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## TOPICS

Patriotic songs; Carnegie Hall; grande versus venti (at Starbucks); troop versus troops; (something) is ghostwritten

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## GLOSSARY

**patriotic** – showing one's love for one's country; feeling pride in one's country

\* Look at all of those patriotic people wearing red, white, and blue on Independence Day!

**to bless** – to help and protect someone; for God or a religious leader to give special help to someone

\* Before we began our project, we asked our minister to bless our efforts.

**prayer** – the words that one says or the thoughts that one thinks when one is speaking to God

\* My mother was very religious and would spend an hour each morning saying prayers.

**national anthem** – the official song of a country; the official song representing a country that is played at important events

\* Before each baseball game, everyone stands up as the national anthem is played.

**prairie** – a large, flat area of land with a lot of grass growing on it

\* As we rode our horses across the prairie, we could see miles and miles in front of us.

**foam** – the white stuff that one sees floating on the ocean where there are waves, mostly made of air bubbles; small, white bubbles that come out of an aerosol (filled with mostly air) can when one presses on a button to release it

\* Emil's face was covered with shaving cream foam when he answered the door.

**ocean current** – a path that water moves through in the ocean

\* In this part of the ocean, the ocean current mainly travels to the southeast.



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**hall** – a large building or a large room that is used for dances, meetings, or other important events

\* We're all meeting at the hall two hours before the dance to help set up.

**to seat** – to have enough seats for a set number of people; to have enough chairs for a certain number of people

\* This room seats only 150 people. I think we need a larger room for our presentation.

**acoustics** – the way in which the shape and size of a room affects the way that sounds are heard in it

\* Musicians like playing in this club because the acoustics are amazing!

**to be lined with** – to be covered with many things

\* Her walls are lined with pictures of her many children and grandchildren.

**to be engaged in** – to be active in; to be involved in

\* Our company is not engaged in any dishonest business practices.

**grande** – Italian word meaning “large,” used to indicate a 16-ounce drink at Starbucks cafés

\* I was so sleepy at work yesterday that I ordered a grande coffee at lunchtime to try to wake up.

**venti** – Italian word meaning “twenty,” used to indicate a 20-ounce drink at Starbucks cafés

\* How am I going to finish a venti iced coffee all by myself?

**troop** – a group of soldiers; a group of people

\* This troop was supposed to go to Italy, but is now going to the Middle East.

**troops** – individual soldiers referred to in the plural

\* Okay, troops, listen up! We'll be marching 10 miles tomorrow, so get some sleep tonight.

**(something) is ghostwritten** – writing that is done by one person but that is presented as the work of another person

\* Nobody believed that the actor wrote that book, and now we know that it was ghostwritten by a former journalist.



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **Arlo Guthrie and “Alice’s Restaurant”**

In this episode of English Cafe, you heard about Woody Guthrie and his song “This Land is Your Land.” This song was Woody Guthrie’s “signature song,” or the song that he is best known for.

Like many famous musicians, Woody Guthrie had an “offspring” (son or daughter) who is also a famous musician. Woody’s son is named Arlo Guthrie, and he was born in 1947. Like his father, Arlo is a folk singer and also like his father, he has a signature song. That song is called “Alice’s Restaurant.”

Arlo often wrote songs of “protest” (showing that he was strongly against an idea or policy) and about “social justice,” the idea that all people should have equal opportunity and live secure, healthy, and fair lives. “Alice’s Restaurant” is one of these protest songs. It is a “satire” (using humor to make a social or political point) that protests against the Vietnam War “draft” (the government’s requirement that men serve in the army and other armed forces during wartime). What is so unusual about “Alice’s Restaurant” is that it is a talking blues song, which means that Arlo talked, rather than sang, most of the “lyrics” (words), and the song was over 18 minutes long!

When “Alice’s Restaurant” was released in 1967, it was “in frequent rotation” (often played) on college radio stations and “alternative” (not mainstream) stations throughout much of the country. Today, many radio stations have made the playing of the song a Thanksgiving Day tradition. In 1969, a film, also called “Alice’s Restaurant” was made based on the song.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 228.

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On this Café, we're going to talk about two patriotic songs, songs that are sung by Americans, in this case, to show their love for their country. Specifically, we're going to talk about "God Bless America" and "This Land Is Your Land." That's right, you're going to hear me sing in this episode, so don't go anywhere, keep listening! We're also going to talk about one of the most famous places for performing in the United States, Carnegie Hall in New York City. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

This Café begins with a discussion of two patriotic songs. Something that is "patriotic" (patriotic) is something that shows your love for your country. Patriotic Americans might have a U.S. flag in their front yard. Patriotic people will sing, often, patriotic songs, songs about your country. Every country has, I'm guessing, songs like this.

