



TOPICS

Famous Americans: Sacagawea; NASCAR racing; to take its toll (on someone); you are/is; whatever versus whatsoever

GLOSSARY

to leave your mark on (something) – to change something in an important way; to have an important influence on something

* Chantrelle left her mark on the university by starting a new student organization to give students more rights on campus.

expedition – a long trip to explore and to discover a new place or a place where few have been

* The expedition over the mountains lasted three months and two members died.

uncharted territory – land that was not mapped well; area where few people have been to and little is known about it; a new place

* Many people moved to uncharted territories in the U.S. in the early 1800s so they could own land and build a new life.

trapper – a person whose job is to catch animals, kill them, and sell their skins

* He used to work as a trapper, but quit because he didn't like killing animals.

to negotiate – to make agreements; to discuss issues with someone until an agreement is made

* The two countries negotiated an agreement to trade with one another.

racetrack – a special road in an oval shape (stretched-out circle) where cars drive to race one another

* As the cars raced around the racetrack, we tried to guess which car would win.

ratings – scores of popularity based on the number of people who watch a program; the number of people watching a television show

* The new show was cancelled after getting the lowest ratings of any show on television that week.



to sanction – to officially accept and allow; to give official permission to do something

* Do you think we should sanction the making of T-shirts with the name of our band on them?

series – a group of things that are related and happen one after the other

* The teams will play a series of games in March in Beijing.

prize money – money that is given to the winner of a competition

* How much is the prize money for the winner of this boxing match?

trophy – a big object usually made out of metal, often in the shape of a big plate or a cup, given to the winner of a competition

* Wanda came home with the trophy she won for being the best bowler.

collision – accident where cars or other vehicles hit another car/vehicle or something else, usually causing damage or injury

* It was a miracle that the collision of the two trains caused very little damage and no injuries.

to take its toll (on someone) – to cause negative effects to someone's health and life, often because they are going through a difficult experience

* Working three jobs took its toll on Tim, who is also trying to finish college.

whatever – an expression to show surprise or confusion; anything or any amount

* Whatever they want, tell the people knocking on our door to go away. It's 6:00 in the morning!

whatsoever – at all; in any way

* I don't plan to give any money whatsoever to support grown children who refuse to work!



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

The Sacagawea Dollar

In the U.S., if you want to pay for something that costs one dollar, you would most likely take out a one-dollar “bill” (money made of paper). However, the government has also produced one-dollar “coins” (money made of metal). In 2000, the government began “minting” (producing money made of metal) a one-dollar coin of Sacagawea.

On the front of coin is a picture of a woman carrying a baby on her back. Since there are no photographs of Sacagawea, the artist used a 22-year-old woman from the same Native American tribe as Sacagawea as his “model” (a person used for creating art). The back of the coin was designed by another artist and shows an “eagle” (large bird) in flight. The bald eagle is the national bird of the U.S.

Although the government minted over \$1 billion Sacagawea coins in the first year, the coin did not “catch on” (become popular). Like other one-dollar coins the U.S. government has produced in the past, the Sacagawea dollar was not popular with the general public and “production” (the making) of the coin “declined” (went down; decreased) a lot in the second and following years. However, the coin is still “in circulation” (being used), although they are somewhat difficult to find.





COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 178.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 178. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Honolulu, Hawaii – well actually, in beautiful Los Angeles, California!

You can visit our website at eslpod.com. Download this episode's Learning Guide, an 8- to 10-page guide we provide for all of our current episodes that gives you some additional help in improving your English. You can also take a look at our ESL Podcast Store, with additional courses in English, including our Introduction to the United States course as well as our ESL Podcast Blog.

On this Café, we're going to continue our series on famous Americans, talking about a very brave woman named Sacagawea who helped early explorers of the United States learn about the western U.S. Then we'll talk about NASCAR racing, which is a very popular sport here in the U.S., where professional drivers race cars at very fast speeds – and get paid for it! And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a continuation of our series on famous Americans. Today we're going to talk about a young woman named Sacagawea. Sacagawea has become an important part of U.S. history, although she probably never thought of herself as even being part of the United States. She was a Native American, or American Indian, one of the people who lived in North America before the Europeans came to live here. We sometimes use the word "Indians" to talk about Native Americans or American Indians. Sacagawea was from "Shoshone," which is a "tribe," or a group of Native Americans; that was the tribe that she belonged to.

Sacagawea left her mark on American history because she helped with an important "expedition," or long trip of exploration and discovery. The phrase "to leave your mark on (something)" means to change something or have an important influence on something. Many writers want to leave their mark on the world by writing a great book. I plan on leaving my mark on the world by recording some wonderful songs – some of them you've already heard!



