



---

**ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore**

---

**GLOSSARY**

**non-fiction** – a type of writing about things that are true and are not imaginary  
\* Most textbooks used in college and university classes are non-fiction.

**hardback** – a book with a hard cover that does not bend easily  
\* This hardback costs almost \$40, so I'm going to wait until the cheaper paperback copy is available.

**paperback** – a book with a flexible paper cover that bends easily  
\* Paperbacks are lightweight and easy to pack, but they get damaged easily if you're not careful.

**new release** – a book that has recently become available for sale  
\* This book is one of our most popular new releases. Our store received 100 copies yesterday, but today, we have only two copies left.

**fiction** – a type of writing about things that are imaginary and are not true  
\* What kind of fiction do you like to read? Mysteries, science fiction, or romances?

**title** – the name of a publication, such as a book, magazine, or article  
\* The title of Lucy's favorite book is "I, Claudius."

**author** – the person who wrote a book  
\* One of my father's favorite authors is Leo Tolstoy.

**ISBN** – International Standard Book Number – a number assigned to each book that is published that no other book has  
\* The ISBN for this book is 978-0325000633.

**out-of-print** – no longer being published; not in print anymore  
\* You won't be able to find that out-of-print book in a normal bookstore, but you might be able to buy it online or in a used bookstore.

**to look (something) up** – to search for something in a directory or a reference book, such as a dictionary or phone book  
\* If you have a phone book, you can look phone numbers up by the person's last name.

**bestseller** – a very popular book that is bought by many people  
\* The "Harry Potter" books are bestsellers in many countries.



---

## ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore

---

**still in print** – still being printed by the publishers; still being made or published

\* That book was very popular in the 1800s and it is still in print today.

**to publish** – to produce or make a book, newspaper, or magazine and sell it to the public

\* Chuck has written three books, but none of them have been published yet.

**used** – secondhand; already bought once and is now available for sale again

\* Davida likes to buy used books because they're less expensive than new books and they're usually in good condition.

**to give (something) a try** – to do something to see if it will work; to try to do something; to try something to see if it is pleasing

\* Mrs. Fritz suggested that I get a new pair of glasses so I can see better. I'll give it a try, but I don't think it will help.

**biography** – the story of someone's life, written by another person

\* This biography of Linus Pauling is fascinating. Have you read it?

**reference** – related to looking for information; a book that has information about specific topic(s)

\* The library's reference section includes dictionaries, encyclopedias, college guides, and telephone books.



---

**ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore**

---

**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. What information does Adrian have about the book he is looking for?
    - a) The title.
    - b) The author's name.
    - c) The ISBN.
  
  2. According to the clerk, what types of books can be found at used bookstores?
    - a) Bestsellers.
    - b) Out-of-print books.
    - c) Books that are still in print.
- 

**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**title**

The word “title,” in this podcast, means the name of a book: “When Gabriella was a child, the title of her favorite book was, ‘The Giant Jam Sandwich’.” The word “title” can also mean the word in front of a person’s name, such as “Dr.” as in “Dr. McQuillan,” “Mr.” (for a single or married man), and “Ms.” (for a single or married woman): “Ms. Banderi, have you seen Dr. Nobu?” A “title” can also be the name of a person’s job, such as “vice president of sales” or “associate professor of chemistry”: “Please introduce yourselves to the rest of the group by telling us your name and your job title.” The word “title” can also mean the ownership of something: “The Gamarras have held the title to that land for generations.”

**reference**

In this podcast, the word “reference” means something that is related to looking for information: “She couldn’t find any reference materials about deep sea fishing at the local library, so this weekend she’ll go to the larger university library.” A “reference” is also a person who can provide a recommendation based on one’s qualifications: “To apply to that school, you must list at least three references who are familiar with your professional experience.” In an academic article or book, a “list of references” is a list of the other books and articles where information was found and that was used to write the article or book: “Our teacher reminded us to include a list of references at the end of our report.” Finally, a “reference” can mean something that mentions something else: “Even though Tony has breathing problems, he almost never makes reference to his illness.”



**ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore**

**CULTURE NOTE**

Books can generally be “categorized” (grouped) into two different groups: fiction and non-fiction. Within those groups there are many “genres” or types of writing. Here is a list of some popular genres and brief explanations of the types of books that you’ll find within each genre.

