



ESL Podcast 313 – A Suspicious Neighbor

GLOSSARY

shady character – a suspicious person; a person whom one thinks probably does bad things

* Mr. Arquize is a shady character because he never says “hi” or even looks at me when we pass each other in the street.

to shoot the breeze – to chat; to talk in a friendly way about unimportant things

* Janet spent hours on the phone, shooting the breeze with her old friend.

shifty – looking dishonest; seeming guilty; suspicious; acting uncomfortable as if one would like to end the conversation or to leave

* When we asked Orest about what he used to do, he became very shifty and tried to change the topic.

line of work – career; area of work; field of work

* When he asked me what line of work my wife is in, I told him that she’s an electrical engineer.

evasive – trying to avoid answering a question or giving a reply directly

* Most Americans become evasive if you ask them how much money they make because they don’t like sharing that information with other people.

busybody – a nosy person; a person who is too interested in other people’s lives and wants to know everything about them; a person who doesn’t respect other people’s privacy

* Zelena is such a busybody! One time she even read her neighbor’s mail!

neighborly – friendly with one’s neighbors; helpful toward one’s neighbors; trying to be a good neighbor

* Edna is very neighborly and always gives a homemade pie to people who move to the neighborhood.

to kick (someone) out – to rudely tell someone to leave a place; to force someone to leave a place

* The young men were kicked out of the bar for fighting.

serial killer – a person who kills many people in the same way, one after another

* There have been three deaths by fire in the past month, and the police think that they might have been done by a serial killer.



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I wouldn't put it past him – a phrase meaning that one believes another person may have done something; a phrase meaning that one believes another person may be capable of doing something bad

* When the failing student got 100% on the test, the principal asked the teacher if she thought he had cheated. She said, "I wouldn't put it past him."

peace and quiet – tranquility; calmness and relaxation; a place and time where there is no noise or interruptions and one can relax and do whatever one wants

* Carolina is going to the mountains to find the peace and quiet she needs to write her book.

to mind (one's) own business – to not get involved in other people's private lives; to focus on one's own affairs and not worry about what other people are doing

* Kelly thinks we should talk to Mike about his divorce, but I think we should mind our own business and not say anything about it.

entitled – deserving of something; with the right to do, know, or have something

* If you buy this tourist card, you'll be entitled to enter all of the city's museums for free for one day.

to leave (someone) alone – to not bother someone; to leave someone in peace; to not talk to someone; to stop interfering in another person's activities

* Bernice had a difficult day, and when she got home she asked her family to leave her alone for a half-hour.

to take no for an answer – to accept that the answer is no; to accept that another person doesn't want to do something

* Get out of bed! I've decided that we're going to spend the whole day together doing fun things, and I won't take no for an answer!

poor – unfortunate; a person whom one feels sorry for; a person whom one feels bad for; a person who deserves one's pity or sympathy

* The teacher is giving those poor children more than six hours of homework each night. It's too much!



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Patricia do when she tried to shoot the breeze with the new neighbor?
 - a) She asked him to go hunting.
 - b) She talked about the cold breeze.
 - c) She tried to start a conversation.
2. What does Ray mean when he says, “That poor man!”?
 - a) He feels sorry for the new neighbor.
 - b) He thinks the man needs money.
 - c) He wants to give the man money.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

breeze

The phrase “to shoot the breeze,” in this podcast, means to talk in a friendly way about unimportant things: “Brock and Elliot like to go to a café to shoot the breeze on Sunday afternoons.” The word “breeze” means a gentle wind: “Put on your jacket because there’s a cool breeze today.” A “breezy” day is a day with a lot of breezes: “It’s always breezy on the Oregon coast. The word “breeze” is also used to refer to something that is very easy to do: “That class is a breeze!” Or, “Saving money will be a breeze once I get that new job.” As a verb, “to breeze in” means to enter a room quickly, easily, and informally: “Thalia breezed in and started telling everyone about what had happened to her that morning.”

poor

In this podcast, the word “poor” means an unfortunate person who deserves one’s pity: “Poor Jenny had to go to school all summer.” Or, “Did you hear about the poor people in Florida whose homes were destroyed by the hurricane?” The word “poor” also means without money, or not rich: “There are many poor people in this part of the country.” Or, “Tracy is too poor to buy milk for her children.” Often the word “poor” refers to something of bad quality: “Her work was so poor that her boss asked her to do it again.” Or, “Lucy is a very poor singer.” Finally, the phrase “poor in (something)” refers to a person, place, or thing that doesn’t have very much of something: “Her diet is poor in protein.” Or, “This city is very poor in parks and other outdoor areas.”



