



ENGLISH CAFÉ – 512

TOPICS

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire; Radio City Music Hall and The Rockettes;
Satan versus Devil versus demon versus evil; to know best; with regard to; to
clean versus to wash

GLOSSARY

immigrant – a person who moves from the home country to a new country to live permanently

* Many immigrants to the United States in the late 1800s came from Ireland, because they were trying to escape hunger and poverty.

rag – a small piece of old cloth, often used for cleaning

* When the milk spilled on the floor, Bo grabbed a rag and quickly cleaned it up.

fire escape – a set of stairs on the outside of a building that people can use to climb down to the street in case of a fire or emergency

* Samir used the fire escape to leave the office when the elevator stopped working.

to mourn – to feel or show great sadness or regret for someone or something that has disappeared or died

* In some countries, people mourn the dead by wearing black from head to toe.

sprinkler system – a set of pipes (hollow tubes) placed in the ceiling of a building that spray water into a room when there is a fire

* The sprinkler system turned on when a fire started in the chemistry classroom.

manslaughter – the crime of killing a person without planning the crime in advance

* The driver was accused of manslaughter when the police learned that he had been drinking heavily before he hit and killed the bicyclist.

to acquit – to officially find a person not guilty of a crime in a court of law

* The banker was acquitted of fraud because there wasn't enough evidence that he had been involved in the crime.



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commission – a group of people officially given a certain task to perform or to complete

* The Congress established a commission to investigate the charges that the President had illegally used government money.

code – a policy; a set of rules

* The military's code of conduct states that all military personnel must be respectful toward senior officers.

philanthropist – a person who tries to promote the health, happiness, and conditions of others, usually by donating or giving large amounts of money

* Mildred was a true philanthropist who used her fortune to support women and children who had been affected by domestic violence.

optimism – feelings of hopefulness and positive thinking about the future

* Employees felt a sense of optimism when they heard the name of the new CEO, since he was a man known for promoting work-life balance.

ostentatious – proudly showing others what one has or owns in an unpleasant or unappealing way

* Yves found his neighbors to be a bit ostentatious with their large pool, huge chandelier, and expensive cars.

synchronized – occurring or happening at once or at the same time

* In synchronized diving, two people jump off of diving boards at the same time and do twists and turns together before entering the water.

Satan – in the Christian religion, the enemy of God; the lord of evil

* Li believes Satan is always trying to tempt us into doing bad things to others.

Devil – the enemy of God; the most powerful evil force in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and who is often represented as the ruler of hell

* In the end, will God or the Devil win in the battle for control over the world?

demon – an evil spirit; someone or something that cause people harm or destruction

* For hundreds of years, many believed that people who had seizures had demons in their bodies.

evil – morally bad; causing people great hurt and harm

* Who would harm innocent children? That would be evil!



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to know best – to be the most suitable to make a decision or determination

* Beth doesn't know anything about cars, so followed Monica's advice when buying a used car, because Monica is a mechanic and she knew best.

with regard to – concerning; with respect to

* With regard to spending, I think we can all agree that reducing our budgets for next year would be wise.

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

The Garment District

The Garment District is a “neighborhood” (an area forming a community within a town or city) located in Manhattan, in New York City. A “garment” is another name for an item of clothing and the Garment District got its name because it is an area known for businesses related to “fashion” (what is popular, especially in clothing).

New York began its role as the center of the United States' garment “industry” (business) by producing clothes for “slaves” (people owned as property and forced to work) who were working on Southern “plantations” (large farms) in the 1900's. During this time, a “majority” (more than 50%) of Americans either made their own clothing or purchased “customized” (made for a specific person) clothing. In the 1820s, the U.S. saw a growth in the number of “ready-made garments” (pieces of clothing that can be purchased and worn) that were produced. By the end of the 1860s, Americans bought most of their clothing instead of making it themselves.

Immigrants coming in from Europe also helped this growing industry. They had the skills and experience in designing and making clothing developed in their “home country” (country where they were from). By 1910, 70% of women's clothing in the U.S., and 40% of men's, was produced in New York City.

Since the early part of the 20th century, the Garment District has been known as the center of fashion “design” (creation and planning) and fashion “manufacturing” (the making of something on a large scale using machines). Located between Fifth Avenue and Ninth Avenue – from 34th to 42nd Street – the neighborhood is less than one square mile in area, but it is home to a large number of New York's “showrooms” (a room used to display goods for sale) and major fashion “labels” (brands; companies).



COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 512.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 512. 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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In this Café, we're going to talk about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, which is sort of an odd topic, but once we start talking about it, I think you'll understand why. We'll also talk about one of the most famous musical venues, musical halls, in the United States – Radio City Music Hall – and a famous group of dancers, the Rockettes. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

I begin by apologizing a little bit for my voice today. I hope you can understand me. My voice is a little sore from, probably, allergies. I'm not sure. So, I'll try to speak even a little bit more clearly than normal today. We're going to talk about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. A "factory" (factory) is a place, a building, where things are made, things like shoes or chairs or computers – anything physical.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory was located in New York City during the early part of the twentieth century. As was true in many big cities in the United States during this time, there were a lot of factories in the cities – places that actually made things. This is less common nowadays, as it has become cheaper for companies to make things like shirts and shoes and computers in other countries outside of the United States. But during the early part of the twentieth century, there were lots of factories in big cities like New York.

This factory was called the Triangle Shirtwaist. A "shirtwaist" (shirtwaist) is an old word that we don't use anymore, to mean a woman's shirt or blouse – what a woman would wear (a "top," we might also call it). The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory employed mostly young girls who were immigrants from Europe. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, millions of immigrants came from Europe to America.



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An “immigrant” is a person who moves from their home country to a new country. My ancestors – my great-great-great-grandfather and mother moved from Ireland to the United States. They were immigrants in the early part of the nineteenth century. This is during the early part of the twentieth century that many of these young girls who were immigrants worked in factories in New York City.

On a typical or usual day, there were 600 workers working in a very small space of the factory. They often worked long hours – 12 hours a day – and weren’t paid very much money. Again, that’s very typical if you look at factories now in other countries where the working conditions are often not very good – that is, the environment in which these workers have to work.

Well, these same conditions, poor conditions, existed in American factories as well at this time, and sadly, on the evening of March 25th, 1911, a fire started on the eighth floor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. It was probably caused by someone throwing a cigarette onto a pile or a bunch of used rags sitting on the floor. A “rag” (rag) is a small piece of old cloth, old fabric that we use for cleaning. If you have an old shirt, for example, that you’re not going to wear anymore, you might cut it up with the scissors and use parts of the shirt as a rag to clean the floor or other things.

When this fire started at the factory, there were workers above the floor where the factory fire broke out – the ninth and tenth floors. These people – again, mostly young girls – went up to the roof, to the top of the building, to escape. However, if you were on the eighth floor, you weren’t so lucky. Some of the girls went down to the bottom of the building, but they discovered that the doors to the building had been locked. The owners had locked the door, apparently to keep the employees from stealing things.

These poor girls were trapped in the stairwell. The “stairwell” (stairwell) is the area at the bottom of each set of stairs. Well, as the fire grew, more and more of these poor young workers died. Some of the workers were able to climb out and get out of the building using the fire escape. A “fire (fire) escape (escape)” is a set of stairs on the outside of a building that can be used to reach the street in case of, well, a fire.

But there were so many people on the fire escapes that the fire escapes broke. They collapsed. And so, the people who were on them fell to the ground, and many of them were killed not by the fire but by the crash – the fact that the fire escape broke and they fell to the ground. Fire trucks arrived with ladders, which are basically sets of steps that you can use to climb up to a higher location.



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However, the ladders only went up to the sixth floor. So the workers in the seventh and eighth floors were trapped. They couldn't get out.

The firefighters tried many different things to rescue these poor workers, but really they didn't have a lot of tools they could use in order to prevent many of them from dying. Sadly, 126 women and 17 men died in this fire. The entire city of New York was saddened by this incredible loss of life. There were many people who mourned the loss of these workers. "To mourn" (mourn) is to show sadness for something that has happened.

But the people weren't just sad. They were also angry at the poor working conditions in this factory. And so a few weeks later, nearly 100,000 people walked down Fifth Avenue – a busy street in New York – to show support to the families and to demand that the government do something about safety at these factories. This is, sadly, an old story that continues to repeat itself in many places around the world. The government did take action against the owners of the factories. They were accused of what is called "manslaughter."

"Manslaughter" (manslaughter) is a crime of killing a person without planning it. If you plan to kill someone, if you take a gun and shoot someone, you would likely be arrested by the police and charged with murder. Manslaughter is a less serious crime. It's when you kill someone and it's your fault – maybe you were drinking alcohol and driving a car and hit someone – but it's not as serious of a crime because you didn't plan it. You weren't trying to kill someone, but you acted in such a way that caused someone to die, and you are, therefore, partly responsible.

However, the owners were not found guilty of this crime. They were acquitted. "To acquit" (acquit) is for a judge or a jury – a group of people who make the decision about whether someone is guilty or innocent – to find the person not guilty. Also what made a lot of people angry was that the owners of the company got a lot of money from the insurance company because of the fire, even though they were responsible (many people believe) for the deaths of so many people.

