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## TOPICS

Famous Americans: Langston Hughes; childcare options in the U.S.; to totally own(ed) (someone); bad news

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## GLOSSARY

**collectively** – as a group; done by people acting as a group

\* We can do collectively what none of us can do alone.

**to be offended** – to be insulted; to become very upset when people say or do something that is against one's beliefs

\* Celia was offended when her cousin said that women are weak and will always need a man's help.

**ancient** – very old; related to a period of time long ago in history

\* Do you know some of the ancient customs of the people who lived in this area 300 years ago?

**soul** – the spiritual and emotional part of a person; not the physical part of a person

\* His fans like his music because he puts a lot of soul into every song he writes.

**homemaker** – housewife/househusband; a husband or wife who doesn't work outside of the home and does work around the house

\* Madeleine worked as a company president for 10 years before she quit to become a homemaker.

**dual-income** – a family with both the mother and father working to make enough money to support the family and to pay for all the things that the family needs

\* Only dual-income families can afford to buy this expensive furniture for their homes.

**childcare** – having someone to care for one's children or to watch over them and keep them safe, while the parents are at work or away from home

\* Nearly half of my paycheck goes to paying for childcare for my three children.



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**mobile** – moving from one place to another a lot; able to move easily from one place to another

\* Since I gained 30 pounds, I feel less mobile and don't go out as much as I used to.

**nanny** – a person who stays in one's home and takes care of one's children

\* Our nanny does a good job taking care of the children and the children like her a lot.

**daycare** – a place where parents leave their children during the day to be watched by adults while the parents go to work

\* Reggie is in daycare everyday with 12 other children, so he often comes home with colds.

**stimulation** – producing interest in someone; encouragement to do activities

\* On vacation, sitting on a beach everyday may not be enough stimulation for someone who is active and likes adventures.

**babysitter** – usually a young teenager who takes care of children for a few hours to make some extra money

\* If we can find a babysitter, let's go out to dinner without the kids this Saturday night.

**totally** – completely; entirely; definitely

\* Our house was totally destroyed by the fire.

**to own (someone)** – to have control over someone; to have power over someone

\* We own you so don't even think of making a move without asking us first.

**to owned (someone)** – to have beaten, done better than, or embarrassed someone you are competing against in very big way

\* The other player quit because he knew that you owned him after your first move.

**bad news** – someone who is unpleasant; someone who makes trouble or creates problems

\* Stay away from Dirk. Everyone knows he's bad news.



## WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

### Nanny TV Shows

In the past 10 years, reality TV, shows with real people in real life or unusual circumstances have become very popular in the United States. One type of reality show brings in an “expert,” someone who knows a lot about a subject, to fix or change the current situation for the better.

The subject of two of these shows is families with children who are “out of control” (behave wildly). The shows are Supernanny and Nanny 911. A nanny is someone you hire to take care of your children, and who usually lives in your home. However, the nannies in these shows don’t live with the family, but do spend time with them to find out what the problems are and try to help the parents learn better ways to control their children’s behavior.

On these shows, many of the problems “stem from” (come from) the parents not “disciplining” (punishing) their children when they do something wrong. Not having any negative “consequences” (results) for bad behavior results in the children not listening to their parents. The nannies teach parents better parenting strategies.

For example, Jo Frost in Supernanny, who also starred in the original British version of this show, tells parents to put the misbehaving child on a “naughty step” or in a “naughty chair,” where the child must remain quietly for a period time as punishment. Jo shows that it’s often the parents who are “reluctant” (don’t like) to discipline, but that children do well with some “ground rules” (basic requirements and standards) in the home.

The nannies featured in these show have had a lot of experience caring for children. They’ve worked in many homes, written parenting books, and have even worked for the British “royal family” (king, queen, and their children and relatives).



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 183.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 183. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café, we're going to continue our series on famous Americans, focusing on Langston Hughes, who was a famous American author, or writer, and poet. We'll also talk about childcare options in the United States, how people take care of their children when they have to work. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

Today's episode of the English Café continues our series on famous Americans. Today we'll be talking about a famous American writer named Langston Hughes. Hughes was born in the state of Missouri, which is in the very center part of the United States, in 1902. He died, or he passed away in 1967. During his lifetime, he wrote many different kinds of things and he became a famous poet, author, "playwright," a person who writes plays for the theater, and a "columnist," or a person who writes on similar topics in a newspaper or magazine every week. So, Hughes did a lot of different kinds of writing.

Langston was an African American and many of his works were about his experiences as a black man in the United States. Usually the word "work" is used to describe someone's job, or things that people do to make money. When we talk about artists, writers, or musicians, however, the word "works" means the artistic things that they do and make, such as paintings, sculptures, books, poems, songs, podcasts maybe; these are all considered "works" of an artist. Langston Hughes' works were about what it was like to be an African American in the United States in his lifetime. Many other African Americans were writing similar things at this time.

