



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 245

TOPICS

The Grand Canyon; Famous Americans: Georgia O'Keefe; shanty versus apartment versus tenement; alert the media; now what?

GLOSSARY

canyon – a narrow, deep place between two hills or mountains, often with water running through it; a very low valley with steep, rocky sides of rock

* It would be very difficult to rescue someone who accidentally falls into this deep canyon.

steep – rising or fall sharply; something that goes up or down very sharply

* Every morning, Jemmina walks up this steep hill to get to the bus stop.

to erode – to slowly destroy something, taking a small piece away at a time

* The rock on this side of the mountain have been eroded by the falling water over many, many years.

outdoorsman – a man who enjoys the outdoors and nature, and likes to spend time outdoors

* There is no one more of an outdoorsman than Jack, who likes to go fishing and hiking every chance he gets.

livestock grazing – allowing cows and other animals to eat the grass that grows naturally in an area

* These lands were used for livestock grazing until they were bought to build a college.

sightseeing – the act of visiting an interesting place at a particular location; seeing interesting places while traveling

* On our trip to Washington D.C., we spent nearly all of our time at museums and doing other sightseeing.

boundary – a barrier between two things or areas; the limits of what is generally accepted or what is considered normal

* Our band likes to push the boundaries in music, using instruments not usually used in jazz.



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discouraged – losing confidence or enthusiasm for something; losing hope about something

* Xiang felt discouraged when she didn't get accepted into the best universities, but she still plans to go to college.

exhibit – when items are presented and displayed for others to see

* Our school will have an exhibit for parents of the best science projects this year.

magnifying glass – a glass lens that one looks through that makes objects one looks at appear larger

* Stop using that magnifying glass to read. Get some real reading glasses!

landscape – view of scenery; view of natural areas

* The photographs in my living show the beautiful landscape of Wisconsin.

desert – a dry, hot region where few plants grow; a place with a hot climate and little water

* Plants that grow in the desert must have long roots to find water and be able to tolerate being under the hot, dry sun.

shanty – a small structure that is put together very simply, usually of wood, used for a simple temporary home

* After the big storm destroyed their homes, people in this neighborhood built shanties to sleep in until help arrived.

apartment – a room or set of rooms in a building that are made for people to live in

* Ellen's apartment has two bedrooms and two bathrooms, and she shares it with her friend.

tenement – a room or set of rooms in a building that are made for people to live in, often in bad condition and/or in poor neighborhoods, with many people living in small spaces

* Our goal is to get families out of tenements and into better homes.

alert the media – a phrase meaning that something important or unusual just happened or will happen

* Alert the media! I have finally passed the test to get my driver's license after three tries!



now what? – short for “now what happens?”, “now what do I/we do?”, or “now what do you want?”

* We’ve looked everywhere for your keys and still can’t find them. Now what?

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Sedona, Arizona

After visiting the Grand Canyon, many visitors choose to visit other interesting places nearby. Some choose to drive about six hours west to the exciting city of Las Vegas, Nevada, for some “gambling” (playing games of chance to try to win money), shopping, and shows. Others may drive four and one half hours south to the city of Phoenix, the “capital city” (the main governmental city in a state) of Arizona. With over four million people living in this capital city, there are many things for visitors to do.

One place near the Grand Canyon that some may “overlook” (fail to notice) is the city of Sedona, Arizona. Sedona is less than a three-hour drive from the Grand Canyon, and it is a place of beauty. The town of about 12,000 people is located south of the Grand Canyon. It is best known for the Red Rocks of Sedona, which are large red rock “formations” (group of large rocks) which appear to “glow” (produce light) red and orange colors when the sun hits them at “sunrise” (when the sun comes up in the morning) and “sunset” (when the sun goes down in the evening).

Sedona is also known as a non-traditional “spiritual” (relating to religious beliefs or one’s spirit or soul) place. Many people visit Sedona to attend spiritual “retreats,” quiet places far from cities where people can think deeply about their spiritual beliefs. Others go to Sedona simply to rest, to be away from the “hustle and bustle” (high level of activity) of their daily life. Still others go there to enjoy the outdoor activities, such as hiking and “mountain biking” (riding one’s bicycle on mountain road and trails).

