TOPICS

The Comstock Lode and the Silver Rush; Classic TV – The Beverly Hillbillies, lesson versus lecture versus seminar; interesting versus interested; I rest my case

GLOSSARY

lode – a vein (long line) of metal ore or deposits, such as gold or silver, that is found in the earth
* Are there many South American mines built around silver lodes?

silver – a precious shiny metal with a gray and white color
* In very expensive restaurants, the forks, spoons, and knives are often made of silver and have to be hand washed and polished after each use.

territory – land that is owned by the government but that does not meet the requirements needed or does not wish to become a state
* Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and it receives certain benefits from the government, but its residents do not have full voting rights.

to prospect – to search a land for minerals or metals that might be in the ground in large amounts
* Many moved to Alaska in the 1890s to prospect for gold, but the long, cold winters made it difficult to prospect for more than a few months each year.

to mine – to dig in the earth for valuable materials, such as minerals and metals
* The miners took an elevator deep into the earth to mine for coal.

to collapse – for a structure to fall down or to fall in
* The building collapsed after the demolition crew set off the explosives.

population – the number of people living in one area, town, or country
* The world population is over seven billion and continues to grow each year.

hillbilly – an uneducated person without much world experience who comes from a rural area (the countryside)
* My relatives are hillbillies who prefer to stay near their mountain homes and travel to cities as rarely as possible.
**wise** – having or showing experience, knowledge, or good judgment
* Ask Samuel. He’s had a lot of experience and is wise. He’ll know what to do.

**oil** – a black liquid found in the earth that is used to make petroleum for fuel, such gasoline
* When the price of oil falls, the price of gasoline falls as well, which means that it is cheaper to fill up a car with gas.

**rural** – countryside, not a town or city
* Andrea grew up in a rural area so she is very uncomfortable with the loud noises and busy streets of the city.

**to purge** – to completely get rid of something that is unwanted, often in a sudden and unpleasant way
* When Marco went on a diet, he purged his house of anything sweet, including chocolates, cookies, and ice cream so that he wouldn’t be tempted to eat them.

**lesson** – an activity or amount of teaching for the purpose of learning; a single class period or a part of a larger course of instruction; something learned through experience, usually as a result of a difficult or trying experience
* Jacob is taking swimming lessons to learn how to swim.

**lecture** – a talk or speech on a specific topic given to a group of people intended to teach them more about the topic; a talk that criticizes someone’s behavior in an angry or serious way, telling them what they have done wrong
* The museum sponsors a series of lectures on ancient Asian art.

**seminar** – a meeting in which one receives information on and training in a particular subject, often for professional purposes; a class offered to a small group of students at a college or university, usually as part of advanced studies
* Are you going to the marketing seminar on how to use social media to launch new products?

**interesting** – describing something that attracts one’s attention and that makes one want to learn more about it or to be involved in it; not boring
* This book on the mysterious death of Edgar Allen Poe is very interesting.

**interested** – wanting to learn more about something or to become involved in something; having a direct or personal interest or involvement in something
* Are you interested in going with me to see the new James Bond film?
to rest (one’s) case – a phrase used to indicate that one has done enough to prove one’s point and that one does not need to say anything more
* I’ve given you all of the best reasons not to drop out of college, so now I rest my case. It’s up to you to decide what you want to do.

WHAT INSIDERS KNOW

Rodeo Drive

The most famous street in Beverly Hills, California is Rodeo Drive. The street itself is two miles (3.2 kilometers) long, but most people think of the three-block “stretch” (expanse; distance) that is known for its large number of “luxury goods stores” (stores that sell very expensive products from “top” (the best or highest quality) brands). This part of Rodeo Drive “falls within” (is part of) the Golden Triangle, which is an important tourist destination and shopping “district” (area).

In 1997, a committee decided to make Rodeo Drive more famous internationally as the shopping destination for the “rich and famous” (well-known and wealthy people; celebrities). They succeeded, and by 1980, the shopping area was generating one-quarter of the city’s sales tax “revenue” (money received).

Part of Rodeo Drive is designed to look like a traditional European street, with “ornate” (with many details and patterns) building “facades” (the fronts of buildings, the parts that face the street) and “cobblestone” (with many small rocks on the surface of a street, not flat pavement) streets. Rodeo Drive also has the Walk of Style, where the sidewalks have “plaques” (flat surfaces with words printed on them for recognition) “honoring” (recognizing and praising) “fashion icons” (people who are very important in the fashion industry).

