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**last resort** – the last and the least desirable option that is available in a difficult situation
* If I can’t find my friends and join them, I can sleep on my brother’s couch for tonight, as a last resort.

**verdict** – the final decision in a legal action; the result of a trial
* When the judge read her verdict, the victim’s family cheered.

**to enable** – to help someone learn to do something; to give people the education and tools needed to do something themselves, but not to do it for them
* The office is giving everyone the afternoon off to enable everyone to get home before the big snowstorm arrives.

**full potential** – what can be achieved, without any limits
* The teacher said that students could only learn to their full potential if they are allowed to pursue some of their own interests.

**affordable** – not expensive; low cost; not costing a lot of money
* Our hotel has affordable rooms for people attending the film festival.

**who** – a relative pronoun that refers back to a person or group of people
* Our neighbor, who has three noisy dogs, complained about the noise we made!

**which** – a relative pronoun that refers back to a thing, place, or idea, used to add more information about the noun or clause it refers to
* Our house, which is very old, needs a lot of repairs.

**that** – a relative pronoun that refers back to a thing, place, or idea, used to restrict (put limits on) the noun it refers to
* Schools that have more books available for students to read get better results.

**It ain’t over till (‘til or until) the fat lady sings** – one should not assume or believe in an outcome (how something will end) until the activity is actually finished
* Most people think that Michael has no chance of winning the election, but I say that anything could happen and it ain’t over till the fat lady sings.

**to go/be all in** – to be completely committed; to be willing to risk everything; to involve everyone or everything
* Unless all three partners in this new company are all in, I don’t think we have a chance of succeeding.
WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

The Two Faces of American Lawyers

If you’re a lawyer in the United States, you have a “dual” (two-sided) “reputation” (others’ opinion of you). You may be respected for your knowledge of the law, but you may also be “looked down on” (disrespected) for what are considered “questionable” (uncertain) “ethics” (moral beliefs; beliefs about what is right and wrong).

“On the one hand” (on one side), lawyers are respected for knowing the law and being able to handle complicated “legal” (related to the law) matters. Perry Mason, whom we talked about in this episode of the English Café, is a TV lawyer who is respected for his “cleverness” (being intelligent and quick to develop solutions to problems) and “ingenuity” (being able to think of new and smart ideas that others cannot or do not think of). Other TV shows about lawyers, such as Law and Order, “highlighted” (showed as the most important thing) their abilities as “orators” (public speakers; speakers in front of an audience) and “investigators” (finding evidence and looking at facts to find out the truth).

“On the other hand” (on the other side of the issue), lawyers also have the reputation of being “unscrupulous” (dishonest; having no moral beliefs) and “greedy” (a selfish wanting of power or money). A few American TV shows included “characters” (people in a show, film, or play) who reflect these negative “perceptions” (views). For example, the character of Denny Crane from the popular television show Boston Legal (2004-2008) is “arrogant” (believes himself to be more important than others and more than he is) and a “philanderer” (has sexual relationships with many woman). Similarly, in the very popular 1980’s L.A. Law, one of the lawyers, Arnie Becker, is an unscrupulous “divorce” (legally ending a marriage) lawyer, who regularly took advantage of his mainly female “clients” (customers).
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part of the United States in 1889. He studied law at a university in Indiana, but stayed in school for only one month. Then he moved to California and became basically a self-taught lawyer. Someone who is “self-taught” learns things on his own, without going to school. Someone who is self-taught has read a lot of textbooks, or nowadays perhaps looks online. Gardner was able to learn enough on his own that he was able to pass the official examination or test to become a lawyer, what’s called the “bar (bar) exam,” nothing to do with the bar that you go drinking at. This test allows people to become lawyers, and Gardner passed the bar even though he did not graduate from law school. He worked as a lawyer; the verb we would use here would be he “practiced” law. He practiced law in California, but he didn’t like it very much; he liked writing better.