At one time, the people of the Yavapai-Apache “Tribe” (group of Native Americans) lived in the Sedona area. In 1876, the U.S. government forced the Tribe out of this “valley” (low area between mountains). The tribe members were forced to go to the San Carlos Indian Reservation about 180 miles away. About 1500 members of the Tribe were forced to walk that distance in the middle of winter and several hundred people died as a result.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 245.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 245. 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 talk about an impressive natural area in the United States known simply as the Grand Canyon. We're also going to continue our series on Famous Americans, this time talking about an American artist from sort of the same region – at least, she lived in the same region of the country, Georgia O'Keefe. And, as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

We begin our Café with a discussion of one of the most popular tourist sites in the United States, the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon is one of the best-known national parks in the U.S. It is located in the state of Arizona, which is just next to California – just east of California. It is located next to the Colorado River, and is considered one of the most beautiful, or at least "impressive" or powerful sights to see.

A "canyon" (canyon) is like a big hole in the ground; technically, we would say it's a "gorge" (gorge). It is something that is formed by nature. You can think of a canyon as something like a valley, a very deep or low valley. Normally, a valley is in between two mountains. A canyon, instead, has what we would call very steep sides on either side of the canyon. When say something is "steep" (steep), we mean it's almost straight up and down; it's almost completely vertical, like a wall. In this case, it's a wall of rock that surrounds the canyon. Canyons are typically formed by rivers over many, many years.

The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long. It, in some places, is very wide, up to 18 miles wide. In other places it is a little narrower, only about four miles wide. It's also over one mile deep in some places. The Grand Canyon is not the deepest canyon in the world, but it is well-known for its "overwhelming," its incredible size



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and beauty. When you visit the Grand Canyon, you tend to feel very small, because it's so big. It's such an impressive site.

Scientists estimate that the Grand Canyon was formed – was created about 17 million years ago. Since then, the Colorado River, which goes through the canyon – it runs through the canyon, we would say, has continued to erode the rock walls in the canyon. The verb “to erode” (erode) means to slowly remove or destroy something, taking a little bit away at a time. It could be something that is physically eroded, say by water. We can also use it more metaphorically, we might say: “My confidence was eroded by his behavior,” everyday I trusted him less and less.

The Grand Canyon is one of the first places in the United States to be named a federal or national park, meaning the U.S. government in Washington became the owner and said this is for people to enjoy. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt visited the area. Roosevelt is known, as a president, to have been very active in the outdoors. That is, in nature: going out to the mountains and the trees and all of that. We would call him an “outdoorsman,” somebody who loves going out into nature. By 1906, the area was being called Grand Canyon National Park. The “designation,” or this name, gave the area protection from activities – commercial activities, and that's one of the purposes of having national parks is to protect them for future generations, for Americans in the future as well. One of the activities that is restricted – that is not allowed in this area is called livestock grazing. “Livestock” refers to animals, such as cows. “Grazing” refers to the way that some animals eat grass very slowly; they tend to walk and eat over a long period of time. Well, “livestock grazing,” then, is farmers take their animals and they have them eat the grass that's on the ground in a particular area.

Today, the Grand Canyon is one of the most popular natural attractions in the U.S. About five million visitors go to the Grand Canyon each year. Many visitors simply enjoy the Grand Canyon by “sightseeing,” that is by looking and observing it. They don't actually go into the canyon. There is a glass-bottom bridge that crosses the Grand Canyon. So you can walk across the bridge and look down, and because you are walking on glass you can see straight down into the canyon. There are also many campgrounds, especially along the top of the canyon where you can set up a tent and sleep on the ground, if that's what you like to do – and I don't!



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Other visitors to the Grand Canyon enjoy doing more active things. One of the things they can do is take a boat down the river, what we would call “whitewater rafting.” A “raft” (raft) is a kind of boat. You can also get into a helicopter and go up in the air and take tours of the canyon. You can go in a small airplane. Remember, the Grand Canyon is huge – it’s very big, so you sometimes need something like that if you want to see all of it. These things let visitors see more than they can than by just walking around what we would call the “rim” (rim) of the canyon, which is the very top of the canyon; you don’t actually go down into it.

On the bottom of the canyon you can also go hiking – you can go walking along the bottom. Sometimes people ride mules, a kind of animal that is used for transporting things. Hiking is often discouraged by park officials. That is, they sometimes don’t want people hiking there because it is a somewhat isolated and dangerous place, especially in the summertime. It’s very hot; it’s in a desert.

