

ENGLISH LEARNING FOR CURIOUS MINDS



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Episode #264

Meyer Lansky: The Mob's Accountant

20th May, 2022

[00:00:00] Hello, hello hello, and welcome to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo English.

[00:00:12] 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 we are going to be talking about Meyer Lansky, the man known as the “[Mob's](#)¹ Accountant”.

[00:00:31] Meyer Lansky was a legendary figure in American Mafia [circles](#)². [So much so](#)³ that he even had his own character in the all-time classic Mafia film the Godfather - Hyman Roth.

[00:00:44] At one point, his total wealth was estimated at around \$300 million.

¹ Mafia's

² groups of people

³ to the degree or extent

[00:00:50] Yet when Lansky died, there was no [trace](#)⁴ of these hidden millions.

[00:00:56] So, in this episode we'll look at the life of Meyer Lansky, how he managed to become a well-respected member of the [mob](#)⁵, despite not being Italian, how he [befriended](#)⁶ the Cuban president and helped build Las Vegas all while spending very little time [behind bars](#)⁷.

[00:01:16] OK then, let's get started.

[00:01:21] Meyer Lansky was born in 1902, in what is modern-day Belarus, to Jewish-Polish parents.

[00:01:30] The family [emigrated](#)⁸, they relocated, to New York in 1911, under pressure to escape the [anti-semitic](#)⁹, the anti-Jewish environment that was [widespread](#)¹⁰ in Imperial Russia.

[00:01:46] Lansky's father found work in Brooklyn, where the family first settled.

⁴ something that showed where they were

⁵ mafia

⁶ became a friend to him

⁷ in prison

⁸ relocated to another country

⁹ anti-Jewish

¹⁰ existing among many people

Meyer Lansky: The Mob's Accountant

[00:01:51] Lansky was a good **pupil**¹¹ at school and appeared to **take his lessons in his stride**¹². Later on in life, his excellent mathematics skills would help him to earn a fortune and **propel**¹³ him to the top **tier**¹⁴ of the **mob**.

[00:02:09] While he may have had more money than he knew what to do with later on in life, as a young boy there was never much money around.

[00:02:18] In an effort to cut costs, Lansky's family moved from Brooklyn to Manhattan's Lower East Side.

[00:02:26] During the early 1900s, the Lower East Side was home to a large number of Jewish families from Eastern Europe, often working in **garment**¹⁵ manufacturing or selling goods from **pavement**¹⁶ **stalls**¹⁷.

¹¹ student

¹² deal with them with no much worry

¹³ push

¹⁴ level

¹⁵ clothing

¹⁶ the part on one side of a road, that people walk on

¹⁷ small shops

[00:02:41] At the time, the Lower East Side was one of the most [densely](#)¹⁸ populated places in the world, with families living in [cramped](#)¹⁹, [overcrowded](#)²⁰ apartments with very basic [sanitation](#)²¹ facilities.

[00:02:56] It was here that Lansky began to [deviate](#)²², to [stray from the straight and narrow](#)²³.

[00:03:04] While Lansky continued to do well at his new school, he quickly became involved in local kid's street gangs and illegal street gambling.

[00:03:14] While Lansky was at school, he became friends with another Jewish boy called Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. The pair would form a long-lasting friendship and go on to create the Bugs and Meyer [Mob](#) - a very violent Prohibition-era gang.

[00:03:34] Lansky's move to the Lower East Side was also responsible for his close relationship with the Italian Charles "Lucky" Luciano, who would later become one of the most powerful figures of organised crime in America.

¹⁸ in a crowded manner, with lots of people very closely together

¹⁹ not having enough space

²⁰ containing too many people

²¹ relating to public health, especially taking dirty water and other waste products away from the buildings

²² start behaving in a different, not usual way

²³ move away from a good and honest way of living

[00:03:50] **Legend has it**²⁴ that Luciano was the child leader of a gang of boys originally from Italy who would **pick on**²⁵ Jewish children, like Lansky and Siegel, forcing them to pay them protection money.

[00:04:04] This practice is also known as an **extortion racket**²⁶.

