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## TOPICS

Famous Americans: Barack Obama; presidential inaugurations; common versus ordinary versus normal; darling and dear; full-fledged

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## GLOSSARY

**president-elect** – the person who has been chosen by the voters to be the next president, but who hasn't actually started the job yet

\* Many of the people who voted for the president-elect believed he will be one of the best presidents in history.

**prestigious** – well-known and admired; well-respected

\* Wendy won a prestigious scholarship to study at our university.

**achievement** – something important that someone has done; something that was successfully done, usually because of one's skill or hard work

\* At the end of his career, Diego had many achievements to be proud of.

**remarkable** – surprising and impressive for many reasons; outstanding

\* I've never seen anyone run as fast as that runner. It's remarkable!

**race relations** – the ways that people with different skin colors interact with each other

\* The mayor is calling a special meeting to talk about ways to improve race relations in this city.

**public speaker** – someone who speaks to an audience of people; someone who makes speeches to people who gather to hear him or her

\* I'm not a very good public speaker so it would be better for you to make the announcements to the students.

**campaign** – the period of time before the elections when people who want a public job try to get other people to decide to vote for him or her

\* Do you think that the new governor will keep the promises she made during the campaign?

**optimistic** – believing that good things will happen; always looking at the good side of things

\* We're optimistic that we will do even better than last year's sales.



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**inauguration** – a special ceremony when someone starts an important job in the government

\* Do you think that the new president make a long speech at the inauguration?

**oath** – a very serious, formal promise that one says, usually repeating the words said by someone else first

\* In the oath, officials promise to be honest and work for the good of the people.

**address** – a special speech; an official speech by an important person in government

\* The president of the university will give an address to the students at the graduation ceremony.

**parade** – an event where people and bands walk slowly through the streets to celebrate something

\* Several bands from local high schools marched and played at the parade.

**common** – best known or most often seen; usual

\* Kara thought that she had a serious disease, but her doctor told her that she only had a bad case of the common cold.

**ordinary** – routine, usual; exactly as expected

\* We ordered a very special cake to be made for the wedding, but when it arrived, it look very ordinary.

**normal** – typical; of the expected standard

\* It's very cold this month, but that's normal for this part of the state.

**darling** – a person who is loved; someone who is adored; a term used for someone who is loved

\* Oh, my darling, I don't ever want to be apart from you again!

**dear** – held close to the heart; a person who is close to one

\* My dear, could you please help me put on this jacket?

**full-fledged** – fully mature or complete; total

\* He graduated from the police academy last year and he's now a full-fledged police officer.



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **The Education of Presidents**

Many of our presidents attended the best schools in the United States and President Barack Obama is “no exception” (the same). Normally, people focus on the universities that president have attended, many of them graduating from “ivy league” schools, which are “considered” (believed) to be some of the country’s best universities. President Obama got his “undergraduate” (four-year degree after high school) degree from Columbia University and later went to Harvard Law School.

However, President Obama and other past presidents have also attended some of the best elementary, junior high, and high schools in the country. Many of these are called college “preparatory schools” and offer subjects that prepare students for studying at a university. Sometimes these classes even lead to “college credit” (points earned toward college graduation) as part of their “curriculum” (courses offered).

Preparatory schools also offer courses and “academic” (educational) experiences that provide a broader background and set of experiences for students who are “college-bound” (intending on attending a university). Some of these include “study abroad” programs, where students travel to and study in a foreign country, and “internships,” where students work for free or very little money in a business or organization to get real-life experience.

President Obama grew up in the State of Hawaii, on the island of Oahu, and attended Punahou School. Punahou is a private school with grades “kindergarten” (for children ages 5-6) through 12th grade. It has just under 4,000 students and is the largest private school in the United States.

Like many private schools, “tuition” (money required to enroll in a school) is not cheap, and even though President Obama did not come from a “wealthy” (rich) family, he was able attend with the help of “scholarships” (money given to students because of good grades or outstanding talent to pay for school).



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 173.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 173. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café we're going to continue our series on famous Americans, focusing on the man who was recently "elected," or chosen to be the next president of the United States, Barack Obama. We'll also talk in general about presidential "inaugurations," or the ceremony that happens when someone begins working as our nation's president. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café continues with our series on famous Americans. Today we'll talk about, perhaps, the most famous American now, and that would be our President, Barack Obama. After Barack Obama was elected back in November, he was called the "president-elect." The "president-elect" is the person who was "elected," or chosen by voters to be the next president. On January 20<sup>th</sup> of 2009, President-elect Obama became President Obama.

Barack Obama has an unusual background for a U.S. politician, meaning that he has had some unusual experiences and, certainly, an unusual family life. He was born in 1961 in the state of Hawaii. His mother was a white woman from the state of Kansas, and his father was a black man from the country of Kenya, in Africa. His parents were separated, or stopped living with each other, when Obama was only two years old. Later they were divorced, or they ended their marriage. Barack Obama's mother remarried (got married again), this time to a man from the country of Indonesia. The family moved to Indonesia and Obama went to school in Indonesia until he was ten years old. Then he moved back to Hawaii to go to school and to live with his grandparents, his mother's mother and father.



