

REVIEW BY SALLY RAMAGE

BLACKSTONE'S POLICE Q & A 2007

CRIME

By Huw Smart & John Watson

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This book relates to the Sergeants' and Inspectors Part 1 promotion examinations. It is one of four books in this series, the others being 'Evidence & Procedure', 'Road Policing' and 'General Police Duties'.

The twelve topics covered in this volume on CRIME are the same twelve covered for the CRIME subject in the Blackstone Police series. These topics are-

State of mind and Criminal Conduct; Incomplete Offences and Police Investigations; General Offences; Homicide; Misuse of Drugs; Offences Against the Person; Sexual Offences; Child Protection; Offences Amounting to Dishonesty, Deception and Fraud; Criminal Damage; Offences Against the Administration of Justice and Public Interest and Offences Arising from Immigration, Asylum and People Exploitation.

The authors maintain that Q and A books are not easy to write, nor are they an easy examination option. I can honestly vouch for that. With Q & A's, one has to have a very good knowledge of the subject before one can decide which answer is correct. On the face of it, the multiple choice answers might look similar but there are distinct differences which can only be spotted if one knows the subject thoroughly.

This series, like the Police Inspectors' Series, uses the First and Second Attempt method of answering, giving oneself vital progress feedback. Brief answers are to be found at the end of each chapter.

The authors have a good sense of humour and the questions, despite their serious nature, are apt to make one smile. For example, the very first question in the book, on state of mind and criminal conduct, states:

"Lawrence hates his wife and plans to kill her. He intends to cut her throat on Tuesday morning whilst she is asleep. On Monday, Lawrence picks his wife up from work and is driving home; he is deep in thought about the following day's planned action. Owing to his inattentiveness, Lawrence drives through a red light and his car is struck on his wife's side. She dies as a result of the accident. Could Lawrence be guilty of murder in these circumstances?"



- A. Yes, as he has achieved his desired outcome.
- B. Yes, as he was thinking about the murder at the time of the accident.
- C. No, he cannot be guilty of murder in these circumstances.
- D. No, but he could be guilty of manslaughter.

Though not contending the seriousness of the subject, one must admit that it is rather a grim ‘take’ on crime, plunging one straight into the deep end, so to speak.

But here is the rub. Part of the answer states: “Murder is a crime of *specific intent* and requires a specific *mens rea*”.

To illustrate the book’s strategy, using this same Q&A, let’s just unpack these multiple choice answers:

Lawrence’s planned outcome is the death of his wife by murder. The accident brings about his wife’s death, but an accident is not murder. So A must be incorrect.

At the time of the accident on Monday, Lawrence was thinking about the planned murder that would take place on Tuesday. He was not thinking of murdering her there and then through crashing his car. So B must be incorrect.

C is the correct **answer**. For this scenario to be a murder scenario, Lawrence must have the *mens rea* to kill her by crashing the car. But it was an accident. There was no specific intent to kill his wife by crashing his car.

He could not be guilty of manslaughter because manslaughter requires a specific *mens rea*.

Each question in the book concentrates on a specific point. The questions are not, for the purpose of these examinations, intended to be overly probing, although one might hazard a guess that each and every question can make for a university level police law essay and so, in the case of question 1.1 above, the essay might begin with the origins of the term *mens rea*, being from the saying “*actus non facit reum nisi mens sit rea*”, or, “*an act does not make a man guilty of a crime unless his mind is also guilty*”.

This book is fit for purpose and its objective is for the officer to pass his/her examination – and to whet the appetite for further reading.