



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 86

TOPICS

Famous Americans: Frank Gehry

Memorial Day, odd one out, as good as it gets. film versus movie

GLOSSARY

architect – a person who designs buildings; a professional whose job is to make plans for the design, style, and size of buildings

* Katrina wants to be an architect, because she loves drawing and she is fascinated by tall office buildings.

iconic – something that is well known, respected, and connected with an important idea

* Machu Picchu is an iconic example of the architecture of the Incas.

blueprint – a plan that is written on paper in blue ink for building something, like a house, office, or machine

* The Applegates are very excited to see the blueprints for their new house this afternoon.

model – a small version of a building, usually made of plastic or wood, so that people can understand what the finished building will look like

* Inside the doctor's office, there is a model of the new hospital that is being built in Springfield.

to observe – to celebrate; to participate in the traditional activities for a holiday or religious event

* Every September 1st, the post office is closed to observe the Labor Day holiday.

to commemorate – to do something to remember an important historical event or a person from the past

* The Vietnam Memorial in Washington, D.C. commemorates the American soldiers who died in the Vietnam War.

military service – the period of time when a person works in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines, or Coast Guard

* Soldiers who lose an arm or leg during a war often have to end their military service early.



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cemetery – a place where dead bodies are buried

* Which cemetery is Uncle Dave buried in?

grave – the place where one dead body is buried

* She and her sister put flowers on their mother's grave every month.

picnic – a meal eaten outdoors, usually while sitting on a blanket on the grass at a park or another beautiful spot

* Every Sunday, the O'Reilly family makes sandwiches and has a picnic at the park.

race track – the oval-shaped dirt path or paved road that is used by runners, horses, or cars that compete to see who is the fastest

* Most runners prefer to run on dirt race tracks because they don't hurt their knees as much as paved race tracks do.

lap – one trip around a race track

* This race track is about one-quarter ($\frac{1}{4}$) mile long, so we'll need to run 8 laps for the two-mile race.

odd one out – one that is different from the other people or things in a group; one that is unlike other people or things

* Virginia is the odd one out in her group of friends, because she is the only one who doesn't like rock music.

as good as it gets – the best that something will be; the maximum; not able to get any better

* After a long, stressful week at work, having a good meal with your good friends is as good as it gets.

film – a story with audio and video of moving pictures, usually lasting 1-2 hours; a good quality movie

* Have you seen the National Geographic film, March of the Penguins, about penguins in Antarctica?

movie – a story with audio and video of moving pictures, usually lasting 1-2 hours, often more entertaining than educational or artistic

* My favorite movies are romantic comedies, but Marco likes to watch horror movies.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

NASCAR

When most people hear the word “sports,” they usually think of basketball, football, baseball, or soccer. But recently, more and more people are thinking of car racing as a professional sport.

NASCAR, the National Association for Stock Car Automobile Racing, was founded in 1948. In the past, it was best known in the Southeastern United States. Today, however, it is becoming increasingly popular throughout the “entire” (whole) country.

NASCAR organizes more than 1,500 races “annually” (each year). Three of the main racing “series” (groups of many races) are the NEXTEL Cup, the Busch Series and the Craftsman Truck Series (this racing series uses pickup trucks instead of cars).

Just how popular is car racing? It has become the second most popular professional sport that Americans choose to watch on TV (professional football is #1). NASCAR races are “broadcast” (shown on TV) in more than 150 countries. NASCAR “claims” (to say that something is true) that it has 75 million fans. And 17 of the 20 “most-attended” (with the most people coming to watch) sporting events in the U.S. are NASCAR races.

Many companies “sponsor” NASCAR races, meaning that they give money to the races so that their company names and “logos” (small pictures that represent a company) are shown on the racetrack, on the cars, and on the drivers’ clothes. They do this because they want the 75 million fans to become customers of their companies.

Some people don’t like NASCAR because they think the races are bad for the environment and unsafe for the drivers, but most Americans enjoy the “thrill” (excitement) of watching the car races, whether at the race track or on TV.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 86.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 86. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this Café, we're going to talk about one of the most famous architects in the United States, someone from here, or living here, in Los Angeles, a man by the name of Frank Gehry. We're also going to talk about an important national holiday in United States, Memorial Day. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

If you visit our website, you will find a Learning Guide for this episode, as you can for all of our episodes – almost all of our episodes. Go to www.eslpod.com for more information.

Our first topic today is going to be a very well known architect, not just here in the United States but in the world. An “architect” is someone who designs, or plans, what a building will look like. Buildings in general are sometimes called “architecture.” In order to become an architect, you have to study architecture.