Here in the United States, one very well known patriotic song is called "God Bless America." To "bless" means to help and protect someone, we usually talk about God blessing people. We also say when someone "sneezes" (someone goes ah-choo!), we sometimes say "Bless you!" In places where there are a lot of German immigrants, places such as Minnesota and in the Midwest U.S., you will often hear people use the expression "Gesundheit!" I use it even though I'm not German – mostly – I'm a little bit German.

Getting back to our song here: In the song "God Bless America," the "lyrics," the words to the song are actually a kind of prayer. A "prayer" (prayer) is something where you say something or are talking to God. You may be asking God for something or thanking God for something. That's a prayer. So, "God Bless America" is a song, but it's also a prayer where we're asking God to bless and



protect America, to take care of our country. We're not saying that God believes or God thinks that the United States is the greatest country in the world – some Americans may think that – but it really is asking for his blessing, his protection.

The song was written in 1918 by one of the most famous Americans songwriters, Irving Berlin. Berlin was born in Russia, but he spent most of his life in the United States. The song became very popular in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in fact so popular some people wanted to make it our national “anthem,” the official song of the United States. Of course, our national anthem is actually a song called “The Star-Spangled Banner,” which we talked about, oh, way back in English Café 153.

I'll begin by singing the first part of “God Bless America,” and then we'll go back and talk about what it means.

*God bless America,  
Land that I love,  
Stand beside her and guide her  
Thru the night with a light from above;*

*From the mountains, to the prairies,  
To the oceans white with foam,  
God bless America,  
My home, sweet home.  
God bless America,  
My home, sweet home.*

Let's talk a little bit about what I just sang, if you could understand that. We started by saying “God bless America, land that I love.” In other words, America is the land – the country, the nation that I love. “Stand beside her.” “To stand beside (someone)” means to be with someone, to support someone the. “Her” refers to the country of the United States. It's common in poetry and songs for countries to be referred to in personal terms, such as “him” or “her,” “her” is a little more common. Here we're asking God to stand beside, or be with America, and guide the country: “guide her thru the night with a light from above.” So we're asking God to guide or lead the United States, America – referring, of course, to the United States – through the night, perhaps through difficult times, through difficult moments, with a light from above. The idea is that God is above us, in the heavens, and therefore He is guiding us with this light.

The next line is “From the mountains, to the prairies.” “Prairies” (prairies) are



large, flat areas of land with lots of grass growing on them. The midwestern part of the United States has prairies. There are fountains both in the eastern and western parts of the U.S. So, the idea is that we are asking God to guide all of the country: “From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans, white with foam.” United States has on its eastern and western borders oceans; the Atlantic to the east, the Pacific to the west. “White with foam” refers to the fact that in the ocean, sometimes the water will form these white bubbles that when you have a lot of them together form foam (foam). You can also form foam and with soap, for example. If you’re in a bathtub and you rub the soap against your skin with the water, you will typically form a certain kind of foam. Well, this is foam from the water bubbles in the ocean.

“God bless America, my home sweet home” is the last line. “My home sweet home.” “Sweet” here means beloved, dear, something that is close to my heart. We use the expression “home sweet home” in regular conversation to refer to the fact that we are glad we are back home. Usually after traveling somewhere, we come home and we may say “Home sweet home!” meaning I’m very happy to be back in my house – in my home, and that’s what the song is referring to here.

“God Bless America” is not as popular a song as “The Star Spangled Banner.” However, at most professional baseball games, at least in recent years, they have been singing “God Bless America” during one of the breaks in the middle of the seventh part, or “inning,” of the baseball game. Someone will be invited to sing “God Bless America.” That’s in addition to singing “The Star Spangled Banner” at the beginning of the game. So you actually get two songs, if you will, at a baseball game. Actually you get three songs, because after they sing “God Bless America” they also sing another baseball song, which we won’t talk about here.

We will talk about another popular song from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, written by a man named Woody Guthrie. Well, Woody Guthrie, back in 1940, decided he didn’t really like “God Bless America.” He didn’t think that it really reflected – it was really representative of America, it didn’t represent everyone. So he wrote a different song, called “This Land Is Your Land.” Guthrie was involved in liberal left politics in the 1930s and 40s, and I think part of the reason for this song was to show that the common person – the average person should be celebrated in a song about the United States.

“This Land Is Your Land” has different parts; I’m just going to sing the “chorus,” which is the part that repeats during the song.



