



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 60

TOPICS

Bestselling books in the U.S., Thanksgiving traditions, to figure out, pronouncing can vs. can't

GLOSSARY

bestseller – a book or other product that sells many copies

* When Dr. McQuillan's new book about his life is published, it is sure to be a bestseller.

hardcover/softcover – a book with a cover that is made with strong paper with cloth over it (hardcover) or a book with a soft paper cover (softcover)

* I wanted to find a copy of this book in hardcover, but the store only had one in softcover.

Rise and shine! – Get up!, usually said to someone who is sleeping

* Okay, everybody. Rise and shine! After breakfast, we're going to climb that mountain!

women's shelter – a safe place where women can go if they are afraid of being hurt by someone in their house or if they are homeless (without a home)

* The new women's shelter down the street will have 30 beds and will help women who are in danger or are homeless.

engrossing – taking all of your attention; very, very interesting; so interesting that all of your thinking is about this thing

* The movie we were watching was so engrossing, I didn't hear the phone ring.

family dynamics – the way that people in a family interact with or affect each other; the relationship between the people in a family

* Kyle understood his new girlfriend better after visiting her family over the holidays and seeing their family dynamics.

prose – language in normal sentences (not poetry)

* I wonder what type of stories Shakespeare would have written if he wrote prose instead of plays.



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top-notch – the best; highest quality; excellent

* Jorge is a top-notch pilot so I don't think we need to worry about him crashing this plane.

mob/Mafia – an organized group of criminals who are very dangerous and who do serious crimes

* Have you seen the new play about a mob family living in St. Paul, Minnesota?

jury – a group of people, usually 12, who are responsible for making a decision in a court case

* The jury's decision to send the women to jail for 70 years was a surprise to everyone.

naughty – someone who behaves badly, usually children

* Her father said, "We're going to visit your grandparents and if you're naughty again, you won't be allowed to play with your friends for an entire week."

hyperactive – someone who is too active or has too much energy

* How am I supposed to cut your hair if you're hyperactive and won't sit still?

parade – a public celebration where people march (walk) along the street while other people on the side of the road are watching and cheering

* We watched the parade from our second-story window and had a great view of all bands and performers.

float – in a parade, a truck with a large flat area that is decorated with a display, usually with people in costumes standing on top, as part of a celebration

* Each year, we have over 200 people help to decorate the floats for our holiday parade.

to figure out – to solve; to find the right answer; to understand something that wasn't clear before

* I've looked at this map for over an hour and I still can't figure out where we are!



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WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

A Presidential Pardon...for a Turkey

A “pardon” is an official action to forgive someone for a crime they have “committed” or done. Normally, only officials in an organization or of the government can give pardons. The president of the United States can give “presidential pardons” that allow prisoners to go free. Normally, people who are on “death row” (in prison waiting to be killed for a serious crime they have committed) hope for a pardon or a “reprieve.” Prisoners who get a “reprieve” have their “penalty” or punishment reduced, but their crime is not forgiven.

At Thanksgiving each year, however, the President uses his presidential pardon in a far less serious way. It is a tradition for the President to give a turkey a presidential pardon so that it won't be killed as part of the holiday. This lucky turkey is allowed live the rest of its life on a peaceful farm. When the turkey is pardoned, there is an official ceremony that takes place in the Rose Garden of the White House (the house where the president lives). Of course, the turkey chosen for the pardon has not committed a crime, but Thanksgiving is the holiday when Americans eat a lot of turkeys. Some reports say that over 90 percent of Americans eat turkey for Thanksgiving.

Pardoning a turkey has been a tradition since 1947 when President Harry Truman pardoned the first turkey. Some people say that the tradition “dates back” or was started by Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president, when he pardoned his son's pet turkey.



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café number 60.

This is the English Café episode number 60. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

On this Café, we're going to talk about some of the best-selling books in the United States, the most popular fiction and nonfiction books. We will also be going over a little bit about Thanksgiving and Thanksgiving traditions in the United States. And as always, we'll answer a few questions. Let's get started!

Be sure to visit our website at eslpod.com to get a list of the words that we are going to be talking about today. You can also get on our website a complete transcript of this episode of English Café, and that includes not just the words, but the definitions, additional sentences using these words as well as additional cultural notes related to today's podcast.

Our first topic today is going to be bestsellers, and a bestseller, all one word, "bestseller," is a book that is very popular, that is one of the books that has sold the most copies. And in most places, the best-selling books are divided into hardcover and softcover, fiction and nonfiction. A hardcover book, "hardcover," one word, is a book that has a cover on it - the cover is what is on the outside the book - that is made usually of some hard material, a type of cardboard or very thick paper. And, that would be a hardcover book. Usually they're bigger books, and they are the first kind of book that a publisher - someone who makes books - releases.