[00:04:08] It's a common criminal activity, "protection". You pay me otherwise I'll **beat you up**²⁷. It's one of the simplest Mafia **extortion**²⁸ techniques, making it an easy way for most gangsters to get started.

[00:04:24] Despite his short height and younger age, Lansky refused to give in to **surrender**²⁹ to Luciano. His **plucky**³⁰, his brave, **refusals**³¹ led to Luciano respecting him and they then became friends, and later business associates.

[00:04:44] His partnership with Luciano would open the door to working with high-ranking, older **mob** members such as Arnold Rothstein, a man nicknamed "The

²⁴ it is known or heard

²⁵ bully, tease

²⁶ an organised illegal activity in which a group tries to get money from someone by using force or threats

²⁷ attack you physically

²⁸ the practice of getting money through force or threats

²⁹ stop fighting or resisting

³⁰ brave

³¹ statements that he wouldn't do it

Brain”, who was **rumoured**³² to have **fixed**³³ the 1919 World Series in Major League Baseball.

[00:05:02] At the time, the Jewish and the Italian **mobs**³⁴ were the two main criminal groups operating in New York, and they didn't **get along**³⁵, they were not friends. Each side **stuck**³⁶ to their ethnic **roots**³⁷ and competed for power, money and territory.

[00:05:20] Unlike previous generations who formed these independent criminal groups based on their ethnicity or nationality, Lansky, Luciano and Siegel were part of a new generation, one where criminals from different backgrounds would work together to maximise their profits.

[00:05:40] When Lansky finished school, aged 14 as was common at the time, he got his first real job working in the manufacturing industry.

[00:05:50] Later, he progressed to working on cars as a mechanic, but he still kept his street gambling habits from his school days and still kept contact with street gang

³² said or reported

³³ influenced its outcome or result by illegal means

³⁴ mafia groups

³⁵ like each other

³⁶ stayed or kept close

³⁷ origins, beginnings

members. Before long, he [took up](#)³⁸ a second job in the evening, working as a [strong-arm man](#)³⁹ at a gambling [parlour](#)⁴⁰.

[00:06:11] Aside from providing security, [strong-arm men](#)⁴¹ were also often very violent, using [threats](#)⁴², force and [intimidation](#)⁴³ as required by their bosses.

[00:06:24] At this time, organised criminals mainly made money from illegal gambling and [extortion](#), but in 1920 there would be a new, incredibly [lucrative](#)⁴⁴ money-making opportunity: Prohibition, or the banning of alcohol.

[00:06:42] We actually did an episode on Prohibition a couple of weeks ago, it was one of our member-only ones, so if you're interested in that one I'd recommend checking it out.

[00:06:53] In 1920, when Prohibition came into effect, sales of alcohol were forced [underground](#)⁴⁵, and a golden opportunity was presented.

³⁸ started

³⁹ strong man hired to provide protection

⁴⁰ business, establishment

⁴¹ strong men hired to provide protection

⁴² suggestions that something bad would happen to them if they wouldn't do what they were told

⁴³ actions of frightening or threatening someone

⁴⁴ producing a lot of money

⁴⁵ below ground

[00:07:04] Naturally, people didn't stop drinking [altogether](#)⁴⁶, and the illegal supply of alcohol, or [bootlegging](#)⁴⁷, as it was known, was [taken over](#)⁴⁸ by criminal gangs.

[Bootlegging](#) often [went hand-in-hand](#)⁴⁹ with the illegal gambling industry, with drinking now forced to take place behind locked doors.

[00:07:26] Lansky decided to leave his day job altogether and go full-time with his illegal activities.

[00:07:34] Lansky and Siegel became partners specialising in [bootlegging](#), in the distribution and sale of illegal alcohol.

[00:07:43] But Lansky wasn't only involved with [bootlegged](#)⁵⁰ alcohol.

⁴⁶ completely

⁴⁷ the illegal supply of alcohol

⁴⁸ controlled

⁴⁹ was closely connected

⁵⁰ illegally sold

Meyer Lansky: The Mob's Accountant

[00:07:48] His Bugs and Meyer **Mob**, as it had become known, had developed a violent reputation, specialising in **assassinations**⁵¹ - performing **hits**⁵², or murders, to order, as well as illegal gambling, truck **hijacking**⁵³ and protection **rackets**⁵⁴.

