



TOPICS

Ask an American: The Princess and the Frog; pronouncing “address”; to cut the bull/ bullshit; outspoken versus vocal

GLOSSARY

fairy tale – a type of story for children, about magical things that cannot really happen

* Cinderella has always been one of Margot’s favorite fairy tales.

extension of (one’s) disbelief – something that allows one to continue believing something, even though one really knows that it cannot actually happen or be true

* Even though the kids know there’s no Santa Claus, they continue to talk about him as an extension of their disbelief.

dreamland – a place in dreams where things can happen that are not possible in real life; a place and the things seen in dreams and visions

* Vicky looks forward to going back to dreamland each night, because she always has good dreams.

hand-drawn – drawn by an artist’s hand, and not by a computer

* Have you ever sent out hand-drawn Christmas cards instead of store-bought cards?

down here – in a nearby area; in the surrounding area, especially in a southern location or area

* The weather is better down here in Florida, but sometimes I miss those cold New York winters.

to break (someone’s) heart – to make someone very sad, often used to talk about the end of a romantic relationship

* When his dog died, it broke his heart and he felt like he had lost his best friend.

merger – the combination of two companies into one larger company, usually when one company buys the other company

* Do you think there will be a merger between Hershey and Cadbury?



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to bring back – to make something popular again, to make something happen again, or to begin selling something again

* I wish someone would bring back the candies and cookies that were popular when we were kids. I can't find them in stores anymore.

the norm – normal, usual, common, and expected

* It used to be the norm for women to stay at home with their kids while their husband worked, but now they are much more likely to have a full-time job.

period – used at the end of a sentence to emphasize whatever was just said, especially to mean that something is always true in all situations, without any exceptions

* You're not allowed to drive my car, period. So stop asking me about it.

Americana – things that are very American, or were created in and by the United States and are closely associated with American culture and history

* The Smithsonian Museum of American History is filled with interesting pieces of Americana.

to open a new chapter – for new ideas or changes to begin

* Having kids opened a new chapter in her life.

to address – to deal with something, usually a problem; to speak or write to someone or a group; to write directions for delivery of a letter or package

* The speaker was very nervous about addressing such a large audience.

to cut the bull/bullshit – an informal and rude way to tell someone to stop talking about how great one is or to stop saying nonsense or doing silly things

* Cut the bull! Instead of telling me how well you can do this project, just do it!

outspoken – not afraid to say what one thinks; saying what one thinks often and freely

* Shane is always very outspoken about his beliefs, even when he knows other people disagree with him.

vocal – not afraid to say what one thinks; saying what one thinks often and freely; spoken by the voice; having to do with sounds made by the voice; a group or area full of a lot of voices

* The choir does a lot of vocal exercises before performing.



WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Lesser-Known Fairy Tale Princesses

Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, and Cinderella are all well-known fairy tale princesses, but others are “lesser-known” (not as well known), and you may not even have heard their stories.

In The Princess and the Pea, for example, a prince wants to marry, but cannot find a “suitable” (appropriate) “bride” (wife). One night, a young woman comes to the “castle” (a large, stone building where kings and queens live) and says she is a princess. The prince and his mother invite her to spend the night. They give her a bed with 20 “mattresses” (the large, soft piece that one lays over in a bed) and, without telling her, they place a pea under the bottom mattress. The next morning, the princess complains that something hard in the bed kept her awake and gave her a “bruise” (a green- or purple-colored spot on one’s skin, usually caused by being hit). The queen and the prince know that only a real princess would be so sensitive, so the prince and the princess marry, and “they live happily ever after” (a phrase used to end fairy tales).

Rapunzel is another lesser-known fairy tale. It is about a young princess named Rapunzel, who has very long hair. She is “trapped” (put in a place and not allowed to escape) in a tall “tower” (a very tall, narrow building) by an “evil” (bad; mean) “witch” (a person with magical powers, usually a woman). A prince hears her “calls” (shouts; yells) for help, but he doesn’t have any way to reach her. He shouts, “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, ‘let down’ (let something fall downward) your hair.” She lets her long hair fall out the window, and he climbs up it. Then he asks her to marry her, and they, too, live happily ever after.