Sacagawea left her mark on American history by helping the Lewis and Clark Expedition explore part of North America that would become the western United States. In order to understand the importance of Sacagawea and the Lewis and Clark Expedition, you need to know a little bit about earlier American history.

In 1803, the United States bought a large amount of land from France; it is sometimes called the Louisiana Purchase. Unfortunately, the American government didn't really know very much about what that land was like or who lived there before they bought it. President Thomas Jefferson, our third president, was very interested in learning more, and he especially wanted to know about "routes," or ways to go from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. So he chose a man named Meriwether Lewis to lead an expedition to learn more – to lead a trip that would explore this new area. Lewis chose a man named William Clark to help him lead this expedition. Although there were 33 people on the expedition, it became known as the Lewis and Clark Expedition – probably because using the names of all 33 people would make it a very long title!

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was going through uncharted territory. "Uncharted territory" is an expression we use to mean land that we don't have good maps for. Few people have been there, so there were a lot of "unknowns," or questions that people didn't have the answers to about this Louisiana Purchase. Not knowing the land and the routes was very dangerous, of course, for Lewis and Clark, but there were also many American Indian or Native American tribes, some of which were "hostile," or not very friendly to the white Europeans and Americans who were taking over their land – I can't imagine why they would be upset!

Lewis and Clark needed to have a way to communicate with these Indian tribes, but they did not speak any of the Native American languages. So as they moved "westward," as they moved toward the west of the United States, they interviewed many trappers who might be able to translate for their expedition. A "trapper" (trapper) is a person whose job is to catch animals, kill them, and then sell their skins. The trappers often spoke Native American languages because they lived in that area. Lewis and Clark decided to work with a French trapper who was actually married to an Indian woman who spoke her native Shoshone language. The wife of this French trapper was Sacagawea.



Sacagawea was very young (she married the trapper when she was only 13 years old) and she was pregnant at the time (she was carrying a child). She showed, however, a lot of “bravery,” or not being afraid, by going on a long and dangerous trip with a group of men who were, of course, very different from the people she had always lived with. She helped the Lewis and Clark Expedition in many ways. In areas where she knew the geography of the land, she helped to guide the expedition westward, to show them which path or route they should take. She also translated when the expedition needed to “negotiate,” or make agreements with Indian tribes that spoke Shoshone, which was, as I mentioned, her language. She was also able to help the members of the expedition find food to eat, since she knew what plants the Native Americans used.

Even more importantly, her “presence,” or just the fact that she was in this group was very helpful for the expedition. When other Indian tribes saw the expedition coming, they might have thought that the people were coming for war, or to fight. But when they saw Sacagawea, a woman, was with them, they knew that the group was probably “peaceful,” or not wanting to fight. Women did not normally “accompany,” or go with war parties, groups of Indians who wanted to fight. Without Sacagawea, it’s possible the Lewis and Clark Expedition would have had to fight a lot more.

Sacagawea’s “role,” or part in the Lewis and Clark Expedition has sometimes been “romanticized,” meaning people today think her role was perhaps more important or more interesting than it actually was. But she definitely was important to the Lewis and Clark Expedition and she has become an important “figure,” or person in U.S. history. There are, in the U.S., many monuments and statues of Sacagawea, and she even appears on the U.S. one-dollar coin. Take a look at our Learning Guide for some more discussion of that Sacagawea dollar.

Our second topic is very different; it’s about car “races,” competitions to see which car can go the fastest. NASCAR stands for the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing. Stock car racing is a special kind of car race that uses cars that go very fast around what is called a “racetrack,” or a special road that’s usually in an “oval” shape, sort of like a stretched-out circle. These are the kinds of tracks that you see, for example, runners using who race against each other. Of course, the cars are not on the same tracks as the runners – that would be a little dangerous and, I think the cars would probably win! These are special roads – special tracks that are built just for the cars.



Car racing used to be popular only in certain parts of the United States; it was very popular in what we call the South, which is actually the southeastern United States. States like Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana; that is traditionally called the South in the U.S. It was very popular in the state of North Carolina. In fact, most car racing teams are still based in, or still have their homes in North Carolina, on the eastern coast of the U.S., but now the sport of car racing has become popular all across the country. In fact, of all the professional sports that people can watch on television, car racing has the second-highest ratings. “Ratings” are scores of popularity based on the number of people who watch a TV program. TV programs, of course, want to have high ratings, because it means many people are watching their shows, so they can get more advertisers to pay more money for ads. It’s a little hard to believe that car racing is the second most popular sport on television, but it is; it’s that popular. Football is the highest rated sport on American television. Many people also like to watch NASCAR races in person, so they buy tickets to sit along the sides of the racetracks where they can see and hear the cars as they are racing.