[00:08:06] Lansky was reportedly **the brains**⁵⁵, organising the criminal activities while Siegel would handle the violent crime.

[00:08:16] Lansky and Siegel worked in close partnership with Luciano, as well as providing him with the **hitmen**⁵⁶ he needed to reorganise the mafia.

[00:08:26] Lansky also became a protégé of the powerful Rothstein, the man nicknamed The Brain.

[00:08:33] Clearly Lansky was **on his way up**⁵⁷ in the criminal **underworld**⁵⁸.

⁵¹ murders for business reasons

⁵² murders

⁵³ illegally taking control of

⁵⁴ organised illegal activities in which they tried to get money from someone by using force or threats

⁵⁵ the most intelligent person in the group who planned what they would do

⁵⁶ persons who were paid to kill someone

⁵⁷ rising to a better position

⁵⁸ world of organised crime

[00:08:39] He was Jewish, not Italian, which would mean he would struggle to ever be accepted at the very upper [echelons](#)⁵⁹, right at the top, but his brains and his business sense meant that he became trusted by many major [mob](#) figures.

[00:08:55] This became a winning formula and Lansky was known for his honest and fair [dealings](#)⁶⁰.

[00:09:03] Given his new status, it is no surprise that Lansky was an influential presence at the now [infamous](#)⁶¹ mafia conference in Atlantic city in 1929.

[00:09:15] The Atlantic City Conference was the brainchild, the invention of, Lucky Luciano who wanted the Italian and Jewish [mobs](#) to [pool](#)⁶² their resources and talent, and work together rather than in competition with one another.

[00:09:34] The conference was attended by all of the big mafia [kingpins](#)⁶³ and led to the creation of something called the United Crime Syndicate.

[00:09:43] The logic was simple. We'll all make more money and have less trouble with the police if we work together rather than fight each other.

⁵⁹ levels or groups within the organisation

⁶⁰ business activities

⁶¹ famous for something bad

⁶² share

⁶³ persons that were very important for the success of the organisation

[00:09:53] After Prohibition ended in 1933, and alcohol was suddenly legal again, Lansky and his other **mob** colleagues needed to find another way to make money.

[00:10:05] Illegal money, of course, as making money legally is just... well, it's hard and boring.

[00:10:13] For Lansky, this would be gambling, which was still illegal.

[00:10:17] He had experience from his school day street corner gambling games and his **superior**⁶⁴ mathematical skills meant that he understood the basics of gambling much better than some other criminals who were simply out to make cash by cheating.

[00:10:35] From the very beginning, Lansky was determined to set up his gambling business fairly.

[00:10:42] Even though this might sound like a **contradiction**⁶⁵, Lansky wanted his customers to have confidence in his gambling establishments.

[00:10:50] He knew that the house, the business, the casino always wins in the end.

[00:10:56] So rather than **rigging**⁶⁶ his tables so that they paid out quickly, Lansky made sure that his establishments were always fair.

⁶⁴ better than the average

⁶⁵ something that was the complete opposite of what would have been expected

⁶⁶ arranging them dishonestly

[00:11:06] Thanks to his honesty in this respect, Lansky's gambling [ventures](#)⁶⁷ really began to take off and with them, his profits.

[00:11:16] But, not [content](#)⁶⁸ with illegal gambling [dens](#)⁶⁹ and [bootlegging](#), Lansky wanted to open what was known as a "carpet [joint](#)⁷⁰".

[00:11:26] “[Joint](#)” in this context means a place, but it can also be [slang](#)⁷¹ for a prison or a cigarette containing marijuana - it's a great example of the different contextual meanings of [slang](#) words in English.

[00:11:41] Going back to what Lansky wanted to open it was a “[carpet joint](#)⁷²” - and “[carpet joint](#)” is a [slang](#) term for a luxury casino.

[00:11:52] Lansky's first big [venture](#)⁷³ was the creation of a casino in Saratoga Springs, New York.

[00:11:59] He partnered with Mafia [bigwigs](#)⁷⁴, or VIPs, Frank Costello and Joe Adonis.

