



## ENGLISH CAFÉ – 270

### TOPICS

Famous Americans: Eleanor Roosevelt; Renaissance fairs; admit versus confess; mix versus blend; chick flick

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### GLOSSARY

**paralyzed** – a physical condition where one cannot move parts of one's body

\* Karol's legs were paralyzed after the accident, but she found ways to live and work with her new disability.

**to stick by (one's) side** – to continue to help and support one, even under difficult circumstances

\* Boris said he would get help for his drinking problem if his wife would stick by his side.

**First Lady** – the wife of the U.S. President

\* In the next four years, the First Lady plans to start programs to help the poor and the homeless.

**role** – function; job

\* As this radio station's announcer, my role is to introduce each show throughout the day.

**newspaper column** – a series of articles published in a newspaper, usually written by the same author(s)

\* I like reading daily newspaper columns written by political insiders.

**press conference** – a special kind of meeting where an individual, a business, or an organization asks reporters to listen to what they have to say, and then answers questions from those reporters

\* The drug company held a press conference to answer questions about its controversial new drug.

**civil rights** – the idea that there are certain things that all people should be able to do, no matter how old they are, what color their skin is, or whether they are men or women

\* This movie is about the fight for civil rights in the U.S. starting in the 1960s.



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**delegate** – an official representative, often representing a country

\* At the meeting, each delegate will get a chance to give his or her opinion about the proposed new policy.

**instrumental** – something important that allows one to pursue an aim or a policy

\* Being raised by a strong mother was instrumental in helping Diane become a strong, independent person when she grew up.

**period costume** – clothing one wears to look like a person living in a time period in the past

\* The theme of this year's party is the Civil War, and everyone is expected to attend wearing period costume.

**reign** – the period of time when a king or queen is in power; the period of time when a member of royalty has control over a country or region

\* Were there any major wars or battles during the reign of Charles I?

**living history** – a display or show with people acting as if they lived during a period in history in order to teach others about what life was like then

\* Visiting Old Tucson in Arizona allows children to observe a kind of living history of the Old West.

**to admit** – to say or accept the truth of something, especially when one doesn't want to

\* Li finally admitted that he couldn't fix his car by himself and asked for help.

**to confess** – to say that one did something bad or undesirable that will harm one's status or reputation

\* It surprised everyone when Jules confessed to stealing money from the company.

**to mix** – to combine; to add to a combination

\* I made a salad for dinner that is a mix of lettuce, tomatoes, chicken, and corn.

**to blend** – to combine; to mix so completely that it is no longer possible to tell one part from another

\* This new drink on our menu is a blend of fruit juices and milk.

**chick flick** – an informal term for a film made to appeal to a female audience, usually with strong emotions and/or romantic themes

\* Di wanted to go to the movies with his sister, but didn't want to see a chick flick.



## WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

### “Eleanor Rigby” by the Beatles

In this episode of English Cafe, we talked about one famous Eleanor: Eleanor Roosevelt. Another well-known Eleanor is a “fictional” (not real) one: Eleanor Rigby. “Eleanor Rigby” was a Beatles song released in 1966 written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. The song was about lonely people. Here are a few of the “lyrics” (words in a song):

*Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been  
Lives in a dream  
Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar (glass  
container) by the door  
Who is it for?*

*All the lonely people  
Where do they all come from?  
All the lonely people  
Where do they all belong?*

*Father McKenzie writing the words of a sermon (a talk given by the priest  
on a moral topic during a church service) that no one will hear  
No one comes near.  
Look at him working, darning (sewing to repair holes in) his socks in the  
night when there’s nobody there  
What does he care?*

Paul McCartney said that the names in the song came from his “imagination” (creative thinking). This may be true, but his imagination may have had some help. During the 1980s, in a “graveyard” (place where dead people are buried in the ground) in Liverpool where Paul McCartney and John Lennon spent free time as teenagers, a group of people found a “tombstone” (a piece of stone placed where someone is buried, usually with the dead person’s name on it and his or her dates of birth and death) for an actual woman named Eleanor Rigby. Not far away was a tombstone for a “McKenzie.” Paul McCartney later said that this was a strange “coincidence” (unusual combination of things happening) and that perhaps his mind remembered seeing these tombstones, but he was not “conscious” (aware) of it. It was perhaps a good thing his “subconscious” (part of the mind that one is not fully aware of) remembered the names so he could put them in this popular song.



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 270.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 270. 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 Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. We're also going to talk about Renaissance fairs, or festivals that celebrate the Renaissance period of history, and are, for whatever reason, very popular in the United States. 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 Eleanor Roosevelt, who was married to former U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Her uncle was former U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt.