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*This land is your land, this land is my land,  
From California, to the New York Island,  
From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters,  
This land was made for you and me.*

We start by singing “This land (once again this country, this nation) is your land.” So immediately we’re emphasizing that the country belongs to everyone, not just to rich people or not just to people in a certain social class. I think that’s what Guthrie was trying to say.

“This land is your land, this land is my land, from California...” which at the time was the state that represented the western border of the United States. It was the farthest west, on the West Coast along with Oregon and Washington. So in 1940, California was one end of the country. Now, of course, we have the states of Alaska and Hawaii, which are farther west, but they did not become states until 1959. So writing in 1940, California represented the West; the East was New York, which is on the eastern part of the U.S., not the most eastern state. He says, “From California, to the New York Island.” He might be referring here to the most famous island in New York, which is Manhattan, the downtown part of New York City. I’m not sure.

Then he sings “From the Redwood Forest, to the Gulf Stream waters.” The Redwood Forest is an area with many trees; a “forest” is a natural area that has many trees. Redwoods are a particular kind of tree – very beautiful, tall trees that grow in Northern California. If you ever go to Northern California, you should deftly try to see these redwood trees, they’re absolutely huge. The Gulf Stream refers to the Gulf of Mexico, which is, again, on the southern eastern part of the United States. The stream in the Gulf is sometimes called the “ocean current.” It’s a path that water moves in as it goes through the ocean. The Gulf Stream passes from Mexico past Florida, and so it represents, once again, sort of the southern eastern part of the United States. Notice this is similar to “God Bless America,” which talks about from the mountains to the prairies, representing the limits of the United States, to include everyone. Then it says “This land was made for you and me,” once again emphasizing that the country belongs to the people, to us.

This song actually has many “verses,” many parts of the song. The song talks about walking through different areas and seeing different parts of the country, but I won’t sing all of those right now. You can probably find a recording of the song online. Several famous singers have recorded the song, including Bruce Springsteen.





Some people have said that the song “This Land Is Your Land” should be our national anthem, just as some people want “God Bless America,” but neither of them, of course, is that. It is, instead, “The Star-Spangled Banner.” “This Land Is Your Land” is not sung in public that much, not as much as “God Bless America,” at least that I have heard.

So those are two patriotic, well known songs here in the United States: “God Bless America” and “This Land Is Your Land.”

Now let’s turn to our second topic: Carnegie Hall. Normally a “hall” is a narrow passageway in a building, how you get from one room to another. But in this case, “hall” refers to a large room or a large building that is used for meetings, dances, and performances. That’s the meaning of “hall” when we’re using the word to talk about Carnegie Hall.

Carnegie Hall is a large building in New York City. It’s used for concerts and other performances. It was built in 1891 by a philanthropist named Andrew Carnegie. A “philanthropist” is a person who is very rich – has a lot of money – and gives that money to organizations and groups in order to help them. Andrew Carnegie made a lot of money in the steel industry. “Steel” (steel) is a type of strong metal used in making buildings and cars and other things.

Carnegie Hall has three separate areas for performance, each of which is also called a “hall.” The biggest hall seats 2,804 people; the smallest hall seats only 268 people. “To seat,” here used as a verb, means that a certain number of people can sit in that room. There’s enough room for, basically, 2,804 chairs, if you will, inside the room. In a typical year, Carnegie Hall has about 250 performances, and it rents out its facilities to other performing groups, so there’s almost always something going on at Carnegie Hall.

Why is Carnegie Hall so famous? Well, the Main Hall has very good acoustics. “Acoustics” (acoustics) refers to the way that sound travels in a given space – in a room. If we say a room has good acoustics, we mean that it’s a good room for listening to music performance, for example. Musicians like to play in Carnegie Hall because it is a place with pretty good acoustics. Also, Carnegie Hall is in New York City, one of the cultural capitals of the United States, if not the cultural capital of the U.S. If somebody says “I’m going to play Carnegie Hall,” they mean they’re going to perform at Carnegie Hall. That’s really the top of the entertainment world in terms of famous places to perform. If you performed at Carnegie Hall, well, you’re considered a great artist. At least that’s what the





traditional reputation of Carnegie Hall is.

Many famous musicians have performed, of course, at Carnegie Hall. The walls are lined with their portraits and photographs. When we say the walls are “lined” (lined) with something, we mean they’re covered with these many things. My mother’s house is lined with photographs of her children, and her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren. When you walk through Carnegie Hall, the walls are lined with photographs and portraits (picture) of famous people who have performed there.

Carnegie Hall used to have just classical music, but it began to have jazz and popular music a little later on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and now there are even rock and roll and country music groups that perform there. In addition to its famous performers, Carnegie Hall also is “engaged in,” or active in, many types of educational work, trying to teach people, especially young students about music. It has a lot of programs for schools, it has family concerts, sometimes Carnegie Hall even sponsors some free concerts in some neighborhoods.