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 241.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 241. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Our website is eslpod.com. On it, you can visit our ESL Podcast Store, which has some additional premium courses in business and daily English that you will enjoy, I think. You can also download the Learning Guide for this episode, and every current episode. The Learning Guide contains lots of additional information to help you improve your English even faster.

On this Café, we're going to have another one of our Ask an American segments, where we listen to other native speakers talking at a normal rate of speech – a normal speed. We're going to listen and then explain what they are talking about. Today we're going to be talking about the movies, using as a specific example a recent movie called The Princess and the Frog. We're going to listen to the star of this movie, as well as the director of the movie in an interview from Voice of America, and then we will explain what they are talking about. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

We're going to start by listening to Anika Noni Rose. She's the actress who provides the voice of Princess Tiana, the main character in this Disney movie. Now, because it is a Disney movie, you may know that it is actually an animated movie – a cartoon movie. This is where you have actors and actresses who provide the voices. And so, Anika is the voice of the lead character – the main character in the movie. We're going to listen to her talk a little bit about the movie as being a fairy tale, and then explain what that is all about. Let's listen:

[recording]

When you're watching a fairy tale, you're not looking for reality. You're looking for softness and for an extension of your disbelief – something that takes you into your dreamland – and that's what hand-drawn does, when I watch it.

[end of recording]



Anika says that when you're watching a fairy (fairy) tale (tale), you're not looking for reality. A "fairy tale" is a type of story we usually tell children. It's about magical things that can't really happen. A fairy is a magical creature that is very small and can fly, but not all fairy tales have fairies in them. Some well-known fairy tales that you may know include Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, and Beauty and the Beast. The Princess and the Frog is also a fairy tale. Anika says, the actress that we listened to, says that when you're watching a fairy tale, you're not looking for "reality," you're not looking for things that happen in real life.

She says that instead of looking for reality, you're looking for softness. "Softness" means something that is the opposite of hard, but also the idea that it is pleasant, that it is pleasing, that it isn't full of negative aspects that we find in reality. She says, "You're looking for softness and for an extension of your disbelief." An "extension" is a continuation. It's something that is bigger or longer that starts as part of something original but then continues on. An extension isn't part of the original thing, but it is something you add to that to make it bigger or longer. Here, Anika is talking about extension of disbelief. "Disbelief" means not believing something. When we watch a fairy tale movie, we know that the things we're seeing aren't real and they can't happen, but of course, we want to believe that they could happen. So we have what is called suspension of belief, that's the more common expression, where you suspend – where you decide I'm not going to worry about reality right now, I'm going to believe whatever I see. Anika is saying that this suspension of belief, or disbelief, is continued into the movie. It's extended into the movie.

She goes on to say that we're looking for something that takes us into our dreamland. "Dreamland" (one word) refers to something that we normally see in our dreams. They could be dreams that we have during the day while we are still conscious, or dreams that we have when we're sleeping. So the fairy tale movie tries to take us to this imaginary, pleasant place – our dreamland.

Finally she says, "and that's what hand-drawn does, when I watch it." "Hand-drawn movies" are animated movies – cartoon movies that are not made by a computer. They're made the way they were always made up until probably 30-40 years ago by hand. Someone actually draws each scene; that's a hand-drawn – drawn by hand – movie. She's saying that these hand-drawn movies are special, and that they allow us to enter, I suppose, more fully into this dreamland. The Princess and the Frog is unlike a lot of other animated movies nowadays, a hand-drawn movie. Let's listen one more time:



[recording]

When you're watching a fairy tale, you're not looking for reality. You're looking for softness and for an extension of your disbelief – something that takes you into your dreamland – and that's what hand-drawn does, when I watch it.

