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## ESL Podcast 318 – Writing a Love Song

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### GLOSSARY

**to keep it down** - to be quiet; to not make very much noise

\* Please keep it down! Melinda is trying to study for tomorrow's exam, but she can't concentrate with so much noise in here.

**none of (one's) business** – not something that a person needs to know about, because it doesn't relate to him or her; private

\* How I spend my money is none of your business!

**love song** – a romantic song; a song written to tell another person that one loves him or her, and hopefully to make that person fall in love with the singer

\* Greta's high school boyfriend wrote a beautiful love song for her, and she still likes to listen to it sometimes.

**to serenade (someone)** – to play and/or sing romantic music for someone, often with the man standing outside below a woman's bedroom window

\* Kelly was very surprised when her boyfriend serenaded her from outside her bedroom window.

**lyrics** – the words that are sung in a song

\* I couldn't understand the lyrics of that new song, so I looked for them online.

**rough** – not finished; incomplete

\* We still need to add more details, but here is a rough design for the new house.

**to rhyme** – to sound the same as another word; for the end of two words to have the same pronunciation

\* "Hat," "mat," "bat," "rat," and "pat" all rhyme with "cat."

**sappy** – very emotional; too emotional and silly

\* Clark's love letter was so sappy that it made Lisa laugh when it should have made her fall more in love with him.

**melody** – tune; the main notes in a song

\* Greensleeves is one of my favorite melodies, because it is so calming and beautiful.

**chorus** – the part of a song that is repeated many times

\* The children don't know the words to most of the verses, but they always sing the chorus.



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**catchy** – memorable; something that is easy to remember; something that is hard to forget

\* Good advertisements need to have a catchy slogan.

**a cappella** – sung without instruments; sung only with voices

\* Do you prefer music where the singers are a cappella, or where they sing with instruments in the background?

**to accompany** – to play a musical instrument while a person is singing

\* The opera singer was accompanied by a pianist and a flutist.

**recording** – an audio copy of something; music or other sound that has been put on a tape, CD, or another format

\* This music is great! How can I get a copy of the recording?

**to take (something or someone) seriously** – to be serious about something; to not act as if something is a joke; to not laugh about something

\* It was hard to take Luke seriously because he was dressed as a clown.

**to move (someone)** – to make someone feel strong emotions

\* The play deeply moved the audience and some people were crying by the end.



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**COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS**

1. Which of these words rhymes with “flower”?
  - a) Bloom
  - b) Hour
  - c) Rose
  
2. Is Isaac going to sing the song a capella?
  - a) Yes, with his friend Jimmy.
  - b) No, he will sing it alone.
  - c) No, there will be an instrument.

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**WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?**

**rough**

The word “rough,” in this podcast, means incomplete or not finished: “Ariella wants to finish the rough draft of her essay tonight so that she can revise it tomorrow.” “Rough” also means not smooth, or something that has a surface that isn’t flat: “The skin of an apple is smooth, but the skin of a cantaloupe is rough.” Sometimes the word “rough” means an estimate, or something that isn’t exact: “They think the rough cost of the project will be \$50,000.” “Rough” can also mean not gentle, or violent: “If the children are too rough when they play with the dog, they might hurt it.” Finally, “rough” can mean tough, or a difficult time: “I had a rough time with that test and I don’t think I answered more than 75% of the questions correctly.”

**record/recording**

In this podcast, the word “recording” means an audio copy of something, or music or other sound that has been put on a tape, CD, or another format: “Have you heard the latest recording from Tori Amos?” A “record” is a thin, round, black piece of plastic that music used to be recorded on, before tapes and CDs: “Wendy has a collection of old records by The Beatles.” A “record” can also be a written document about something that happened: “Each month, the phone company sends a record that lists all the telephone numbers that I have called.” Another meaning of “record” is the best/worst or highest/lowest way that something has been done: “He holds the world record for the long jump.” Or, “Charlie wants to break the world record for eating the most pies in 20 minutes.”



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**CULTURE NOTE**

Americans have many unusual ways of showing their love, beyond simply writing love songs. Often they do these things “in public” (where other people can see and hear), because they want everyone to know about their love.

“Skywriting” refers to having an airplane write a message in the sky by using special white smoke. Some people use skywriting to write a message to the person they love. For example, an airplane might write, “I love you, Lian. Will you marry me?” Skywriting is very expensive, but it’s an “impressive” (very interesting and positive) way for a man to show his love for a woman.

Sometimes a man will “propose” (ask a woman to marry him) to his girlfriend at a ball game. These men pay money so that the large “electronic scoreboard” (a large wall in a sports stadium that shows which team is winning and usually has a large TV for images) displays a love message.

Another unusual way that Americans show their love is by using “singing telegrams.” A “telegram” was a way to send a message over long distances that is then delivered by another person. That other person might be dressed in an unusual “costume” (special clothing to make one look like another person or thing). He or she then sings the “text” (words) of the telegram to the “recipient” (the person who receives the telegram). Often this is done at the recipient’s school or office, so it is another way to share one’s love in public.

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



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### COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 318: Writing a Love Song.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 318. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Be sure to visit our website at [eslpod.com](http://eslpod.com), and download the Learning Guide for this episode. It will help you learn English even faster by giving you all of the vocabulary words, definitions, new sample sentences using the expressions we talk about on this episode, comprehension questions, cultural notes, additional vocabulary definitions, and a complete transcript of this episode.

Our episode is called "Writing a Love Song." It's a dialogue between Isaac and Brittany, and, well, you'll see, it's about someone writing a song of love. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Isaac: Can you keep it down in there? I'm trying to write a song.

Brittany: You are? What kind of song?

Isaac: It's none of your business.

Brittany: Come on. Tell me.