He didn’t always write under his own name, however. Gardner sometimes used what are called “pseudonyms” (pseudonyms). A “pseudonym” is another name that an author uses instead of his or her real name. At first, Gardner wrote a lot of stories – short stories for what were called “pulp magazines.” “Pulp (pulp) magazines” are inexpensive magazines that were very popular in the 20th century, in the early and mid part of the 20th century. They have a lot of stories, detective stories and other kinds of stories that were very popular, perhaps additional articles, kind of like a gossip magazine nowadays, stories about celebrities, that sort of thing, famous people. Gardner developed many different characters when he wrote for these pulp magazines, and the most famous one was a lawyer and a “crime-solver” we could call him, someone solves crimes – who figures out who did it, and that lawyer was named Perry Mason – that character. Gardner went on to write more than 80 books – 80 novels using Perry Mason as the main character. The first one was called The Case of the Velvet Claws. Most of the novels have titles that begin with “The Case of” (something). “Case” (case) usually refers to a legal trial. So when O.J. Simpson was arrested for murder here in Los Angeles, we would talk about the O.J. Simpson case. A case is any sort of legal proceeding that you go to a judge and you have some sort of decision made. All of the Perry Mason books, or almost all of them, begin with “The Case of” (something).

In most of the stories, Perry Mason is defending or helping the person who is being accused of murder. So the police arrest someone, and they say this person killed another person. Well, Perry Mason is the lawyer who says no, that isn’t true; he defends this person. In the stories, Mason tends to work with clients in a very difficult or unusual situation. Usually, he doesn’t charge very much money in the books – that’s how you know they’re fiction! He has usually what we might call a “minimal retainer.” A “retainer” (retainer) is the amount of money that you pay a lawyer in advance for work that they’re going to do. Well, his
clients usually or often don’t have a lot of money, so Mason works for them for a very low price.

The Perry Mason character was also in a few movies – a few films in the 1930s and 1940s; there were also radio dramas or radio programs in the 1940s and 50s with Perry Mason. But the most famous “adaptation,” the most famous way the books were changed into something else, was the television series that began in 1957, and continued, or aired, until 1966, so nine years there were television shows based on the Perry Mason novels. The actor in that series became quite famous; his name was Raymond Burr.

The television series *Perry Mason* was so popular and is still popular that you can still find it on many television stations 50 years after it was first broadcast. I’ve watched lots of *Perry Mason* TV shows; I’ve probably seen almost all of them actually. I’m a big fan of *Perry Mason* as the TV show. The books are okay; they’re not great American literature. No one would call Gardner one of our best writers; he isn’t that. But his stories are entertaining, and if you like mystery or detective stories I think you would like the *Perry Mason* mysteries.

Erle Stanley Gardner also worked on another project called “The Court of Last Resort.” A “last resort” is the last option, the thing that you do when you’ve tried everything else. The Court of Last Resort was not a novel – it wasn’t a book; it wasn’t a story. It was what we would now, I guess, call a project that Erle Stanley Gardner as a lawyer was involved in. It was similar to something called the “Innocence Project” which I talked about back on English Café number 176. Basically Gardner and others that he worked with would try to find cases where it looked as though someone did not get a good legal defense, or perhaps where people thought the police got the wrong person, that the person who had been sent to jail was in fact innocent – did not commit the crime. Gardner and other lawyers would try to get the verdict overturned, or changed. A “verdict” (verdict) is the result of a legal trial. Usually it’s the person is guilty, they did the crime and they have to jail, or the verdict is they’re innocent, they didn’t commit the crime. Well, Gardner would try to get guilty verdicts reversed or changed for people who he believed were not, in fact, guilty. He actually wrote a book about the project in 1952, and the project won an award from the Mystery Writers of America.

Gardner died in 1970; he was 80 years old. His books have been translated into dozens of languages. He sold millions and millions of copies of his books not just in the United States but in other countries. You perhaps have read some *Perry Mason* books yourself in your own language. I find the *Perry Mason* stories interesting because they all take place – they all are here in Los Angeles.
Perry Mason is a lawyer in Los Angeles, and it's always fun to read about places that you know about. But mostly I enjoy these stories just because they're entertaining; they're interesting.

