

Chatterbox #227 - How susceptible are you to advertising?

Episode description

Do you take a lot of time to make a decision before buying a product, or are you an impulse shopper? In this intriguing episode, Andrew and Morag discuss the power of advertising and how it affects what we think about and, inevitably, what we buy. Enjoy!

Fun fact

Google AdSense has changed the face of advertising. Using Google AdSense, publishers in the Google Network are able to target advertisements to those who browse their sites. In 2015 alone, AdSense earned \$15 billion, about 23% of Google's total revenue.

Expressions included in the study guide

- Susceptible
- Impulse shopper
- > Influencer
- To deal with [something]
- Wacky
- Information overload
- To snoop





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.

Hey, Morag.

Morag: Hey, Andrew.

Andrew: How's it going? What's new?

Morag: Oh, man, I just had a real disappointment last night.

Andrew: A real disappointment. Oh, no, what happened?

Morag: I've been finding myself going down a particular YouTube hole where I've

been watching people dissemble and fix and clean old Nintendo systems.

Andrew: Very geeky. I love it.

Morag: Yes, I'm a very nerdy person, but I have a Nintendo 3DS that I've had for

almost 10 years and the thumb stick broke off of it.

Andrew: OK, what is the thumb stick? Like the joystick?

Morag: Yeah, there's one joystick on it and that's used to move your character or

move around in pretty much every game. So it's kind of totally useless without it. But it broke and I found out that you can replace them pretty

easily. I bought a bunch of very specific tiny screwdrivers and a

replacement for it, and I was so excited yesterday to go home and open up my Nintendo DS and, like, get in there and, like, switch stuff out and **deal** with little ribbon cables. And I was, like, "Oh, this is gonna be so much fun." And then I stripped a screw, because I forgot what left and right were.

Andrew: Oh, shoot.



Morag: I got them backwards, so now I have a completely stripped screw that I

have no idea if I'm ever going to be able to get it out of there, all because I was watching too much YouTube and just wanted to be like the guys in the

video.

Andrew: I think there is a product that you can apply to screws that will help you take

them out of the material that they're stuck in, but I don't know if that works for electronics. I think it's more for building something with, like, wood and

metal. So you might be out of luck.

Morag: No, there's things you can do. It's just going to become increasingly more

dangerous, going all the way up to drilling into the screw, where you're dealing with, like, sensitive electronics with a giant drill. Well, I can

update you later, we'll see how it goes.

Andrew: Yeah, give us an update next time we talk and let us know if you were able

to rescue your 3DS. And I'll keep my fingers crossed for you.

Morag: Why, thank you.

Andrew: So, Morag, the topic of today's Chatterbox episode is advertising and, more

specifically, we're going to talk about the question: how susceptible are

you to advertising?

But just before we discuss that question, I wanna let everyone know that

there is a study guide for this episode. It's available on our website.

Culips.com, and we specifically designed it to help you make the most out of this episode. So if you'd like to check it out, just visit the website and give

it a download.

OK, Morag, so before we tackle this question, how **susceptible** are you to advertising, I thought it might be cool to brainstorm some of the places that we see ads. Now, I know ads are, like, all around us, right? You can walk outside of your apartment and see a billboard or take a look in your mailbox and you'll have a flyer. But just off the top of your head, where do you think

that you see the most ads in your daily life?

Morag: Google search results.

Andrew: Google search results, OK. Interesting.

Morag: One hundred percent, because the top three, sometimes to four, search

results are always paid advertisements. So, and they look almost identical to regular results. My job depends on almost entirely on my Google-fu.

to regular results. My Job depends on almost entirely on my Google-id.

Andrew: OK.



Morag: So I'm doing that constantly, so I definitely see the most ads on Google.

Andrew: OK, yeah, Google definitely for me. I was also going to answer the internet.

And, these days, I feel like I see a lot of ads on Instagram.

Morag: Way more than before.

Andrew: Way, way more than before. Suddenly, they just perhaps changed their

advertising algorithm or something, 'cause I'm getting, like, double the

amount of ads that I used to see.