The opposite of a hardcover book would be a softcover book, "soft," softcover. And a softcover book, you can guess, does not have a hard cardboard front and back, but it has just a softer paper cover. Softcover books are usually cheaper, lighter and smaller than hardcover books. Hardcover books and softcover books are divided into fiction and nonfiction. Fiction, something that isn't true, and nonfiction, things that are true.

The top book currently in the United States, one of the bestsellers in fiction, is a book called "Rise and Shine." Rise, "rise," and shine, "shine." These of both



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what we would call command forms of the verb, or imperatives, and it's when you are telling someone to do something. Rise means get up, usually said to someone who is in bed sleeping. Shine means to have a bright light on something, but shine can also mean that you do a good job, that you are excellent at what you do, or that you are completely awake and ready to do a good job. So, the expression, rise and shine, is something you might say to someone who was still in bed sleeping. It's something a mother might say to her children, "Rise and shine kids! Today is Monday. You have to go to school," which I think is wonderful when the children go to school. Especially the children who live next to me here in my house in Los Angeles, because they're very noisy during the week, so school is a good place for them.

Well, "Rise and Shine" is a book about a woman; her name is Anna Quindlen, "Quindlen," not related to me, McQuillan. And, it's a novel, or a fictional story, a novel that is about a woman who works in a women's shelter. A women's shelter, "shelter," is a place for women who perhaps don't have a home to live in. It is often for women who are in a marriage or a relationship where there is some violence and they need a safe place to go. The government has some shelters, mostly, however, private organizations - churches, other groups - have women's shelters and these are places where women can go to be safe.

This is a novel about a woman who works in a women's shelter. One person described this novel as "engrossing." To be engrossing, "engrossing," means that you get very involved in it, that it is very, very interesting. You can't put it down, we would say, you can't stop reading. And it's a novel about what one person calls, "family dynamics." Dynamics, "dynamics," are, in this case, the way that two people or a group of people react, communicate, talk to each other. Family dynamics are the way that you get along with someone else in your family, or don't get along with someone else in your family.

It is a well-written book. One reviewer - someone who writes about books - says that, "The prose is top-notch." The prose, "prose," just means the writing. We also have that term, prose, to mean something that is not a poem. You can have a poem like Shakespeare's poems or Jeff McQuillan's poems: "Roses are red, violets are blue. The sky is sunny and so are you." Thank you, I just...I just made that up. I just invented that poem. Prose is the opposite of poetry. It's sentences that are meant to tell a story usually. The reviewer says the writing, or the prose, in this book is top-notch, "top-notch." Top-notch means the very best,



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very, very good. So, if you are interested in that book, it's called "Rise and Shine."

Another popular book in the United States currently is one called, "Judge and Jury." The judge, "judge," is the person who is the leader, if you will, of a trial. When you go to court, you have a judge. In some cases, you have a jury, "jury." A jury is a group of people who decide whether you are guilty or innocent. And, this is a novel by a famous American novelist, James Patterson. It's about an FBI agent. The FBI is the Federal Bureau of Investigation; it's one of our national police organizations. And, it's about an FBI agent who is investigating the mob. The mob, which is spelled "mob," here means the same as organized crime. We also sometimes call it the Mafia, "Mafia." The mob, Mafia, organized crime; all these mean the same. They are a group of people who are criminals and who are, you can guess, organized into a group.

This is the subject of a famous American television show called, "The Sopranos," and it's about a group of, in this case, Italian-Americans who are involved in the mob, or the Mafia, involved in doing crimes. It was also the topic of three movies in the 1970's called, "The Godfather" and "The Godfather II" and "The Godfather III." So, that is a bestseller in fiction, hardcover fiction. It's called "Judge and Jury," by James Patterson.

Some of the best-selling nonfiction books have to do with politics, of course. You can guess that politics is a popular topic. There is one book called, "Fiasco," "Fiasco," by Thomas Ricks. A fiasco is something that goes wrong. A fiasco is similar to a disaster, but it's something caused by humans. It's something that people do and it creates a lot of problems. It's a fiasco. And this is, I believe, about the war in Iraq. Another popular book - nonfiction book - is a book called "Marley and Me," by John Grogan. Marley, "Marley," is not the famous singer, Bob Marley, the famous reggae singer from the Caribbean. This is a dog, Marley, and it is a story about a man who gets a dog and what happens to him and his dog. The book is called, "Marley and Me: Life and Love with the World's Worst Dog," and this dog is apparently very naughty and hyperactive. To be naughty, "naughty," kind of an old word, which means to be bad, and hyperactive, "hyperactive," is when you are very active, too active. Somebody who is always jumping up and down or someone who is always talking or doing something, we would call hyperactive. Well, this is a hyperactive dog. So, if you like dogs, and I don't, you can get this book called, "Marley and Me," by John Grogan.



