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**ESL Podcast 370 – Describing a Bad Experience**

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**GLOSSARY**

**to rope (one/someone) into** – to lure or to convince someone into doing something

\* The car salesman roped me into buying the old used car after he told me that the car had previously been owned by a famous actor.

**lame** – boring; unsatisfactory; not interesting

\* The party was lame because there was no music, there was no food, and only two people showed up.

**the pits** – very bad; terrible; horrible

\* The concert was the pits because the lead singer had a horrible voice.

**amateur hour** – an expression used when a performance is so bad that it seems like average, everyday people are performing instead of professional performers

\* All three of the comedians' performances were so bad tonight that you would have thought that it was amateur hour.

**experimental** – to try something new; based on an untested or untried idea

\* She is going to undergo an experimental treatment to try and rid her body of cancer.

**was (one/someone) wrong** – an expression used when a person admits that he/she made an error in judgment or is mistaken about something

\* I thought it was going to snow today, so I wore my heavy jacket to work. It never snowed, and the temperature reached 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Was I wrong about the weather!

**if you can call it that** – an expression used to describe something negatively, indicating that it does not meet a standard

\* The cake, if you can call it that, was as hard as a rock and tasted like cardboard.

**atrocious** – very low quality; extremely bad or unpleasant

\* The house looked atrocious because it had not been painted in 25 years.

**to get hours of (one's) life back** – an expression used when a person wants to describe how useless or pointless some activity he/she just participated in was

\* I just spent half of a day with my wife shopping for dresses. I wish I could get those hours of my life back!



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**to leave a bad taste in (one's) mouth** – an expression used when one has just had a negative experience and continues to think about or remember it

\* Gambling away \$500 in Las Vegas has left me with a bad taste in my mouth.

**to put this whole experience behind me** – an expression used when a person has just had a negative experience, and he/she wants to forget that the experience ever happened

\* On the way to my vacation in Florida yesterday, my wallet was stolen, my luggage fell off of the top of my car, and I had a flat tire. When I get home, I am going to put this whole experience behind me!

**open-mic** – an event at a bar, coffee shop, or other public meeting place where the public is invited to perform music, read poetry, etc. in front of a crowd

\* Joey had always wanted to play his guitar in front of an audience, so he went to open-mic night at the local bar to show off his skills.

**a wild horse couldn't drag (one)** – an expression meaning that there isn't any chance that one would do something that one is being asked to do

\* - Maria, would you like to go to the zoo and look at the snakes with me?

- I hate snakes! A wild horse couldn't drag me to the zoo to look at them!

**to chalk it up to** – to be the reason for; to credit

\* Tam doesn't eat meat anymore. I chock it up to the influence of his new girlfriend who is a vegetarian.

**temporary insanity** – temporarily crazy; behaving strangely for a short or limited time

\* It was temporary insanity that made me jump up and down and yell loudly when I saw my favorite band at the concert.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these might Oliver be most willing to see next weekend?
  - a) An open-mic performance
  - b) A movie.
  - c) Another experimental play.
2. Which of these would be considered experimental?
  - a) A concert with music written and performed by college students.
  - b) A concert by a classic rock band.
  - c) A performance of a famous ballet.

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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **To rope (someone) in**

The expression “to rope (someone) in,” in this podcast, means to lure or to entice a person into performing a certain action: “She roped her son into washing the dishes by telling him that she would pay him five dollars.” The expression “to rope in” is also used to describe the action of a person using a rope to catch a large animal found at a farm: “The cowboy roped in the calf so that the veterinarian could give it its shots.” Finally, “to rope in” can mean to earn or to gain: “The salesman roped in a lot of money this month thanks to his smooth speaking abilities.”

#### **The pits**

In this podcast, the phrase “the pits” means very bad, or horrible: “The cookies were the pits because he forgot to add sugar and flour to the mix before he baked them.” The phrase “the pits” also means a place where large holes have been dug into the earth: “The machinery dug pits in the earth in order to find coal used for fuel.” Or, “Watch out for the big pits left by the storm as you walk across this field.” A “pit” refers to the hard center of a piece of fruit where the seeds are found: “The old man made sure he pulled out the pit of the plum before he took a bite.” Finally, the term “pits” is used informally for armpits or the area on the underside of one’s shoulder: “This blanket is too short and only reaches up to my pits.



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### CULTURE NOTE

In the U.S., if a concert, sporting event, or live show is bad or “delayed” (late, people are kept waiting for the event to begin), there are several ways people in the “crowd” (audience) might respond or react.