On my computer, actually, I have an ad blocker installed, you know, so I don't see too many advertisements, like, on YouTube or on websites. The ad blocker is pretty good at covering most of those up, but definitely Google search results, too, can be really frustrating sometimes. Like, recently I've been travelling a lot, so I'm doing travel-related Google searches, which are just a nightmare because Google's just trying to sell you tickets, you know? Like, I was in Spain, so I google something for Spain and I'd get like cheap flights to Spain and I'm, like, I'm already here, I don't need this, it's irrelevant to what I'm looking for. So, yeah, those ads can be somewhat

annoying, sometimes.

Morag: A lot of the tricky ads are the ones that are masquerading as something

else. So, like, the Google search results or the Instagram posts, I

sometimes won't notice that an Instagram ad is an ad for a couple seconds.

Andrew: Totally, totally, they're really well designed and targeted to be effective like

that, right?

So let's get back to our main question, then. In your opinion, how

susceptible are you to advertising?

Morag: OK. So, I would love to say not at all, because if I am aware of a piece of advertising, I will usually discount what has been advertised for, because

I'm frustrated with advertising. However, I'm also perfectly aware that that's not how advertising works. It's not about making you make the conscious decision to purchase something because you've seen an ad. It's about

brand recognition.

And across the board, statistically, it has very much been proven that if you recognize, if you've already seen something like a brand before, you are

vastly more likely to pick it no matter what your feelings are on its

advertisement or even just the brand in general. If you have something, if you have a choice between something that you recognize and something that you don't recognize, human beings will choose the thing that they recognize. So I do not think I am immune to this, and therefore am probably

highly **susceptible** to the end goal of most advertising.



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Andrew:

Yeah, I completely agree with you there. And, you know, I'm not an **impulse shopper** very often. Like, I won't see an ad on the internet and then right away click through and buy it, like, that doesn't happen very often. But I do think that these internet ads are kind of planting a seed, right? Slowly, slowly getting me used to their brand or used to the image of the brand. And then I do think that right when I do go to shop, I might be much more likely to buy that product because, just as you explained, I'm familiar with it, I've seen it before, I've interacted with the product online to some extent. And so in that regard, I'm probably more **susceptible** to advertising than I would ever like to admit.

Morag:

I think that's probably the case for most people, unfortunately. There's been some interesting feedback loop that I think happens with, specifically, social media advertising where something, I'm not sure, something becomes popular and then people advertise about things that are similar or so many people are being advertised to about the same kind of thing that it becomes popular. I'm specifically thinking about this one eyeglasses brand that I get ads for constantly.

Andrew: OK.

Morag: And the images in these ads, the girls wearing these glasses look like every

girl on Instagram wearing a pair of glasses. Like, it's all the same style. And I'm not sure if the brand came first or if that style came first, but I all of a sudden kind of like the way those glasses look, because I'm seeing them all

the time.

Andrew: Interesting. Well, from that brand's perspective, they would probably be

really stoked if they created the trend and then everybody emulated it.

Morag: It's probably a combination.

Andrew: Yeah.

Morag: It's definitely a feedback loop of you see one person's doing something cool

and then somebody else tries to do it and then a brand does it and then you see that thing that you thought was cool a million times and then more people do it and next thing you know you have that and you're like, "I just

wanted to look cool."



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Andrew:

I find that more than ever I'm doing something that I never thought I would do, and it honestly makes my stomach a little bit sick to think about it, that is that I do interact with some brands. For example, I follow a lot of runners on Instagram and different running events and different running-related pages. And almost all of the top athletes that I follow are sponsored by numerous different sporting companies. And, as a result, I check out those sporting companies' pages to see more information about the athletes that they sponsor because a lot of times they have, kind of, you know, mini documentaries or exclusive content related to that athlete. And so then I end up following these brand pages, and then I get targeted ads based on the things that I've seen on those pages. So if I looked at a specific pair of shoes, well, next thing you know I'm getting a ton of ads for those shoes. So it's like I'm willingly signing myself up to eventually buy this product. It's really strange.

Morag:

It's a brilliant system that they've set up of reinforcing the desire for certain things or the validity of certain choices. It's hard not to get into these loops, though. I do the same thing with certain Instagramers or just, like, **influencers**, with clothing brands and that kind of stuff. And I'm like, oh, man, that outfit's amazing, I'm gonna go look at it, and they are sponsored by and linked to that brand.