"Collectively," or as a group, during the 1920s their work, the work of these African American artists, became known as the Harlem Renaissance. "Harlem"



(Harlem) is a part of New York City that has traditionally had a lot of African American, or black, residents. The “Renaissance” usually refers to the cultural changes and growth that happened in Europe during the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, perhaps up to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This renaissance, however, refers to the “rise,” or increase or growth of African American literature in the United States during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Hughes began writing poetry when he was in elementary school. His father didn’t want him to become a writer and tried to get him to study engineering, but that didn’t work; usually it doesn’t. My father wanted me to be an engineer and I ended up becoming a podcaster – that’s the way it goes. He continued writing, however, and many of his poems and short stories were published in magazines and books.

His most famous poem is called The Negro Speaks of Rivers, and was published or printed for the first time in 1921. The word “Negro” means a black person or an African American, although it is not a term that we use any more. Some African Americans would be “offended” by this word, meaning they would become very upset when people use it, so it’s not a word that we use anymore, nor should you, in talking about African Americans. But at the time Langston Hughes was writing, it was the common term. Langston puts it in the title of his poem, The Negro Speaks of Rivers. It’s a beautiful poem; I’ll share just a little bit of his poem with you to give you an idea of his poetry. The first part of it is:

*I’ve known rivers:  
I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the  
flow of human blood in human veins.  
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.*

In the poem, Hughes says that he has known rivers that are “ancient,” or very old. How old? Well, as old as the world and older than the “flow,” or movement of human blood in human veins. “Veins” are the small tubes that blood moves through inside our bodies. He says that his “soul,” his spiritual and emotional part, the part that isn’t physical, has grown deep like the rivers. The poem goes on later to talk about different rivers in Africa and the United States. As you read the poem it becomes clear that Hughes is really talking about the experiences of all African Americans, not just his own experience. You might enjoy reading the rest of the poem. If you have time to look for it online you can find it on several different websites.



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I actually first heard about Langston Hughes in the early 1990s. I had heard his name, but I had never really read his poetry, and a friend of mine, back in 1992, I remember very well, recommending I go and try to read some of Hughes' poetry. So I went to a bookstore here in Los Angeles and I found a copy, and I started reading the poetry when I was there at the bookstore, something we often do. We start reading a book to see if we like it, if we want to buy it. I was absolutely amazed at Hughes' poetry. I bought the book, and I remember going home that night and reading the entire thing because I was so much in love with his poetic style. I think he's a wonderful poet, and he also reflects a different view of the United States, especially during a time when the idea that there would be an African American president was almost an impossible one. So, I recommend trying to find a little bit of Langston Hughes. His poems are often short; the language is not particularly difficult, but I think it's worth taking a look at. It's an important part of modern American culture.

Hughes is probably not the most famous 20<sup>th</sup> century poet in the United States. That would probably be a title we might give to someone like Robert Frost. But, he is a wonderful poet, and one that I think is worth looking at.

Now let's talk about our next topic, which is childcare options in the United States. Many people think that the ideal or best situation for children is to have one of the parents, usually the mother, stay at home with the children. In the past, it was certainly common for women to be what we would call "homemakers," which is also the same word or the same idea as a "housewife," women who don't work outside of their home. Their job is to take care of the children and the house and to do the things that are required, such as cooking and cleaning, for the family. This, however, has changed for most American families over the last 30 or 40 years.

Today, most Americans families are "dual-income" families, meaning that both the mother and the father, if there is a mother and a father, work outside the home in order to make enough money to support the family and pay for all of the things that a family needs. This means that parents need to find "childcare" for their children when they're at work, especially when the children are too young to go to school, say below the age of five or six. They need to make arrangements for someone to care for their children, or to watch over them, keep them safe while they are working.

In many countries, older relatives who have already retired or no longer work can care for children while parents are at work. However, in the United States, this is not as common as it is in other countries. In part, this is because the U.S.



population is very “mobile,” meaning that people move around the United States a lot. Many people move far away from their family, for reasons of work or school. I live in Los Angeles; most of my family lives 2,000 miles away, back in Minnesota. Many people, who have children that is, don’t live near their relatives. Even when people do live near their relatives, the grandparents often don’t have time or are too busy to take care of their own grandchildren. Many grandparents simply want to enjoy their own retirement. They visit and play with the grandchildren, but they don’t necessarily want to take care of them every day. It depends on the family, of course.

So, most American families need to find other ways of having their children taken care of. Families that have a lot of money often will hire a nanny (nanny). A “nanny” is a person who stays in their home, or who comes over to their home very early in the morning, and takes care of the children in their own home. Sometimes the nanny sleeps and lives in the home, but it’s more common for the nanny to come in early in the morning and then leave at night, after the parents return from work. Nannies play with the children, they might teach the children things or take them to sports or extra lessons, they might even help cook and clean in the house. Children get a lot of individualized, or personal attention from their nannies. They often develop very strong relationships with their nannies, but, of course, this is an expensive childcare option.