First, if the event is delayed, the crowd may “boo” (make the sound “boooo”) until the “performers” (people the audience has come to watch) make an “appearance” (show up; come out to perform). If the event is “awful” (very bad), the crowd may boo to show their “distaste” (dislike). The booing may often times be “accompanied” (two things happen at the same time) by “profanity” (swear words or cuss words).

Next, if the event is delayed, the crowd may throw food, bottles, or garbage at the “stage” (the raised or higher area where the performance takes place) until the performers appear. Sometimes, when the event is bad, the crowd may actually throw items at the performers. When this happens, the police are usually called in to help prevent a “riot” (people behaving out of control).

Finally, if the event is delayed or if the performer(s) are “unsatisfactory” (not good), the audience may ask for a “refund” (money returned). In some instances, the crowd will be given its money back. For example, if an event is to be held outdoors and there is stormy weather and the event is “cancelled” (a scheduled event not taking place), the organizers will “issue” (give) all members of the audience a refund. However, there are other instances where the venue will not give the audience a refund, even if the members of the audience ask for it. For example, if a band finishes its “set” (all the songs the band planned to play in one section of the concert) and certain members of the audience “complain” (to express dissatisfaction) to the venue that they did not like the music the band played, “chances are” (it is likely) that the venue will not issue a refund.

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



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 370: Describing a Bad Experience.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 370. 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](http://eslpod.com) to download the Learning Guide for this episode. The Learning Guide contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences, additional definitions, cultural notes, comprehension checks, and a complete transcript of this episode.

This episode is called "Describing a Bad Experience." It's a dialogue between Caterina and Oliver about, well, something that was not very fun. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Caterina: I can't believe I let you rope me into seeing this performance. It was so lame!

Oliver: Okay, you're right, it was the pits. I had no idea it was going to be amateur hour. When I saw the ad in the paper describing this as an experimental play, I thought it might be interesting. Was I wrong!

Caterina: I didn't understand that play at all. The music, if you can call it that, was atrocious. How can anyone be expected to listen to that for more than three seconds without going crazy? I wish I could get those two hours of my life back!

Oliver: Yeah, it's left a bad taste in my mouth, too. Let's go see something else. I want to put this whole experience behind me.

Caterina: Benjamin's Bar is having open-mic tonight. Do you want to check it out?

Oliver: No way! Wild horses couldn't drag me to another amateur show. How about a movie instead?

Caterina: Okay, I'd go to a movie.



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Oliver: You'd better pick one, though. Look what happened when I was left to pick a play.

Caterina: Forget about it. We'll just chalk it up to temporary insanity.

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Caterina saying to Oliver, "I can't believe I let you rope me into seeing this performance." "To rope (rope) someone into something" means to convince someone to do something, to make them want to do something, perhaps something that they didn't really want to do in the first place. So, Caterina is saying I can't believe you convinced me to go to this performance. "It was so lame!" "Lame" means, here, not interesting, boring; unsatisfactory, we might say. You could say, "this party is lame," or, "this television show is lame." It's an expression you'll hear among teenagers and young people; it's not quite as common with older generations – like me!

Oliver said, "Okay, you're right, it was the pits." He's telling Caterina that he agrees with her; he says the performance "was the pits" (pits). To say something is "the pits" means it's very bad, it's terrible, it's horrible: "It was the pits." The word "pit" has several different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations of that word, as well as the word "rope."

Oliver says, "I had no idea (the play) was going to be amateur hour." "Amateur" is the opposite of "professional." We use the expansion "amateur hour" to talk about a performance, such as a play, that is so bad it seems as though it was done by amateurs, meaning it wasn't professional. Any sort of performance or play could be called "amateur hour" if you are criticizing it, saying it wasn't very good. Oliver says that he saw an ad – an advertisement – in the paper describing this as an experimental play. "Experimental" is when you try something new. "To experiment" means to test something, often something that is new, so an experimental play would be a new kind of play, perhaps. He says, "I thought it might be interesting. Was I wrong!" When you say "was I wrong," you mean I was wrong; you are admitting your mistake; you are admitting your error.

Caterina says, "I didn't understand the play at all. The music, if you can call it that, was atrocious." The expression "if you can call it that" is used to describe something negatively, usually because it isn't up to a certain standard – it isn't good enough. So, you go to a restaurant and you order a steak and it's very bad, it's not a good steak, you may describe the experience to your friend later as saying, "Well, I ordered a steak, if you can call it that," meaning it was so bad you



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shouldn't even call it a steak – it doesn't deserve the name of steak. My singing, if you can call it that, is heard by many people who then have to cry because of the pain! That would be a use of that expression.