Andrew:

Right.

Morag:

And I'm, like, ah, I'll follow them for, like, styling ideas and stuff, and then I get advertisements from them. And then it's just the same feedback loop where it's, like, oh, man, next time I'm probably gonna end up buying some of that, I guess. I don't think there's anything necessarily evil about this or, like, bad. It's a new advertising paradigm that I'm hoping that younger people are already aware of by virtue of growing up in it, but I think for people a little bit older, we were used to and pretty good at **dealing with a different strategy of advertising** and then this thing, social media, grew up that was, felt like natural and slowly became an advertising platform.

Andrew:

Sure, yeah.

Morag:

So it takes more conscious effort, at least on my part, to dispense with the influence of these ads versus just a billboard, which I don't even look at.

Andrew:

It was funny, I was back in Canada for a couple weeks last month and, when I was watching TV, I was laughing at the commercials and how ridiculous they seemed. Like, I haven't watched Canadian TV for so long that when I was doing it, the ads just seemed, it was, like, almost like culture shock how **wacky** they were. And I was, like, does anybody buy something 'cause they saw an ad on TV? Like, it's totally our generation is not **susceptible** to TV advertising at all, I think, but definitely internet advertising can be quite effective.

Morag:

Yeah, I think there's, except for the whole thing I spoke about earlier where it's the recognition thing, I think that works on every type, even a billboard, even if you don't really look at it. But the more direct and immediate forms of susceptibility to advertising, like, you see a thing and you buy it, I think we're definitely ... Internet advertising, especially social media stuff, can work way better on us. Yeah, I really try to make the conscious effort to not give into that stuff. Like, I try as much as possible to buy used clothing or clothing that's locally made or designed and that kinda stuff. But then that gets annoyingly expensive, and sometimes you just want something cute that you saw on Instagram.

Andrew:

Well, even these small local companies can place ads and target the specific demographic of people that they wanna hit and want to advertise to. So, I mean, it can kind of work out good for some of these small local companies as well.

Morag:

Exactly, businesses doing well isn't inherently bad, and having brand recognition through advertising is often one of the main ways that businesses can do that. So I guess it comes down to the philosophy and morals of the business. Then you have to look up every single business that you wanna potentially ... Oh that's too much.

Andrew: Overload

Overload, information overload.

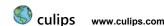
Morag:

I wish I had enough time.

Andrew:

Morag, I've got one last quick question for you before we leave, because I know we've talked about conspiracy theories before and they're kind of fun to think about. But I've heard a conspiracy theory that goes that Google and Apple are allowing advertisers to listen to what we say via the microphones that are in our phones, and then they can use this audio that they've tapped into to provide us with targeted ads. Do you think there's any validity to this idea at all?

idea at all?



Morag: There actually is validity to that idea, and it's been proven recently through

an Alexa issue where you can, in Europe, you can ask for all of the documentation that Amazon has on you, period, including audio logs. And if you have something, if you have an Alexa, it is constantly recording if it

hears any sound. And it's doing that. OK, back up, if you have a device where you can activate it via a voice command, it fundamentally has to be listening at all times because otherwise it couldn't hear your voice command to activate it. This is not necessarily bad. In fact, a lot of times it can be used to make a voice recognition better. The more they hear you speaking,

the more they can parse it. It's a lot of really good data.

Andrew: Sure.

Morag: But the other thing is, it's not like they're selling that information necessarily

to brands. It's that Google itself is the advertiser, so is Amazon. So they have the data and they can, potentially if they want to, if they are, look for

key words then serve you the same ad.

Andrew: Right, based upon what it detected in your speech.

Morag: Yeah. It's not a large conspiracy theory where it's, like, Google's selling this

to this person or whatever. They have their own advertising platforms and

then they know what you just said.

Andrew: Wow, it's interesting. I don't know how I feel about that, but luckily I don't

have an Alexa. I do have a Siri, though, so she might be listening to me

right now.

Morag: Oh, Siri is definitely. Can you say, "Hey, Siri" and she'll wake up?

Andrew: Yup, let me try. Hey, Siri. It woke up.