Eleanor Roosevelt was born in 1884 into a very wealthy, or rich family in New York City. Her parents named her Anna Eleanor Roosevelt, but she always preferred to be called by, or to be referred to by her middle name, Eleanor.

In 1905, when Eleanor was 20 years old, she married Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was a distant cousin, or someone who she was related to, but not very closely. That's why they both had the same last name, Roosevelt.

The Roosevelts had six children and seemed to be happy, at least at first. But in 1921 Franklin became ill, or sick, and was left paralyzed. "Paralysis" (paralysis) is a physical condition where you cannot move parts of your body. Facial paralysis is when you can't move the muscles in your face. Paraplegia is when you can't move the lower half of your body – your legs. Someone who suffers from paraplegia is a paraplegic. If you have quadriplegia then you can't move your arms or your legs. Franklin Roosevelt was a paraplegic, unable to move his legs, but Eleanor, despite his illness, "stuck by his side," meaning she never left



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him – I would hope that she wouldn't, that a wife would not leave her husband because he gets ill. I suppose it can happen. Eleanor did not leave her husband; she stuck by his side, meaning she stayed with him. She, in fact, encouraged him to become active in politics and she began to speak in public on his behalf, or for him when he couldn't speak or didn't want to be seen in public because he was in a wheelchair.

Eleanor herself became active in politics. She supported a 48-hour work week and a minimum wage. She protested against child labor, work done by young children. When her husband became president, Eleanor became the First Lady. The term "First Lady" refers to the wife of the U.S. president. All U.S. presidents, up 'til the time of this recording in 2010, have been men. If they are married, their wife is called the First Lady. What will happen if we have a female president? I suppose we'll call him the First Man, I'm not sure.

Eleanor was worried about becoming First Lady, because before her, all First Ladies had had only what we could call a ceremonial "role," or job. "Ceremonial," here means they didn't do anything very important. They might go to a new school that was opening and give a speech or visit soldiers in hospitals. But they didn't do any policy work; they weren't involved in laws and legislation. Eleanor Roosevelt wanted a more active part in politics. She decided that she would become a different type of First Lady, one that would be more appropriate to the modern world.

She lived in a period when women did not have as many career options as they have now – career options outside of the home. By "career options" I mean jobs that they could go out and get paid for. Eleanor wrote a "newspaper column" a series of articles, often opinions, called My Day that appeared in the newspaper six days a week between 1935 and 1962. These columns gave her opinions on subjects such as women's rights, race, and the current political events. So, she was quite unusual for a First Lady in that she wanted to have an influence on politics.

She also wrote many magazine articles, and during the 12 years when her husband was president she held 348 press conferences. A "press (press) conference" is a special kind of meeting where someone from a business or organization – in this case the White House – comes into a room, there are reporters who work for newspapers, magazines, nowadays radio and television, even websites, and they ask questions of that person. The most common press conference you hear about is the presidential press conference. These used to be a lot more frequent than they are now, these presidential press conferences.



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Well, Eleanor gave her own press conferences at a time when the media – newspapers and magazines – were mostly dominated by men, meaning men held all the important jobs. Roosevelt helped female reporters also discuss issues that were important to women.

As the First Lady, Eleanor also traveled many places; she helped her husband maintain a connection with people who were having a difficult time during the Great Depression. The Great Depression is that period of time in the 1930s when the country, indeed the world, was very poor and there were many unemployed people – people who did not have jobs. Eleanor also reached out, or tried to connect with African Americans or black people. She supported their efforts for “civil rights,” she wanted blacks to be treated the same as whites. During World War II she flew in an airplane with a young African American man who was training to be one of the Tuskegee Airmen, the first group of black men to fly for the U.S. armed forces. Stories about this flight brought attention to the Tuskegee Airman and helped inspire discussions about the role of African Americans fighting in World War II.

Even after her husband, Franklin D. Roosevelt, died in 1945, Eleanor remained active in politics. In 1947, President Harry S. Truman made her a delegate to the United Nations, or the UN as we more commonly call it. A “delegate” is a representative. Eleanor Roosevelt represented the United States in the newly formed UN. She was “instrumental,” meaning she was very important in writing the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was an official statement listing the rights that all people should have, no matter where they live.

Some people even wanted Eleanor to run for office, or try to become an elected politician. Truman even considered having her run as the vice-president. I’m not sure how serious he was; it would have been very unusual to have a female vice-president in the late 1940s. Still, Eleanor said no; she declined, meaning she said she was not interested. For the rest of her life, she did remain an important spokeswoman, or spokesperson, for women’s rights, talking in public about how important it was for men and women to be treated equally. She gave, on average, 150 public lectures each year in the 1950s, and she remained very active in American politics up until the time of her death.