The Grand Canyon, however, is definitely something that if you are going to be in the southwestern part of the United States – Southern California, for example – you might want to consider a trip there. It’s also something you can travel to from Las Vegas, if you are going to visit Las Vegas in the U.S. I was at the Grand Canyon once in my life. I was nine years old, so that was many years ago, and it was, in fact, quite impressive. However, we have an expression in English, which is, “to take your breath away.” “To take your breath away” is something that is so amazing, so beautiful, that you forget to breathe; you go “Ah!” Well, I took this expression very literally, meaning I thought that it meant that if I saw the Grand Canyon I would stop breathing. So when we went to the Grand Canyon and we looked at it, I was waiting for myself to stop breathing and I never did – fortunately! Nevertheless, it is a really beautiful area if you have a chance to visit.

This subject of our next topic was someone who spent a lot of time not too far from the Grand Canyon, in the state next to Arizona called New Mexico. That’s Georgia O’Keeffe.

Georgia O’Keeffe was an artist – a famous American artist. She was born in 1887 in the state of Wisconsin, which is just east of Minnesota in the north central part of the U.S. Throughout her career, O’Keeffe was known for what we might call the technical aspects of her work. She was able to do the sorts of things that artists need to do to paint very well. But she was also known for pushing the boundaries of American art in the 20th century. “Boundaries” often



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refer to physical barriers like fences or lines – imaginary lines between countries. There's a boundary between the United States and Canada. In fact, in northern Minnesota, near the Canadian border, we have an area called the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. A "canoe" is a long type of boat. And in this area, you can go, well, canoeing. It's boundary waters. Well, this is a slightly different use of the word "boundaries." It does still mean limit, but here we're talking about going beyond what is normally accepted – what is culturally accepted. That's to push the boundaries. When I say that she's pushing the boundaries, I'm saying that she did things that were unusual and certainly made some people uncomfortable.

O'Keefe's parents put her in art school – in art classes, I should say – at a young age. Because she did so well, they encouraged her to go to art school, which is sort of a college for people interested in art. She did that, and she learned there all about watercolor paints and drawings. "Watercolor" is a kind of paint that has the base of it as water, compared to, for example, oil-based paint.

After high school, O'Keefe enrolled in a famous art institute, the Art Institute in Chicago, Illinois. Illinois is just south of Wisconsin, so it was close to her. One of her oil paintings that she completed in 1908 won her a scholarship to attend an outdoor summer school program in New York, and she went to that and learned even more about art during her time in New York.

In the fall of 1908 (at this time she was only 21 years old) she became "discouraged" or disappointed with school – with art school. Usually if you are discouraged, you sort of have lost your hope; you don't look forward to the future. She didn't want to continue studying in art school, so she got a job as an art teacher in a grade school – an elementary school for young children in Chicago. She continued to take art classes, however, after work, and it was during this time that she learned to use colors, light and dark shades in her artwork to make more of an impact on the viewer.

Then in 1916, her art teacher displayed some of her drawings in a "gallery," which is a place where people go to look at art and often to buy the art that is there. The drawings were so popular that many additional exhibits of her work followed. An "exhibit" (exhibit) is when certain things – certain items are displayed for other people to see. If you are going to an art exhibit, you are going to see someone's art: paintings, sculpture, drawings, and so forth. I just went to an art exhibit here in Los Angeles a few weeks ago that was exhibiting paintings from Renoir.



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Well, Georgia O'Keeffe had many exhibits, and by the 1920s she began to do large-scale oil paintings of natural objects. A large-scale drawing or painting shows a lot of detail of an object; it's obviously large – big. It was almost like her drawings showed things through a “magnifying glass,” which is a special glass lens that makes things look bigger. O'Keeffe became well known for this type of artwork.

By the middle of the 1920s, she was considered one of America's most important artists. In 1928, six paintings of “calla lilies” a type of flower, sold for 25,000 dollars, which was, of course, quite a bit of money back then. This was, in fact, the largest amount of money ever paid for a group of paintings by a living American artist. Because of this sale, her reputation as a great artist became even stronger.

Near the end of the 1920s, O'Keeffe began traveling in the United States to find new “scenes,” new things to look at and to paint. She traveled frequently to the state of New Mexico, which is, I think I mentioned, just east of Arizona in the southwest part of the United States. O'Keeffe liked what she saw in New Mexico and she ended up buying a home there and moving there permanently. The area where she was has many “cliffs,” which is basically like the land that comes to an end and then it drops down suddenly, kind of like one half of a canyon you could think of it, since we were talking about the Grand Canyon. In any case, she became very inspired by the landscapes in New Mexico. “Landscape” (one word) means the view of the “scenery,” the natural surroundings. So a landscape painting is a painting of the scenery of a large area of nature.