Morag: Yup. So, I personally have everything like that disabled.

Andrew: Very smart, I think.

Morag: But, you know, 'cause you have buttons to put these on, if you want to.

Andrew: Sure. I just lose my phone so often that it's actually very nice to say, like

"Hey, Siri, turn on the flashlight" and then I can figure out where my phone

is.

Morag: Well, the main thing, the main sort of conspiracy theory portion of that, is

that there's I don't know they'll use this for nefarious purposes or

something. It's not really all that nefarious. It's just you're giving them data

to make voice recognition better.



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Andrew: Right, which is something that I would love to see.

Morag: Exactly, there's just some privacy concerns with that, but it's also if you

think about the number of people that have these things on and the number

of things they're tracking.

Andrew: There's probably nobody on the Amazon site that's **snooping** through your

specific data just to see what's up in your life. It's just an overwhelming

amount of data that's coming in, right?

Morag: An overwhelming amount of data that's helpful for machines and not so

much for people. I mean, you realize you had a stain on your shirt all day and you're, like, oh my god, everyone will have noticed, what if everybody noticed, what would they think of me now? The answer is no one cares, no one noticed. Fundamentally you care the most about you, so if you're in this giant sea of data, nobody cares. They're not looking for you, you know? Or

at least that's what I tell myself.

Andrew: That's a good way to rationalize it. I like it.

Morag: Yup.

Andrew: Well, Morag, we covered a lot of ground here today. That was a really

interesting chat.

Morag: I had fun.

Andrew: Cool, but I think we'll leave it at that for today. Just before we go, though, I

do wanna remind everybody about our study guide—sorry, this is my little ad. So our study guide is available on our website, Culips.com. If you'd like

to check it out, just visit the website and you can do that.

I have a great idea, how about you send us an email and let us know your opinion about how **susceptible** you are to advertising. And I know each country has kind of a different internet infrastructure, so maybe the way that the internet works in your country is different than how it works for Morag and I. And maybe advertisements are delivered differently as well, so feel

free to share your opinion with us. You can send your email to

contact@Culips.com and we would be very happy to read any messages that you may send us. And, finally, we are all over social media, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, you name it and we're there. Just search for the Culips English podcast to connect with us on social media and learn

more about what we do.

That's it for us, we'll talk to you next time. Bye.

Morag: Goodbye.



Detailed Explanations

Susceptible Adjective

People whose decisions are highly influenced by other people or things around them are considered **susceptible**. In this episode, Andrew and Morag discuss how **susceptible** they are to advertisements; in other words, they talk about how much advertisements influence their decision-making and what they decide to buy.

Another good example of **susceptibility** is peer pressure. Peer pressure is the strong influence of a group onto individuals to make them behave in a similar way. For example, teenagers are very **susceptible** to peer pressure in high school when their fellow classmates convince them to try smoking, drugs, alcohol, and sexual activities in order to appear cool and popular.

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

Fran: How is it going with that guy you were dating?

Margaret: Oh, him. I dumped him. He was a real jerk.

Fran: Again? It seems like you always find the worst guys.

Margaret: It's because I'm so **susceptible** to flattery. If a guy smiles at me and gives

me a compliment, my brain turns to mush. I fall in love too easily, and they

end up breaking my heart every time.

Fran: Don't worry. You'll find a good guy eventually. You're too sweet to stay

single forever.

Gina: Wanna go for a walk today? This spring weather is absolutely gorgeous!

Frederica: No, sorry. I'm gonna have to pass. I am so susceptible to allergies this

time of year. If I go outside for too long, I just sneeze non-stop.

Gina: Oh, that sucks. Well, I'll go and take pictures of the pretty flowers. Catch

you later!



Impulse shopper

Noun

An **impulse shopper**, also known as an **impulse buyer**, is someone who buys something suddenly, without thinking carefully about it or shopping around for the best price. **Impulse shoppers** tend to spend too much money when they shop, and often regret their purchases.

Similarly, an impulse buy is a purchase that you make without thinking about it. People who are unable to avoid impulse buying are often referred to as shopaholics—people who are addicted to shopping.

Here are a couple more examples with **impulse shopper**:

Brigit: I think I'm going to divorce my husband.