NASCAR “sanctions,” or officially accepts and allows more than 1,500 races in 39 U.S. states, in Mexico, and in Canada. There’s something called the Sprint Cup Series, which is the most important car racing event of the year. A “series” is usually a group of things that are related to each other that happen one after another. For example, a television series is a show with the same characters that are in different episodes each week. Well, the Sprint Cup Series is a series of 36 races over a 10-month period. So in 10 months, there are 36 different races that are all part of this Sprint Cup Series. Each race has about \$4 million in “prize money,” which is the money that is given to the winner or winners of the race. So, you can make a lot of money driving your car fast around in a circle!

The winners also get the Sprint Cup, which is a “trophy,” a big object usually made out of metal, that is often in the shape of a big plate or a large cup. The trophy is something that you are given if you win a competition, often. People get trophies for things in school: science projects for example, or if your basketball team wins the championship you might each get a trophy. The trophy for the Sprint Cup Series is called the Sprint Cup (very clever – very smart name!), and you can tell by the name, it has a shape of a very large cup.

NASCAR racing can be very dangerous for drivers, because they are going so fast that sometimes their cars “lose control” or “go out of control,” meaning that



the drivers cannot control how quickly the car is going or where it is going. NASCAR has a lot of rules that try to make things safer, but it's impossible to "prevent," or avoid problems. NASCAR drivers are often injured and some even die when they have "collisions," or accidents where their car hits the wall of the racetrack, or perhaps hits another car. But there is so much money in the sport, and so many people, I guess, like to watch it, that car racing continues to be popular even though it is or could be very dangerous. Some people think that the danger is what makes the car racing interesting to watch.

I have to say that I've never actually watched a NASCAR race on television for more than a few minutes, and I have never been to a NASCAR race. But, it is very popular, at least in many parts of the U.S. I prefer to watch something quieter, something a little slower, a little less dangerous – something like baseball, for example.

Now let's answer some of your questions.

Our first question comes from Marco (Marco) in Italy. Marco wants to know the meaning of the expression "to take its toll (toll) on (someone)." When we say something "take its toll" on someone, we mean it causes something negative; it has some negative effect on someone's health or on someone's life, usually because it's a difficult experience. So if you, for example, have cancer, that will take its toll on your health – it causes it to be worse.

The word "toll," used in other contexts, is usually a tax or a fee that you have to pay, for example, to use a road or to cross a bridge. Some governments charge you money to use certain highways or cross certain bridges. We would call that price that you pay – that fee that you pay a toll. We also use the word "toll" in talking about a long distance telephone call, or at least we used to. People used to talk about making "toll calls." Those were calls that were long distance that cost additional money – extra money.

Mahdi (Mahdi) in Afghanistan wants to know why if "you" is a singular pronoun, we don't say "you is" instead of "you are." Well, "you," in English – in American English can be both a singular or a plural pronoun; it can mean you (one person) or you (50 people). In some parts of the country in the U.S. they say "you all," meaning more than one. But in most regions, "you" means both one person and several people.



However, in either case the second person singular verb for “to be” is “are.” So, “you are a good person,” “you are all good people.” It would be incorrect to say “you is,” because “is” is the third person singular form of the verb “to be.”

Finally, Calixte (Calixte) in France want to know the differences between the words “whatever” and “whatsoever” (whatsoever).

“Whatever” is used to express often surprise or confusion, and has the same meaning as “what,” but is used for emphasis. For example you could say to someone, “What is the matter with you?” meaning what is wrong with you. But you could also say, “Whatever is the matter with you?” It’s a stronger way of saying – emphasizing that first word “what.” That’s used mostly in writing, and is not used all that often in spoken English. “Whatever” can also mean having no restrictions: “You can take whatever you want to eat,” meaning I’m not limiting you; you can take anything you want to eat. That is, by far, the most common use of “whatever.” A third use of “whatever” is more informal, slang level English. When someone says, “Oh, whatever,” they mean I don’t care, that’s not important to me, I don’t want to talk about it anymore. That became very popular in the last 20 years or so, that particular use of “whatever.” Usually it’s said by teenagers about something that they don’t want to talk about anymore or don’t care about: “Whatever!”

“Whatsoever” means at all or in any way. For example: “You are not allowed to go out on school nights for any reason whatsoever.” “Whatsoever” is used for emphasis, to say that something cannot happen no matter what the circumstances or under any circumstances; it is not possible. Usually, “whatsoever” is used by a parent or someone in authority, and is often used when you are giving a command – you are telling somebody what to do.

Whatever question you have, we’ll be happy to try to answer it here on the Café if we have time. You can email us; our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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