<b>FICTION</b>	
Children's stories	Imaginative and entertaining stories written for young children
Detective fiction/Mysteries	Stories where the readers don't find out who did a murder or another crime until the end of the book
Fantasy	Stories about magic, talking animals, and characters that have never existed
Historical fiction	Stories based on real people from the past, but the things they say and do are not real
Humor	Funny, comical stories or jokes
Literature	Stories that are recognized as important works
Poetry	Stories written in short sentences that sometimes rhyme
Romance	Stories about falling in love or being in love
Science fiction	Stories about what may happen in the future, based on changes in science and technology

<b>NON-FICTION</b>	
Cooking	Recipes and information about how to cook
History	Information about important events and people from the past
Home improvement	Information about how to make one's home bigger, better, and/or more beautiful
Religion	Information about world religions and faith
Self-help	Information about how one can improve one's life, such as by reducing stress, making friends, or learning to do better in one's job
Travel writing	True stories about people's adventures traveling to other countries and living in other cultures

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – a; 2 – b



---

**ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore**

---

**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 257: Finding a Book at a Bookstore.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 257. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

If you visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com), you can download a Learning Guide to this episode that contains all of the vocabulary, the definitions, additional sample sentences of the words we use, additional explanations of the words we use, cultural notes, and a complete transcript of this episode. We also have a ESL Podcast Store that has some additional premium courses that you may be interested in.

Our dialogue today is about a customer going into a store, talking to one of the employees at the store, and asking him where certain kinds of books are. He's in a bookstore, of course! Let's get started.

[start of story]

Clerk: Can I help you find something?

Adrian: Yes. Can you tell me where the non-fiction books are?

Clerk: Are you looking for hardbacks or paperbacks?

Adrian: I'm not sure. I think hardbacks.

Clerk: Well, the non-fiction new releases are at the front of the store. The non-fiction section is behind the fiction shelves on your right. The hardbacks are on the top shelves and the paperbacks on the bottom ones. Is there a specific book I can help you find?

Adrian: I'm looking for an old book and I'm not sure of the title. It's something like, "The Literary Crisis."

Clerk: Do you know the name of the author?

Adrian: No, I don't. I saw it mentioned online and I actually wrote down the ISBN, but I can't find it now.



---

## ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore

---

Clerk: Well, if it's an old book, it may be out-of-print, but let me look it up in our system. If it was a bestseller at one time, there's a chance that it's still in print. Let me check...Okay, here it is. It was published in 1982, and unfortunately, it is out-of-print. You may want to try a used bookstore, like Bookwoman's down the street.

Adrian: Thanks, I'll give them a try. I'm also looking for a biography. Can you tell me where they are?

Clerk: Sure. The biographies are behind the reference section over there. Let me know if you need any more help.

Adrian: Thanks. I appreciate it.

[end of story]

Our dialogue begins with the clerk, the person who works at the bookstore, asking Adrian, the customer, "Can I help you find something?" And Adrian says, "Yes. Can you tell me where the non-fiction books are?" Notice that he uses the expression "Can you tell me" instead of just saying, "Where are the nonfiction books." Can you tell me, or could you tell me, are considered more polite - a nicer way to ask a question.

Non-fiction books are books about things that are true. The opposite of non-fiction is fiction, "fiction." Fiction books are imaginary - they're invented - they're not real. Non-fiction are books about things that are real.

The clerk asks Adrian, "Are you looking for hardbacks or paperbacks?" There are two kinds of books that you can get. A hardback, "hardback," book is a book that has a hard cover, one that does not bend easily, so it is straight and it doesn't bend; that would be a hardback or a hardback book. A paperback, "paperback," is a book that has flexible paper on the cover. So, the cover of the book - the outside of the book - is made of a soft, flexible paper; it isn't hard.

Adrian answers the question by saying, "I'm not sure" - I'm not sure if I am looking for hardbacks or paperbacks. Notice we can use those words as both adjectives and nouns. So, I can say, "I'm looking for a paperback," or "I'm looking for a paperback book," it means the same thing.

The clerk then says, "Well, the non-fiction new releases are" in "the front of the store." New releases, "releases," are books that have recently been published - they became available very recently, in the last month or maybe two months.



---

## ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore

---

Bookstores usually put new releases in the front of the store because those are the ones that people are probably most interested in buying.

“The non-fiction section,” the clerk goes on, “is behind the fiction shelves on your right.” We’ve already explained what fiction books are. “The hardbacks are on the top shelves and the paperbacks on the bottom ones.” The shelves, “shelves,” are the, usually, pieces of wood that you put the books on to hold the books.

The clerk then asks, “Is there a specific book I can help you find?” Adrian says, “I’m looking for an old book and I’m not sure of the title.” The title, “title,” is the name of a book or a magazine or an article. There are several different meanings to that word, title; take a look at our Learning Guide for today for some more information.