Frank Gehry was born, originally, in Canada – in Toronto – but he has lived in Los Angeles for many years, since the 1940s. He studied at the local college here, the Los Angeles City College, and then moved over and got his Bachelor's degree the University of Southern California, which is where I got my Doctorate degree. So, we're good friends, Frank and I – not really!

Gehry is probably most famous for a museum that he designed in Bilbao, Spain, called the Guggenheim Museum. Now, you may know that the Guggenheim Museum is actually one of several Guggenheim art museums. This particular commission by Gehry was consider his most interesting, and definitely his most famous. When we talk about an architect having a “commission” (commission), we mean the agreement, or contract, that he had with some organization to design a building for them.

The Guggenheim Museum, as I say, is the most famous museum; I'm sure you have seen pictures of it. It has very bright metal called “titanium” on the outside. “Titanium” (titanium) is a very strong metal. It looks a little like silver, or at least it can.



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But Gehry is also famous for some buildings here in Los Angeles. There's a building that looks a little like the Guggenheim Museum in Spain, called the Walt Disney Concert Hall. A “concert hall” is a place where you can go and hear music – musical concerts. In this case, the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra plays at the Walt Disney Concert Hall.

You probably recognize the word “Disney.” Walt Disney and his wife gave a lot of money to build this concert hall. Walt Disney was famous for being an “animator,” someone who made animated movies – cartoon-like movies – and now he's famous for having given money to build this beautiful concert hall in downtown Los Angeles. If you ever visit Los Angeles, you will definitely want to see Walt Disney Concert Hall.

But as I said before, his most iconic work is the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. When we say something is “iconic” (iconic), we mean that it is what people recognize to be someone's particular style. It is something that is considered “representative,” it represents his work. It's considered one of the best examples of his particular work.

When I first moved to Los Angeles back in the early 1990s, many years ago, I remember going downtown and visiting one of the art museums, the Museum of Contemporary Art in downtown Los Angeles. And there they had a model of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, as well as blueprints for the new building. This was before the building had been built.

A “model” (model), in this case, means a very small copy of what the building will look like. By very small, I mean maybe two or three feet. So, you build a model to show people what the building will look like. We could describe a model like this as being a miniature version of the building. “Miniature” (miniature – sometimes informally pronounced “min-a-ture”) is something that is very small; something that is smaller than the normal size for an object.

They also had, at this exhibit that I visited many years ago, the blueprints for the concert hall. The term “blueprints” (blueprints – one word) refers to the drawings. They're usually big pieces of paper that show where all the different parts of the building will go. Whenever you build a house or a large building, you need to have blueprints. They're called “blueprints” because they are often printed in a blue ink, but the term refers to a plan for how you are going to build this building.



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Frank Gehry is considered someone who is very innovative in terms of the design of a building. “Innovative” (innovative) is someone who's creative; someone who has new or different ideas. So, that's Frank Gehry.

If you come to Los Angeles, definitely visit the Frank Gehry-designed Walt Disney Concert Hall, but you can see Frank Gehry's work in many other places as well. He has, of course, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. He has a beautiful building in Prague, in the Czech Republic, and in other cities as well.

Our next topic is a national holiday in the United States called “Memorial Day.” Memorial Day is a national – we might say a federal – holiday. It is celebrated on the last Monday of May, so in the year 2007 it will be on May 28th. It's always observed, or celebrated, on the last Monday. Normally when we talk about a holiday like this, we used the verb “observe.” “To observe a holiday” means to celebrate a holiday.

In this case, the Memorial Day holiday is meant to, originally, commemorate men and women who have died in military service in the United States. The verb “to commemorate” means to remember, usually to remember or to show respect for someone or something in a formal ceremony where you have a formal event. That's one way of using this word “commemorate,” or simply to remember an important event. A city could commemorate its anniversary, for example.

Here, we are commemorating the men and women who have died in wars who have been part of the military in the United States. We would say part of the “military service” in the U.S. – people who were in the Army, the Navy, and other parts of the military.

The Memorial Day holiday is actually a very old one; it began back after the U.S. Civil War in the 19th century. After World War I, in the early 20th century it was expanded, you could say, to include anyone who died in any war or any military action.

Americans celebrate this holiday in different ways. Some people go to a cemetery (cemetery), which is a place where we bury, or put, the bodies of those who have died. They go to the cemetery to remember and put, maybe, flowers or a small flag on top of the place where the person is buried. We would say on their “grave” (grave), which is the name we give the place where someone is buried in a cemetery. There are also official ceremonies in Washington D.C. to remember – to commemorate – those who have died.



