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## TOPICS

Famous Americans – Malcolm X; to pack/packing versus to box/boxing versus to wrap/wrapping; rational versus reasonable; to insinuate

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## GLOSSARY

**minister** – the leader of a Christian church, especially a Protestant church

\* Our church's minister preaches the need to love our neighbors and to help each other.

**black nationalism** – an effort among African Americans to encourage blacks to be proud of their heritage and to get more political power by separating themselves from whites and ruling themselves

\* Black nationalism was an African Americans response to several hundred years of ill treatment.

**insane asylum** – a hospital for people with mental problems or mental disease

\* People with even mild mental problems 200 years ago were placed in insane asylums.

**conversion** – the act of changing one's religion or religious beliefs

\* What was the reason behind your conversion from Catholicism to Judaism?

**to memorize** – to place in one's memory; to remember something completely and exactly

\* The exam required students to memorize the major bones in the human body.

**to debate** – to formally argue a position or point of view, usually against an established opinion or another person with a different point of view

\* The presidential candidates debated issues related to national security.

**temple** – a building used for worship, or the showing of respect to a god, as part as one's religion, especially in Judaism, Islam, and Mormonism

\* People who are not Mormons are not allowed into parts of the Mormon temple.

**second-in-command** – the second most powerful person in a position of authority in an organization

\* You're the captain, so you're in charge, but I'll be your second-in-command.



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**civil rights** – the basic moral and social behaviors and privileges that people are given, regardless of their gender, race, or ethnicity

\* How can we have a fair society without the same civil rights for all?

**by any means necessary** – using any method or tactic necessary to achieve one's aim, including violence

\* The police captain said: "I want the criminal stopped by any means necessary."

**paternity suit** – a legal action to prove in court that a man is the father of a child

\* If the paternity suit is successful, Ryan will have to admit that the baby is his and provide financial support.

**chickens come to roost** – having to face the consequences or results of something bad one has done or some mistake one has made

\* Li's boss discovered she didn't have a college degree as she had claimed, and in a case of chickens coming to roost, she was fired and her reputation ruined.

**to pack** – the act or process of putting things into bags or boxes, often in preparation for a trip or a move

\* The taxi will be here in 10 minutes. Are you done with your packing?

**to box** – the act of putting something in a box

\* If you're done boxing the candles, I'll take them to your mother.

**to wrap** – the act of covering or enclosing something in paper or cloth

\* Do we have enough red paper to wrap all of the Christmas presents?

**rational** – having the ability to think about things clearly; based on facts or reason, not on emotions or feelings

\* It's difficult to make rational decisions when someone is grieving for a spouse.

**reasonable** – fair and sensible; moderately good; not too expensive

\* My supervisor approves reasonable requests for time off to see a doctor or dentist.

**to Insinuate** – to gradually make oneself a part of something, such as a group or a person's life, usually by behaving in a dishonest way; to say something, especially something bad or insulting, in an indirect way

\* Jonah insinuated himself into that rich family with the intention of marrying their wealthy daughter.



## **WHAT INSIDERS KNOW**

### **The Black Arts Movement**

The 1965 “assassination” (murder for political reasons) of Malcolm X “gave birth to” (led to; caused to appear or happen) the Black Arts Movement, which refers to a group of artists, poets, dancers, writers, musicians, and others whose work was “politically motivated” (inspired by a strong wish for political change). Led by a poet, Imamu Amiri Baraka, these artists tried very hard to create black art for black people. They viewed this as a way to “awaken” (bring to life; draw attention to; inspire) “black consciousness” (awareness of what it means to be black, and awareness of the African American experience) and encourage “liberation” (freedom and independence) from white “oppressors” (people who hurt or limit others).

The Black Arts Movement wanted people to feel “proud” (glad to have something that has worth and value) of black history and culture, and the contributions of black leaders. The artists felt that it was important to express their true thoughts and “values” (what one believes is important and right) without trying to “assimilate” (try to become part of the dominant culture) into white America.

The movement began in New York City at the Black Arts Repertory Theater in Harlem, but it quickly spread to Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, and other parts of the country. Black people “established” (created) their own “publishing houses” (companies that produce books), magazines, and art museums, and more.

