**Urban Legends Part I                                                                                          MAVO/HAVO/VWO**

We’re going to read two stories which are characterised as ‘Urban Legends’. If you look up the term Urban Legend in a dictionary you’ll find: *‘a story about an unusual event or occurrence that many people believe is true but that is not true’.* The Dutch translation of an Urban Legend is a ‘*broodje-aap verhaal’*.

First read the text, then answer the questions.



**Text I - The carpet fitter**

Eddie was a carpet fitter, and he hated it. For ten years he had spent his days sitting, squatting, kneeling or crawling on floors, in houses, offices, shops, factories and restaurants. Ten years of his life, cutting and fitting carpets for other people to walk on, without even seeing them. When his work was done, no-one ever appreciated it. No- one ever said "Oh, that's a beautiful job, the carpet fits so neatly." They just walked all over it. Eddie was sick of it.

He was especially sick of it on this hot, humid day in August, as he worked to put the finishing touches to today's job. He was just cutting and fixing the last edge on a huge red carpet which he had fitted in the living room of Mrs. Vanbrugh's house. Rich Mrs. Vanbrugh, who changed her carpets every year, and always bought the best. Rich Mrs. Vanbrugh, who had never even given him a cup of tea all day, and who made him go outside when he wanted to smoke. Ah well, it was four o'clock and he had nearly finished. At least he would be able to get home early today. He began to day-dream about the weekend, about the Saturday football game he always played for the local team, where he was known as "Ed the Head" for his skill in heading goals from corner kicks.

Eddie sat back and sighed. The job was done, and it was time for a last cigarette. He began tapping the pockets of his overalls, looking for the new packet of Marlboro he had bought that morning. They were not there.

It was as he swung around to look in his toolbox for the cigarettes that Eddie saw the lump. Right in the middle of the brand new bright red carpet, there was a lump. A very visible lump. A lump the size of -- the size of a packet of cigarettes.

"Blast!" said Eddie angrily. "I've done it again! I've left the cigarettes under the blasted carpet!"  
He had done this once before, and taking up and refitting the carpet had taken him two hours. Eddie was determined that he was not going to spend another two hours in this house. He decided to get rid of the lump another way. It would mean wasting a good packet of cigarettes, nearly full, but anything was better than taking up the whole carpet and fitting it again. He turned to his toolbox for a large hammer.

Holding the hammer, Eddie approached the lump in the carpet. He didn't want to damage the carpet itself, so he took a block of wood and placed it on top of the lump. Then he began to beat the block of wood as hard as he could. He kept beating, hoping Mrs. Vanbrugh wouldn't hear the noise and come to see what he was doing. It would be difficult to explain why he was hammering the middle of her beautiful new carpet.

After three or four minutes, the lump was beginning to flatten out. Eddie imagined the cigarette box breaking up, and the crushed cigarettes spreading out under the carpet. Soon, he judged that the lump was almost invisible. Clearing up his tools, he began to move the furniture back into the living room, and he was careful to place one of the coffee tables over the place where the lump had been, just to make sure that no-one would see the spot where his cigarettes had been lost. Finally, the job was finished, and he called Mrs. Vanbrugh from the dining room to inspect his work. "Yes, dear, very nice," said the lady, peering around the room briefly. "You'll be sending me a bill, then?"

"Yes madam, as soon as I report to the office tomorrow that the job is done." Eddie picked up his tools, and began to walk out to the van. Mrs. Vanbrugh accompanied him. She seemed a little worried about something.

"Young man," she began, as he climbed into the cab of his van, laying his toolbox on the passenger seat beside him, "while you were working today, you didn't by any chance see any sign of Armand, did you? Armand is my parakeet. A beautiful bird, just beautiful, such colours in his feathers... I let him out of his cage, you see, this morning, and he's disappeared. He likes to walk around the house, and he's so good, he usually just comes back to his cage after an hour or so and gets right in. Only today he didn't come back. He's never done such a thing before, it's most peculiar..."

"No, madam, I haven't seen him anywhere," said Eddie, as he reached to start the van.  
  
And saw his packet of Marlboro cigarettes on the dashboard, where he had left it at lunchtime....  
  
And remembered the lump in the carpet....

And realised what the lump was....

And remembered the hammering....

And began to feel rather sick....

*MDH 1994 -- from a common urban legend*

**Questions - The Carpet Fitter                                                                          MAVO/HAVO/VWO**

Write down words you don’t know yet and look for their translation.

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| **English** | **Dutch** | **English** | **Dutch** |
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**MAVO**

**Answer the questions about *the Carpet Fitter* in Dutch.**

1. Why did Eddie hate being a carpet-fitter?
2. What did Eddie’s friends call him *‘Ed the Head'?*
3. Why couldn’t Eddie go home?
4. What did Eddie think was under the carpet?
5. What was really under the carpet?  
   **HAVO**

**Answer the questions about *the Carpet Fitter* in English.**

1. What did Eddie think of Mrs. Vanbrugh?
2. What was Eddie day-dreaming about?
3. Why didn't Eddie remove the carpet to take out the thing that was causing the lump?
4. What was Mrs. Vanbrugh worried about?
5. What was actually under the carpet?  
                                                                                                                                                 **VWO**

**Answer the questions about *the Carpet Fitter* in English.**

1. What did Eddie think of his job? Why?
2. What did Eddie want to do when he had finished fitting the carpet?
3. Why didn't Eddie remove the carpet to take out the thing that was causing the lump?
4. How did Eddie solve the problem of the lump in the carpet?
5. What did Eddie realise when he sat in his van and wanted to drive off?

**Text II - The Choking Dog**

"Come on, come on, move it, idiot!"