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Obama studied at one of Hawaii's best private schools, called Punahou. He later studied at two very "prestigious," or well-known and admired universities: he studied political science and international relations at Columbia University and then he studied law at Harvard Law School. He is an "attorney," or a lawyer and he has worked as a community organizer, which is a person whose job it is to work with people in a community to try to help them solve their problems. Obama has done a lot of work in civil rights, or work that tries to get people to be treated fairly and equally. Barack Obama was elected to the Illinois State Senate back in 1997, and he was a state senator until the year 2004. In 2004, Obama ran for (tried to get elected to) the United States Senate. He was elected and started serving as a senator in 2005. A "senator" is one of the two people that represent each state in the Senate, which is part of the national (or federal) government. Usually, you are part of the national government or a governor in your state for several years before you try to become president, but Barack Obama decided he would run for president in 2008, only a few years after having been elected to the Senate.

Barack Obama's "achievements," or the things he has done, are really "remarkable," or surprising and impressive for several reasons. First, he is rather young; he's only 47 years old, which is two years older than I am. This makes him one of the youngest U.S. presidents (Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest; he was just 42 years old). Obama's achievements are also remarkable because he is the first African American to be elected to the presidency. The United States, like other countries, still struggles or has difficulty with "race relations," or the ways that people with different skin colors interact with each other. Until now, all U.S. presidents have been white men, and many people "doubted," or didn't really think that a woman or a minority (someone who is not white) could be elected president here. Many people are happily surprised by Obama's election as the first African American president of the United States.

President Obama is a very good "public speaker," meaning that he speaks very well to an audience of people. People enjoy listening to him and he has a talent or a strong skill for saying things in a way that makes them easier to understand. During the presidential "campaign," or the period of time before the elections, when he was trying to get Americans to vote for him, he gave several powerful speeches, excellent speeches giving the people reasons why he should become the next president.

President Obama's most famous campaign speech was Yes We Can. This was also an expression (or phrase) that he used many, many times in the campaign. The Yes We Can speech was a very optimistic one. "Optimistic" meaning that



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you believe that good things will happen in the future. The opposite of optimistic would be pessimistic, believing that bad things will happen. If you lose your job and you think that you will never get another job, that's being pessimistic, looking on the bad or negative side of things. But "yes we can" is a very optimistic phrase – an optimistic expression. Obama said in his Yes We Can speech, and other speeches that Americans should believe in a better future. His campaign was about trying to help Americans hope and believe that change was possible and that he, as president, would make it possible. We don't know if he will be successful – if he will succeed. We'll have to wait and see. Even Americans who did not vote for Barack Obama hope that he will do well, and I think most people have been very "impressed," have a very good opinion of President Obama.

If you want to know more about Barack Obama, you can read one of his two books that he has written. One book was called Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance. "Inheritance" is something that you get from your parents or your grandparents, someone in your family older than you. The other book that Obama wrote was The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream. "Audacity" (audacity) means that you do something that is brave, something that is dramatic, something that may require a risk. So, Obama is saying that being hopeful about the future is a brave, perhaps somewhat risky thing to believe. The second part of the title of the book is Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream. To "reclaim" something means to claim it again; to claim it means to say that it is yours, that it belongs to you. What belongs to us, Obama is saying, is the American Dream. The expression "the American Dream" signifies (or means) the hope that Americans have for their future. The specifics can be different for each person. Some people think the American Dream is to own a house, to have a car, to have a family, a good job; these are all part of the American Dream for some people. So, Obama is talking about reclaiming (or getting back) the American Dream that we may have lost in recent years. Those are two books that you might want to find and read if you are interested in President Obama.

Barack Obama became the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the United States on, as I said before, January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. That is the date of his inauguration. An "inauguration" is a special ceremony when someone starts an important job, usually in the government. Since 1937, in the United States, the inauguration for president has always been held (or has always taken place) on January 20<sup>th</sup>. If January 20<sup>th</sup> is a Sunday, then the inauguration will take place as a private ceremony, and then there is a public ceremony the next day.



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On Inauguration Day, the new U.S. president takes an oath of office. An “oath” (oath) is a very serious, formal promise where you say something, usually repeating the words that someone else is giving you. For example, tradition has it that when people became doctors, they would take the Hippocratic oath, which states that they will use their powers of medicine ethically (in a good way). The Hippocratic oath was named after the famous Greek doctor Hippocrates. Well, when one becomes president, he or she that is elected takes the “oath of office,” meaning the oath of the job of the presidency.

The new president usually takes the oath of office while placing his left hand on a Bible and holding his right hand in the air. The actual oath of office for the U.S. presidency is just one sentence. It says:

“I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.”