[end of recording]

Next we're going to listen to one of the makers of the movie, a man by the name of John Lasseter who works at Disney. He also used to work at another company – another movie studio, we call them, called Pixar. Pixar has made a lot of famous animated movies. Recently, or not too long ago, they were “purchased,” the company was sold to Disney, and now Pixar is part of Disney. He's going to talk about this idea of hand-drawn animation a little bit more, talk about why they decided to do this special animation, and why it's important. Let's listen:

[recording]

When I was up at Pixar, when the studios down here, all the studios, decided that they were not going to do hand-drawn animation anymore, it broke my heart, because never in the history of cinema has a film been entertaining to an audience because of the technology; it's what you do with the technology. And I really felt like they were blaming poor performance of their movies on that it was hand-drawn as opposed to computer animation. And so when the merger of Disney and Pixar happened and I returned to the Disney studios, the very first decision we made was we're going to bring back hand-drawn animation.

[end of recording]

He begins by saying, “When I was up at Pixar.” He could have said, “When I was at,” or “working at Pixar.” We sometimes use “up” for a place that is north of us, “down” for a place that is south of us, and “over” for a place that is east or west of us. I might say I'm going to go up to San Francisco. It means the same as I am going to San Francisco; it just indicates that it is probably north of where I am now. I could go down to San Diego, which is south, or I could go over to Phoenix, which is east. I'm not quite sure he says up at Pixar; maybe their studios were north of where he works now.



He says, “when the studios down here,” so again, he’s suggesting that these studios – the Disney studios were south of Pixar. “Down” is also used to mean south. So, when the studios down here, here in Los Angeles – perhaps Pixar was up in Northern California, I don’t know – all the studios decided that they were not going to do hand-drawn animation anymore. All of the movie companies – the studios, the companies that make movies decided they weren’t going to continued doing hand-drawn animation. He says, “it broke my heart.” “To break (someone’s) heart” means to make someone very sad. Sometimes we use this phrase in a romantic relationship when one person decides to end the relationship, but the other person wants to continue: you break that person’s heart. You, who want to stop, are breaking the heart of those who want to continue. Many girls have broken my heart – until I met my wife!

Well, the studios decision not to do hand-drawn animation broke John’s heart. He says, “because never in the history of cinema (of movie making) has a film been entertaining to an audience because of it’s technology.” He says that what a movie does with the technology is more important, not just the fact that a movie uses computer animation or 3D or other fancy, sophisticated types of technology. It’s not the technology, it’s the story; it’s what the movie does with the technology to tell a story. John says that he felt like the studios were blaming the movies – the animated movies poor performance on the fact that they were hand-drawn. “To blame” (blame) means to say that this thing or this person is at fault, is guilty, did something wrong. The movie studios, he says, tried to blame hand-drawn animation – the technology – for the problems with the movie. But of course, technology is not the reason, he says. The studio’s movies were not doing well probably because they weren’t very good stories – they weren’t good movies. He also says, “as opposed to computer animation,” meaning compared to here.

“Then,” he says, “there was a merger of Disney and Pixar.” A “merger” (merger) is a business term referring to what happens when two companies join together to create one large company, or larger company, usually because one company buys the other company. Disney bought Pixar, and when this happened – when they merged (came together) this man returned to Disney studios, he started working for Disney again. He doesn’t say when he worked for them before.

His first decision while working there was that Disney should bring back hand-drawn animation. “To bring (something) back,” or “to bring back (something)” is a phrasal verb meaning to try to make something popular again, to try to make something happen again, or even just to start selling something again. Sometimes, for example, a restaurant will stop selling a particular kind of food.



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Some of the customers might complain about the change; they want the old food back. And, if enough customers complain, the restaurant might decide to bring back that food, to start making and selling it again. John wants to have Disney bring back hand-drawn animation. Let's listen one more time:

[recording]

When I was up at Pixar, when the studios down here, all the studios, decided that they were not going to do hand-drawn animation anymore, it broke my heart, because never in the history of cinema has a film been entertaining to an audience because of the technology; it's what you do with the technology. And I really felt like they were blaming poor performance of their movies on that it was hand-drawn as opposed to computer animation. And so when the merger of Disney and Pixar happened and I returned to the Disney studios, the very first decision we made was we're going to bring back hand-drawn animation.