As “prominent” (famous; well known) artists became “increasingly” (more and more) extreme in their views, the Black Arts Movement came to an end around 1975, but by that time, many African American artists had become recognized for their work, and some of them had achieve “financial success” (having earned a lot of money from one’s work).



## **COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

You're listening to ESL Podcast's English Café number 586.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast's English Café episode 586. 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 the famous civil rights leader of the 1950s and '60s, the controversial Malcolm X. And as always, we'll answer a few of your questions. Let's get started.

The man we now know as Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925. Omaha is about, oh, 500 miles or so west of Chicago. Nebraska is in the central part of the U.S. Malcolm Little and his family later moved to the state of Michigan when he was just a baby.

Malcolm X had a very difficult childhood. His father, Earl Little, was a Baptist minister and a supporter of what was called "black nationalism." A "minister" (minister) is a leader in a Christian church. The idea of "black nationalism" was that blacks, or African Americans, should be proud of their history, of their heritage, but also should get more political power. Now, the idea of more political power for African Americans is not controversial. It's not something that, at least nowadays, many people would disagree with.

However, at the time, black nationalism was a movement to encourage blacks to separate themselves from whites – to rule in, a way, their own country within a country.

This movement was part of a larger political movement, or political efforts to change society, in '50s and '60s, but it was considered more radical. Whereas the civil rights movement was trying to get equality for blacks, black nationalism was an attempt to create a separate political structure that would be responsible to African Americans alone.

When Malcolm X was only six years old, his father died. He was, sadly, hit by a car in the street. Some people suspected that his father was in fact murdered by people who didn't like his ideas. After his father died, Malcolm X's family became



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very poor. When he was 14 years old, his mother, no doubt under considerable stress and difficulties, was put in to what was called an “insane asylum.”

The word “insane” (insane) is the opposite of “sane” (sane). “To be sane” means to be reasonable, to be rational. The opposite of that is “insane,” which is, we would probably more commonly describe as someone who is crazy, someone who is not rational, does not think logically. An “asylum” (asylum) is a hospital or place for people with mental problems or mental difficulties. Malcolm X’s mother, then, was sent to an insane asylum, a place – a hospital – for people with mental problems.

Malcolm and his brothers and sisters were then put into “foster homes” – families other than their own who took them in and helped care for them until they became adults. Malcolm was a very good student, but he dropped out, or left school, apparently when his eighth grade teacher told him that he should become a carpenter instead of trying to become a lawyer. A “carpenter” is a person who builds things out of wood or makes things out of wood.

He went to live with his half sister, Ella, and got involved in a life of crime – breaking the law – including becoming a “drug dealer.” A “dealer” (dealer) is someone who sells drugs to other people. He became leader of a gang, or group of thieves, in New York City. His nickname, or the informal name that he was called, at that time was “Detroit Red,” because he had a little bit of red color in his black hair.

He was sent to prison, to jail, in 1946 for robbery, for stealing, and he remained there for seven years. When he was in prison, as sometimes happens, he began to think about his life seriously and went through a religious conversion. A “conversion” (conversion) is the act of changing one’s religion or religious beliefs. Instead of being a Christian, he converted to Islam. He joined a particular group called the Nation of Islam.

The Nation of Islam was an African American, or black, Islamic religious movement that was originally started back in 1930 in Detroit, Michigan. It combined the Nation of Islam with this idea of black nationalism. When he converted, Malcolm replaced his last name, which you’ll remember was “Little,” with the letter X. Nation of Islam followers, or at least some of them, did this because they believed that African American last names came from the slave owners, the people who bought and owned slaves before slavery became illegal in 1865.



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Some members of the Nation of Islam got rid of their last name. Malcolm X replaced his last name with the letter X, and that's how we know him today. When he converted to Islam, he began to do things that other Muslims did, including stopping his smoking, his gambling. He didn't eat pork since that was one of the Nation of Islam's rules. He also wanted to educate himself, so he spent a lot of time reading books in the prison library.

Some say that he even tried to memorize an entire dictionary. A "dictionary" is, of course, a book with words and definitions. "To memorize" (memorize) means to be able to remember something exactly. I'm not sure if he actually memorized an entire dictionary, at least a very big one, but that is what has been said. He also, more importantly, developed his debating skills. "To debate" (debate) is to argue a certain position, to try to give reasons why a certain point of view is correct or incorrect. This skill of debating would come in very useful to Malcolm X once he got out of prison.