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So, those are some of the most popular books in the U.S. right now. I haven't read any of those books, but I did read about them on the web, and someday, maybe, I'll watch the movie.

Our second topic today, briefly, is to talk a little bit about Thanksgiving, the holiday of Thanksgiving. Now, if you listened last year on Thanksgiving, we had a podcast about the traditional Thanksgiving dinner, the traditional Thanksgiving meal in the United States, and I talked about the holiday of Thanksgiving, which is the fourth Thursday of every November. It's a national holiday, nobody works, and it's a day for people to come together and to give thanks for the good things that they have in their life. You can go to our website and listen to ESL Podcast number 91, which is called, "Thanksgiving." I believe it is under the "Daily Life" category, you can search for it on our website. And that will give you some general information about Thanksgiving and Thanksgiving dinner or Thanksgiving meals.

I thought I would talk today about some other popular things that happen on or around Thanksgiving that most Americans know about. One of the things that most Americans do on the morning of Thanksgiving - or many Americans - is they watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. A parade, "parade," is when you have a group of people who walk along the street to celebrate something. The Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City is sponsored by a national store called Macy's. This is a store, "Macy's," Macy's, that sells all sorts of things - clothes and jewelry, shoes. Macy's pays for this, or helps pay for this parade, which is in New York City and it's very famous. It is on television on Thursday morning, and you will see lots of what we call floats, "floats." (A) float is usually a big car that moves down the street that has people on top of it. It's a truck, usually. There are also balloons - big, huge, gigantic balloons of Snoopy and other cartoon characters, and it's a fun time for children.

At the end of the parade, there is always Santa Claus. The reason that there is Santa Claus at the end of the Thanksgiving Day Parade is because the day after Thanksgiving - the Friday after Thanksgiving - is considered the first important day for people to go and start buying presents, buying gifts, for Christmas. So, the beginning of the Christmas shopping season, we would call it, is the day after Thanksgiving. And in fact, this is the most popular day, more people go and shop, or try to buy things in stores on Thanksgiving weekend, the day after, the Friday after Thanksgiving than any other day. Stores have early morning sales - 5 o'clock, 6 o'clock in the morning the store will open with a special sale. It will



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reduce the price, lower the price on things to get more people to buy. It is one day that you do not want to go to a big store in the United States, unless you like having thousands of people around you. I don't. I never go shopping the day after Thanksgiving, but it is a popular tradition.

Another popular tradition on Thanksgiving Day is to watch American football. And there are usually at least two American football games on in the afternoon of Thanksgiving. One of them is in Detroit, Michigan, which also has its own Thanksgiving Day parade. The Detroit Lions, which is the name of the team, has a game, and also there's a game in Dallas. The Dallas Cowboys have a game usually every Thanksgiving Day.

So, those are some popular things that people do on Thanksgiving, things that you can see on American television. Thanksgiving is, of course, this week, the week of this Café. So, if you live in the United States, you don't have to work tomorrow! I have to work, of course, because ESL Podcast never takes a vacation.

Now let's answer your questions. Our first question today comes from Brazil. Cassius, "Cassius." Cassius from Brazil wants to know the meaning of the verb to figure out. To figure, "figure," out, "out," two words. To figure out is one of those phrasal verbs, or verbs with two words in it that is very popular in English. To figure out means to solve a problem, to understand something that you didn't understand before, to find a solution to a problem. These would all be ways of defining the verb to figure out. For example, I was talking to my wife yesterday. I figured out that she was very angry with me. And the reason I figured it out - how I figured it out - is because she wasn't talking back to me. I talked to her; she didn't say anything back to me. I figured out she was mad, she was angry at me. You can also figure out a math problem, or figure out the answer to a puzzle, something that you have to try to find a solution for. So, that is the meaning of the verb, to figure out, and we use it very often.

Our next question comes from Japan, from Satsuki, "Satsuki." Satsuki's question is a pronunciation question about the difference between the word "can" and the word "can't," the short version of cannot. When you say these words very quickly, it is sometimes difficult to hear the difference.



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Here's "can": I can go today. I can go today. Here's "can't": I can't go today. I can't go today. Listen again: I can go today. I can go today. Now with the "T": I can't go today. I can't go today.

You notice there's a small difference between "I can go today" and "I can't go today" in the pronunciation of the "A," and you can just hear the "T," very, very softly. It's a difficult distinction for some people to hear. I can go today means I can go today. I can't go today means I cannot, or I can't go today. So, that is the difference between these two. It's difficult to explain. It's something you really need to listen to many times just to hear the difference. This difference is sometimes difficult even for native speakers. Sometimes someone will say something to you and you'll say, "You can or you can't?" You have to ask because when you say it very quickly it is more difficult to hear the difference.

Well, if you have a question about something you don't understand, email us at eslpod@eslpod.com. We'll try to answer your question.

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From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on the English Café.

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