Today, Rodeo Drive “is home to” (is the location of) luxury stores such as Bulgari, Cartier, Chanel, Coach, Giorgio Armani, Gucci, and more. It is common to see photographs of celebrities shopping on Rodeo Drive, their arms “laden” (carrying many heavy things) with shopping bags “emblazoned” (displayed in an obvious way) with the logos of these and other luxury brands.
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This is English as a Second Language Podcast’s English Café episode 561. I’m your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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On this Café, we’re going to talk about something called the Comstock Lode and Silver Rush – one of the most important events of the late nineteenth century, especially for those of us who live in the western United States. We’re also going to talk about a classic television show from the twentieth century, which in a way is sort of related to the first topic. The show was called The Beverly Hillbillies. And as always, we’ll answer a few of your questions. Let’s get started.

A “lode” (lode) is an area of metal ore that is found in the earth. It is sometimes referred to as a “vein” (vein) of metal ore. When I say “metal ore,” I’m referring to metals such as silver and gold which are found in the ground, which could be a hill or a mountain or some other area. A “lode,” then, is a large amount of metal ore that is found in a certain area.

“Comstock” (Comstock) is the name of a man who owned land in the state of Nevada, or what is now the state of Nevada. “The Comstock Lode,” then, refers to silver that was first found on land owned by a man named Comstock in what was then the “territory” of Nevada. A “territory” (territory) here is used as a legal term to describe land that is owned by a country but is not yet officially one of the states or provinces of that country.

As the United States was growing in size, it began to take some of the land that it owned, the territories that it owned, and make them into states. There are still territories of the United States – areas that belong to the country of the United States that are not yet states. Places such as Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands – all of those legally are considered U.S. territories, but they’re not states.
Well, most of the United States started out as territories that were eventually made into states, or parts of which were made into states. Back in June of 1859, right before the American Civil War, silver was discovered in Nevada, in the territory of Nevada, on land owned by Mr. Comstock, and this became known as the Comstock Lode. “Silver” is what’s called a “precious metal” that is gray and white in color. You’re probably familiar with both silver and another well-known precious metal, “gold.”

Both silver and gold were discovered in the western parts of the U.S. during the nineteenth century. In fact, 10 years before the Comstock Lode was discovered, people were already moving to the western United States in the hopes of finding gold. Gold was discovered in California in 1849. This sudden rapid movement of people to California in 1849 was called the “gold rush.” The verb “to rush” (rush) means to move very quickly because you have a need to get somewhere quickly.

The gold rush was a sudden movement of people to California looking for gold. Everyone wanted to become rich quickly. This is, of course, is still true today. It was no less true in 1849 when people came to California looking for gold. In 1859, 10 years after the California gold rush, people started moving to the neighboring territory of Nevada to look not for gold, but for silver. Nevada is right next to the state of California.

In fact, some of the people who came to California to find gold also moved to Nevada 10 years later to look for silver. The verb we use for looking for gold and silver is “to prospect” (prospect). “To prospect” means to search for gold and silver and other metals in the land, or sometimes in the water. In California, for example, many people “prospect” for gold by trying to find little pieces of gold that fell into the rivers and would move through the water.

Some of the people who prospected for gold in California began to prospect for gold in Nevada, but they didn’t find gold. Instead, they found silver, at least in the land owned by Mr. Comstock. Word soon spread – that is, other people found out about the silver discoveries in Comstock and the Comstock Lode – and very soon after, you had what we could call a “silver rush,” where people moved to Nevada to mine for silver. “To mine” (mine) is to dig holes in the earth, looking for things such as gold and silver.

We also use this verb “to mine” when we are looking for other things in the ground, including “coal” (coal). “Coal,” of course, is burned as an energy source. Still today, it’s an important energy source in many parts of the country and around the world. Both gold and silver have been considered valuable ever since
ancient times. When people realized that they could become rich by going to Nevada and mining or otherwise looking for silver, of course they immediately did so.

Unfortunately, you couldn’t find a lot of silver in the Comstock Lode just by digging in the ground. You had to dig very deep into the ground in order to find the silver. You had to, in effect, create what are called “tunnels” (tunnels). A “tunnel” is a long hole that goes underground or into a mountain. One of the problems with these tunnels is sometimes they weren’t very strong. They weren’t very well built and they collapsed. “To collapse” (collapse) is when a structure, a building, falls down. The tunnels collapsed and killed many people who were trying to look for silver.