⁶⁷ activities

⁶⁸ pleased or satisfied

⁶⁹ places where people met to engage in an illegal activity

⁷⁰ place, club

⁷¹ a type of informal language used in a particular context or group of people

⁷² luxury casino (slang)

⁷³ operation, project

⁷⁴ people who had important or powerful positions, VIPs

[00:12:06] Like numerous other illegal gambling establishments, their casino was protected by corrupt local politicians.

[00:12:14] In fact, it was due to his illegal gambling operation in Saratoga Springs that Lansky would spend his only time in prison, - a total of just 24 days. This was due to a [widespread crackdown](#)⁷⁵ on illegal gambling which officials and local residents had previously [turned a blind eye to](#)⁷⁶.

[00:12:36] Lansky decided to [head](#)⁷⁷ south, for sun, sand, and [easily-bribed](#)⁷⁸ politicians. He went to Florida, and opened a series of casinos in the state with the unofficial agreement of the local government. Illegal gambling had become a major source of income for some local governments.

[00:12:57] Criminals would make huge donations to local [synagogues](#)⁷⁹, churches, hospitals and city organisations. Local residents and politicians, many of whom benefited directly from this illegal industry, would often [turn a blind eye to](#)⁸⁰ these casinos. Lansky's reputation as someone who was able to build [well-run](#)⁸¹, respectable

⁷⁵ a situation in which officials had started dealing with the illegal activities

⁷⁶ pretended not to notice, ignored

⁷⁷ go, move

⁷⁸ showing interest in receiving money in order to ignore his illegal activities

⁷⁹ buildings in which Jewish people practice their religion

⁸⁰ pretend not to notice, ignore

⁸¹ well-organised

casinos meant that he was invited to Cuba in the late 1930s, by a then military colonel, Fulgencio Batista.

[00:13:30] Batista had a vision to make Cuba into a [playground](#)⁸² for the rich and famous, and sought Lansky's services as someone who would be able to rebuild the country's corrupt casino industry.

[00:13:44] This would be just the start of a project that was later to become his main focus in life, but there was a [spanner in the works](#)⁸³ when Batista unexpectedly lost power and influence after his [appointed](#)⁸⁴ political successor lost the 1944 election.

[00:14:03] Lansky, without a [sympathetic ear](#)⁸⁵ in Cuba, focussed his attention back on the US, and he was [instrumental](#)⁸⁶ in [planting the seeds](#)⁸⁷ for what would become America's gambling capital.

[00:14:17] In 1946, he helped his childhood friend and partner Bugsy Siegel to take control of the [mob's](#) interests in Las Vegas, where Siegel would create the Flamingo Hotel.

⁸² a place where they would choose to enjoy themselves

⁸³ something that didn't go according to plan

⁸⁴ officially chosen as

⁸⁵ someone who would be willing to listen to his problems and help him

⁸⁶ very important or influential

⁸⁷ preparing the way, setting the basis

[00:14:31] However, this hotel [ran massively over budget](#)⁸⁸, and suspicions were running high that Siegel was [on the take](#)⁸⁹, that he was [syphoning money off](#)⁹⁰ for himself.

[00:14:44] Lansky is said to have [spared](#)⁹¹ his friend the [mob's](#)⁹² [wrath](#)⁹³, their anger, but he wasn't able to do so forever.

[00:14:54] Eventually it seems that Lansky had little choice but to agree with the growing demands to have Siegel taken out or killed.

[00:15:03] Now up until now, you might have thought that Lansky sounded like any other gangster running [protection rackets](#)⁹⁴ being involved with [bootlegged](#) alcohol and violent crime.

[00:15:15] Sure, he did all that, and he was certainly not a very nice man. But the reality was that he was quite unlike the typical [mafioso](#)⁹⁵ of the time.

⁸⁸ was working or functioning far beyond the amount of money that it had been planned for

⁸⁹ receiving illegal income

⁹⁰ illegally taking money from the organisation

⁹¹ save him from

⁹² mafia's

⁹³ extreme anger

⁹⁴ organised illegal activities in which a group tries to get money from someone by using threats

⁹⁵ member of the mafia

[00:15:28] Lansky had always been [particular](#)⁹⁶ about money, both his own and the profits that he collected and shared with or on behalf of his various partners.