In June of that same year, the state legislature – the state government of New York – created something called the "Factory Investigating Commission." A "commission" is a group of people who are given a certain job, a certain task. The Factory Investigating Commission went around visiting factories, speaking to workers and finding out about the safety in these factories. As a result of this commission's investigations, or research, 30 new health and safety laws were proposed to the government.



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These laws included laws about fire codes and child labor. A “code” (code) is another word for a rule or a law. “Child labor” refers to having young children working in places such as factories. These laws then helped change the safety conditions in factories not only in New York, but in other parts of the country as well. People read about this terrible disaster, this large number of people getting killed, and changed laws in other places as well, in order to make factories safer.

Sadly, it often takes a tragedy, a very sad event such as this, to get the government and the rest of us to realize how important certain laws are, certain safety laws are.

Let’s move on to a little happier topic.

In New York City, there is a large performance auditorium, a place where you can go hear people play music and see people dance, called “Radio City Music Hall.” The word “hall” (hall) is an old word to refer to an auditorium or a place where you go see performances. Most Americans have heard of Radio City Music Hall in New York City. The history of the hall and of a famous group of performers associated with the Hall, called “The Rockettes,” is, I think, quite interesting.

If you know a little about world history, especially the history of the United States, you’ll know that in 1929, the U.S. had very serious financial problems, and this resulted in or led to what we would call a “depression” during the 1930s. A depression is a very difficult time for the economy of a country. Many companies closed. Many people lost their jobs, and it was a very difficult time in the U.S. for many people, both rich and poor.

One person who survived the depression without too many difficulties was the most famous American businessman of that generation, John D. Rockefeller. John D. Rockefeller was an American businessman, but he was also what we would call a “philanthropist.” A “philanthropist” (philanthropist) is a person who tries to help other people by giving them money. Usually a philanthropist gives money to organizations that try to improve the condition of others and, well, to make other people happy.

John D. Rockefeller felt that he needed to do something in order to give people a sense of optimism about the U.S. economy during these difficult years. “Optimism” (optimism) is when you feel positive about the future, when you think good things are going to happen. So, Rockefeller decided to talk to one of the



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large radio companies – called the “Radio Corporation of America,” more commonly known by its initials “RCA” – to do something to make people feel more optimistic about the future of the American economy.

And so, they decided to build the world’s largest theater, or at least the world’s largest indoor theater – a theater that was inside of a building. This theater, it was decided, would put on performances that were of a very high quality, that people would enjoy, and yet that wouldn’t have very high ticket prices so that many people could go to these performances. The team chose an architect to design this new building. They wanted the building to look beautiful but not too ostentatious.

This is a good word to know – “ostentatious” (ostentatious) describes someone who is very proud to show others what he or she owns. This is the person who likes to buy a Mercedes and make sure everyone sees him in his Mercedes. He’ll drive up and down the road so people can see him in his fancy car. That would be someone who is ostentatious. Normally we use this word, however, to describe a building or a place that looks very expensive or that looks like it took a lot of money to build.

Well, the designers of the new theater didn’t want it to look ostentatious, so they used other kinds of materials that were not as expensive and that didn’t look as expensive. So, the theater became the largest indoor theater in the world. It is 190 feet – that would be about 48 meters – long from the back of the room to the stage, to the front of the room. The stage is about 30 meters long and 18 high off the ground. It’s designed so that every seat in the theater has a good view. You can see the stage from every seat in the theater.

In 1932, Radio City Music Hall, as it was called, had its very first performance, and it quickly became a place where many of the biggest movies were first shown to audiences. Many famous performers over the years have performed at Radio City Music Hall, including Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, and Ray Charles. However, the most famous performers at Radio City Music Hall are a group of dancers called the “Rockettes” (Rockettes).

The average American nowadays associates the Rockettes with Radio City Music Hall, but actually that’s not where the group started. The group actually started as a group of dancers in Missouri, and one of the people who was responsible for Radio City Music Hall saw this group and convinced them to come to New York City and start performing. And eventually, they began to



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perform at Radio City Music Hall, and in 1934 took the official name of the Rockettes.

Now, the Rockettes are famous for dancing in a certain way. They're famous for what we would call "synchronized dancing." "Synchronized" (synchronized) means happening at the same time, when everybody kicks their leg at the same time. They do it in a synchronized way. You might have heard of a sport in the modern Olympic Games called "synchronized swimming," where women swim in a pattern and they all move in the same way at the same time. Well, this is synchronized dancing.

The Rockettes were also famous for very high kicks. The women would kick their legs up into the air in a synchronized way, but also getting the leg up very high. The Rockettes have different performances throughout the year, but the most famous performance they put on is called the Christmas Spectacular, which takes place during November and December every year. This Christmas Spectacular has 36 Rockettes (and, of course, Santa Claus) dancing the biblical scene of the birth of Jesus, including real animals such as camels, sheep, and donkeys.