When he left prison, he became a leader of this group, the Nation of Islam. The main leader of the group, Elijah Muhammad, was in Chicago. He liked Malcolm X and gave Malcolm X important positions in the organization. Eventually Malcolm X went around to other big cities and started temples – buildings that were used for worship for the organization. He also started a newspaper, which he printed in his own basement.

He was an excellent speaker, an extremely bright man who went out and tried to get more people into this organization. Some say the group at its largest had as many as 500,000 members, although that number is difficult to verify. It was certainly more powerful as an influence politically than it was in getting a large number of members. Malcolm X became the first minister or religious leader of the Nation of Islam's temple in Boston, and later in Harlem, which is a part of New York City.

Harlem is traditionally the area where African Americans, or blacks, lived in New York. The Harlem temple was in fact the largest in the country next to the main offices in Chicago led by Elijah Muhammad. Muhammad made Malcolm X his second-in-command of the organization. "Second-in-command" means he was the second most powerful leader of the group. He was a great public speaker and a wonderful organizer. He was able to start temples in different cities and get people to become members of the group.

In 1958, Malcolm X met a young woman by the name of Betty Sanders, a college-educated nurse who had gone to one of his speeches. They later married



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and had six daughters. Malcolm X's speeches expressed anger and frustration and unhappiness – the anger that was felt by many African Americans about the way that they had been treated in the United States.

Malcolm expressed these opinions during the larger civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s. This movement had as its main leader someone you probably know, or whose name you have heard, Martin Luther King Jr., or the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. Martin Luther King had the idea that the progress of African Americans was best achieved by integrating into the larger society. In other words, African Americans would be given equal rights and become just like other Americans, non-black Americans.

Malcolm X had a very different vision, or different idea. He saw African Americans as being best served by separating themselves from the larger white, or non-black, community and having their own community. So, there were these two very different views of how African Americans should achieve progress in the '50s and '60s – Malcolm X with his black nationalist view of separation, and Martin Luther King with his ideas of integration, of becoming part of the larger society.

Martin Luther King was also an advocate, or someone who was in favor of, or supported, nonviolence. Malcolm X didn't believe in nonviolence. He believed, in fact, that the best way to make progress was at times through violence. He believed in getting civil rights for African Americans by any means necessary. The word "means" (means) refers to ways or methods of doing something.

So once again, there were two very different views from the Nation of Islam minister and the Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr. Both, interestingly, were amazing speakers, very effective speakers. They were able to convince a lot of people because they were such good debaters. Malcolm X, in fact, used to go to universities such as Harvard University, or Oxford University in England, and talk about his ideas.

He helped, among other things, change the way that people referred to blacks. He criticized the use of the term "Negro" and "colored," which were popular terms in the middle and early twentieth century to refer to blacks, and that change included, eventually, the adoption of the term "African American." Malcolm X was very much interested in Africa, in the nations of Africa, and in fact traveled to Africa.



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Although he was very successful in many ways, by 1963, he and the leader of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad, were not getting along very well. They disagreed about how the Nation of Islam should be involved in the larger civil rights movement that was taking place in the U.S. Malcolm X also found out a very important secret about Elijah Muhammad. He had learned that Elijah had six children with his personal secretaries. Two of the secretaries made this known when they filed what's called a "paternity suit."

"Paternity" (paternity) refers to fathers or fatherhood. It comes from the Latin word "pater," meaning father. The opposite would be "maternity" (maternity). "Maternity" refers to mothers, coming from the Latin word "mater" for mother. Well, a "paternity suit" (suit) is when a woman goes to court to say that a certain man is the father of one of her children and therefore needs to give her money to support that child. Well, Malcolm X wasn't very happy with Elijah Muhammad's behavior. Muhammad wasn't very happy with some of the things that Malcolm X was saying.

Most controversially, Malcolm said, after the assassination or killing of President John F. Kennedy in 1963, that this was an example of "chickens coming home to roost." This expression "chickens coming home to roost" refers to something bad that happens to a person because of what that person has done, meaning that the person is responsible for the bad things that happened to him because he did bad things in the past. Malcolm X was saying that the president in a way caused his own death because he helped create a violent society, a society that had violence in it.