[00:15:39] In an attempt to avoid prison, Lansky is said to have [channelled](#)⁹⁷ money through Swiss banks and various [holding companies](#)⁹⁸ in order to hide his wealth and that of his partners.

[00:15:53] It's for this reason that he is still known today as the “[Mob's](#) Accountant”, as someone who knew how to read a [balance sheet](#)⁹⁹, how to [squeeze the maximum amount of money out](#)¹⁰⁰ of a business, and most importantly, how to hide it from the authorities to avoid getting caught.

[00:16:13] However, Lansky was not completely against taking risks, and despite being [spectacularly](#)¹⁰¹ wealthy, it never seemed to be enough.

⁹⁶ insisting that it should be managed according to his way

⁹⁷ directed, transported

⁹⁸ companies created to buy and own the shares of other companies

⁹⁹ financial statement of a company

¹⁰⁰ get as much money as he could from it

¹⁰¹ in an impressive way

[00:16:23] After returning to power in a military [coup](#)¹⁰² in 1952, Cuban President Fulgencio Batista invited Lansky back to Cuba to further [reform](#)¹⁰³ the gambling industry, after his early [stint](#)¹⁰⁴, or stay, in Cuba several years before.

[00:16:41] As gambling had become increasingly [cracked down upon](#)¹⁰⁵ in America during the 1940s, and with many of his casinos being closed down, Cuba seemed like a golden opportunity for Lansky.

[00:16:55] Batista and Lansky worked out a deal together, Batista and Lansky would control Cuban gambling in return for secret payments or [kickbacks](#)¹⁰⁶, and favourable treatment from the government. The mafia would also be free to control everything that came along with gambling: alcohol, prostitution, drugs, essentially turning Cuba into a [den of iniquity](#)¹⁰⁷ only a short flight away from Florida.

[00:17:24] Lansky had already made clear that he believed Cuba was a golden opportunity for the mafia, and several years before coming back, he had organised the Havana Conference - the biggest [mob](#) meeting since the Atlantic City Conference in 1929.

¹⁰² a sudden, violent, and illegal possession or seizure of power

¹⁰³ shape or form again, improve

¹⁰⁴ stay

¹⁰⁵ hard to control because of measures taken by the officials

¹⁰⁶ secret illegal payments

¹⁰⁷ a place where illegal things were done

[00:17:41] Batista and Lansky' business arrangement would last for 10 years. Aside from taking over casinos Lansky also built his own, including his [crown jewel¹⁰⁸](#), the Riviera hotel.

[00:17:55] The hotel's grand opening [starred¹⁰⁹](#) the award-winning actress Ginger Rogers and was even shown on American TV.

[00:18:04] However, as the saying goes all good things come to an end.

[00:18:09] Following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, when Fidel Castro took power and the country became communist, all American-owned businesses were nationalised. Casinos were closed down and property seized.

[00:18:24] It is estimated that Lansky lost around \$7 million at the time, approximately 44 million euros in today's money.

[00:18:33] In Lansky's own words, he crapped out. He lost it all on a gamble.

[00:18:38] This phrase, by the way, crapped out, comes from the dice game craps, which was the first form of gambling that Lansky [encountered¹¹⁰](#) on the streets of New York as a child.

¹⁰⁸ most important or valuable part or asset

¹⁰⁹ presenting in a leading role

¹¹⁰ experienced, met

[00:18:51] After losing everything in Cuba, Lansky had no choice, but to move back to the U S, where he was put under surveillance, [under watch¹¹¹](#), by the tax authorities for suspected income tax fraud.

[00:19:06] After coming under continued pressure from the US authorities, Lansky decided to sell all of his business interests, leave America and moved to Israel under Israel's law of return programme.

[00:19:21] However, given Lansky's criminal record and America wanting to [press¹¹²](#) tax evasion charges against him, Lansky was [deported¹¹³](#), he was sent back to the USA just two years later.

[00:19:34] Back in the USA Lansky faced criminal charges.

[00:19:39] He was cleared of the tax evasion charges and given his poor health and old age, the judge suspended, or stopped, the other charges from being brought to court.