Isaac: It's for Melanie.

Brittany: Oh, it's a love song. That's so romantic. Are you going to serenade her?

Isaac: Maybe. Now leave me alone so I can write.

Brittany: Don't kick me out. Maybe I can help. Let me hear what you have so far.

Isaac: Oh, all right. Here are the lyrics. There're pretty rough. Can you think of something that rhymes with flower?



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Brittany: Hmm...let me see. They're not bad, not too sappy. Let's hear the melody...That's nice. The chorus is catchy. Are you going to sing it a cappella?

Isaac: I was going to ask Jimmy to play the guitar to accompany me, so I can make a recording of it.

Brittany: Let me do it. I can play the guitar.

Isaac: No way. You won't take it seriously.

Brittany: I will. I promise. I'll make little kissing noises in the background and it'll move her to tears.

Isaac: Forget it! What was I thinking telling you about it?!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Isaac saying to Brittany, "Can you keep it down in there?" The expression "to keep it down" means not to make a lot of noise – to be quiet. This is something my mother would always say to us in our rooms at home; she'd say, "Keep it down in there! Stop making so much noise." Well, she said that to my brothers and sisters because I never caused any problems when I was a child!

Isaac says to Brittany, "I'm trying to write a song." And Brittany says, "You are? What kind of song?" Isaac replies, "It's none of your business." That expression, "it's none of your business," is an idiom that means it's not something that you should know about; it's private; it doesn't relate to you; you don't need to know. It's something of a negative expression; when you say "it's none of your business," you are saying stop trying to find out what I am doing. It's something you would say to a family member or a friend, not something you would say to your boss.

Brittany says, "Come on. Tell me." "Come on," meaning go ahead; be nice to me; tell me what you're doing. Isaac then says, "It's for Melanie" – the song is for Melanie. Brittany says, "Oh, it's a love song" – a romantic song, a song that a man would sing to a woman he was in love with. Brittany says, "That's so romantic. Are you going to serenade her?" To "serenade (serenade) someone" means to play – usually to sing – romantic music for someone. The typical example would be a man standing below the window where a woman was in her house – or a girl – and the woman comes to the window, and the man is down



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below, and he sings this song and she falls in love, and...well, you know the rest of the story!

Isaac says, “Maybe,” meaning maybe I’ll serenade her – perhaps. “Now leave me alone so I can write.” Brittany says, “Don’t kick me out” – don’t get rid of me; don’t tell me to leave. “Maybe I can help. Let me hear what you have so far” – let me hear the song that you’ve written so far, up to this point.

Isaac says, “Oh, all right” – okay. “Here are the lyrics.” The lyrics are the words that are sung in a song. He says the lyrics are “pretty rough.” When we say something is “rough,” in this case, we mean it’s not finished; it’s incomplete. “Rough” has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanation.

Isaac then asks Brittany, “Can you think of something that rhymes with flower?” To “rhyme” means to sound the same as another word, especially the vowels in another word. “Hat” rhymes with “cat” and “rat”; these are all rhymes. So, in writing a song, many people look for words that rhyme at the end of a sentence in the song.

Brittany says, “Hmm...let me see” – let me think about it. She’s looking at the lyrics and she says, “They’re not bad, not too sappy.” When something is “sappy” (sappy) it’s too emotional; it’s almost a little silly. Something is “sappy” is very emotional, very dramatic: “I went to see this romantic movie, and it was sappy” – it was too emotional, too dramatic.

Brittany says to Isaac, “Let’s hear the melody.” The “melody” (melody) consists of the main notes in the song; we would say the “tune” (tune). You’re familiar with iTunes; well, “tune” is another word for a song. The “melody” is the collection of notes that make up the song. The melody is separate from the lyrics; the lyrics are the words, the melody is the music.

Brittany says, “The chorus is catchy. Are you going to sing it a cappella?” The “chorus” of a song is the part of the song that is usually repeated several times in the song. When something is “catchy” (catchy), we mean it’s easy to remember – something that is difficult to forget. Sometimes this can be a bad thing, when you keep singing a song to yourself even though you don’t like it, but the melody is so catchy – so memorable – that it is hard to forget it. To sing “a cappella” is a Italian expression meaning to sing without instruments – to sing only with your voice – no piano, no guitar, no other musical instruments. In Italian, it actually translates into “in the chapel,” or “in the church.” Church music was traditionally sung in many places just with voices.



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Isaac says, “I was going to ask Jimmy (his friend) to play the guitar to accompany me.” To “accompany” means to play a musical instrument while someone else is singing. To “accompany” can also mean to go with someone: “I will accompany you to the store” – I will go with you. But when we use it in talking about music, it means to play a musical instrument – piano, a guitar – while someone else is singing.

Isaac says he wants to make a recording of the song. A “recording” is an audio copy of something. In this case, it could be on a CD, an MP3, or some other format. You can also have video recordings of something.

Brittany says, “Let me do it. I can play the guitar.” Isaac says, “No way,” meaning no; not at all; I’m not going to do that. Something of an informal expression – “no way.” “You won’t take it seriously” – you won’t be serious about it; you’ll treat it as a joke – “you won’t take it seriously.”

Brittany says, “I will. I promise. I’ll make little kissing noises [Jeff makes kissing sound] in the background and it’ll move her to tears.” Brittany is joking here; of course, to make little kissing noises in the song would make it very sappy. To “move someone to do something” is to make someone feel very strong emotions. We often use the expression when we talk about crying; “tears” are the drops of water that come out of your eyes when you’re very sad, for example. “It moved me to tears” – it made me cry.

Isaac says, “Forget it! What was I thinking telling you about it?!” “What was I thinking,” meaning I was stupid – I should have known better.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this podcast was written by Dr. Lucy Tse.

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.

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