Nannies cost perhaps anywhere between \$12 and \$15 an hour, maybe more, depending on what part of the country you live in and your nanny’s experience. There are not a lot of families who can afford \$15 an hour for 10 hours a day, five days a week, that would be about 3,000 dollars a month. Sometimes families will to split or share the cost of a nanny in what’s called a “nanny share,” where two or more families will pay for a nanny together, and then all of the kids will stay at one person’s house during the day, but even this is too expensive for many families.

A more common option for parents with small children is “daycare” (daycare – one word). In a daycare, there might be anywhere from 2 to up to 15 or so adults and many different children who are dropped off in the morning when their parents go to work and then are picked up in the evening to be taken home. So these are places where several children are brought from different families and taken care of by professionals. Some daycares are sponsored or organized by churches or schools, others are just in individual people’s homes. There are some companies that provide daycare for their employees, either in the building or near the building where the parents work. This is not, however, the most common situation. Because people who take care of children, what we would





call “childcare providers” in daycare take care of many children at the same time, daycare isn’t as expensive – it’s cheaper than having a nanny. Of course, some daycares are better than others, so parents have to do a lot of research to find a daycare that they like. They want to make sure that the children have enough personal attention and “stimulation,” or things to do and see and hear, since that’s important for young children as they grow up.

In most states, you need some sort of license or certificate in order to have a daycare with several children in it. Here in California, for example, you have to go to school to get a certificate to open a daycare center, a place for several children that you would take care of at your home or somewhere else.

When children get older and start to go to school during the day, parents might need childcare only for a few hours each day. Children leave school usually around 2:30-3:00 in the afternoon; parents don’t get home from work until 5:00 or 6:00, so they’ll need someone to take care of their children during those two hours. Some schools actually provide after school programs for kids to keep them busy, but many parents have their children go to a daycare during those two or three hours after school. These after school programs for children are sometimes called “latchkey (latchkey) programs”. A “latch” is a kind of lock that you use on the outside door of your house; a “key,” of course, is what is used to open a lock. The original expression was a “latchkey kid” or a “latchkey child,” someone who was a young child who went home after school without anyone there being present to take care of him or her. So schools started developing these latchkey programs so kids didn’t have to go home alone, without any adults present; they could stay at school until the parents had a chance to pick them up after work.

The final kind of childcare that parents might use is what we call a “babysitter.” If a parent is going out for a few hours, say on a Friday evening or some time on the weekend, they might just want someone to take care of their children for a couple of hours. We would call that person a “babysitter,” usually it’s a young, teenage girl who takes care of the children to make some extra money. Many American teenage girls have “babysat.” Notice the verb it is “to babysit.” Babysitting is a common way for 12-, 13-, 14-year-old girls, maybe older, to make a little extra money while taking care of the children. Although it’s possible for young boys to do babysitting, it’s not very common.

Now let’s answer some of the questions you have sent us.





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Our first question comes from Yuan (Yuan) Jun (Jun) in China. Yuan Jun wants to know the meaning of the sentence “I totally owned you.” The word “totally” means, here, completely, entirely, or definitely: “I am totally in love with Jessica Alba.” She’s a actress – a beautiful, young actress. I’m kidding, of course; I’m not totally in love with Jessica Alba. I’m totally in love with my beautiful wife; I haven’t looked at another woman since 1993!

To “own” someone is an informal use of the word meaning to have complete control over someone, to have power over someone. If you say to someone, “I totally own you,” you mean that you have some sort of power over them. For example, if you discovered something bad that they did and you can hurt them by telling their spouse or their parents, you have control over them, you can get them to do what you want. You can say, “I totally own you.”

When you use this expression in the past tense, “I totally owned you,” you often mean that you have done better than someone else, that you have beaten somebody else, especially in a game. So if you are playing tennis and you beat the other person, you could say, “I beat you three games to zero. I totally owned you!”

Peter, from an unknown country, would like to know the meaning of the expression “bad news,” if someone says, “She is bad news.”

Well, “bad news” can mean news that is not good. For example, if someone says, “You are going to lose your job,” that’s bad news. If a person is bad news, if you say, for example, “Stay away from that woman, she’s bad news,” you mean that is a person who is causing problems or who can cause you problems, someone who makes trouble. If you’re a parent and your 16-year-old daughter brings home a boy for you to meet, and the boy has a leather jacket, rides a motorcycle, is 20 years old, and has tattoos on his arms, you might say, “This guy is bad news.” He’s not good for my daughter; he will cause her problems in the future.

If you have a question you’d like to ask us, we’ll certainly try to answer it here on the Café. Email us at [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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