[00:19:51] He died in 1983 of lung cancer at the age of 80.

¹¹¹ being watched at all times

¹¹² (charges) accuse him formally

¹¹³ forced to leave the country

[00:19:56] [No mean feat for](#)¹¹⁴ one of the most powerful organised criminals in 20th century America, and it is certainly quite something that he only spent less than a month in prison, lived to the age of 80 and died a free man.

[00:20:12] You couldn't say the same about many of his business associates.

[00:20:16] But while he might have lived a long and free life, and certainly would have made vast amounts of money from everything from [bootlegging](#) to [extortion](#), then later the drugs and casino trade, after his death this money seemed to have [vanished into thin air](#)¹¹⁵.

[00:20:35] His family, reportedly I should say, were surprised to say that his [estate](#)¹¹⁶ amounted to little more than \$35,000, around 100,000 euros in today's money.

[00:20:47] So what exactly happened to the hundreds of millions of dollars that the U S federal authorities believed Lansky had hidden?

[00:20:57] Did they ever exist? Are they still sitting in a Swiss bank somewhere?

[00:21:02] Or did he really lose everything in Cuba, he put everything on black and he wasn't expecting communist "red"?

¹¹⁴ A great achievement for

¹¹⁵ disappeared completely in a mysterious way

¹¹⁶ money and property

Meyer Lansky: The Mob's Accountant

[00:21:11] Before his death, despite Forbes magazine suggesting that he was one of the richest men in America, Lansky had claimed that he was almost [broke¹¹⁷](#), almost out of money.

[00:21:23] He openly stated that he lost almost everything he had in Cuba, but there does seem to be a large difference between his estimated 300 million dollar fortune and the 7 million dollars that he lost in Cuba.

[00:21:38] I don't think you need to be an accountant to see that, as far as the [Mob's Accountant](#) is concerned, something doesn't quite [add up¹¹⁸](#).

[00:21:49] OK then, that is it for today's episode on Meyer Lansky.

[00:21:54] I hope it's been an interesting one, and you've learned a bit about the life and times of the so-called "[Mob's Accountant](#)".

[00:22:01] As always, I would love to know what you thought about this episode.

[00:22:05] What do you think of Meyer Lansky, was he really any different from any other [mob](#) boss?

[00:22:11] Do you really believe that Lansky lost all his money?

[00:22:15] And do you think that these gangsters of the 1930s and 40s are really any different from the organised criminals of today?

¹¹⁷ out of money

¹¹⁸ seem right compared to other information

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[00:22:24] I would love to know, so let's get this discussion started.

[00:22:28] You can head right into our community forum, which is at
community.leonardoenglish.com and get chatting to other curious minds.

[00:22:36] You've been listening to English Learning for Curious Minds, by Leonardo
English.

[00:22:41] I'm Alastair Budge, you stay safe, and I'll catch you in the next episode.

[END OF EPISODE]

Key vocabulary

| Word | Definition |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Mob's | Mafia's |
| Circles | groups of people |
| So much so | to the degree or extent |
| Trace | something that showed where they were |
| Mob | mafia |
| Befriended | became a friend to him |
| Behind bars | in prison |
| Emigrated | relocated to another country |
| Anti-semitic | anti-Jewish |
| Widespread | existing among many people |
| Pupil | student |
| Take his lessons in his stride | deal with them with no much worry |

| | |
|---|---|
| Propel | push |
| Tier | level |
| Garment | clothing |
| Pavement | the part on one side of a road, that people walk on |
| Stalls | small shops |
| Densely | in a crowded manner, with lots of people very closely together |
| Cramped | not having enough space |
| Overcrowded | containing too many people |
| Sanitation | relating to public health, especially taking dirty water and other waste products away from the buildings |
| Deviate | start behaving in a different, not usual way |
| Stray from the straight and narrow | move away from a good and honest way of living |
| Legend has it | it is known or heard |
| Pick on | bully, tease |
| Extortion racket | an organised illegal activity in which a group tries to get money from |