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CULTURE NOTE

A “sex offender” is a “criminal” (a person who breaks the law) who has “committed” (done) a “sex crime,” such as having sex with a person who is less than 18 years old, sexually abusing another person, or “raping” (forcing someone to have sex) a woman.

Sex offenders usually stay in “jail” (prison) for a number of years, and then are “released,” or allowed to leave the jail. However, many people are worried about living next to these sex offenders because they want to protect their children from these criminals.

In the United States, most sex offenders have to “register” (list one’s name) in the “sex offender registry” (a list of sex offenders’ names and addresses) for the state where they want to live. In most states, the sex offender registries are “made available to the public,” meaning that anyone can read them, usually online or at a government office. When people learn that they are living next to a sex offender, they can choose to act differently around those people.

The sex offender registries are very “controversial,” meaning that some people think they are good, and other people think they are bad. Many people say that sex offenders have a high “rate of recidivism” (how likely it is that criminals will repeat their old crimes) and for that reason, it is important to know whether sex offenders are in the neighborhood, so that they can protect their children. But other people say that sex offenders have already been “punished” (have suffered for doing something wrong) by spending time in jail and now need an opportunity to start a normal life, without being “haunted” (reminded of something bad in the past) by their earlier crimes.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 313: A Suspicious Neighbor.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 313. 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 and download a Learning Guide for this episode to help you learn English even faster.

This episode is called "A Suspicious Neighbor." It's a dialogue between two people talking about one their neighbors – their new neighbors, someone who recently moved close to them – and whether this person is, perhaps, involved in something they should not be. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Patricia: What do you think of our new neighbor?

Ray: I don't know. I haven't met him yet.

Patricia: Me neither, but I think he's a shady character.

Ray: Why do you think that?

Patricia: Well, when he was moving in, I tried to shoot the breeze with him and he was shifty. When I asked him what line of work he was in, he was very evasive.

Ray: Maybe he just didn't want to talk to a busybody when he was busy moving boxes. Have you thought of that?

Patricia: I wasn't being a busybody. I was just being neighborly. When I offered to help him, he practically kicked me out of his apartment.

Ray: Okay, you must be right. He's probably a serial killer.

Patricia: I wouldn't put it past him.

Ray: Come on. My guess is that he just wants some peace and quiet.



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Patricia: He wants peace and quiet to do what? That's what I want to know.

Ray: I think we should just mind our own business.

Patricia: You can do what you like, but I'm going over there and I'm getting some answers. If I have live next to him, I'm entitled to know something about him.

Ray: Why don't you leave the man alone? He's entitled to some privacy. And plus, he probably won't let you in.

Patricia: That's what you think. I'm not taking no for an answer.

Ray: That poor man!

[end of dialogue]

The title of our episode is "A Suspicious Neighbor." If you are "suspicious" of someone, you don't trust them. You think that they are bad, perhaps, or evil in some way, or are doing something wrong. "He is very suspicious looking" – he looks like he is doing something wrong.

Well, in our dialogue Patricia says to Ray, "What do you think of our new neighbor?" Ray says, "I don't know. I haven't met him yet." Patricia says, "Me neither" – that would be the common, informal way of saying "I haven't either"; we use the word "me" instead of "I" in normal conversation. "Me neither, but I think he's a shady character." A "character" is used to describe a person who is unusual or a little different – a little strange. "Shady" (shady) means someone who is suspicious – someone who you think is doing bad things.

So, Patricia thinks their new neighbor is "a shady character." Ray says, "Why do you think that?" Patricia says, "Well, when he was moving in (when he was bringing his things – his furniture, his clothes – into his house), I tried to shoot the breeze with him and he was shifty." Patricia says she "tried to shoot the breeze" (breeze). "To shoot the breeze" is an idiom which means to chat, to talk in a friendly way about things that are not important. You can shoot the breeze with an old friend; you can shoot the breeze with someone you haven't even met before. It's to talk, to chat, to have an informal conversation. The word "breeze" has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at the Learning Guide for additional explanations.