Caterina says the music is atrocious. “Atrocious” (atrocious) means very bad, extremely bad; something that is of a very low quality; that would be atrocious. The noun “atrociousness” is a horrible thing that happens, a terrible event. Caterina says, “How can anyone be expected to listen to that (music) for more than three seconds without going crazy,” meaning if you listen to it for more than three seconds you will go crazy because it's so bad. She says, “I wish I could get those two hours of my life back!” When someone says “I want to get that time – that hour, that day – of my life back,” they mean it was such a terrible experience they wish they hadn't participated in it. They wish that they could go back in time so they wouldn't lose that time to whatever terrible experience it was. It's just another way of emphasizing how bad this particular play was.

Oliver said, “Yeah, it's left a bad taste in my mouth, too.” The expression “to leave a bad taste in someone's mouth” means that you had a negative experience, and you continue to think about it and remember it; it continues to bother you. For example, you go to Las Vegas, the gambling capital of the United States, and you spend \$500 and you lose it, you could say, “Well, that left a bad taste in my mouth about gambling” – I still remember losing that money, and I don't want to gamble again. I never gamble, so that has never happened to me, fortunately!

Oliver says, “Let's go see something else. I want to put this whole experience behind me.” Once again, that expression, “to put this whole experience behind me,” is used when you have had a very negative experience, like going to a bad play, and you want to forget that it ever happened. You can also say to someone who you have been arguing with, “Let's put this behind us” – let's forget about it, let's move on, let's make some progress and not worry about this bad experience.

Caterina suggests they go to Benjamin's Bar because they're having open-mic night. “Open-mic” (mic) is an event, usually at a bar or a coffee shop or some other place, where the public is invited to come and perform. Perhaps play music, sing, read poetry in front of the audience. So, you don't have to be a professional; you could just come and you put your name on a piece of paper, and they ask you to come up one person after another. I remember in the early 90s, it was very popular in Los Angeles for cafés – coffee shops – to have open-mic comedy time, so people who wanted to be comedians – who wanted to tell



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jokes – could come and tell jokes. Usually they were not very good. Well, at least my jokes were not very good!

Oliver doesn't want to go to open-mic; he says, "No way! Wild horses couldn't drag me to another amateur show." This is an old expression, "wild horses couldn't drag (drag) me." "To drag" means to pull something, either something very heavy or something that doesn't want to move, to pull it and move it across a certain distance. A "wild horse" is a horse that is not trained. "Wild horses couldn't drag me" means that even a very strong horse couldn't pull me to do something – couldn't get me to do something. So, "wild horses couldn't drag me to this movie," or "this bar," means there is nothing that would make me go there.

Caterina says, "Okay, I'll go to a movie," because Oliver suggests going to a movie. Oliver tells her that she has to pick the movie because he did not do a very good job at picking the play. Caterina says, "Forget about it (don't worry about it). We'll just chalk it up to temporary insanity." "To chalk something up" is to give a reason for something, to credit something. "I'll chalk this up to your inexperience," meaning the reason you didn't do well is because you don't have enough experience: "To chalk it up." Usually we say "to chalk it up to something." For example: "Tam doesn't eat meat. I chalk it up to the influence of his new girlfriend, who is a vegetarian." Sometimes we use "chalk it up" when we don't necessarily like what has happened; you're not happy about Tam becoming a vegetarian, so you have to give a reason for it: you chalk up to his girlfriend. "Temporary insanity" would mean that you were temporarily crazy, behaving strange for a short amount of time. It became popular several years ago, when someone would commit a terrible crime, murder for example, for the defense attorneys – the lawyers – to say he was insane for a short amount of time, he was temporarily crazy. We would call that "temporary insanity." Caterina is saying here that the reason Oliver didn't pick a good play was because he had temporary insanity. I think it's because Oliver doesn't know anything about plays!

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

[start of dialogue]

Caterina: I can't believe I let you rope me into seeing this performance. It was so lame!

Oliver: Okay, you're right, it was the pits. I had no idea it was going to be amateur hour. When I saw the ad in the paper describing this as an experimental play, I thought it might be interesting. Was I wrong!





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Caterina: I didn't understand that play at all. The music, if you can call it that, was atrocious. How can anyone be expected to listen to that for more than three seconds without going crazy? I wish I could get those two hours of my life back!

Oliver: Yeah, it's left a bad taste in my mouth, too. Let's go see something else. I want to put this whole experience behind me.

Caterina: Benjamin's Bar is having open-mic tonight. Do you want to check it out?

Oliver: No way! Wild horses couldn't drag me to another amateur show. How about a movie instead?

Caterina: Okay, I'd go to a movie.

Oliver: You'd better pick one, though. Look what happened when I was left to pick a play.

Caterina: Forget about it. We'll just chalk it up to temporary insanity.

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was definitely not lame! It was written by Dr. Lucy Tse. Thank you Lucy.

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

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