Mining for silver, then, was a dangerous occupation. You could get killed doing it. Not just because the tunnels collapsed, but sometimes there would be water that would go into the tunnels and that would kill people. Between 1859 and 1864, so many people moved to the area near the Comstock Lode in the modern state of Nevada that several new towns were created. People of course needed a place to live. So, these towns included a place called Virginia City, which became the place where government and business affairs were taken care of.

The number of people moving to the area also made it possible for the territory to meet some of the requirements that the U.S. government had for a state to be formed. The U.S. government created states out of these territories when there was a sufficient population – that is, when there were enough people who were living there. At the time, to become a state, a territory had to have more than 5,000 people there who could vote. By 1864, the population around this Comstock Lode was so great that the territory could, in fact, become a state.

By 1869, 10 years after the discovery of the Comstock Lode, it became simply too expensive for individual people to go and mine the land. You needed new technology in order to discover and get the silver out of the ground. So you saw the formation of large mining companies that came in and began to do this work. When the railroad system that connected the east coast of the United States to the west coast of the U.S. – what we call the “transcontinental railroad” – was completed in 1869, these companies were able to move or transport the silver in order to sell it in other parts of the country.

The best years of the silver rush were not the early years back in 1859, 1860, but rather about 25 years later when these mining companies began to become more successful at getting the silver out of the ground. Between 1876 and 1878,
nearly $36 million worth of silver was mined in the Comstock Lode area. That would be about $800 million today.

Of course, no lode of precious minerals is endless. Eventually, you are going to find all or most of the silver in a given area, or at least it’s going to become too expensive to remove it. By 1880, less and less silver was being discovered in this area, and by the late 1880s, almost a third of the population that had moved to the Comstock Lode area had moved away because there was simply not enough silver there to keep them, to give them jobs.

The Comstock Lode and the silver rush, similar to the gold rush in California, were key events in the formation of the state of Nevada, and also in getting people to move out to the western United States. Of course, once there was no more silver to be discovered, Nevada had to find other ways to get people to move there – had to find other ways to make money.

It wasn’t until the twentieth century that Nevada decided that it was going to make gambling legal, and gambling provided the major source or the biggest source of income in Nevada, especially in cities such as Las Vegas and Reno. Nowadays, when people think of the state of Nevada, they don’t think of silver – they think of gambling. So instead of getting money out of Nevada, people go to Nevada to lose their money, as you will almost always do if you are gambling.

We turn now to our second topic, a classic television show. The Beverly Hillbillies was a popular television show during the 1960s up through the early 1970s. To understand what this television show was about, you need to understand what a “hillbilly” is. A “hillbilly” (hillbilly) is an uneducated person who comes usually from a rural area in the United States. Specifically, we usually associate the word “hillbilly” with people who live up in the mountains or hills in the eastern part of the United States, in what are called the Appalachian Mountains.

The Appalachian Mountains are located in the eastern U.S. In the western United States, we have what are called the Rocky Mountains. The Appalachian Mountains are older, and because they are in the eastern part of the U.S., they have been populated much longer than the Rockies, at least by what we may describe as European Americans.

Many of the people who live in the Appalachian Mountains historically have been very poor. They haven’t had a lot of money. They also haven’t had a lot of education, in part because they are often isolated. They are away from the big
cities and towns, and therefore didn’t have the same opportunities to go to school.

The term “hillbilly,” however, is a very insulting one, or at least it’s usually used as an insult. To call someone a “hillbilly” is to say the person is uneducated, who comes from an area that is not very sophisticated. It definitely would not be something you would want to call someone unless you were doing it as a joke. Usually, as I say, the term has been applied to those from these Appalachian Mountain communities or areas in the eastern U.S. mountain range. A more general insulting term for someone who comes from a rural area, not from a big city, would be “hick” (hick).

The television show The Beverly Hillbillies was about a family called the Clampett family, who originally was from not the Appalachian Mountains, but another set of mountains more in the central part of the U.S. called the Ozark Mountains, in the state of Arkansas. Arkansas is where former U.S. President Bill Clinton was from.

In the show, the Clampett family has a father whose name is Jed; a grandmother; Jed’s wife’s mother; Elly May, a teenage daughter; and Jethro Bodine, who is Jed’s cousin’s teenage son. Jed is a very kind man in the show, and the granny, the grandmother, is very wise. The daughter, Elly May, is a beautiful woman but a little bit innocent; that is, she doesn’t really understand the way the world works. The cousin, Jethro, is arrogant. Someone who is “arrogant” (arrogant) thinks he is more important or knows more than he really does.

