



ESL Podcast 722 – Talking About Television Shows

GLOSSARY

TV season – the period of time each year when most entertainment television shows are shown on TV, usually from September until May

* There aren't very many interesting shows this TV season, so I guess I'll have plenty of time for reading.

rerun – a television show that is shown on TV repeatedly, after it has already been shown on TV at least once

* When Jane is stressed out, she relaxes by watching reruns of the TV shows she enjoyed as a child.

premier – the first time something is shown or seen; the first episode of a TV series, or the first episode of a show in a particular TV season

* New shows have to start with a fantastic premier, or else nobody will tune in to see the other episodes that season.

to cancel – to decide not to continue doing something that had been scheduled to continue; to stop something before it has finished

* When Dmitry broke his ankle, he had to cancel his gym membership.

hiatus – a break; a pause or gap in a series of things

* The researchers were getting very frustrated with their work, so they decided to take a one-week hiatus.

contract negotiations – the discussions between two or more people or parties to determine how much one should be paid for a certain type of work

* Fred says the contract negotiations went really well. They ended up offering him an annual salary of \$115,000, a corporate car, and great benefits.

to renew – to extend something for an additional period of time when the first period of time ends

* How often do the people in this state have to renew their driver's license?

season finale – the last episode of a particular show in a particular TV season

* Scriptwriters have to make the season finale interesting enough so that viewers are willing to wait three months to find out what happens next.

cliffhanger – a story, especially in a movie or television show, that leaves the viewer or reader waiting to find out what happens next

* Each chapter in this book is such a cliffhanger that I can't stop reading because I'm too anxious to find out what happens next!



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episode – one of many shows in a TV series, usually lasting a half hour or an hour

* Did you see the episode where the main character found out she had unknowingly married her uncle?

to air – to be shown on television

* The news story about our school winning the championship should air at 6:10 this evening.

mid-season replacement – a show that takes the place of another show partway through a TV season, usually because the first show was not successful and did not have enough viewers

* Everyone else seems to like the mid-season replacement, but I really miss the original show.

preempted – replaced by something else, especially by something that is more important or urgent

* Our fancy anniversary dinner was preempted by a trip to the emergency room when our son swallowed a coin.

televised – shown on television

* I'd hate to be a celebrity and have so many things from my personal life be televised for everyone to see.

to conspire against (someone) – for many people to work together to hurt or harm another person in some way, especially to confuse that person or make life difficult for him or her

* The king became paranoid that the soldiers were conspiring against him.

to give up – to stop having or doing something that one normally likes or enjoys

* This year, Albert decided to give up sweet foods to improve his health.

that I've got to see – a phrase used to express disbelief, meaning that one must see something happen before one will believe it

* When Lolita said she was going to donate all her money to the poor, I said, "That I've got to see!"



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What type of episode starts a new TV season?
 - a) A premier.
 - b) A season finale.
 - c) A cliffhanger.

2. What happened to Madwomen last season?
 - a) It was temporarily suspended.
 - b) It received really good reviews.
 - c) It faced severe budget cuts.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

premier

The word “premier,” in this podcast, means the first time something is shown or seen, or the first episode of a show in a particular TV season: “As soon I saw the premier, I knew it would become my favorite TV show.” It can also be used as a verb with the same meaning: “Do you know when that musical premiered on Broadway?” A “premier” can also be the head, leader, or prime minister of a country or province: “Stalin was the premier of the USSR for many years.” As an adjective, “premier” describes things that are the best or most important: “It must be fun to stay in premier hotels, but we save money by staying in cheap hostels.”

to give up

In this podcast, the phrase “to give up” means to stop having or doing something that one normally likes or enjoys: “If we really want to save money to pay for college, we need to give up eating at restaurants and going on expensive vacations.” The phrase “to give up” also means to stop trying to do something, usually because it is too difficult or frustrating: “I’ll never be able to learn how to fix my own car! I give up!” Finally, the phrase “to give (somebody) up for dead” means to stop looking for a person who is lost, because one believes he or she is no longer alive: “Everyone had given her up for dead, but then the police found new evidence that she might be alive.”