Joanne beat impatiently on the steering wheel of her Mercedes sports car. How stupid to get caught up in the rush hour! She had planned to leave work early this afternoon, at three o'clock, to give herself a chance to relax and have a bath before going out to a meeting of her local tennis club. But just at ten to three a client had arrived, and it was two hours before she had finished dealing with the man. When she came out of her office, all the other staff in the Highlight Advertising Agency had already left. Now she was stuck in a traffic jam in central Birmingham at 5:30, and at 6:30 she was expected to be chairing a meeting of the tennis club. There would be no time for any hot bath.

Ahead of her, the traffic was moving at last, and she swung quickly out into the centre lane to turn right, and raced the last half-mile through the quiet suburban streets to her house. Pulling up on the driveway, she leapt out of the car and ran for the house. As she opened the door, she nearly tripped over Sheba, who was standing behind it.

"Hey, Sheba, hello," she said, bending down to stroke the large Alsatian dog's head, "I've got no time for you now, but I'll take you out as soon as I get back from the tennis club." It was then that she noticed something worrying about the dog. Sheba seemed to be coughing or choking, her stomach pumping repeatedly as if she was trying to vomit something up. She was obviously in real discomfort and could hardly breathe; her sad eyes gazed up at Joanne helplessly.

"Oh damn, this is all I need now," said Joanne to herself, dropping her briefcase and bending down to take a closer look, "a sick dog, today of all days!" On closer examination, Sheba did look very sick, and Joanne realised she would have to take her down to the vet immediately. Luckily, the vet's surgery was only a few streets away, and Joanne quickly loaded the dog, still coughing and choking, into her car for the short drive.

When she got there, the surgery was just about to close for the day. Luckily, Dr. Sterne had not left yet, and when he saw the state of Sheba, he brought her quickly into his office.  
  
"It looks like something is stuck in her throat," said Dr. Sterne. It shouldn't take me too long to get it out."

"Listen, doctor, I'm really in a rush to get to a meeting -- can I leave her with you, and go and get changed? I'll be back in ten minutes to pick her up, then I'll take her on to the meeting with me. Is that OK?"

"Sure," said the doctor. "You get going. I'll see you in ten minutes." Joanne jumped back into her car again, and made the quick trip round to her house in a couple of minutes. As she was once more entering the hallway, the phone on the table by the door began to ring. She picked it up, annoyed by this additional interruption to her plans.

"This is Dr. Sterne," said an anxious voice. "Is that you, Joanne?"

"Of course it's me," said Joanne, surprised at the sound of his voice, "no-one else lives here."

"I want you to get right out of that house immediately," said the doctor's voice. "Right now. I'm coming round right away, and the police will be there any time now. Wait outside for us." The phone went dead. Joanne stared at it. She was confused, but she was also a little frightened by the obvious fear in the voice of the doctor. She replaced the receiver, then quickly backed out of the door and ran into the street.

At that moment, a police car with its lights flashing swung round the corner and screeched to a stop outside the house. Two policemen got out. After briefly checking that she was the owner of the house, they ran into the house through the still open door, without explaining anything. Joanne was by now completely confused and very frightened. Then the doctor arrived.

"Where's Sheba? Is she OK?" shouted Joanne, running over to his car. "She's fine, Joanne. I extracted the thing which was choking her, and she's OK now." "Well what's this all about? Why are the police in my house?"

Just then, the two policemen reappeared from the house, half-carrying a white-faced figure, a man in a dark grey sweater and jeans, who, it seemed, could hardly walk. There was blood all over him.

"My God," said Joanne, "how did he get in there? And how did you know he was there?"  
"I think he must be a burglar," said the doctor. "I knew he was there because when I finally removed what was stuck in Sheba's throat, it turned out to be three human fingers. I don't think he's a very happy burglar."

*MDH 1994 -- From a common urban legend*

**Questions - The Choking Dog                                                                            MAVO/HAVO/VWO**

Write down words you don’t know yet and look for their translation.

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| **English** | **Dutch** | **English** | **Dutch** |
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**MAVO**

*Answer the questions about the Choking Dog. Choose the correct answer and write down 1, 2, or 3.*

1. Where did Joanne work?
   1. A Mercedes dealer.
   2. An advertising agency.
   3. A tennis club.
2. Where was the vet’s surgery?
   1. Near Joanne’s home.
   2. Near the tennis club.
   3. Near her work.
3. Why did Joanne take Sheba to the vet’s surgery?
   1. Sheba needed her yearly check-up.
   2. Sheba was having trouble breathing.
   3. Sheba couldn’t see anymore.
4. Why did the doctor call Joanne when she was at home?
   1. To warn her for something bad.
   2. To let her know Sheba was fine.
   3. To ask her to bring Sheba’s favourite toy.
5. Who else was in Joanne’s house when the doctor called and asked her to come back to the surgery?
   1. The police.
   2. Joanne’s husband.
   3. A burglar.
6. What was inside Sheba’s stomach?
   1. The burglar’s toes.
   2. A piece of the burglar’s sweater.
   3. The burglar’s finger.

**HAVO**

**Answer the questions about *the Choking Dog* in English.**

1. Why was Joanne upset/angry at the beginning of the story?
2. Why did she take her dog to the vet?
3. Why did she drive back home?
4. Why did the doctor call her?
5. Who was the man wearing the dark grey sweater and jeans?
6. What had been in Sheba’s stomach?

**VWO**

**Answer the questions about *the Choking Dog* in English.**

1. Why was Joanne stuck in traffic?
2. Why was it inconvenient that Sheba was feeling sick *‘today, of all days’*?
3. Why did Joanne drive back home?
4. Why was Joanne surprised when the doctor called and asked if it was Joanne who had picked up the phone?
5. Who was the man wearing the dark grey sweater and jeans?
6. What had been in Sheba’s stomach?