One day Jed, the father of the family, is out hunting and discovers, or finds, oil on the land owned by the family. “Oil” in this case refers to the black liquid found in the earth that is used for energy or as an energy source, and is of course very valuable. Jed soon sells his land for millions of dollars, and someone suggests that he move to California with his family to have a better life – specifically to one of the richest areas in Los Angeles, Beverly Hills. I say “one of the richest areas of Los Angeles,” but in fact, Beverly Hills is its own city. It is a city that is next to the city of Los Angeles.

In any case, Beverly Hills has the reputation for being one of the wealthiest or richest cities in Southern California, and there have been lots of movies and TV shows made about Beverly Hills. You may have seen the movies from the 1980s, Beverly Hills Cop and Beverly Hills Cop II, as well as the television show Beverly Hills 90210. 90210 is the zip code or the postal code for Beverly Hills.
So, you can understand the title of the show, Beverly Hillbillies. They are hillbillies that moved to Beverly Hills. The whole point of the show is of course to find comedy in this situation where you have a family who is not very well educated and isn’t very sophisticated trying to live in the rich area of Beverly Hills. The Beverly Hillbillies, for some reason, was immediately successful with television audiences when it was first on the air, or when it was first shown, in 1962. It continued to be one of the most popular shows throughout the 1960s in the United States.

It continued until 1971. In fact, when the show was canceled, when they stopped showing it in 1971, it was still popular. Why did they cancel the show? Some people say that beginning in the early 1970s, the television studios, the companies that make television shows, wanted to have more shows about people who were from the cities. They didn’t want to have a lot of television shows about what we would call “rural life.” “Rural” (rural) refers to people who don’t live in a town or a large city.

Because the population by the 1970s was mostly “urban” – that is, living in large cities, the television studios and networks decided they would “purge” or get rid of the shows that were about people from rural areas. I’m not sure how much that really was the case but some people say that was one reason why The Beverly Hillbillies, among other shows, was canceled.

You could still watch The Beverly Hillbillies in the 70s and 80s, when I was growing up, on television. They would show what are called “reruns.” A “rerun” (rerun) is an old television program that is shown again on TV. I won’t say that The Beverly Hillbillies was one of the great television programs of the twentieth century. It certainly wasn’t that, but it was one of the most popular TV shows of the 1960s and certainly reflected a certain part of, or aspect of, American culture during the mid-twentieth century.

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

Our first question comes from Zhenzhen (Zhenzhen) in China. The question has to do with three words, “lesson,” “lecture,” and “seminar.”

The word “lesson” (lesson) can have a couple of different meetings. A “lesson” can be an activity that a teacher does in a classroom in order to instruct or teach students a certain piece of information or a certain kind of knowledge. That can be a “lesson.” You could have more than one lesson in a single class, and usually do. A lesson could also be one period of time in a course of study in a
school, whether it’s a specific activity within a class period or the class period itself.

The word “lesson” can be used to describe lots of different kinds of activities. A science teacher might have students doing experiments as part of the lesson. A history teacher may be giving information to students or having students read a book or an article and discuss it. That might be part of the lesson. So the word “lesson” can be used to describe lots of different kinds of activities from which we learn something.

The world “lesson” is also used to describe something that we’ve learned in life, often from a difficult experience. Something has “taught us a lesson,” we say. In other words, we’ve learned something from a difficult situation. We didn’t actually go to a teacher or tried to learn something, but the fact that the situation was difficult gave us knowledge or gave us information that we consider important, and so we use that word “lesson” to describe the knowledge that we now have from that life situation.

The term “lecture” (lecture) refers to a specific activity that often takes place in a lesson or as part of a lesson. A “lecture” is when the teacher or some other person stands up in front of a group of people and gives them information. I talk and you listen. That’s what a lecture is. There’s no discussion, there are no experiments, there’s no reading of books or articles. A lecture is just you listening to the teacher speaking.

The verb “to lecture” means to give a lecture, to give a lesson, to give information to someone who listens to you. “To lecture” can also be used as a verb to mean to criticize another person – to tell someone what he or she has done wrong. You may hear someone use the expression “Don’t lecture me.” The person is saying, “Don’t tell me what I am doing wrong.” Don’t criticize me or tell me the things that I have done wrong ethically or morally or in terms of my behavior.