Let’s talk a little bit about what that means. The oath begins by saying that one “solemnly” (solemnly), or seriously swears or affirms or promises to faithfully execute the office of President of the United States. The phrase “to faithfully execute the office” means to work in the job, and do all the things that the president is supposed to do. To do something faithfully means to do everything you are supposed to do. To execute the office simply means to carry out or do what is required. So, the oath of office asks the president to faithfully execute the office. It goes on or continues to say that the new president will work to the best of his or her ability, or as much as he or she can, to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. To preserve means to keep it safe; similarly, to protect and defend means to make sure that you are not going against the Constitution, or allowing anyone else to go against the Constitution.

After the oath of office, a military band or a group of many musicians and musical instruments plays some music, and then the president gives the inaugural address. An “address,” here, means a special speech. This is the person’s first speech as President of the United States. The new president usually thanks Americans for electing him to the presidency and describes, in Barack Obama’s case, his plans for what he wants to do during his presidency. The inaugural address is one that many people pay close attention to, and often becomes a famous speech in the history of our country. There is, after the speech, a “parade,” or an event where people and musical bands walk slowly through the streets to celebrate something. We have parades in our country for Inauguration Day; we have them also in many cities for Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day,





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New Years Day. The parade on Inauguration Day is something like that, but there are a lot of formal and official groups – military and so forth – that participate in the parade.

The inaugural celebrations usually last for about 10 days: five days before the Inauguration Day and five days after Inauguration Day. Barack Obama's inauguration celebration was one of the largest in American history, perhaps the largest in American history. There were many people who were very excited about President Obama being elected. And that caused hundreds of thousands of people to come to Washington to celebrate that election.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Tong Tian (Tong Tian) in China. The question has to do with the meanings of the words “common,” “ordinary,” and “normal.”

“Common” means the best known or most often used or seen, the most usual. For example: “Dogs are a common household pet.” Or, “It is common to wear a heavy jacket or coat in wintertime.”

“Ordinary” also means usual; it means exactly as you expect. We may also say “routine.” If you say, “today was an ordinary day,” you mean nothing unusual happened; it was just as we expected.

“Normal” means typical, of an expected standard. For example: “My eyesight is normal, I don't need glasses.” It's normal; it's what it should be according to medical standards. That's not true, my eyesight is not normal! “It's normal to feel nervous when you are speaking in English on the telephone.” It is normal; it is not unusual.

“Common” and “ordinary” are often used to describe something or someone that is not unusual – or rather, that is usual in some way. Sometimes, however, it can be a negative way of describing something. If someone says, “You have a shirt that is of a very common style,” here it means not interesting. “Common,” like “ordinary,” means nothing special. You say about your boss, for example, “He's an ordinary guy. He's an ordinary man.” That means there's nothing special, nothing unusual about him or her.

“Normal” can be used to describe health; we gave the example of your eyesight. You could talk about your blood pressure being normal, or your heart rate being normal. So, “normal” means, in many cases, healthy.





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Our next question comes from Farkhod (Farkhod) in Uzbekistan. The question has to do with the differences between “dear” (dear) and “darling” (darling).

“Dear” is a common way of starting a letter or an email:

“Dear Jeff,  
Thank you for your wonderful singing. We really love to hear you sing.”

That would be a common email that I receive!

“Dear” also can mean very expensive, although it is not use that much anymore in the U.S. to mean that. If someone says, “Coffee is very dear these days,” they mean it’s very expensive. “Dear” also is used, more commonly, to mean someone who is close to you emotionally: “He is a dear friend of mine.” That means he’s a very close friend of mine.

“Darling” can mean cute or charming. You can say, “His granddaughter is simply darling; she’s very cute.” “Darling” is also a person who is loved and adored: “That writer is the darling of book critics,” people who write about books and their opinions about books. That would mean that the critics love this person; they like him and his books.

“Dear” and “darling” can both be used sometimes as a way of talking to someone. You may say, “Would you get my coat, dear?” That might be something a wife says to her husband, for example. “Darling, I love you.” This is another way of using these words to address someone. However, they are not as common anywhere. It is not that common in most places now to hear the word “darling” used in this way. Younger people probably use the word “honey,” or “hun,” which is short for honey, if they are going to be talking to their loved one.

“Dear” has one more use, “dear” can also be used as an expression of surprise or upset: “Oh dear, I spilled my milk!” Once again, this is not that common anymore; you don’t hear that many people use that expression, but you might read that expression somewhere.

Finally, our last question comes from Khlood (Khlood), not sure where Khlood is from. His question has to do with the expression “full-fledged.” “Full-fledged” (fledged) means complete, total, fully mature: “London has a full-fledged symphony.” It means it has a complete symphony, everything that you would



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expect. A full-fledged member of a club is someone who goes all the time, who is an active member. You could also say, “After going to school for four years, David is a full-fledged doctor.” He is a doctor who has completed all of the requirements.

If you have a question or comment for us, you can email us. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com). We don't have time to answer everyone's questions, but we'll do the best we can.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listened to us next time on the English Café.

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