As you can imagine, Malcolm X got a lot of criticism from many people about this statement, including from the leader of the Nation of Islam, Elijah Muhammad. During this period, Malcolm X decided to fly to Mecca, the city in Saudi Arabia considered the most religious, holy place by Muslims. On this trip, Malcolm X had another conversion experience, this time to the Sunni branch of Islam. After that second conversion, Malcolm X changed his name again to a Muslim name, el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz. His wife also changed her name to Shabazz as a last name.

He also decided that he could no longer be part of the Nation of Islam and their ideas of black nationalism. He began to see that that was not the way for African Americans to make progress in the U.S. He instead became more, what we might describe as "orthodox" in his beliefs as a Muslim, following the Muslim religion more strictly. He then left the Nation of Islam and started his own organization, and this caused a lot of problems with the Nation of Islam.



Many people in the Nation of Islam threatened to kill Malcolm X because he had left the group, and eventually he was in fact killed, on February 21st, 1965, while giving a speech in New York City. Three members of the Nation of Islam were convicted, or found guilty, of murdering Malcolm X. Sadly, his four daughters, his wife, and his two unborn children (his wife was pregnant at the time he was assassinated) were there when he was killed.

Before his death, a young writer at the time had interviewed Malcolm X about his life. That young writer was Alex Haley, and he published what was called The Autobiography of Malcolm X that same year, in 1965. Normally an autobiography is a book you write about your own life. This was an autobiography that was, in a sense, co-written by Alex Haley. He used the interviews that he recorded with Malcolm X to write the book.

This became a very popular book, and Alex Haley, after his successful Malcolm X book, went on to write another book, called Roots, apparently about his own history of his own family in America (although later people found that some parts of the book were less true than others, shall we say). In any case, his autobiography of Malcolm X became an instant classic. Many Americans bought the book and read it. In 1992, a movie was made about the life of Malcolm X called, appropriately enough, Malcolm X, starring the famous actor Denzel Washington.

Today many Americans think of Malcolm X as someone who was an advocate, or in favor of, a more violent, a more separatist view of African American progress in the U.S., although at the end of his life he began to change, as I mentioned, many of those ideas and renounce, or say he was wrong about, some of his early ideas about politics and the African American community.

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

Our first question comes from Leo (Leo) in Russia. Leo wants to know the meaning of the terms “packing,” “boxing,” and “wrapping.” “Packing” (packing) comes from the verb “to pack” (pack). “To pack” is to take things and put them in a “container.” A “container” (container) is something that you put other things into, such as a box or a suitcase or a bag. Those are all kinds of containers. “To pack” means to put things into a container.

Sometimes we use this verb “to pack” to talk about getting ready to go on a trip by putting things into suitcases, or pieces of luggage. Sometimes we use the



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word “pack” when we are moving from one house to another. We have to put all of our things into boxes, so “packing” could refer to what you do before you travel or what you do before you move from one house to another.

“Packing” can sometimes also refer to material that is put in a box or in a bag to protect things that are inside of it. If you have a lot of glasses, for example, or plates that you are packing to move from one place to another, you might put something else in the box to prevent those things from breaking. That’s sometimes called “packing” or “packing material.”

The word “boxing” (boxing) has a couple of different meanings. The verb “to box” (box) has a couple of different meanings. The most common meaning of the verb “to box” is the action of hitting another person with your closed hands as part of the sport of “boxing.”

However, “to box” can also mean to put things into a container called a “box.” So, “boxing” could also refer to the action of putting things into boxes. “I’m boxing up my office.” That phrasal verb “to box up” means put things into boxes. You could just say, “I’m going to box my office,” rather than “box up my office,” but for whatever reason, the phrasal verb “to box up” is probably a little bit more common than “to box.”

More recently, after the invention – or creation, I should say – of YouTube, there are people who do what are called “unboxing videos” where they buy a new phone, for example, and they videotape themselves taking it out of the box. I don’t know why this is interesting, but it for some reason is something people like to watch. So, “unboxing” has become a popular activity for some people on YouTube. That would be the opposite of “boxing,” which would be to put things into a box.