So, “lecture” in a school is something that the teacher does, giving information to students. “Lecture” in daily life refers to a person criticizing another person, telling the person what he did wrong and/or what he should be doing.

Finally, the word “seminar” (seminar) refers to a meeting, either in school or in a business environment in which you are given information and training about a specific subject. You may go to a seminar to learn how to do certain accounting procedures for your business, or you may go to a seminar about the latest government regulations that affect your particular company.
The word “seminar” is used not just in the university or school setting, but also in a business setting to refer to a learning activity that is focused on one specific topic. At the university, the term “seminar” usually refers to a course that is taken by graduate students or more advanced undergraduate students. It’s usually a class that has a small number of people in it, maybe 10 or 15 people. In the business world, a seminar could be a learning opportunity that involves hundreds of people.

“Seminar” is now a term most often used in the business context, although if you are at a university, especially if you’re a graduate student, you will see this term used to describe a small class where there are few people. In the business world, as I mentioned, “seminar” could refer to a large meeting of hundreds of people which is focused on one specific topic.

Our second question comes from Ahmad (Ahmad) in Saudi Arabia. The question has to do with the difference between “interesting” and “interested.” One word ends in “ing.” One word ends in “ed.” “Interesting” is something that you want to know more about or want to be involved in, or simply something that attracts your attention. If something is described as “interesting,” it’s the opposite of boring. It’s something that you find attractive, something you want to know more about.

“Interesting” usually describes the quality of a certain thing. You could find a movie “interesting,” or you might think that it is interesting to learn about the environment. The environment is what is interesting. Notice that the word “interesting,” the adjective, is describing the thing or object you want to know more about or find attractive.

There’s another adjective, “interested,” that means wanting to know more about something but is used to describe a person. “I am interested in knowing more about this film.” “I am interested in astronomy.” “She is interested in me.” She finds me attractive. I don’t know why, but she does. So in this case, “interested” is always something that describes what a person is feeling or what a person is desiring.

There’s a special case in which the adjective “interested” is used to mean “involved” or “concerning.” It’s usually used this way together with the word “party” or “parties” in a legal discussion or document. If we talk about the “interested parties,” we’re talking about people who are involved in a certain legal situation or a legal agreement. The word “party” or “parties” describes people, not
a celebration, in this case. But that’s somewhat of a limited or specific use of “interested.”

In general conversation, it’s used to describe a person who has an interest in or an attraction to a certain thing or person. So you could even say, “I am interested in her because I think she is interesting.” “I hope she is interested in me and finds me interesting.” Notice in those sentences that “interesting” can describe a thing or a quality of a person, whereas “interested” describes a person who wants knowledge about another thing or person.

If you say, “I am interesting,” you are saying that other people will find you attractive or want to know more about you. If you say, “I am interested,” you mean that you have a desire to know about another person or another thing. That’s an interesting question. I hope you were interested in my answer.

Finally, Alexandre (Alexandre) from Brazil wants to know the meaning of an expression which also comes from the legal world, “I rest my case.” A “case” here is an argument in front of a judge or in a legal context. For example, if the police arrest you, they will bring you in front of a judge and the government lawyer will try to convince the judge that you are guilty, that you did something wrong. You are involved in a “legal case.”

Really, the word “case” means argument for or against a certain position. The government has its case, and you try to argue something else. You are arguing against the government’s case, against their position, in this case. In a courtroom in front of a judge, the lawyers – when they are finished with their arguments, when they are finished making their cases, making their positions known – stop at the end and say, “I rest my case.” “I rest my case” means “I am done arguing my position.” I am finished talking.

In everyday English, someone may use that expression, “I rest my case,” either to be a little bit funny after they have finished presenting their position or presenting their ideas in an argument or in a situation where they are arguing a certain point with another person and are saying, “I am now finished presenting the evidence or the proof of why I am right, of why my position is correct.”

It’s often done in a somewhat humorous way. You are using a very formal statement from a legal setting and applying it in an everyday situation where you are discussing your opinion or giving your evidence about a certain position that you hold.
If I were to say that Minnesota is the best state in the United States, I might describe why I think that’s true. I might give you my evidence. We have more than 10,000 lakes. We have given the world wonderful musicians like Bob Dylan and Prince. We have produced wonderful politicians, or at least famous politicians. I could say, “All of this is evidence that Minnesota is in fact the best state in the United States. I rest my case.” I’m now done giving you the facts as I see them of why my position is correct.

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. We’re certainly interested in hearing your questions. 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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