



ESL Podcast 533 – Making Funeral and Burial Arrangements

GLOSSARY

funeral – a ceremony after a person has died, putting the body somewhere and allowing other people to say goodbye

* Have you thought about what kind of funeral you want to have when you die?

mourner – a person who is very sad because another person has died, usually a close friend or a family member

* How many mourners went to Ted Kennedy's funeral?

wake – the period of time after death but before a funeral, when people meet in that person's home to remember the person and talk about his or her life, usually while eating food

* I won't be able to go to Aunt Elmina's funeral, but I did go to her wake.

to cremate – to burn the body of a dead person until only ashes (grey-colored powder) are left

* Lynn wants to be cremated, because she doesn't like the idea of her body lying in the cold earth.

ashes – the grey-colored powder that is left after something burns in a fire

* Could you please sweep the ashes out of the fireplace?

to scatter – to spread around, to put a small amount of something over a large area

* I dropped the children's toy box, and crayons and markers are scattered all over the bedroom floor.

to bury – to place a body or something else underground, covering it with earth

* Christian is trying to bury his little sister's feet and legs in the sand, but she keeps moving away.

casket – a special box that is used to hold a dead body and is placed underground

* He wants a fancy metal casket with gold handles and a red velvet lining, but his wife would prefer a simple wooden casket.

headstone – a piece of stone placed at the top of a grave, usually with the dead person's name, date of birth, date of death, and sometimes a short phrase

* This headstone is very simple: "Gabriel Marciano, 1857-1938, a loving husband and father."



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to inter – to bury the body of a dead person, in the ground or inside of a building

* We're going to meet at the church at 11:00, and her body will be interred at noon.

mausoleum – a small building that is used to hold the bodies of dead people, usually when they are all from one rich family

* All of Charlotte's aunts and uncles plan to be interred in the family's mausoleum.

hoopla – excitement and attention; lots of activity and motion; with many interesting things happening

* What's all the hoopla for on the street? What's happening?

to grieve – to feel very sad because someone has died or because one has lost something important

* I don't think you should ask Meghan out on a date. She's still grieving for her husband, even though he died two years ago.

fuss – lots of unnecessary activity, worry, actions, or discussion, especially if everything would be simpler without it

* I've never seen so much fuss over a missing cat! They cried, called the police, and put up posters all over the neighborhood.

gravesite – a small, outdoor space where one dead body is buried

* Every year, on the anniversary of our mother's death, we go to leave flowers on her gravesite.

non-denominational – without a religious affiliation; not connected to a particular religion

* When did you start going to a non-denominational church? I thought you were raised as a Presbyterian.

cemetery – an outdoor area where many bodies are buried

* On Halloween night, the teenagers dress up as ghosts and run through the cemetery, trying to scare people.

fun and games – activities that are not serious and are only meant for having a good time

* They thought that skipping class was all fun and games until they realized they might fail algebra.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What would you expect a mourner to do?
 - a) Be cremated.
 - b) Be interred.
 - c) Grieve.

 2. What would you expect to find at a gravesite?
 - a) Ashes.
 - b) A headstone.
 - c) A mausoleum.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

wake

The word “wake,” in this podcast, means the period of time after death but before a funeral, when people meet in that person’s home to remember the person and talk about his or her life, usually while eating: “We’re making a lasagna to bring to Pete’s wake.” The phrase “in the wake of (something)” is used to talk about something that happens after something else and as a result of it: “Many people died in the wake of the flooding.” A “wake-up call” is a call that one requests at a hotel to help one wake up at a certain time the next morning: “Please give me a wake-up call at 6:45.” Another meaning of “wake-up call” is something that happens unexpectedly and makes one think about what one is doing and decide to change things: “Xiaofeng’s driving accident was a wake-up call that made her friends become better drivers.”

to scatter

In this podcast, the verb “to scatter” means to spread around or to put a small amount of something over a large area: “They scattered leaves on the table as decoration.” The verb “to scatter” can also mean for many people to leave an area in many different directions very quickly, usually because they are scared: “The birds scattered when the boy shouted.” The phrase “scattered showers” refers to short periods of rain that happen many times during the day: “Expect scattered showers this afternoon, with heavy rain tomorrow morning.” Finally, the word “scatterbrained” is used to describe someone who is very distracted and cannot remember things well, or doesn’t know what he or she is doing: “Shelby is so scatterbrained she doesn’t even remember where she parked her car.”