O'Keeffe continued to produce art throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. She created many famous art pieces during those years. A painting called Summer Days became one of her best-known pieces. It was a painting that had a cattle “skull,” the head of a dead animal like a cow, with different wildflowers with a desert in the background. A “desert” is a dry, hot area of earth that doesn't have a lot of vegetation – doesn't have a lot of trees and so forth.

Sadly, in 1971 Georgia O'Keeffe began to lose her “eyesight,” she couldn't see very well. She was 84 at the time, but she lived until she was 98. I, in fact, remember when Georgia O'Keeffe died, and the big articles in the newspaper about her and her work. Today, her work is considered a very important part of the history of American painting in the 20th century.

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



Our first question comes to us from Yee Rane (Yee Rane) in China. The question has to do with the meanings of the words “shanty,” “tenement,” and “apartment.” Well, let’s start with the last one first: “apartment.”

An “apartment” is a room or a set of rooms in a building that you live in. Typically, there are several apartments in a building, what we would call an apartment building. These apartments are usually on one floor. That is, they don’t have stairs that go down or up; everything is on a single level. Apartments in the United States are typically rented, so when someone says, “I’m living in an apartment,” they mean that they are renting the apartment; they do not own the apartment. If you own the apartment, we would probably call it a condominium – a condo.

A “shanty” (shanty) is a very small structure that is put together very simply, usually made of wood, that’s used for either temporary shelter or as a temporary home. A “shantytown” (one word) is a poor neighborhood that is made up off, or consists of many shanties. So if you go into a very poor area almost anywhere in the world you will see these very small little houses, they’re not big, however they’re what we would call shanties, often just a single room. A shantytown would be a collection of these in a given area.

A “tenement” (tenement) is a house or apartment building that you could live in, usually in the city. In American English we often use this word to talk about small apartments in very poor neighborhoods that are in bad condition. Tenements also could refer in some cities to apartment buildings that were originally built in the 19th century – the 1800s, and the early 20th century, or 1900s, especially those that were built to house immigrants. They were not very good quality, they were small; they were very crowded together. The most common use of tenement, however, is to refer to these buildings in a big city where there are a lot of poor people who live and where the apartments are not in very good condition.

A “shanty” is not used as a term for housing in the United States, even temporary housing. A shanty is, in the U.S., more commonly called a “shack” (shack), and it’s used for storing things or for very temporary use. “Apartment” is the most common word you will hear; it is the most universal word, especially when we are talking about something you would rent instead of own. An apartment with only one room would be called a “studio apartment,” then you have one-bedroom,



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two-bedroom, three-bedroom apartments. So, that's shanty, tenement, and apartment.

Our next question comes from Mario (Mario) in Italy. Mario wants to know the meaning of a phrase he heard in a movie: "alert the media." The "media" refers to newspapers, magazines, radio, television news, news sites on the Internet – this is the media. They are either for news or for entertainment. "To alert (someone)" means to tell someone, to let someone else know.

The expression "alert the media" is an informal way of telling someone that something important has happened. They don't really mean that you should go and call the newspaper; they're saying that this is so important that the newspaper could talk about it, even though they wouldn't. For example, you could say, "Alert the media. I'm going to stop smoking." Well of course, no one cares if you're smoking or not, unless you live with them and then they might care – I would care, for example. But "alert the media" is a joking way of saying this is big news.

Sometimes we use it to make a joke only; we use it sarcastically, really kidding. We're actually criticizing the person who we are talking about. Somebody says, "I'm going to be gone today for 20 minutes," and you say, "Oh, alert the media, he's going to be gone today for 20 minutes!" Well, that's not a very important piece of information, so you're not using it in any way to be serious. You are trying to make fun of the person who thought that was important information.

Since I don't know what movie that came from, I'm not sure which meaning was meant.

Finally, Morris (Morris) in Taiwan wants to know the meaning of the phrase: "now what?" for example in the sentence: "It works, now what?"

"Now what?" is informal; it's short for "now what happens?" or "now what do we do?" or "now what do you want?" For example: "My car just ran out of gas on the highway. Now what?" Well, now you have to call someone to bring you some gas! It might be something that a parent would say to a child who is always bothering them – who is always asking them questions. Maybe after the 15th question the parent would say after the child tries to get his or her attention, "Now what?" meaning now what do you want, you're bothering me, I'm busy.



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We don't use "now what?" in writing or formal conversation. It is definitely an informal but common expression.

If you'd like to have us try to answer your question, you can email us at eslpod@eslpod.com. We don't have time to answer everyone's questions, and it often takes us several weeks to get to your question, or even months, but we'll do our best.

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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