She received during her lifetime 48 honorary degrees; these are degrees given by a university to someone who has done important work. They’re not real college degrees, they’re honorary; they’re given to honor or show respect for that person. She never, herself, studied at the university; Eleanor Roosevelt never went to college. She was also an honorary member of Alpha Kappa Alpha,



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which was the first sorority, the first kind of college organization for African American women at universities in the United States. She also received one of the United Nations Human Rights Prizes, and after she died she was even nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, although she was not awarded it – she was not given it.

Eleanor died in 1962, one year before I was born. She was 78 years old. She's remembered by many Americans not only as the First Lady, but some say the First Lady of the World for her work in civil rights.

I don't think many Americans today growing up know lot about Eleanor Roosevelt; she was very famous to those of my father's generation. But she's not as well known, unfortunately, today, even though she was very important in getting women involved in politics in the U.S.

Our next topic is Renaissance fairs. The Renaissance (Renaissance) was the period of European history from roughly – approximately – the 1300s to the 1600s, that is from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, when there was, according to many, a cultural rebirth. Renaissance means to be born again – to be reborn, if you will. This rebirth was an increase in people's interest in culture and especially education – in learning. A Renaissance fair (fair) is a celebration of the Renaissance period. The Renaissance fairs in the United States typically last one or two weekends in the spring or summer of the year.

Well, what is this Renaissance fair, what do people do there? At a typical Renaissance fair – and I have been to a couple back when I lived in Minnesota – you see a lot of people who work for the organization that pays for and sponsors the Renaissance fair, you see people dressed in period costumes. A “costume” (costume) is clothing that you put on – could be a hat, it could be a shirt, it could be pants or a dress – I prefer a dress – that makes you look like someone other than who you really are. For example in the United States, for Halloween, October 31<sup>st</sup>, children might wear a costume that makes them look like Mickey Mouse or a ghost. A “period costume” refers to clothing that makes you look like you are from an earlier part of history; it's worn by people who want to pretend – imagine that they are living during that time. So at a Renaissance fair, many people wear these period costumes and they talk and act as if they were living during that period of history.

Many Renaissance fairs are meant to look like an English village. The fair is often in a park. So being Americans, we connect most closely with the English version of the Renaissance versus the Italian or French or Spanish or German or





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other European countries. The English village is typically supposed to be one from the period in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The “reign” (reign) is the period of time when someone is a queen or a king. Queen Elizabeth had her reign between I think 1558 and 1603, something like that. She was queen for a very long time. Too long, some people say, but that’s just their opinion.

A Renaissance fair has a lot of entertainment, so when you go to a Renaissance fair you can see a lot of things going on. I should mention you don’t, as someone who pays to go to be fair, you don’t have to dress like those in the fair; you don’t have to come in a period costume. When you go, there are a lot of musical performances, a lot of comedians telling jokes – jokes, of course, related to the Renaissance period. You’ll also see some short plays – some dramatic performances. There are also sometimes craftsman, or people who make things with their hands, once again, things that you would find during the Renaissance period. The other important part of a Renaissance fair is the food. There are lots of businesses selling food that you might have eaten during the English Renaissance. Usually this is food that you eat with your hands, such as chicken or turkey, perhaps corn, and bread.

Renaissance fairs, as I mentioned, have a lot of people selling what we would call arts and crafts, those things you make with your hands. Sometimes these are toys, sometimes it’s clothing; sometimes even they sell certain old kinds of weapons, things that you would use, for example, in a war. But mostly, they are things that are for fun; you can buy them as a gift for someone else for example.

Some of the people who go to Renaissance fairs are very interested in that period of history and they want to learn more about it. Sometimes we call these experiences “living history,” when people act as if they lived during that period of history in order to teach other people what life was like back then. There’s a place in Virginia in the United States, on the eastern coast of the U.S., called Williamsburg, and Williamsburg is a living history site. They pay people – actors; employees – to dress up as if they were living in the colonial American period.

These fairs are not free; you have to pay to go to them. They are run by organizations – companies that do them to make money, in part. Adults typically pay 20 or 25 dollars per person to get in; children are a little cheaper. So it’s not cheap, but if you want a different kind of experience going to a Renaissance fair can be a lot of fun.





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You know what else is a lot of fun? Answering some of your questions. Let's do that now.