Adrian says, “It’s something like 'The Literary Crisis.'” The clerk then asks, “Do you know the name of the author?” The author, “author,” is the person who wrote the book.

Adrian says, “No. I saw it mentioned online” - on the Internet - “and I wrote down the ISBN, but I can’t find it now.” ISBN (all in capital letters) stands for, or means, International Standard Book Number. This is a number that is given a book when it is published. It is, what we would call, a unique number, meaning it is only for that book - no other book has that same number. This is a number that bookstores and libraries use to identify, and locate, and order books.

The clerk says, “Well, if it’s an old book, it may be out-of-print.” The expression out-of-print, “print,” means that the company that published the book is not making any new copies of the book; it isn’t in print any more. The opposite of out-of-print is in print; that means the company is still making the book and you can still buy it in a bookstore. But when it is out-of-print, that means the company is not printing any more of those books - not making any more of those books.

The clerk says, “let me look it up in our system.” To look something up means to search for something, usually in a computer, a reference book - a book that gives you information about things. You’re trying to find something, usually a fact or, in this case, a piece of information about the book, on their computer.

“If it was a bestseller at one time,” the clerk says, “there’s a chance that it’s still in print.” A bestseller, “bestseller,” you may know, means a very popular book. “Harry Potter” is a best-selling book - a bestseller - in many countries. The “Harry Potter books, they have been translated into many languages. Those



---

## ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore

---

books are “still in print,” meaning the company that makes the book is still making and printing new copies.

The clerk says that she found the book in their computer system. She tells Adrian that the book “was published in 1982.” When we say a book is published, coming from the verb to publish, “publish,” we mean that it was made or produced, and then sold to other people - to the public, we would say, to the people who would want to buy the book. So, a book being published means that the company makes copies, they send them to bookstores, and people can buy them.

Well, the book Adrian is looking for “was published in 1982,” and it’s “out-of-print.” The clerk suggests that Adrian “try a used bookstore.” Used, “used,” means old. We often use the expression secondhand, meaning someone has already bought the book new, and now they are selling that book to someone else; that would be a used book. You can have a used furniture store, or a used musical instrument store; anything that you could sell again that isn’t new would be called used. A used car is a car that is not new that someone else is selling after they bought it new.

Adrian says, “Thanks,” to the clerk. He says, “I’ll give them a try.” To give something a try means to do something to see if it will work - to try to do something - to do something and see if you like it; that’s to give something a try. You can say, “I’m going to give this restaurant a try” - I’m going to go there, it’s my first time and I hope that I will like it - I’m going to give it a try.

Adrian then says that he’s “looking for a biography,” a book about the life of a person. “Can you tell me where they are?” The clerk says that “The biographies are behind the reference section.” The reference, “reference,” section are places where they have books such as dictionaries or encyclopedias. This would be a place where you sell books that have lots of different kinds of information about specific topics.

In a library, they have a reference section where they have dictionaries, encyclopedias, telephone books and, often, books that you can’t take out of the library; you must use them in the library. Those are sometimes called reference books. Reference has a couple of different meanings; once again, take a look at our Learning Guide for this episode for additional explanations.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal rate of speech.





---

**ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore**

---

[start of story]

Clerk: Can I help you find something?

Adrian: Yes. Can you tell me where the non-fiction books are?

Clerk: Are you looking for hardbacks or paperbacks?

Adrian: I'm not sure. I think hardbacks.

Clerk: Well, the non-fiction new releases are at the front of the store. The non-fiction section is behind the fiction shelves on your right. The hardbacks are on the top shelves and the paperbacks on the bottom ones. Is there a specific book I can help you find?

Adrian: I'm looking for an old book and I'm not sure of the title. It's something like, "The Literary Crisis."

Clerk: Do you know the name of the author?

Adrian: No, I don't. I saw it mentioned online and I actually wrote down the ISBN, but I can't find it now.

Clerk: Well, if it's an old book, it may be out-of-print, but let me look it up in our system. If it was a bestseller at one time, there's a chance that it's still in print. Let me check...Okay, here it is. It was published in 1982, and unfortunately, it is out-of-print. You may want to try a used bookstore, like Bookwoman's down the street.

Adrian: Thanks, I'll give them a try. I'm also looking for a biography. Can you tell me where they are?

Clerk: Sure. The biographies are behind the reference section over there. Let me know if you need any more help.

Adrian: Thanks. I appreciate it.

[end of story]

The script for today's podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.



English as a Second Language Podcast  
www.eslpod.com

## **ESL Podcast 257 – Finding a Book at a Bookstore**

---

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com).

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

English as a Second Language Podcast is written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. This podcast is copyright 2007.