Sounds a little weird, I know, but that's what they do, and people go to these shows and really enjoy it. My mother went to see the Rockettes when she visited New York City once. In fact, she tells me that when she was growing up as a little girl taking dancing lessons, she wanted to become a Rockette. The Rockettes were famous throughout the United States, and you can imagine young girls like my mother, taking dancing lessons, would want to become a Rockette. They were considered stars.

If you ever have a chance to go to New York City, especially during November and December, you should try to see the Rockettes at the Radio City Music Hall. I admit I have never seen one of the shows, but maybe someday I will be able to go there and see them dance.

Now let's answer a few of your questions.

Our first question comes from Mohammad (Mohammad) in Iran. Mohammad wants to know the difference between "Satan," "demon," "evil," and "devil." I'm going to start here with the word "evil" (evil), since in some way, the other three words are more closely related than this word is to the others. Something that is "evil" is something that is causing great harm or causing great injury, often in an ethical or moral sense. To talk about a person being "evil" would mean that this



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person is doing something wrong in a very serious way – causing some sort of moral injury, if you will.

The words “Satan,” “devil,” and “demon” are somewhat related, especially the first two, “Satan” (Satan) and the “devil” (devil). In the Christian religion, “Satan” is the same as “the Devil.” Satan is thought to be an angel who opposed God and is therefore the leader, if you will, of those angels that opposed God. When people talk about the Devil, they are usually referring to this notion of Satan – a single angel.

Now sometimes people will talk about “devils” in the plural – this would refer in theology to those angels (we sometimes call them “fallen angels”) who are led by the Devil, who are led by Satan. The word “devil,” however, is used not just in Christianity, but also in Judaism and Islam to represent this evil force who is present in the world. A “demon” (demon) is another word for an evil spirit. It would be the same as my previous definition of “devils” in the plural. A demon would be an evil spirit that, once again, is causing some sort of moral harm in the world.

Now, people use these terms sometimes almost in a joking way – people will talk about someone being “a devil.” They don’t usually mean the person is an evil spirit. They might mean the person misbehaves or does things that are evil, but he is not himself actually a demon in the, shall we say, “theological” sense. There are other terms for “Satan” or “the Devil,” including “Lucifer” (Lucifer), which you will also sometimes see or read.

Our next question comes from Aysun (Aysun) in Turkey. The question has to do with the expression “to know best.” Well, once upon a time, many years ago, there was a television show called “Father Knows Best.” “To know best” means to be the wisest or the smartest person in a given situation.

If someone says, “I know best,” he means he knows better than you do, he knows the best way out of this situation, or he is the person who can make the best choices or decisions. You might say this to someone, for example, who has information that you don’t have and who is perhaps asking your advice on a certain decision. You may say, “Well, I don’t know. You know more than I do. You know best.” “You know better than anyone else,” is what you are saying.

Finally, another question from Iran, from Yousef (Yousef). This is a question related to two things that Yousef has heard or read, two phrases: “with regards to” and “with regard to.” Both of these expressions can mean “concerning” a



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certain thing. You might say, “With regard to lunch today, I think we should go to a pizza parlor” (an Italian restaurant). “With regard to” means “concerning this situation.” It’s used usually when we are about to say something about that situation.

Traditionally, some grammar books have said that you shouldn’t use “regards to” with an “s” at the end, that that was incorrect. However, you still will hear and see that “s” at the end of “regard” in the phrase “with regards to.” Now, the word “regards” is perfectly acceptable to mean good wishes or showing respect to someone. In that case, you do and must put an “s” at the end of the word “regard.” It’s somewhat of a formal way of telling someone to give someone else your good wishes.

“Give my regards to your brother,” you might say to someone, if you know that person’s brother. You’re saying to this person, “Tell your brother that I say hello; tell your brother that I wish him well.” Something like that. One of the great American composers of the twentieth century, George M. Cohan, had a famous song that used this expression:

“Give my regards to Broadway
Remember me to Herald Square.”

The singer was telling whoever he was speaking to, to give his “regards to Broadway.” “Broadway” is the theater district in New York City.

So, strictly speaking, traditionally, if you’re using this expression to mean concerning or about a situation, you would say “with regard to.” If you are giving someone your best wishes, you would give your “regards” to someone. The “s” would come at the end of the word “regard” in that second case. Nevertheless, the language changes, and now you will hear both “with regards to” and “with regard to” to mean concerning or about a certain thing.

If you have any questions about a certain thing in English you don’t understand, 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 again right here on the English Café.

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