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There are some ways that Americans celebrate that aren't very much related to the original idea of Memorial Day, however. One thing that many people like to do is to celebrate the day with a picnic. A “picnic” (picnic) is usually a meal that you have in a park, where you go outside. It's also very common for people to go to baseball games on Memorial Day.

It is not related, of course, to the original idea of Memorial Day, but people see it as the beginning of the summer season. Since it is always the last Monday in May, it's kind of the official beginning, for many people, of their summertime. For children, they usually begin their summer vacation in the first week or two of June, so Memorial Day is this beginning of summer for us.

Another thing that you will always see on Memorial Day is a famous race – car race – called the “Indianapolis 500.” Indianapolis is a city in the state of Indiana. The state of Indiana is in the north central – north central part of the United States. It is next to the state of Illinois.

In the Indianapolis 500, you have professional racecar drivers – people who drive very fast cars – and they go around in a circle, around what we would call the “race track” (track). The Indianapolis 500 is the most famous race in the U.S. It is broadcast on national television. Personally, I don't find it very interesting to watch cars go around in a circle, but some people really enjoy it. It is sometimes called the “Indy 500” (Indy) instead of Indianapolis. “Indy” is a short form for Indianapolis, in this case.

It's called the “Indianapolis 500” because the cars go around the track until they reach 500 miles. It's actually 200 times around the track because the track is more than one mile. I believe it is 200 laps. A “lap” (lap), in this case, is one time around the race track. So, the cars go around the race track 200 times, and that is 500 miles.

Because Memorial Day is a national holiday, there are no public or government services on that day. There's no mail delivery; the government offices are mostly closed, except the police and the fire, and most private companies give their employees the day off – they don't have to work. So, if you are in the U.S., you will get next Monday off – off of work. And if not, you can just think of us as we have the day off of work next Monday! I say next Monday if you are listening to this episode when we released it in May of 2007.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.



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Our first question comes from Rosalba (Rosalba), from Puerto Rico – from Puerto Rico, we would say in English – which is part of the United States. Rosalba wants to know the meaning of the expression “odd one out.” What does it mean when we say that something or someone is the odd one out?

The “odd (odd) one out” is the one thing or person that is different from the others in a group. We would say it’s the one that does not belong with the rest of the group, that does not fit (fit) with the rest of the group.

For example, if someone gave you three adjectives, “cheerful,” “happy,” and “moody,” and asked you to pick the odd one out, you should pick “moody” (moody). “Moody” means sad usually, and the other two adjectives, “cheerful” and “happy,” mean that you are in a good mood – you are in good spirits, so “moody” is the odd one out.

For example, if you go to a movie, and you are going with some friends, and when you arrive you see that you are the only man – that everyone else is a woman – you might say, “I’m the odd one out.” Of course, you might also say, “I’m very lucky, since I’m the only man here!” That’s the expression “odd one out.” You’ll also hear “odd man out,” it means the same thing, the one that doesn’t belong with the rest of the group.

Alberto (Alberto), over in Italy, has a question about the expression “as good as it gets.” This was actually the title of a movie. “As good as it gets” means it is the best that something will ever be; it will not get any better than this.

For example, you’ve been trying to find a new girlfriend, and you go on a date and you meet different women, and you don’t like any of the women that you meet. You may say, “I hope that this is not as good as gets,” meaning you hope that things will get better. Usually that happens when the woman goes on a date with a man, more than the man with the women, but you get the idea! “As good as it gets” – it won’t get any better.

Our final question comes from Josue (Josue), in Spain. Josue wants to know when you use the word “film” (film) and when you use the word “movie” (movie). Do they mean the same thing, or are they different somehow?

Both of these words refer to what you go to a theater to see – a recorded production that is put on a big screen is a movie. You can use these two words to mean the same thing. Many times people will say, “I want to go to a movie,” or



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“I saw a good film last night,” and they use the two words to mean the exact same thing – no difference.

However, there are some people who do distinguish the two words. Typically, they will use the word “movie” for popular movies – movies that are interesting, entertaining; or not interesting, not entertaining, but that are not necessarily great art – that aren't necessarily the best. You may describe, for example, the movie Spiderman, or the Harry Potter movies as being movies. They're entertaining; they're not necessarily the best that have ever been made. I like both of those movies – or series of movies.

A “film” is usually something we call a very good movie, something that tries to be, perhaps, more artistic. So, a film by Ingmar Bergman, the great director, or Alfred Hitchcock, those would probably be called films because they're considered at a higher level – a higher quality. I, for example, made a short video back when we had our one-year anniversary. That would definitely not be called a “film” – not very high quality.

Well, we hope that you have some high quality questions you want to ask us. Email us at eslpod@eslpod.com, and we'll try to answer them for you here on the Café.

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

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