Now let's turn to our next topic, which is an organization called The Boys & Girls Clubs of America. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America is a nonprofit organization; it's not a business, they're not trying to make a lot of money. Instead, their mission – their purpose is very broad, very large. Officially it's “to enable all young people, especially those that need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens.” I'll explain what that means, but basically it's an organization that helps kids who either are poor and need additional help, or perhaps come from an area or from a situation where they might get into trouble and they need someone to help them. The official mission or purpose of the group is “to enable (that is, to help) all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential.” Your “potential” is what you are able to do, what you are able to accomplish; not what you've done, but what you are capable or able to do. “Full potential” would be to do everything that you are able to do. The mission statement says they're trying to help kids reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. “To be productive” means to do or make things, in this case probably it means to have a job. “Caring” means that they care about other people, and “responsible” means they do what they're supposed to do. “Citizens,” of course, are members of a certain country.

The first Boys' Club was created in the 19th century, back in 1860 in the State of Connecticut. Connecticut is in the northeastern part of the United States. By 1906, 66 years later, there were more than 50 Boys' Clubs, and these Boys' Clubs then created a national organization. Former U.S. President Herbert Hoover, whom I talked about in English Café 339, was one of the many famous individuals that were involved in creating this national organization of Boys’ Clubs. The group had a few different names, but today it's known as The Boys & Girls Clubs of America; there was a separate Girls' Clubs of America, and then they joined together. There are now more than 4,000 of these clubs that serve four million young people, both boys and girls, in the United States and in military bases that the United States has. There are several Boys & Girls Clubs right here in Los Angeles very close to where I live. In fact, there's one that's only about two or three minutes from my house.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America works on five different areas – five different things that it tries to do. First, it has an education and career programs, where they try to help young children and teenagers understand what opportunities are
available to them and give them help in preparing for jobs as adults. Second, they have a character and leadership programs, where they try to help young people become leaders in their community; they try to help them develop character: to be honest, to be trustworthy, to be responsible, and so forth. Third, they have programs that focus on health and life skills; that is, trying to make sure the children stay healthy physically and are able to do the things they need to do to survive in this country – this society. A fourth thing they do is to focus on the arts. They try to introduce children to drawing, to painting, to other things that might increase their cultural knowledge and understanding. And finally, they have sports or recreational activities, things that help kids develop their bodies and get involved in teams – sports teams, that sort of thing.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America have buildings that they either own or rent where kids go, often after they finish school, and they participate in these different programs, so they’re a wonderful way of helping kids stay out of trouble. That is, make sure they don’t get involved in some bad things by getting them involved instead in some of the programs that these Clubs provide.

The organization, as I say, has many after school programs. They start after kids leave school, usually at 3:00 in the afternoon, 3:30, and they continue on till maybe 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening when their parents come back from work. They also offer a lot of summer programs when school is not we would say “in session,” that is, there’s no school classes in the summertime so they have programs during the day in the summer. The programs are “affordable” meaning they don’t cost too much money. In fact, that’s one of their purposes, is to help kids who may not have a lot of money to do the things that other children with more money can do. The Boys & Girls Clubs of America is very well known for their work. In fact, it’s considered by at least one organization to be the best youth organization in the United States.

I, myself, have never been involved with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. I don’t remember them when I was growing up in Minnesota. But certainly here in Los Angeles, there are many of them, and they do wonderful work.

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

Our first question comes from Thorsten (Thorsten) in Germany. Thorsten wants to know the way we use the words “who,” “which,” and “that.” Well that’s a big question Thorsten; we’ll give you a little answer. Let’s start with “who.”
“Who” is what we call a relative pronoun, meaning it refers to something or someone, in this case, who has typically already been mentioned in the sentence. For example, “The man who came to the door was my brother.” In that sentence, the “who” refers to the man; it’s used to help describe this particular man.