Well, Patricia was shooting the breeze with her new neighbor, and said that "he was shifty." To be "shifty" (shifty) means to look dishonest, to look as though you



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were guilty, to be suspicious looking. Someone who acts as if they want to end the conversation quickly or to leave for some suspicious reason would be shifty. We sometimes use that adjective especially about someone's eyes; we say, "He has shifty eyes, I don't trust him." People say that about me all the time!

Patricia says, "When I asked him what line of work he was in, he was very evasive." Your "line of work" is your career – the area where you work. My line of work is English language teaching. "Evasive" means you are trying to avoid answering a question or avoid giving a direct reply. Your wife says to you, "Where were you last night? You got home very late." And you were at the bar with your friends, watching the baseball game – this is just an example, not something that happened to me last Thursday! But you don't want to tell your wife where you were, so you say, "Oh, I was...umm...I was...boy, that's a beautiful dress you have on, my love!" – you're being evasive; you're trying not to answer the question. Or you might say, "Oh, your hair looks beautiful tonight, my darling, my beautiful wife!" That's another way of being evasive. Just an example; I've never done that, of course!

Ray says, "Maybe he just didn't want to talk to a busybody when he was busy moving boxes." Ray is saying maybe the new neighbor didn't want to talk to a busybody. A "busybody" (one word) is a person who is interested in other people's lives – too interested – someone who likes to gossip; someone who wants to know everything about you, even very private things. The other word or expression we can use here is "a nosy (nosy) – a nosy person." The man was busy moving into his house, so he didn't want to talk to a nosy person – a busybody asking him lots of questions.

Patricia says, "I wasn't being a busybody. I was just being neighborly." We use the word "neighborly" as an adverb here to mean friendly with your neighbors, trying to help your neighbors. Patricia says, "When I offered to help him, he practically (he almost) kicked me out of his apartment." To "kick someone out" is a phrasal verb meaning to tell someone to leave not in a nice way – to force someone to leave. "Get out of here, I'm busy!" – that would be to kick someone out. If you come home late every night from the bar, someday your wife may kick you out of the house!

Ray says, "Okay, you must be right" – you must be right about this person. Then he tells a joke; he says, "He's probably a serial killer." A "serial (serial) killer" would be someone who kills many people in the same way. A famous example of this would be Jack the Ripper from English history – a serial killer, someone who kills many different people. Of course, Ray is joking. We use this



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expression, “serial killer,” when we want to describe someone, usually sarcastically, in a bad way. It’s often used, strangely, as a joke.

Patricia responds to Ray’s joke by saying, “I wouldn’t put it past him.” This phrase – this expression, “I wouldn’t put it past him,” means I believe this other person may have done something – I believe this person may be capable of doing something bad. “I wouldn’t put it past him,” Patricia is saying maybe he really is a serial killer.

Ray says, “Come on,” meaning stop joking; be serious; you’re being unreasonable. “My guess,” Ray says, “is that he just wants some peace and quiet.” That expression, “peace and quiet,” means calmness, tranquility – a time and a place where there is no noise or there are no interruptions and you can just relax. “I’m looking for a little peace and quiet when I come home from work” – I just want to relax, not have any noise.

Patricia says, “He wants peace and quiet to do what? That’s what I want to know.” She doesn’t trust him. Ray says, “I think we should just mind our own business.” To “mind your own business” means to not get involved in other people’s private lives; to worry about your own life, your own business, your own situation, and not worry about other people’s situations.

Patricia says, “You can do what you like (you can do whatever you want), but I’m going over there and I’m getting some answers” – some answers to the questions she has about the new neighbor. “If I have live next to him,” she says, “I’m entitled to know something about him.” To be “entitled” means you deserve something; you have a right to do or to know something.

Ray says, “Why don’t you leave the man alone?” To “leave someone alone” means not to bother someone – to leave someone in peace. Ray says, “And plus (in addition), he probably won’t let you in” – he probably won’t allow you to come into his apartment.

Patricia says, “That’s what you think,” meaning I don’t agree with you, I don’t think that. She says, “I’m not taking no for an answer.” “To take no for an answer” means to accept that the answer is no – to accept that another person doesn’t want to do something.

Ray says, “That poor man!” meaning that unfortunate man. He feels sorry for the new neighbor. The word “poor” has a couple of different meanings in English; again, take a look at the Learning Guide for some additional explanations.



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

[start of dialogue]

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[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was by Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thanks for listening. We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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