

Chatterbox #208 – Horoscopes

Episode description

Do the planets influence our lives? In this episode of Chatterbox, we find out what Andrew and Morag think about the subject of horoscopes and astrology.

Fun fact

Cultures have long been trying to understand the stars. The oldest known system of astrology comes from ancient Mesopotamia and dates back to more than 4000 years ago!

Expressions included in the study guide

- To come out
- For a kick
- Rorschach test
- Side gig
- Meme
- Enthusiast



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Morag: And my name is Morag.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips. Good morning, Morag.

Morag: Morning, Andrew.

Andrew: How are you?

Morag: I'm doing all right. You're OK?

Andrew: I'm doing pretty good, yeah. Morag, we're recording right now, I guess it's the middle of April and I'm not sure when this episode will **come out**, but Mercury in retrograde just finished a couple of days ago. Do you know what this is, Mercury in retrograde? Have you heard of this before?

Morag: I do know. Now, I don't actually remember exactly, physically, what it is, but it's a horoscope or, like, astrological term where Mercury is affecting us in some way. What I think it means is that communications are blocked and more difficult, and it's also supposed to be associated with old friends or lovers reappearing in your life.

Andrew: One of my friends needs to buy a new computer and she was advised not to buy a new computer until Mercury in retrograde, that period, is finished.

Morag: Really?

Andrew: Yeah, because apparently it's a really bad time for technology and her astrologer suggested she waits until Mercury in retrograde is finished before buying a computer. So she was happy today, she finally bought it. She had been waiting for about 2 weeks.

Morag: Oh my gosh.

Andrew: And she took this really seriously and, yeah, actually I didn't even know Mercury was in retrograde because I don't follow this kind of thing too closely.

Morag: Well, I actually tend to know that Mercury is in retrograde because I will get, unfailingly I will get text messages from an old boyfriend or two. I remember there was one where I was looking at my phone, I was, like, what is happening? Why am I talking to all of these people? And I looked it up and it was, like, Mercury in retrograde had just started, and it was creepy.

Andrew: Now that you mention it, that actually happened to me last week, too. So.

Morag: Right?

Andrew: Weird, maybe there's something to this. I'm not sure.

Morag: It's very strange. That past relationships thing is actually one of the only aspects of this Mercury in retrograde, and actually horoscopes in general, that usually seems actively true in my life. Like, I'll look it up now and usually when these things start or I'm contacted, it's that time. Weird.

Andrew: Very, very weird. Well, everyone, if you haven't guessed by now, the topic for today's Chatterbox episode is astrology and horoscopes and Mercury in retrograde, these astrological beliefs and events.

So Chatterbox is our series where we just have a natural conversation, it's unscripted, it's free-flowing, and it will help you to improve your listening comprehension, listening fluency by just eavesdropping in. And just before we get really into the nitty-gritty of today's topic, I wanna remind everybody to visit our website, Culips.com, because this is the place where you can download the study guide for this episode.

All right, Morag, let's continue with our conversation, and maybe we can transition to talk about horoscopes for a little bit?

Morag: Well, the most important part about that would be, well, I mean, hey, Andrew, what's your sign?

Andrew: My sign is a Taurus. I'm a Taurus.

Morag: Taurus? OK.

Andrew: What about you?

Morag: I'm a Cancer.

- Andrew: Cancer. You know what, I don't even know what these mean, to be quite frank with you.
- Morag: We're talking about astrological sun signs here. So I know an embarrassing amount about horoscopes.
- Andrew: OK, OK.
- Morag: Yeah. It's just an interesting concept, 'cause there's a lot ... It's a lot more complicated than the horoscopes in newspapers and that kind of thing makes it seem. I don't trust them. I just think it's an interesting thing.
- Andrew: Well, maybe before we get too far ahead, and for everyone that doesn't know, including maybe myself, you could give a brief definition of a horoscope. What is a horoscope?
- Morag: A horoscope is a short piece of advice or statement of current status of someone's emotional life based on this astrological profile, general astrological profile. And that is determined by when you were born. Some of our listeners might be familiar with Chinese horoscopes, which are, like, done by year of birth, so, like, I'm a Snake.
- Andrew: Oh, I'm a Rat.
- Morag: You're a Rat? Oh, we're not very trustworthy, I feel like.
- Andrew: No, we're not very cute animals here on our birth signs.
- Morag: Yeah, so it's that kind of thing, where you are one of 12 types and those types have certain characteristics with them. So when you look at a horoscope, it's what is going on with that type in a day, or a week, or a month. You can usually find them in pretty much any newspaper in North America, like in the fun section.
- Andrew: Yeah, usually in one of the last pages of the newspaper, in the very back by the crossword.
- Morag: Yup, where you have the crossword and the word search and comics and stuff. But they're around, you know?
- Andrew: Yeah, so I enjoy reading my horoscope in the newspaper. I think it's always funny to read them, but I don't take them seriously. Usually the contents are about finances or relationships or maybe a career decision that you might have upcoming. They give you advice about making decisions surrounding these things. But, yeah, I just read them **for a kick**.