Victoria: What do you mean? You guys seem so happy.

Brigit: Yeah, we were! But ever since he turned 50, my husband started going

through some sort of mid-life crisis. He has become an insane impulse

shopper!

Victoria: Really—Kevin? He hates shopping! What is he buying?

Brigit: Well, just last week he decided he wanted to buy a motorcycle. The next

day, he came home with this \$20,000 monster! He didn't even think about it

for more than a day!

Victoria: Your husband doesn't even like driving with the windows down, now he

wants to ride in an open-air motorcycle? That's hilarious.

Greg: How's the diet going, pal?

Trent: Terrible, man. You know that candy section next to the register at every

store?

Greg: Yeah, it's meant to attract people who are **impulse shoppers**. Don't tell me

you buy that crap!

Trent: I can't help it! Every time I walk by the register, I end up buying a candy bar

and then it's just a downward spiral for the rest of the day. I've gained

2 kilos!



Influencer Noun

An **influencer** is someone who influences or affects the way other people behave and shop through their use of social media. Social media **influencers** will promote products on their channels or pages that viewers will see and buy based on that **influencer's** recommendation. **Influencers** often receive products for free from various companies with the **influencer** will later review the products on their social media platform, thus increasing the popularity of those products.

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

Rafael:	I really wanna start my own YouTube channel and become an influencer . They're living the dream life, man: free stuff, popularity, the whole deal.
Trey:	How do you think you're gonna become famous? That takes a lot of work, bro.
Rafael:	Hey, I got a lot of free time, might as well put all of that free time to good use.
Trey:	You haven't even have enough concentration to start the essay we have due tomorrow, let alone plan and execute a whole YouTube channel. I wish you luck, though!

Maggie:	Can you believe how popular the Kardashians are? I mean, Kim Kardashian and Kylie Jenner are two of the most powerful influencers in the world.
Raja:	Yeah, well, they are both gorgeous, talented, and extremely hardworking. I think they deserve all the attention they get, and more.
Maggie:	Yeah, I know. They just have to mention a product and sales for that product go through the roof!
Raja:	Imagine how stressful it must be to have that much influence in the world. They must feel so much pressure to be perfect all the time. I could never do it.
Maggie:	Yeah, it's definitely not easy being that famous.



To deal with [something]

Phrasal verb

To deal with [something] means to handle or solve a particular problem. For example, in this episode, Morag talks about her troubles **dealing with her videogame console**. The joystick broke on one of her games, so she watched a lot of videos to try and **deal with** or fix the problem.

Here are a couple more examples with to deal with [something]:

Margaret: Boss, there's someone here who would like to talk to you. What would you

like me to say to them?

Boss: I'm really busy at the moment. I don't have time to deal with any

unexpected meetings right now. Tell them to schedule an appointment

and get back to me.

Margaret: Yes, sir. I'll do that. Thank you.

Hillary: Honey, the sink has a leak in it. Do you wanna look at it, or should I call the

plumber?

Bill: Really? Again? Let's just call a plumber. I don't have the energy to deal

with that today.

Hillary: No problem. I'll call him now.

Bill: Thanks, Hill. I'll go check on the kids.



Wacky Adjective

Wacky is an adjective that is a combination of the meanings of the words funny, silly, and strange. For example, if you call a person **wacky**, you are saying that that person's personality is funny, silly, and just a little bit weird. For example, a girl whose favourite color is pink but whose favourite type of movie is horror is a little bit **wacky**.

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

Danette: I had the **wackiest** dream last night!

Therese: Really? What was it?

Danette: I dreamed that I was in a beauty pageant, but all of the other contestants

were monkeys. Have you ever imagined monkeys in pink bikinis? Because I

have!

Therese: Wow, that is **wacky**! You always have the weirdest dreams.

Danette: That's the truth! At least they're never boring.

Hugh: So, my ex-girlfriend called me last night.

Mo: You mean the ex-girlfriend who hates your guts? What did she say?

Hugh: She said she's changing apartments and wants me to come help her move

her stuff.

Mo: That's **wacky**. Why would she ask you, of all people?

Hugh: Yeah, that's what I was wondering. Maybe I should say yes and see what

happens.