So if you’re ever in New York City – in the downtown of New York City, Manhattan, you definitely want to at least go by Carnegie Hall. It would be wonderful to see a performance there. I admit I have not been to Carnegie Hall, but someday I hope I will go at least as somebody sitting in the seats, if not an actual performer!

One more thing about Andrew Carnegie: I said he was a philanthropist. He was really one of the most famous and most generous philanthropists in the United States, especially in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to building Carnegie Hall, he’s also famous for building libraries – public libraries and university libraries. In fact, he gave money to build more than 2,500 libraries. Most of those were built in the United States, but also in Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Serbia, islands in the Caribbean, and Fiji. He probably did more for American education and learning (“literacy,” the ability to read and write) than just about any other single individual in our history.

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Natsiree (Natsiree) from Thailand. As always, I apologize if the pronunciation is not correct. The question has to do with the words “grande” and “venti.” Both of these words have become popular in the U.S. because there’s one chain – one company that has many different coffee shops, or cafés, in the U.S. called Starbucks. They have them in other places in the



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world as well. And if you go, at least to the American version of a Starbucks, you will see that the size of the drinks that they sell – coffee drinks, mostly – are either tall, grande, or venti.

“Grande,” in this case, comes from the Italian word meaning large. A grande drink is a 16 ounce coffee drink at Starbucks. A “tall” is a 12 ounce coffee drink, which is actually, at least on the menu, the smallest drink you can get. It’s somewhat ironic that a tall is actually the smallest. Then comes the grande. The biggest is called a “venti” (venti). This is Italian for twenty, because this has 20 ounces of coffee or whatever drink you’re getting – tea. So for example if you wanted a coffee, you would say “I want a venti coffee.” Or if you wanted something like coffee with milk, you would say “I want a grande latte.” “Latte,” another Italian word, is related to milk.

In fact, Starbucks uses several Italian words in its menu. It sells drinks such as espresso, which is a strong, Italian style coffee. It sells lattes, which is hot milk added to your coffee or tea. I go to Starbucks at least a couple of times each week. I get a venti Earl Grey tea latte (a type of tea). I get, usually, non fat, meaning non fat milk. So if you come to Los Angeles and you want to buy me a drink at Starbucks, you can order a venti Earl Grey latte, non fat milk!

Our next question comes from David (David) in Germany. David wants to know the difference between “troop” (troop) and “troops” (troops). For example, he heard or read in the news that there were 140,000 troops in Iraq.

“Troops” refers to individual soldiers, but talking about more than one. So there are 40,000 troops, there are 100,000 troops. That means 40,000 soldiers – 40,000 troops.

“Troop,” without the “s” at the end, is actually a group of soldiers that is under the command, or is following, a single leader. “The captain says his troop is moving out at dawn,” meaning it’s going to leave in the morning. “Troop” can also refer to small groups that are not soldiers, adults or children. In fact, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, which are two organizations for young boys and young girls, usually calls their group of children a “troop.” So when I was a young child, I was in a Boy Scout troop. It was a group of kids, maybe 10 or 15, that all went to the same school and were all part of the same Boy Scout troop.

So, “troop” can refer to a group of people. But, “troops,” with the “s” at the end, always refers the number of soldiers, or the individual soldiers, but as a group. It’s a little confusing, I know! There’s a popular bumper sticker that you might



see in the U.S. – a bumper sticker is a little sign that people put on the backs of their cars. One of them that has been popular here in the last seven or eight years is “Support our troops,” meaning support the men and women who are in the military services, such as the Army and the Navy and the Marine Corps.

Our final question comes from Daniele (Daniele) in Italy. The question has to do with the word “ghostwriting” (ghostwriting – one word). You’ll usually hear, more commonly, the word “ghostwritten.” For example: “This book was ghostwritten.” What does this mean?

Well, a “ghost” (ghost) is, supposedly, a dead person who has an image you can still see. Some people think they can talk to those who have died by talking to their ghost. Well, “ghostwritten” refers to something that was written by someone else, or someone else helped the author write whatever it is they wrote. A lot of famous actors and politicians write books, but they don’t really write them themselves. They have a “ghostwriter,” a person who helps them write the book.

So that’s the meaning of “ghostwritten,” it has nothing to do with dead people. It is more related to the idea that you don’t see the ghost that is writing. The ghostwriter is somehow not seen, that you think that you’re reading the politician or the actor or whoever it was who put their name on this book.

If you have a question or comment for us, you can email us. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto: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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