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CULTURE NOTE

People often visit the gravesites of their “deceased” (dead) loved ones, but some people also like to visit the “tombs” (mausoleums; stone buildings for dead bodies) of famous people.

For example, the Royal Mausoleum of Hawaii is where two of Hawaii’s “royal” (relating to kings and queens) families are buried. Visitors can go to a “chapel” (small church) and, behind the chapel, see the tombs of Hawaiian kings and their families.

Lincoln’s Tomb, in Springfield, Illinois, is the tomb of the United States’ 16th president, Abraham Lincoln. People can go there “to pay their respects” (to show one’s admiration for someone who has died) for his “role” (the way a person acted and the things he or she did) in U.S. history.

Many people who go to Washington, D.C. visit Arlington National Cemetery, which is a very large cemetery where more than 300,000 people are buried. Most of them fought in wars for the United States or were important “figures” (people) in “public services” (jobs where one works for the government and tries to help other people).

Arlington National Cemetery has a “monument” (something that is built to remember an important person or event) called the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. It is “dedicated to” (said to be in honor of) all the “unknown soldiers” (people who die while fighting for their country, and whose bodies are found, although their names and identities are not known). The tomb is always “guarded” (watched over) by men in “uniform” (standard clothing), and people come to watch the “changing of the guard” (the ceremony where guards leave and new guards come).

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 533: Making Funeral and Burial Arrangements.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 533. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development, right here in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode. To help support these free audio podcasts you can also make a small donation on our website, if you would like to support us that way.

This episode is called "Making Funeral and Burial Arrangements." Reiko and Lucas are having a conversation about what will happen when they die – what they want done with their body after they die. So, we'll have vocabulary related to death. On that happy note, let's get started!

[start of dialogue]

Reiko: When I die, I want a big funeral. The more mourners the better!

Lucas: Not me. I'm just the opposite. I don't want any kind of funeral or wake. I just want to be cremated and have my ashes scattered.

Reiko: What? You don't want to be buried in a beautiful casket with a big headstone? Better yet, how about being interred in a mausoleum?

Lucas: You've got to be kidding me! Why would I all want all of that hoopla? I'm dead. What difference would it make to me?

Reiko: It's not for you. It's for the mourners. Having a ceremony and a burial will help them grieve.

Lucas: Not my friends and family. The less fuss the better for them. Most of my family is buried in simple gravesites in non-denominational cemeteries.

Reiko: What's the fun in that?

Lucas: I think you're forgetting one thing: we're talking about death. It's not supposed to be fun and games!



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[end of dialogue]

Reiko begins our dialogue by saying, “When I die, I want a big funeral.” A “funeral” is a ceremony that you have after a person dies; it is a way of allowing people to say goodbye. Funerals have been around for as long as we have any sort of recorded history in almost every culture. Sometimes the funeral is religious; sometimes it is not. Reiko says she wants a big funeral. She says, “The more mourners the better!” A “mourner” (mourner) is a person who is very sad because someone they know has died, usually a friend or a member of the family, or it could just be someone they know very well. “To mourn,” as a verb, means to feel sad because someone has died; you’re remembering that person. Often, mourners wear (at least in Western traditions) black if they are “in mourning,” that is, if they are observing the time of sadness, of grief, of sorrow after someone has died.

Reiko says, “The more mourners the better!” meaning she wants as many people there mourning her as possible. Lucas says, “Not me (I don’t agree). I’m just the opposite. I don’t want any kind of funeral or wake.” A “wake” (wake) is a period of time after death but before a funeral, when people get together to remember the person. Often there’s food at a wake; it depends on whether it’s held in someone’s home, which was the old tradition, or in what we would call a “funeral home.” A “funeral home” is a place that prepares the body after it dies but before it goes into the ground (before it is buried). Wakes can sometimes have a religious aspect to them as well. When someone dies, the night before the funeral there’s often a wake, where people can go and talk to each other, talk to the family members, say some prayers for the person who has died. That’s one kind of wake. “Wake” has a number of different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Lucas says, “I don’t want any kind of funeral or wake. I just want to be cremated and to have my ashes scattered.” There’s usually two things that you do with the body once someone dies. One option is to “bury” the body; that is, to dig a hole in the ground, and put the body in the hole. Usually, you put it in a box before you put it in the hole. The other option is to “cremate” (cremate). When someone is “cremated,” the body is burned until the only thing left you have are what are called “ashes,” gray-colored powder that is left. Those ashes are then sometimes put into a small container, which is called it an “urn” (urn). Well, Lucas doesn’t want to be buried, he wants to be cremated and to have his ashes scattered. “To scatter” (scatter) means to spread something around, put a small amount of something over a large area. “To scatter one’s ashes” means to take the ashes after the body has been burned – you take what is left of the body, the ashes, and you throw it, perhaps, over a lake or in the ocean or out in the trees.