Mo: Come on, man. You're not that desperate. Just say no.



Information overload

Noun

Information overload is a situation in which you receive too much information at one time and your brain can't process all of it easily. People who procrastinate on studying for a test until the night before often experience **information overload** as they try to review large amounts of information in a very short amount of time.

Here are a couple more examples with **information overload**:

Cassandra: I'm worried about Tiffany. Do you think she's OK?

Jeff: She's only 15. What are you so worried about?

Cassandra: I don't know. She just seems so tired these days. Teenagers have a lot to

deal with, you know? Life, friends, school, and, on top of all that, she keeps

track of this crazy social media presence.

Jeff: You're right. It sounds exhausting. I bet she's just experiencing a bit of

information overload. How about we get away for a few days and unplug? We could go to the cabin and leave our computers and internet behind for a

couple of days.

Cassandra: That sounds lovely! I'll go tell Tiffany now.

Ad: Have you ever felt daunted by the limitless amount of information found on

the internet? How can you tell fact from fiction? It's a bit of an **information overload**, right? Well, look no further than SearchEZ. SearchEZ is our easy-to-use app for all information. Just type in a keyword or question and only the most trusted, fact-checked information will appear on your search

screen. Never be stressed again with SearchEZ.

Greg: Hmm. Do you think this search engine is legit?

Kristoff: No, I bet it's just as riddled with lies and fake news as the rest of the search

engines online.

Greg: Wanna test it out?

Kristoff: Sure, let's do it!



To snoop Verb

To snoop is to secretly look around for information about people's private lives. **Snooping** is often an invasion of privacy, because the person affected doesn't know that you are trying to find information about him or her.

In this episode, Andrew and Morag talk about the fact that sites like Google and Amazon **snoop** through your browsing pages to find out what products you search for so that they can better tailor advertisements to your specific tastes.

Here are a couple more examples with **to snoop**:

Sian:	What are you doing hiding behind this tree?
Georgia:	I'm snooping on my boyfriend to see if he's cheating on me.
Sian:	Why would you do that? Did he give you any reason to think he might be cheating on you?
Georgia:	Well, when I was snooping through his phone yesterday, I saw he had some messages from a girl called Hannah.
Sian:	Girl, you've got some serious trust issues. Hannah could be his sister, or his cousin, or just a friend. Have you asked him about it?
Georgia:	No, are you crazy? Then he would know I was snooping through his phone!

Abdul:	What are you doing in here snooping in the kitchen at 3 a.m.?
Rianne:	I'm not snooping . I'm just hungry and I didn't want to wake anybody up. So why are you awake at 3 a.m.?
Abdul:	Same as you. Care for a midnight snack? I'm thinking cereal.
Rianne:	Oh, yes, definitely! I'll grab the bowls and spoons, you get the milk!

Quiz

1. What is NOT a synonym for wacky?

- a) zany
- b) peculiar
- c) sensible
- d) outlandish

2. What does it mean to snoop on someone?

- a) to tell on someone
- b) to lean on someone
- c) to check up on someone
- d) to spy on someone

3. Which is NOT opposite of susceptible?

- a) resistant
- b) affected
- c) insensitive
- d) immune

4. What is it called when you receive too much information at one time?

- a) information explosion
- b) mental meltdown
- c) information overload
- d) knowledge noise

5. Which is an example of an impulse shopper?

- a) a person who collects stuffed owls
- b) a person who loves to buy luxury cars
- c) a person who buys a new pair of shoes every 6 months
- d) a person who buys snow skis in July even though they don't need them

Writing and Discussion Questions

- 1. Do you plan your purchases, or are you an impulse buyer? How so?
- 2. How susceptible are you to advertising?
- 3. How do you feel about Google AdSense and its relation to our privacy rights?
- 4. What is the wackiest thing that you ever bought and why?
- 5. Who is your favourite social media influencer and why?
- 6. How do you usually deal with a problem when it arises?



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Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Morag St. Clair

Music: Something Elated by Broke For Free, Let It

Go by Scott Dugdale

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Andrew Bates

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Kassy White

English editor: Stephanie MacLean

Business manager: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Project manager: Jessica Cox

Image: Saketh Garuda (Unsplash.com)