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CULTURE NOTE

Broadcast Syndication

“Syndication” usually involves arranging for photographs or articles to be sold to individual magazines or newspapers. When the same thing is done for television programs, the “practice” (something that is commonly done in a particular way) is known as “broadcast syndication.”

“First-run syndication” happens when a new show is sold to many individual TV stations and it has never been seen before. “Off-network syndication” is used for older shows that have already been aired on network television, but can now be aired as “reruns” (repeat showings) on other television stations that aren’t necessarily part of the original network.

When a television show is sold to a network, it normally airs at the same time and on the same day each week. When a show is syndicated, its “show times” (when something is shown) are not as “predictable” (easy to anticipate and know what will happen in the future). But if a syndicated show is popular among viewers, the station will begin to air it more frequently and more “regularly” (at the same time each day or week).

Networks “tend to be” (usually are) “conservative” (following traditions and rules) when selecting new programs. Therefore, television producers who want to “break the rules” (do something differently than how it has been done in the past) are more likely to try to syndicate their shows to individual stations instead of large networks.

Some syndicated shows are very well known. These include the popular “game shows” (shows where people compete to win something) Jeopardy!, Wheel of Fortune, and Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, among others.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – a; 2 – a



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 722: Talking About Television Shows.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 722. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit our website at eslpod.com. Download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you improve your English even faster.

This episode is a dialogue between Cleo and Victor; they're talking about television shows and some common vocabulary we might use when we talk about TV shows. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Cleo: The new TV season is starting this week and I can't wait. I've been watching reruns all summer and I'm ready for the premiers of my favorite shows.

Victor: You watch Madwomen, right?

Cleo: Yes, it's my favorite show.

Victor: Then I've got some bad news for you. It's been cancelled.

Cleo: How is that possible? The show was on hiatus last season because of contract negotiations, but I heard that it had been renewed for another season. The season finale was a cliffhanger!

Victor: I know, but something must have gone wrong. They filmed two episodes, which they'll air, but then there'll be a mid-season replacement.

Cleo: This is outrageous! I've been waiting nearly two years for its return. Oh well, at least I can watch my other favorite show tonight, Reviver.

Victor: Sorry, but it's been preempted. The president is giving a televised speech tonight.

Cleo: Are you kidding me?!



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Victor: Nope, sorry.

Cleo: The world is conspiring against me. I've had enough. I'm giving up TV watching!

Victor: You? That I've got to see!

[end of dialogue]

Cleo begins by saying to Victor, "The new TV season is starting this week and I can't wait." The TV season traditionally has been the time of year where most of the new entertainment television shows are shown. This, in the U.S., is usually between September until May, so the TV season typically starts in September. Everyone is back from vacation, the children are at school, and people are watching more television. That's the idea; they start the new shows in September, so the TV season would be that period of time. A "season" is a period of time; it could be weeks, it could be months. There are four seasons in the year: we talk about summer, winter, fall, and spring. But we can also have a season for some other event or some other activity, baseball season or football season for example.

Cleo says, "I've been watching reruns all summer and I'm ready for the premiers of my favorite shows." A "rerun" (rerun) is a television show that is shown more than once; the same episodes are shown again, sometimes on the same television station or channel. A rerun could be something from a show that is still producing new shows. During summertime, the big television stations usually show episodes of television programs from the previous year; they have been shown once, but now they're showing them again. Sometimes, reruns can go many years after the show is no longer on the air – that is, are no longer producing new shows. There are many examples of this: Friends, M.A.S.H., Seinfeld. Those are three television shows that have, we would say, "been in syndication." They have been showing the reruns on different television channels for many years.

Cleo is tired of watching reruns; she's ready for the premiers of her favorite shows. A "premier" (premier) is the first time that something is shown or seen. In this case, it would be the first episode of a television show beginning the new TV season.

Victor says, "You watch Madwomen, right?" Madwomen is not a real television show; there is a real television show called Mad Men, but this is a different show. Cleo says, "Yes, it's my favorite show." Victor says, "Then I've got some bad



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news for you (I have something bad or unfortunate to tell you). It's been cancelled." "To cancel" (cancel) means to decide not to continue doing something that was supposed to continue to be done. For example, a television show may be cancelled after its first season; maybe it wasn't very popular. Sometimes television shows are canceled after only two or three episodes; if no one is watching them the television station – the television, we would call it, "network," the national company – will cancel a show.