someone by using force or threats

Beat you up

attack you physically

Extortion

the practice of getting money through force or threats

Surrender

stop fighting or resisting

Plucky

brave

Refusals

statements that he wouldn't do it

Rumoured

said or reported

Fixed

influenced its outcome or result by illegal means

Mobs

mafia groups

Get along

like each other

Stuck

stayed or kept close

Roots

origins, beginnings

Took up

started

Strong-arm man

strong man hired to provide protection

Parlour

business, establishment

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Strong-arm men | strong men hired to provide protection |
| Threats | suggestions that something bad would happen to them if they wouldn't do what they were told |
| Intimidation | actions of frightening or threatening someone |
| Lucrative | producing a lot of money |
| Underground | below ground |
| Altogether | completely |
| Bootlegging | the illegal supply of alcohol |
| Taken over | controlled |
| Went hand-in-hand | was closely connected |
| Bootlegged | illegally sold |
| Assassinations | murders for business reasons |
| Hits | murders |
| Hijacking | illegally taking control of |
| Rackets | organised illegal activities in which they tried to get money from someone by using force or threats |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| The brains | the most intelligent person in the group who planned what they would do |
| Hitmen | persons who were paid to kill someone |
| On his way up | rising to a better position |
| Underworld | world of organised crime |
| Echelons | levels or groups within the organisation |
| Dealings | business activities |
| Infamous | famous for something bad |
| Pool | share |
| Kingpins | persons that were very important for the success of the organisation |
| Superior | better than the average |
| Contradiction | something that was the complete opposite of what would have been expected |
| Rigging | arranging them dishonestly |
| Ventures | activities |
| Content | pleased or satisfied |

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Dens | places where people met to engage in an illegal activity |
| Joint | place, club |
| Slang | a type of informal language used in a particular context or group of people |
| Carpet joint | luxury casino (slang) |
| Venture | operation, project |
| Bigwigs | people who had important or powerful positions, VIPs |
| Crackdown | a situation in which officials had started dealing with the illegal activities |
| Turned a blind eye to | pretended not to notice, ignored |
| Head | go, move |
| Easily-bribed | showing interest in receiving money in order to ignore his illegal activities |
| Synagogues | buildings in which Jewish people practice their religion |
| Turn a blind eye to | pretend not to notice, ignore |
| Well-run | well-organised |

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| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Playground | a place where they would choose to enjoy themselves |
| Spanner in the works | something that didn't go according to plan |
| Appointed | officially chosen as |
| Sympathetic ear | someone who would be willing to listen to his problems and help him |
| Instrumental | very important or influential |
| Planting the seeds | preparing the way, setting the basis |
| Ran massively over budget | was working or functioning far beyond the amount of money that it had been planned for |
| On the take | receiving illegal income |
| Syphoning money off | illegally taking money from the organisation |
| Spared | save him from |
| Mob's | mafia's |
| Wrath | extreme anger |
| Protection rackets | organised illegal activities in which a group tries to get money from someone by using threats |

Meyer Lansky: The Mob's Accountant

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| Mafioso | member of the mafia |
| Particular | insisting that it should be managed according to his way |
| Channelled | directed, transported |
| Holding companies | companies created to buy and own the shares of other companies |
| Balance sheet | financial statement of a company |
| Squeeze the maximum amount of money out | get as much money as he could from it |
| Spectacularly | in an impressive way |
| Coup | a sudden, violent, and illegal possession or seizure of power |
| Reform | shape or form again, improve |
| Stint | stay |
| Cracked down upon | hard to control because of measures taken by the officials |
| Kickbacks | secret illegal payments |
| Den of iniquity | a place where illegal things were done |
| Crown jewel | most important or valuable part or asset |

Meyer Lansky: The Mob's Accountant

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|-------------------------------|--|
| Starred | presenting in a leading role |
| Encountered | experienced, met |
| Under watch | being watched at all times |
| Press | (charges) accuse him formally |
| Deported | forced to leave the country |
| No mean feat for | A great achievement for |
| Vanished into thin air | disappeared completely in a mysterious way |
| Estate | money and property |
| Broke | out of money |
| Add up | seem right compared to other information |

We'd love to get your feedback on this episode.

What did you like? What could we do better?

What did you struggle to understand?

Let us know in the forum community.leonardoenglish.com