- Morag: My mom sent me a picture of my horoscope the other day, so I can read you an example.
- Andrew: Perfect, perfect.
- Morag: This is actually from yesterday.
- Andrew: OK, what's it say?
- Morag: So Cancer, which is from June 22nd to July 23rd—if you were born in that space, you're a Cancer. "Even minor efforts will yield major results over the next 24 hours, so get up and get busy and don't use past failures as a convenient excuse not to try again. Identify your number one aim and focus on it to the exclusion of everything else." Which, to be honest, is a very general good piece of advice.
- Andrew: Yeah, I feel like that's not really a prediction about the future at all, that's just a motivational message, essentially.
- Morag: Well, yeah, I think they're not usually a clear prediction, because that's really impossible.
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: But, I mean, especially with these, like, super general things, if you're really, really into astrology, you do usually believe that you can predict or tell what the flow of some major events in people's lives will be. But, like, not what they are, but when they happen and that kind of thing. But there's, like, a million other things and other signs and other stuff that goes into that calculation. This is just a very general thing, so these all tend to be, I don't know, just an interesting cue to see where you, what you think about it. So if you read something, they're general enough that you'll apply it to something in your life. Which I think is useful, because when I read that I was like, "Oh, I really need to study French," but it's what you read into it that tells you more about yourself than the thing, you know?
- Andrew: Right, right. Yeah, I guess there's some similar principles at play when it comes to fortune-telling too, right?
- Morag: Absolutely.
- Andrew: If you go to see a psychic or a fortune-teller, they usually give you pretty vague readings of the future and each individual can kind of read into that and make something of it, if they want to.

- Morag: Absolutely. It's a similar thing with tarot cards and that kind of thing. It's like, if I show you this thing and it has this general meaning, what comes up in your mind?
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: I don't know if you know, or if our listeners will know, what a **Rorschach test** is?
- Andrew: That's the psychological inkblot test, is it?
- Morag: Yeah. So if anybody wants to Google it, you'll probably recognize it from popular culture. But it's more, it's like that, they're all like that, I think: It's about what you see and what you take from it and how your brain works with that, rather than what it actually says. They're all really, really general, but they're also super fun.
- Andrew: They are fun.
- Morag: Yeah. Sometimes you're like, "Oh it's gonna be a really, really important day today, yeah," you know?
- Andrew: Right.
- Morag: Yeah, it's funny.
- Andrew: I'm just realizing now the motivational aspect of them. I guess it's something that it never really clicked before, but I think that's great if they are helping people work harder or achieve their goals or work towards their goals. Then I think I'm thinking more positively right now about horoscopes now than I ever have in the past.
- Morag: That's cool. I mean, some of the other things they do, they often will tell you to be careful with your money, you know? They're generally, like, you know, pay attention to another person's needs or what they're saying or, you know, value yourself and your time. They're all pretty good things that we need to be reminded of most of the time.
- Andrew: It's funny that you mentioned studying French just a couple moments ago, Morag, because when I lived in Montreal, I studied French and I went to a French school and took language classes for 4 hours every day. It was great, it was an awesome opportunity to study French. And one of my classmates in that class actually was a horoscope writer.
- Morag: No way.
- Andrew: That was his **side gig**, yeah.



Morag: Wow.

Andrew: And I think he gave me a negative impression of horoscopes, because I saw how he didn't take it seriously, how he was just willy-nilly about writing the horoscopes. He was like, "Ah, man, I've gotta go home after class and write these horoscopes for tomorrow's paper."

Morag: Oh man.

