

Lesson 28: Wealth and Poverty

Two friends, Janet and Elise, discuss the political views of Elise's husband. Mark these statements "True" or "False" as you listen.

Listening Comprehension

True or false according to the dialogue?

1. Elise wasn't really aware of her husband's views when they were dating.
2. Janet implies that Elise should divorce her husband.
3. Nowadays, Elise and her husband have angry arguments about politics.
4. Republicans want to take money from the rich and give it to the poor.
5. Michael is prejudiced against poor people.
6. Elise admits she doesn't know a lot about economics.
7. Janet's profession involves social work.
8. Elise is just as worried as Janet about Michael's political orientation.

Conversation Text

Janet: I can't believe your husband is a Republican. Didn't you know that when you **tied the knot**?

Elise: When we were dating, he was always pretty **tight-lipped** about his political views... he described himself as a moderate. And whenever he brought up points that countered my opinions, I figured he was just **playing devil's advocate**.

Janet: He **misled** you, though. I mean, every relationship has its **ups and downs**, but that's a serious **breach** of trust. Don't tell me you're going to **stick with him**!

Elise: Look, some of his comments do **rub me the wrong way**, but it's not like we're **at each other's throats** about these issues. You've gotta **pick your battles**, and I'm not about to end my marriage just because we **don't see eye to eye** on some things.

Vocabulary

tied the knot = (informal) got married

tight-lipped = reluctant to speak

playing devil's advocate = arguing from the point of view of the opposite side just to generate discussion

misled = influenced you to believe something that wasn't true

ups and downs = good times and bad times

breach = break (especially of an agreement)

stick with him = stay with him

rub me the wrong way = irritate/annoy me a little

at each other's throats = in an angry disagreement

pick your battles = choose which things you are willing to fight for, and which you are willing to tolerate

don't see eye to eye = don't agree

Janet: But doesn't it make you think less of his character? Republicans are selfish and **stingy**.

Elise: How can you **make a blanket statement** like that? You *know* Michael, he's a kind and generous man.

Janet: Just look at the Republican **stance** on economics, for instance. They **favor** the rich and think the poor should just **pull themselves up by their bootstraps**.

Elise: I don't think it's quite that simple. Granted, I don't **eat, sleep, and breathe** politics like you do, but...

Janet: Let me **break it down** for you. Republicans want tax breaks for the wealthy. The **rationale** is that rich people will spend more money and stimulate the economy for everybody. But the distribution of wealth in this country is already so **lopsided**, how can anyone argue that helping the rich stay rich will solve the problem?

Vocabulary

stingy = the opposite of generous, someone who is not willing to give to help others

make a blanket statement = generalize; make a statement about an entire group of people

stance = position, opinion

favor = prefer, or provide preferential treatment to

pull themselves up by their bootstraps = improve their situations by their own effort, without assistance

eat, sleep, and breathe = constantly be thinking about and working with an activity

break it down = explain it and make it simple

rationale = reasoning, logical sequence of thought

lopsided = unequal; more on one side than the other

Elise: We do our part, though. We donate to charity. And I've never heard Michael make a **disparaging** remark about poor people. Economics **aren't my strong suit**, but I'm pretty sure he's not **rooting for** people to **starve** just so we can get a tax break.

Janet: But people *are* starving. Just look at the number of **destitute** families in our **soup kitchen** every week. In my line of work, we have to **fight tooth and nail** against Republican policy. They're always the ones shutting down social programs, saying that people shouldn't be getting **handouts**. Republicans want to keep their privileged position while looking down on everyone else who isn't so fortunate.

Elise: Hey – Michael may be a Republican, but you can't **make him out to be** some sort of **villain**. I've pretty much **come to terms with** the fact that he may just have different ideas about how to accomplish the same goals. He cares about helping people, he just doesn't believe in **squandering** resources on government

Vocabulary

disparaging = insulting and disrespectful

not my strong suit = not an area in which I'm skilled or knowledgeable

rooting for = hoping and wanting to happen

starve = suffer and die from lack of food

destitute = poor; completely lacking resources for survival

soup kitchen = center where food is served free to poor people

fight tooth and nail = fight intensely using all possible resources

handouts = things given for free

make him out to be = describe him in a certain way

villain = evil person

come to terms with = learned to accept and tolerate

squandering = wasting

programs with **bloated** bureaucracies, **as he puts it**. You're **delusional** if you think Republicans actually *want* poor people to go hungry.

Janet: Sometimes it seems that way.

Elise: And sometimes **you sound like a broken record**. Oh, look at the time. I better get going.

Vocabulary

bloated = much bigger than it should be

as he puts it = expressing this idea in the words that he uses

delusional = holding a completely false belief; crazy

you sound like a broken record
= you keep saying the same things repeatedly

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word from the box. Three words are not used.

at each other's throats

don't see eye to eye

rooting for

break it down

favored

rub people the wrong way

come to terms with

lopsided

squandering

delusional

misleading

stuck with

disparaging

not my strong suit

ups and downs

1. I can give you some suggestions, but interior design is really _____ . You should ask a pro.
2. That's a very _____ advertisement - it makes it look like you get a free product, but you actually pay full price.
3. It's very hard to _____ having cancer; a lot of patients need counseling.
4. My teenage daughters were _____ about who would get to use the car on Friday night.
5. Of course we'll be _____ our favorite baseball team to win the championship!
6. Our neighbor is a die-hard atheist who thinks anyone with religious beliefs is _____ .

7. She has a bit of an abrasive personality that tends to _____.
8. I was always jealous of my little brother because my parents clearly _____ him.
9. There's no way I'll be friends with anyone who makes _____ comments about particular ethnic groups.
10. We tried to bake a cake, but it came out _____; one part was higher than the other.
11. When I was younger I almost quit piano lessons, but now I'm glad I _____ it because I really enjoy playing.
12. I didn't understand today's physics lesson at all. Luckily I found a video online that helped _____ for me.

Speaking Task

Talk about a time when you “didn’t see eye to eye” with someone (could be your spouse, a friend, colleague, etc.) Describe the difference of opinion and the points that were brought up on both sides. What was the outcome – did you come to a consensus, did one person compromise, or did you “agree to disagree”? Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish or send the MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. True
2. True
3. False
4. False
5. False
6. True
7. True
8. False

Vocabulary Quiz

1. not my strong suit
2. misleading
3. come to terms with
4. at each other's throats
5. rooting for
6. delusional
7. rub people the wrong way
8. favored
9. disparaging
10. lopsided
11. stuck with
12. break it down