[end of recording]

Another reason this movie we're talking about today, The Princess and the Frog, is an unusual movie is because the main character in the movie, the princess, is African American, or a black woman. In almost all of the other Disney movies, the main character is white, or Caucasian – not all of them, but most of them. Here we're going to listen to the actress, Anika, describing how people are going to react to the fact that the movie has an African American princess, the main character. Let's listen:

[recording]

For my nephew, it will be the norm. He will think nothing of it. It will be his first princess, period. For my mother, it will be something she's been waiting for. For my grandmother, it will be something that she never thought would have happened. Each person that sits in that theater will have a different journey that they're bringing to the story and it will make the story different for them. So, I think that that's something that's really beautiful about what it is that's being made, because Disney is Americana and we have simply opened a new chapter in Americana: something that's been here for a very long time, but hasn't necessarily been shared. In that respect, it's just another step in the completion of the story of what America is in this fantasy world.

[end of recording]



Anika says that for my nephew, it will be the norm. Your “nephew” is the son of your brother or sister. You are his uncle if you’re a man, and his aunt if you’re a woman. So for her nephew, who is very young, Anika says that this movie will seem like the norm (norm). “Norm” comes from our word “normal,” meaning something that is usual, something that is common, something that is not a surprise. So, her nephew, who’s very young, will see this movie with a black princess and think, “Oh, that’s normal.” That’s natural; it won’t surprise him. She says, “He will think nothing of it. It will be his first princess, period.” “He will think nothing of it” means that he won’t be bothered by it, he won’t be surprised or have to think about it. She says that the princess in the movie will be his first princess, period. We use the word “period” at the end of a sentence – we actually say the word when we want to emphasize what we just said, especially if we mean that what we just said is true in all situations, and there are no exceptions. Sometimes we use this when we are giving a rule, or a law almost. “You are not to go into my room, period. No exceptions,” a mother might say to her children.

Anika says that for her mother, who of course is older than she is, seeing a black princess in an animated movie is something she has been waiting for. Her mother has been hoping someone would make a movie with a black princess instead of a white one. For Anika’s grandmother, who of course is even older – maybe 40-50 years older than Anika – seeing a black princess in an animated movie will be something that she never thought would have happened, something that she thought was impossible. So depending on how old you are, you will react differently to this movie, she says.

She also says that each person who sits in the movie theater and watches the movie will bring a different “journey,” a different background, different experiences, to understand the story their way. This makes the story different for each person, and that’s what’s a beautiful thing about this movie, she says, although that would seem to be true for all movies.

Next, she says that Disney is Americana. The word “Americana” is used in many different ways, but generally it means things that are very American, that were created in the United States and are closely associated with American culture and history. Disney films is Americana because it is closely related to people’s idea about America. Rock and roll music, hamburgers, baseball, hot dogs, apple pie – Chevrolet, of course. These would all be things that are Americana; they’re associated with the United States. When I was younger, there was a TV



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commercial for the car company Chevrolet, and there was a little song talking about how American Chevrolet was, something like: [Jeff sings]

*Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet,
They go together in the good old U.S.A.
Baseball, hot dogs, apple pie, and Chevrolet...*

Sounds good to me! Anyway, that has nothing to do with this movie.

Anika says that we have simply opened a new chapter in Americana. “To open a new chapter” means to begin a new part of the story. A “chapter” is a part of a book – a section of a book. So we’re doing something new, but it’s still part the same tradition, if you will. She says that this new chapter is something that has been here in the United States for a long time, but hasn’t necessarily been shared. Not everyone has been made aware of it, or it hasn’t been brought to everyone’s attention. She says that in that respect, or in that way, having a black princess in this movie is another step in the completion of the story of what America is in this fantasy world, the world of fairy tales and magic.