Andrew: I don't think he was touched with some sort of enlightened thinking that allowed him to, I don't know, read the stars the way that an astrologist needs to.

Morag: I think that the most fun and the best sort of horoscopes and astrological things are, these days, to be found on Instagram.

Andrew: Oh really?

Morag: Oh yeah. There's a lot of people who will make, like, astrological **memes**, like jokes and things.

Andrew: Yes, yes.

Morag: And also.

Andrew: Like the Taurus starter pack or something like this.

Morag: Yeah, that kind of stuff, or you know, like—I never wanna use my sign because it sounds really weird—Cancer bingo. That sounds awful. Like Libra bingo or something, but they sort of tell you, people will make jokes and that kinda thing. But they're **enthusiasts**, and they're people who will write things toward the supposed characteristics of the sign. So I mean, like, you'll have people be a little bit more tender with Cancers, you know. Very emotional, that kind of thing, so that's actually kind of fun. I think that it should mostly just come from people who enjoy the thing, maybe? But I don't know, it's fun and there's probably some very strange and applicable vocabulary if you do look on Instagram for this kind of thing. It's quite popular right now.

Andrew: Yeah.

Morag: Especially among people, sort of, in their early 20s and things.

- Andrew: Yeah, I was going to mention that it's kind of a part of the almost, like the hipster Instagram subculture. It's talking about astrology and I do see a lot of it on my Instagram feed as well. So it's not hard to find, if you click around, you'll find those **memes** and some of them are quite funny, actually.
- Morag: Yeah, some of them are really interesting, yeah, or just ridiculous.
- Andrew: Well, Morag, I think maybe we can wrap it up here, I don't want to take up too much of everybody's time today. But I'm really curious about our listeners. Guys, do you read your horoscope every morning in the newspaper? Do you buy into astrology? You should send us a message and let us know, I'm really curious. And the best way to do that is probably just by sending us an email. Our email address is contact@Culips.com, C-O-N-T-A-C-T @Culips.com. We're also on social media, Facebook and Twitter, and if you go to those sites and search for Culips, you're bound to find us. And you can contact us through there as well. And yeah, Morag, I think that brings us to the end, so we'll catch you next time. Bye, everybody.
- Morag: Goodbye.
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Detailed Explanations

To come out

Phrasal verb

Near the beginning, Andrew mentions that he does not know when this episode will **come out**. In this sense, **to come out** means to be released or published. When a film first hits movie theatres, that's when it **comes out**. If a daily newspaper hits newsstands at 5 a.m., that's when it **comes out**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to come out**:

Clifton:	I was reading that Martin Scorsese is finishing up his latest film. I can't wait.
Steven:	Cool. When does it come out ?
Clifton:	I heard it has a release date in May, but that's only in Los Angeles and New York. I think it will come out in the rest of North America in June.
Steven:	Interesting. Let's be sure to watch that one on the big screen.

Bree:	How's the new novel coming along?
Chandra:	I finished writing it last month.
Bree:	Great. So do you have a publication date yet?
Chandra:	I'm actually not sure when it will come out . The publishers are still doing market research.
Bree:	At least your job's done.

For a kick

Idiom

For a kick is another way of saying just for fun. Another variation is to get a kick out of something.

Here are a couple more examples with **for a kick**:

Gilda: I heard you ran a triathlon last month. How did that go?

Victoria: Really difficult—but I survived.

Gilda: Was it for a charity or something?

Victoria: No. Just **for a kick**, really. I'm always trying to push myself.

Fran: I saw you walking on the sidewalk the other day.

Vicky: Oh, really? Was I alone?

Fran: No. You were walking with a guy. Is that a new boyfriend?

Vicky: Nope. Same boyfriend.

Fran: But the man had green hair.

Vicky: Oh, yes, he just dyed it green.

Fran: Because?

Vicky: **For a kick**. He does that a lot.

Rorschach test

Proper noun

A **Rorschach test** is a series of inkblots on paper shown to patients by psychologists. Based on the patients' impressions, the psychologists analyse the patients. Informally, we say something is a **Rorschach test** when the answer is open to one's interpretation. Is the glass half empty or half full? Other people can analyze you depending on what you answer!

Here are a couple more examples with **Rorschach test**:

Layla:	Do you want to go to the Museum of Modern Art with me tomorrow?
Ian:	I'm not a fan.
Layla:	Not a fan of what?
Ian:	Of modern art. Some person spilling paint on a canvas is not my idea of good art. If I want to look at a Rorschach test , I'll go to the doctor.
Layla:	I guess it truly is a Rorschach test . You see bad art and I see good art.