“Which” is also what we call a relative pronoun, but it doesn’t refer back to a person. It refers back usually to a thing, a place, or an idea. “My car, which is very old, would not run today.” The “which” refers to my car, and the information that follows “which” gives some additional information in identifying something specific about my car.

“That” is also a relative pronoun that refers back to a thing, a place, or an idea. It’s used to what we call “restrict” the noun it refers to; it limits it to something very specific. “Cars that are very old often don’t run well.” You’re talking about a very limited or specific kind of car, and that’s why we use “that” instead of “which.”

However, in common English, especially in conversational English, people don’t usually or often don’t distinguish between the technical uses of “which” and “that.” People use them interchangeably, meaning they use either one and they don’t pay attention to the technical differences that you might find in a grammar book. So, I wouldn’t get too worried about that. However, if your teacher gets worried about it, then you might want to pay attention to the difference between “which” and “that.” “That” is used when, as I mentioned, you restrict or put limits on what a noun refers to. For example, “Schools that are full of poor students need better teachers.” “Schools that are full of poor students,” this means that only the schools that are full of poor students should get better teachers. The implication is that there are some other schools that don’t need to change because their students aren’t failing. That’s a case where you’re restricting the kind of school you’re talking about; you’re limiting it. You could also say, “Schools, which are full of poor students, need better teachers.” This implies that all schools are full of poor students, which is true, and all of them need better teachers. So you’re not limiting, you’re not restricting which kind of schools you’re talking about. If you talk about people, however, you use “who” in both cases, whether it’s all the members of the group of people that “who” refers to or if you’re just limiting it. So if it’s a person you just use “who.” You only have to worry about “that” and “which” if it’s a thing or an idea.

Our next question comes from Alice. Alice is from a mystery country; perhaps she’s from Wonderland, hmm! Alice wants to know the meaning of a popular expression: “it ain’t over till the fat lady sings.” “It ain’t over (it is not finished) till...
(or until) the fat lady sings.” “Fat” is someone who weighs too much, who’s too heavy. What does this expression mean? It means that you should not assume that something is going to happen unless the event is completed, unless it actually happens. For example you’re watching a baseball game. The Los Angeles Dodgers are playing the San Francisco Giants, and it’s at the very end of the game in the ninth inning and the Dodgers are winning five to four. But you can’t say the game is over until it actually completes – until it actually is completed, I should say. The Dodgers could lose it. Here, we would say, “It ain’t over till the fat lady sings.” We don’t know the final result until everything is concluded.

Now why do we say “the fat lady sings”? I believe that comes from opera. “Opera,” of course, where you have what is called classical singing or classical music combined with words, the world’s first music videos without the video. The stereotype – that is, what people think of as opera singers would be a large, powerful female singer who might also be fat. And so, the idea is that you have to wait until that singer finishes her song, and then you know the opera is over. But that’s not very important; you really don’t have to understand why we say that, just that it means that, as one person said, “it ain’t over till it’s over.”

Christopher (Christopher), from Germany also, wants to know the meaning of the phrase “to go all in.” Sometimes we might say “to be all in.” This is an expression that means to be completely committed to something, to be completely involved, or to be willing to risk a lot. “I’m going to go all in on my study of ancient Greek.” I’m going to commit myself to it; I’m going to spend five hours a day on it; I’m going to be completely dedicated to that. I’m not actually going to do that; it’s just an example. Don’t write to me in ancient Greek and then ask me what it means!

The expression comes from gambling, where you decide to bet all of your money. If you’re, for example, playing poker in Las Vegas – you’re playing cards, and you decide you’re going to go all in. You’re going to bet all of your money on this particular hand of cards or this particular game. This is an informal expression, however. You wouldn’t want to use it in a business letter. It just is used in informal conversation to mean completely committed or willing to risk everything on this particular thing or project.

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. Our email address is eslpod@eslpod.com. We’ll try to answer them as best as we can, and as many as we can, although we do get a lot of questions and sometimes we’re not able to answer all of them. I apologize for that.
From Los Angeles, California, I am Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on the English Café.

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