

Serpico

In the early 1970s, Frank Serpico was working as a detective with the New York Police Department. He lived very differently from most policemen. He was a "loner" – he didn't mix with his colleagues. His home was in Greenwich Village, his hair was long and he had a beard. He wasn't a typical policeman at all.

Because he was a natural actor and could disguise himself easily, he often worked "under cover". During his work, he discovered something about the N.Y.P.D. that he didn't like: corruption. He discovered that some of his colleagues accept bribes from criminals, and he reported this. No police officer had ever reported corruption in the N.Y.P.D. before.

In court, Serpico gave evidence of corruption against his colleagues. He also said that he was afraid he'd be killed for it. Six months later his prediction nearly came true. This is what happened.

The New York police were looking for a man. They were informed that he was at home in the Bronx. Serpico went there to arrest him, with two other policemen. When they tried to arrest him, he shot Serpico in the head at very close range. The other two policemen did nothing. Serpico was very badly hurt, and nearly lost his life.

As soon as he recovered, he left the police department. A book was written about his experiences by Peter Maas. (He had met Serpico when he was writing for "New York" magazine). The book immediately became a best seller: three million copies were sold in the United States alone, and it was translated into twelve languages. Soon afterwards a film was made with Al Pacino as Serpico. Maas worked on the film – which was based on his book – but Serpico himself was not involved. Like the book, the film was very successful, and and this year a 'Serpico' TV series has started. (An actor called David Birney is playing Serpico).

Serpico himself lives in Europe. When he left the police department in 1972, he also left America. The other two policemen (from the raid) are still in New York. They are still in the police department, and they are now both sergeants.

I COMPREHENSION (15 POINTS)

{BASE ALL YOUR ANSWERS ON THE TEXT}

A *The following words or phrases are in the text. Of the four explanations suggested, only one is correct. Circle it. (4pts)*

1 He often worked "under cover"

- a He often carried a cover over him
- b He often hid his true identity
- c He didn't work much
- d He didn't work often

2 Bribes

- a Punishment
- b Information
- c Stories
- d Presents

3 His prediction nearly came true

- a Dream
- b Prophecy
- c Wish
- d Ambition

4 He recovered

- a He got better
- b He got his money back
- c He got free
- d He got his gun back.

B Say which of the following statements are true and which are false. (4pts)

- 1 Serpico was the first policeman to report corruption in the N.Y.P.D.
- 2 Serpico told lies about his colleagues.
- 3 In court, Serpico said he was afraid he would be killed for corruption.
- 4 When the man in the Bronx shot Serpico in the head, the other two policemen quickly arrested him.
- 5 When he recovered, Serpico wrote a book about his experiences.
- 6 The book about Serpico was only sold in the U.S.A.
- 7 Peter Maas played the part of Serpico in the film.
- 8 Both the book and the film have had a lot of success.

C The following comments are related to the text. Choose the best one. (2pts)

1 When Serpico was shot, the other two policemen did nothing because

- a The criminal was dangerous.
- b They didn't want to get shot too.
- c They wanted Serpico out of the way.
- d They hadn't time.

2 Serpico was

- a Honest.
- b Corrupt.
- c Lonely.
- d Popular.

D Answer the following questions, using your own words as far as possible. (5pts)

- 1 Why wasn't Serpico a typical policeman?
.....
- 2 Why was he afraid he would be killed?
.....
- 3 What kind of man was Serpico, and what kind of men were the other police officers?
.....
- 4 How did Serpico's colleagues get their revenge on him?
.....
- 5 Who was Peter Maas?
.....