Jill:	Take a look at this picture.
Ben:	OK. I don't know what I'm looking at. What is that?
Jill:	Guess.
Ben:	Is it a kind of Rorschach test ? If I said this picture looks like a bird, are you going to tell me that I'm crazy?
Jill:	No, no. Just tell me what you think.
Ben:	I think it looks like a bird.
Jill:	Ah. Interesting.
Ben:	What!

Side gig

Noun

A **side gig** refers to something that is not your main job or area of interest. You might have your full-time job, but also work once a week somewhere else.

Here are a couple more examples with **side gig**:

Xavier: Oh, hello! I didn't know you worked at the supermarket.

Brianna: Hi! Yeah, but I only work here on Saturdays. It's just a **side gig**. My mom works here too, so it's fun to come to work together.

Xavier: Do you get a discount?

Brianna: Unfortunately, I don't. Like I said, I'm just a part-timer.

Charles: Wow, your friend is a really good singer.

Patrick: I know. He's great.

Charles: Do he sing professionally?

Patrick: No. This is a **side gig** for him. He's actually an accountant.

Charles: If ever he wanted to change careers, I'm sure he'd be successful.

Meme

Noun

Late in the episode, Andrew speaks of clicking around Instagram to find **memes**. A **meme** is a joke, style of picture or video, or other phenomenon on the internet that becomes popular by spreading from person to person. In that sense, **memes** go viral.

Here are a couple more examples with **meme**:

Nathan:	No! Don't take my picture while I'm wearing this shirt!
Beth:	I like your shirt. It's funny.
Nathan:	OK. But don't post the picture online. I know your friends. They will try to turn me into a meme .
Beth:	You're not that funny!

John:	Have you seen the Sad Keanu meme ?
Fanny:	Keanu? As in Keanu Reeves, the actor?
John:	Yeah.
Fanny:	No, I haven't. What is it?
John:	It's Keanu Reeves sitting on a bench, eating a sandwich, and looking really sad.
Fanny:	And why is this funny?
John:	It's funny because people write all kinds of hilarious comments on the picture, or they copy and paste the picture in different situations. Google it!

Enthusiast

Noun

An **enthusiast** is someone who enjoys and supports something, usually a hobby. You can be a sports **enthusiast**, a wine **enthusiast**, a yoga **enthusiast**, or a movie **enthusiast**, among many other things.

Here are a couple more examples with **enthusiast**:

Mary:	What have you been doing lately?
Chrissy:	My husband and I have been taking up archery.
Mary:	Archery? Like, with a bow and arrow?
Chrissy:	Of course! We've become quite the enthusiasts . Have you ever tried shooting a bow?
Mary:	I can't say that I have. Is it difficult?

Jake:	I'm going to order wine with my steak. How about you?
Portia:	Sure. Let's split a bottle. How about the merlot?
Jake:	I was thinking white wine.
Portia:	White wine with steak? No way!
Jake:	Why not?
Portia:	You don't need to be an enthusiast to know that you drink red wine with steak and white wine with fish.
Jake:	That's not a real rule. If I like white wine with my steak, then I'll have some.

Quiz

1. True or false: the term Rorschach test is only used in psychology?

- a) true
- b) false

2. Which of the following is a good example of a side gig?

- a) volunteering for a music festival
- b) working 30 hours a week
- c) studying to become a doctor
- d) training for the Olympics

3. What sign is Morag, according to her birth year?

- a) Taurus
- b) Snake
- c) Rat
- d) Cancer

4. Which of the following is not related to astrology?

- a) a psychic
- b) a fortune-teller
- c) a meme
- d) a piece of advice

5. Which of the following is a good synonym for an enthusiast?

- a) a player
- b) a viewer
- c) a star
- d) a fan

Writing or Discussions Questions

1. Would you change your plans for the day if your horoscope told you something troubling?
2. What effect do you think the stars have on our daily lives?
3. How much do you think the time of year you were born in affects your behaviour?
4. Have you ever tried a Rorschach test? What was the experience like?
5. What kind of motivational messages do you like to keep in mind?

Quiz Answers

1.b 2.a 3.b 4.c 5.d

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