** keep a promise, be reliable, do what you said
- **Antonyms:** break a promise, go back on one's word
- **Examples:**

## The Unabomber

- **True to his word**, he stopped the attacks after the manifesto was published.
- She was **true to her word** and returned the money the next day.

### 5. Caught red-handed

- **Meaning:** Caught while doing something wrong or illegal.
- **Synonyms:** caught in the act, caught committing a crime
- **Antonyms:** get away with it, avoid being caught
- **Examples:**
  - The thief was **caught red-handed** trying to steal a wallet.
  - He denied everything until he was **caught red-handed** by the police.

## **Quiz**

### **Listening Comprehension Multiple Choice Questions**

1. Why was publishing the manifesto considered unusual?
  - a) It was written in a foreign language
  - b) It supported government policy
  - c) Newspapers usually do not publish terrorist manifestos
  - d) It was too short to be meaningful
  
2. What did the FBI hope would happen after the manifesto was published?
  - a) The public would agree with the Unabomber
  - b) The Unabomber would surrender immediately
  - c) Someone would recognise the writing style
  - d) The bombings would increase
  
3. What promise did the Unabomber make in 1995?
  - a) To turn himself in

b) To stop bombing if his manifesto was published

c) To reveal his identity

d) To leave the United States

4. Who recognised the writing style in the manifesto?

a) A Harvard professor

b) An FBI linguist

c) Ted Kaczynski's neighbour

d) Ted Kaczynski's brother

5. Where was Ted Kaczynski living when he was arrested?

a) In Chicago

b) On a university campus

c) In a cabin in Montana

d) In New York State

## The Unabomber

### True or False

6. The Unabomber always claimed responsibility for his attacks. (True/False)
7. The FBI spent more than today's equivalent of \$100 million on the investigation.  
(True/False)
8. Ted Kaczynski enjoyed his time at Harvard. (True/False)
9. The Unabomber mainly targeted people connected to technology. (True/False)
10. Ted Kaczynski went to trial and was found guilty by a jury. (True/False)

### Fill-in-the-Blank

11. From the early morning, up and down the country, queues snaked \_\_\_\_\_ the block as people waited in line for their chance to read what promised to be a bombshell story.
12. Whoever the Unabomber was, he had managed to elude the authorities for the \_\_\_\_\_ part of two decades.
13. His bombing campaign had started in 1978, and had continued, \_\_\_\_ and on, until 1995,
14. The manifesto was published, and, true to his \_\_\_\_\_, the bombings stopped.

## The Unabomber

15. As the authorities hoped, the phones started ringing off the \_\_\_\_\_. Every lead was followed up on, but it came to nothing.

### Vocabulary Practice

16. What does “**meticulous**” mean in the podcast?

- a) Very fast and careless
- b) Extremely careful and detailed
- c) Loud and aggressive
- d) Emotionally unstable

17. What is a “**manifesto**”?

- a) A personal diary
- b) A secret police report
- c) A legal contract
- d) A long text explaining beliefs

18. What does “**elude**” mean?

- a) To escape or avoid
- b) To explain clearly
- c) To attack suddenly
- d) To confess publicly

19. What does “**radicalised**” mean in this context?

- a) Became politically moderate
- b) Changed career suddenly
- c) Adopted extreme beliefs
- d) Lost interest in society

20. What does “**in custody**” mean?

- a) Being questioned by the media
- b) Being treated by doctors
- c) Being held by the police



d) Being watched secretly

## **Answers**

1. c) Newspapers usually do not publish terrorist manifestos
2. c) Someone would recognise the writing style
3. b) To stop bombing if his manifesto was published
4. d) Ted Kaczynski's brother
5. c) In a cabin in Montana
6. False
7. True
8. False
9. True
10. False
11. around
12. best
13. off
14. word
15. hook
16. b) Extremely careful and detailed
17. d) A long text explaining beliefs
18. a) To escape or avoid
19. c) Adopted extreme beliefs
20. c) Being held by the police