Cleo says, "How is that possible? The show was on hiatus last season because of contract negotiations, but I heard that it had been renewed for another season." "Hiatus" (hiatus) is a break or a pause in something or in a series of things. When we say a television show is "on hiatus," we mean that they are not actually working on it right now. That's a word you'll hear in Los Angeles when you talk to people who work in the movie or television industry; here we simply call it "the Industry." A television show will be in hiatus; it will not be filming, they will not be actually making the new episodes during a certain period of time. Cleo says that this show was on hiatus the entire last season – last year – because of contract negotiations. "Contract negotiations" are discussions between two or more people to determine how much you should be paid. If an actor has contract negotiations, he's trying to get more money from the television company – the production company.

Cleo says, "I heard that (her favorite show) had been renewed for another season." If a television show is popular, they will continue it for another set of shows – another season, and that's called "renewing" the show (renewing). She says – Cleo – that she thought the show had been renewed. "The season finale was a cliffhanger!" A "season finale" of a television show is the final episode of that year. We talked about the "premier" being the first episode; the "finale" is the final episode. If the television show is being cancelled, sometimes they'll have a "series finale," the last episode they will ever make. The season finale, according to Cleo, last year was a cliffhanger. A "cliffhanger" (one word) is a story in a television show or perhaps a movie that has a very exciting ending but it doesn't end completely; it doesn't tell you what happens next, and it makes you want to find out what happens next. We call that a cliffhanger.

Victor says, "I know, but something must have gone wrong (there must have been a problem). They filmed two episodes (they made – they produced two episodes), which they'll air, but then there'll be a mid-season replacement." An "episode" is one of many shows in a series of shows. We have different podcast episodes each week, three every week. Well, television shows have episodes. "They filmed two episodes," Victor says, "which they will air." "To air" (air) as a verb means to show on television; "to broadcast" on television, we used to say.



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After they show or air those two episodes, Victor says, “there will be a mid-season replacement.” A “replacement” is something that takes the place of another thing. “Mid-season” would be sometime between September and May, before the complete season ends. A television season for a TV show might have 25, maybe 30 episodes, usually a little less. A mid-season replacement might happen in November, December, or January, when a show isn’t very popular and so they put on a new show.

Cleo says, “This is outrageous (this is terrible)! I’ve been waiting two years for Madwomen’s return. Oh well, at least I can watch my other favorite show tonight, Reviver.” Again, not a real show, though it sounds like Survivor, which is a real show. Victor says, “Sorry, but Reviver been preempted.” “To preempt” (preempt) means to replace something with something else, especially something more important. On television, for example, if the president is going to be giving an important speech, sometimes they will preempt shows; they will not show them and replace them with, for example, the president’s speech, and that’s what is happening in our dialogue. “The president is giving a televised speech tonight.” “Televised” means shown on TV.

Cleo says, “Are you kidding me?!” meaning are you joking with me. Victor says, “Nope,” which is an informal way of saying “no” – “nope” (nope). If you want to say “yes” the informal phrase would be “yup” (yup), but “nope” I think is a little more common. Anyway, Victor says, “Nope, sorry.” Cleo says, “The world is conspiring against me.” “To conspire against (someone)” is when you have many people working, trying to harm another person in some way, or trying to make life difficult for you. Of course, no one is actually conspiring against Cleo. It’s an expression we sometimes use as a joke to say that everything is going wrong, as if someone were trying to hurt you or harm you.

Cleo says, “I’ve had enough. I’m giving up TV watching!” “To give up” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to stop doing something that you normally like to do. “I’m going to give up smoking.” I’m going to stop smoking cigarettes. Actually I don’t smoke, it’s just an example. “I’m going to give up Earl Grey tea lattes at Starbucks.” No, I’m just kidding. I’m not going to give up my Earl Grey tea lattes!

Victor says, “You?” meaning you’re going to give up TV, “That I’ve got to see!” The expression “that I’ve got to see” means that you don’t believe the person. You think that what they said or just promised to do won’t happen, you don’t believe them.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.



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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter is fortunately not on hiatus; it's the wonderful Dr. Lucy Tse who brings you today's script. Thank you, Lucy.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.



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