Our first question comes from Ramzi (Ramzi) from an unknown country – we'll call it Country Z. Ramzi wants to know the difference the verb "admit" (admit) and "confess" (confess).

"Admit" has two meanings. One meaning of "admit" means to let someone into some event or some party: "He was admitted into an organization," that's also possible. The other definition of "admit," the one that Ramzi I think is asking about, means to state the truth of something, or to accept something as being true especially when you don't really want to. You think that your baseball team is going to win the World Series, the championship of baseball in the United States. But you watch one of the games and you realize that the other team is better, but you really like your team. So it's difficult for you to admit that the other team is better, but you have to because the other team is better. Sometimes people admit to things that they are not particularly proud of. If someone has a gambling problem, they like to spend money in Las Vegas; they may be unwilling to admit that they have a problem, to say yes, that is true.

"To confess" also has two meanings, but both of them are related to this second meaning of "admit." "Confess" can mean the same, pretty much, as "admit," but usually you are admitting something that will harm your reputation or harm your status. "Everyone knew Janet was a thief, but she wouldn't confess." She wouldn't say, "Yes, I am a thief. I steal things." There, "confess" would mean admit something that would make other people think less of you. "Confess," then, is admitting something, but admitting something that you did wrong and that might be embarrassing or might make people think less of you.

The second related meaning of "confess" refers to a particular action that happens in some Christian religions, especially the Catholic and Orthodox religions. Here, "confess" means to go to a priest, an official representative of the religion, and tell that person things that you did wrong. That person – that priest, then, will absolve you of your sins. "To absolve" means to say you no longer have to worry about these, at least you are no longer considered someone who is sinful and outside of the love of God within that particular church. This is a very special kind of confessing; it's one of the what are called sacraments of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. It involves getting forgiveness for the things that you did wrong – your bad actions – your sins. The sacrament itself is called confession or penance, sometimes reconciliation. All these things are related to the same action of you going to a priest and telling him what you did



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wrong. Now, you can do that anonymously in the Catholic tradition, in the Orthodox tradition as well I believe; you don't have to show your face. That's part of the process – the procedure.

So, “confess” and “admit” can sometimes be used in the same situation. But as I said, “confess” usually is when you've something wrong, and that it's something that is embarrassing for you.

There's another use of “confess.” It means admitting that you did something wrong, but not telling a priest in a church, but telling the police. If you go to the police and you say, “I killed that person,” you are confessing to the crime, we would say. I am admitting that I did that thing; I am confessing to the crime.

Okay, Ly (Ly), also from an unknown country – we'll call it Country G – wants to know the difference between “mix,” as a verb, and “blend.”

“Mix” (mix) means a couple of things. Usually in cooking, it means to combine or put together different ingredients – different parts of the food. You can mix milk and eggs together, or you could mix two different kinds of liquids if you were making an alcoholic drink. You can also use “mix” to refer to other things: “She mixed happiness with pain in her novel.” More generally, “mix” can mean able to be combined: “The boys and girls don't mix during their lunch period at school, they sit in separate places.”

“Blend” (blend) also means to mix, but to mix so completely that you can no longer tell which part was which; you can't tell the two parts from each other. That's blending; it's a kind of mixing but it's complete, so that it almost looks like a new thing.

If you are reading a cookbook telling you how to make a certain kind of food and it tells you to mix two things together, usually you can just take a spoon and combined them with your spoon or fork. If it says to blend them, then you might need a machine called a blender. There's also a similar machine called a food processor that actually mixes them more completely.

Finally, Susanna (Susanna) from China – we'll call it China – wants to know the meaning of the expression “chick (chick) flick (flick).” “Chick” is an informal way of referring to a woman or an older girl; it was popular in the 60s and 70s. It's now considered by many women to be a little insulting to call some woman a “chick.” “Flick” is an informal term for a movie – a film, but often a film that is not very serious or is not of high quality. So, “chick flick” is an informal term for a



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movie that is made for a mostly female audience – mostly for women. It often has heavy emotions; it many times has romantic elements or themes in it.

I said that chick flicks are often considered not serious films, but that's not always true. There are some films that people call chick flicks that do have serious topics, often related to women and family relationships. Examples of chick flicks would include...oh, I don't know...Sleepless in Seattle, that one with Tom Hanks and...what's her name...I'm terrible with actresses' names and actors' names. Anyway, um, let's see...Terms of Endearment might be a chick flick, Steel Magnolias, Pretty Woman, the movie with Julia Roberts and Richard Gere. Those are all sort of classic chick flicks I guess. I've seen a couple of them only because my wife made me watch them with her, although I would never admit that to my friends!

If you have a question or comment, 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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