Let’s listen to Anika talk one more time:

[recording]

For my nephew, it will be the norm. He will think nothing of it. It will be his first princess, period. For my mother, it will be something she’s been waiting for. For my grandmother, it will be something that she never thought would have happened. Each person that sits in that theater will have a different journey that they’re bringing to the story and it will make the story different for them. So, I think that that’s something that’s really beautiful about what it is that’s being made, because Disney is Americana and we have simply opened a new chapter in Americana: something that’s been here for a very long time, but hasn’t necessarily been shared. In that respect, it’s just another step in the completion of the story of what America is in this fantasy world.

[end of recording]

Now let’s answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Janos (Janos) in Hungary. The question has to do with how we pronounce the word (address).



Well, there are two ways of pronouncing this word. One is “address.” “Address” is a verb; “to address (something)” means to deal with something, usually a problem: “The boss is going to address the fact that the project wasn’t finished on time.” He’s going to do something about it, probably fire somebody – hopefully not me!

“To address” also means to give a speech to a group: “The president will address the nation this evening on television.” He’s going to talk to everyone in the country. “To address” can also mean to write down on an envelope that you are going to mail where you want that envelope to go. That’s to “address” as a verb. The accent – the stress is on the second syllable.

“Address” can also be a noun. It can mean, for example, the speech – the formal speech that someone gives, that can be used to describe that speech. “The president gave an address to Congress.” He addressed Congress with an address; he spoke to Congress with this speech. That’s possible; you could say that.

There’s one final meaning for (address), perhaps the most common one, which is what you write on an envelope (on a letter) that says where that envelope should go – where it should be delivered: the street, the city, the name, and so forth. That’s an address (or address), either the first or second syllable can be stressed for this particular noun. Normally the address (or address) on an envelope doesn’t include the name. We talk about the name and address. The address is the street, the number on the street, the city, the state; in the United States the zip code, which is the five-digit code that tells you what area in the country and the city it is located.

Shirley (Shirley) from Brazil wants to know the meaning of the phrase “cut the bull” (bull). “To cut (something)” as a verb can mean to stop something, to stop doing something. “Cut the talking” means stop talking. “Bull,” in this case, is a slang word, usually considered somewhat rude or offensive, that means nonsense, something that isn’t true.

“Bull” is actually short for another word that has (shit) at the end. We won’t say that on the podcast, but I think you can figure that out! That would be very rude thing to say. Even “cut the bull” is not something you would say anyone in authority, anyone you wanted to continue having a formal relationship with. It’s a very informal expression – a slang expression; it means stop talking about this



nonsense. Often it means the person is talking about him or herself, how great they are, and you may say, “Oh, cut the bull.” You’re lying, you’re bragging, we would say. Again, you would only use that for people you know very well, and in an informal situation.

Finally, Erkin (Erkin) of an unknown country – we’ll call it “Country X” – says, “What is the difference between ‘outspoken’ (outspoken – one word) and ‘vocal’ (vocal)?” Both “outspoken” and “vocal” can mean not afraid to say what you think, someone who will say what they think even if people criticize them. Even if it hurts them they will say what they want to say – give their opinion about something.

“Outspoken” is often related to more formal situations or political situations; not necessarily, but that’s more usually when you will hear it. “She is outspoken about her support of animal rights.”

“Vocal” can be used in more business or personal settings. You could say, “He was very vocal in his opposition to the new project.” People are often very vocal about their plans to get married, especially if your parents don’t want you to.

One other definition of “vocal” is merely something that is spoken – by your voice. It can also be something that is sung by a particular voice. We may talk about “vocal” as an adjective to refer to a kind of music. Vocal music is music where you hear singing. “Vocal” as an adjective can refer to really anything related to the voice.

We hope you’re vocal in support of ESL Podcast with your friends, colleagues, and family. If you have a question you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com.

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

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