Finally, we have “wrapping” (wrapping). “Wrapping” comes from the verb “to wrap” (wrap). “To wrap” means to put something around another object, usually a paper or some kind of cloth, like a towel. If you are, to go back to my example, moving a bunch of glasses or plates that you think might break while you move them, you might wrap them up in something. You might put paper, like newspaper, around each individual glass or plate so it doesn’t break. The action would be called “wrapping” – “to wrap” something.

We also use this verb when we are giving someone a present – a gift – say, at Christmas time or for someone’s birthday. We “wrap it up” in a special, pretty paper. We call that paper “wrapping paper.” Don’t confuse that verb “to wrap”



spelled (wrap) with a verb that sounds exactly the same, but is spelled differently, “rap” (rap). “To rap” can mean to hit your hand or your fist against something to make a loud noise. You might “rap” on a door. But more commonly, the verb “to rap” nowadays is used for a style of singing that has rhymes and a form of poetry as part of the lyrics, or words of the song.

Our next question comes from Bom (Bom) from an unknown country, and I really can’t guess where Bom is from. So, Bom, from a country to be named later, has a question about two similar words, “rational” (rational) and “reasonable” (reasonable). The word “rational” and the word “reason” are closely related and are often used as “synonyms” – as words that mean the same thing or very similar things.

“Reason,” or “to be rational,” means to think in a logical way, to think the way most human beings think, which involves using our logic and our intelligence to come to a conclusion or to understand the way the world works. When we describe something as “rational,” usually we’re comparing that or rather contrasting that with something which is “irrational,” or not rational.

If we say a person is “not rational,” or “irrational,” we mean that perhaps they have some sort of mental disease because they’re not able to think the way other human beings are able to think. They’re not able to use logic to connect one idea to another. So, “rational” refers specifically to what human beings are able to do.

In fact, the classic definition of a human being is a “rational animal.” We are animals just like a dog or a cat (well, not like a cat, really) but we are, unlike a dog or cat, “rational.” We have the ability to think, and I don’t want to go into a philosophical debate about what that might mean, but that’s an example of how that word might be used.

“Reasonable” could refer to someone who is thinking rationally, but has a slightly different meaning. “Reasonable” usually refers to someone who is trying to get along with another person and compromise or make changes that would be acceptable to two different people or two different groups of people.

Once again, it is often used to contrast with someone who is “unreasonable.” If you are “unreasonable,” you are asking for things that don’t seem like they would be something that the average person might ask for, or you are unwilling to change your ideas about things even though it would make life a lot easier for you and someone else you’re trying to get along with.



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The word “reasonable” is usually used when we’re talking about a disagreement between two people or two groups of people, and one side or one person doesn’t want to change its, or his, position. The word “reasonable” is also used as an adjective to mean “pretty good,” especially if we are talking about an amount of something. “I have a reasonable amount of time” – that means I don’t have a lot of time, but I have enough time to do whatever it is I’m being asked to do.

Our final question comes from Mikhail in Russia. The question has to do with the verb “to insinuate” (insinuate). “To insinuate” means to say something bad or insulting about another person but in an indirect way. You don’t say it directly. You don’t say, “He’s an idiot.” Instead, you say something that gives the other person that idea without you saying it directly.

If, for example, you get 100 percent on a test, on an examination in school, and the teacher thinks maybe you cheated, maybe you weren’t honest, the teacher may say to you, “Well, Jeff, you got 100 percent. That’s the first time that ever happened. You must have studied for a whole year to get that kind of mark,” or grade, “on your test.” In a way, the teacher is insinuating that I perhaps did something dishonest.

I actually once had a teacher insinuate I cheated on something that I had written. She questioned whether I could have written the sentences I had written. As it turns out, I did not cheat. I can tell you quite honestly, but she insinuated that I did. The verb “to insinuate” is often used in cases such as the example I gave, where someone is accusing you, saying that you did something wrong, but they’re not saying that directly. They’re saying things that communicate that idea, shall we say.

If you have a question or comment, you can email us. Our email address is [eslpod@eslpod.com](mailto:eslpod@eslpod.com).

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. Come back and listen to us again right here on the English Café.

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