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It depends on what your preference is. Some religious traditions don't allow this scattering of ashes; it's not part of the funeral. But some people have done this, and continue to do this: take their burned remains and scatter them somewhere. "Scatter" has a couple of different meanings; take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.

Reiko says, "What? You don't want to be buried in a beautiful casket with a big headstone?" We talked about the verb "to bury," to put the body into the ground. This is the traditional way that funerals were conducted. This is what you typically did, at least in the United States up until recently you would have a funeral. I'm not sure if it is still the most common way of getting rid of the body. Perhaps cremation has become more popular, I'm not sure. The "casket" (casket) is the box that you put the dead body in before it goes into the ground. A "headstone," sometimes called a "tombstone" ("tomb" is another word for the place where you put a body), is a piece of stone, typically, that has your name on it, often the day that you were born and the day that you died, or the year that you were born and the year that you died. Sometimes the headstone (or gravestone) has something about the person: "He was a wonderful husband and father." On my headstone, it will say: "He is no longer in beautiful Los Angeles, California"! That's a headstone.

Reiko says, "how about being interred in a mausoleum?" We mentioned how the body in a casket is typically put into the ground. But there's also another option with a body and a casket, and that is to put the casket into a mausoleum. A "mausoleum" is small building that is used to hold the bodies of dead people. Often, this was done with a very rich family for example. There are some churches that have mausoleums. The Catholic cathedral here in Los Angeles has a mausoleum underneath the church, where you can buy a place to have your body put. "To inter" (inter) means to bury the body or to place it in a mausoleum. It's a special verb that we use when we're talking about funerals. Sometimes, the actual placing of the body in the ground or in the mausoleum is called the "internment."

Lucas says, "You've got to be kidding me! Why would I all want all of that hoopla?" "Hoopla" (hoopla) means a lot of excitement, a lot of attention, a great deal of activity, many things going on. It's a somewhat informal expression to talk about, perhaps, too much excitement, too many things going on. When someone is celebrating, they may have a party with a lot of hoopla – a lot of things going on, music and dancing, that sort of thing. Here, Lucas simply means he doesn't want to go to all of this trouble after he dies – or at least, someone else go to that trouble. He says, "I'm dead. What difference would it make to me?"



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Reiko says, “It’s not for you. It’s for the mourners. Having a ceremony and a burial will help them grieve.” “To grieve” (grieve) means you are feeling sad because someone has died, or you perhaps have lost something important. Reiko is saying that the funeral is to help your friends and family grieve, to get through this sadness, to let the sadness be expressed.

Lucas says, “Not my friends and family. The less fuss the better for them.” Once again, we have this expression as we had earlier in the dialogue when we heard “The more mourners the better,” here we have “The less fuss the better.” This way of expressing things means simply that it would be better if we had more mourners, or it would be better if we had less fuss. “Fuss” (fuss) means a lot of unnecessary activity or excitement. Lucas says his family and friends don’t want all of that. “Most of my family is buried in simple gravesites in non-denominational cemeteries.” A “gravesite” is a place where the body is buried. We mentioned before the word “tomb,” a “gravesite” is similar to that. A “cemetery” is a large place where there are many different bodies buried. “Denominational” refers to a particular type of church or religious organization. In the Christian tradition, that would include Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists, Catholics, and so forth. Those are all different denominations. A “non-denominational” cemetery would be a cemetery for anyone, regardless of their religion.

Reiko says, “What’s the fun in that?” meaning that’s not very interesting. Lucas says, “I think you’re forgetting about one thing: we’re talking about death. It’s not supposed to be fun and games!” The expression “fun and games” means things that are not very serious, that are only meant to have a good time. Reiko says that being cremated and having one’s ashes scattered is not very fun, and Lucas says well, it’s not supposed to be fun, because we’re talking about something that is sad, which is death. At least, that’s Lucas’ view.

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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

Writing scripts is not all fun and games. Just ask the scriptwriter for this episode, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I am Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.

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