

Chatterbox #311 – The Taylor Swift effect

AD-FREE

Episode description

In this episode, Andrew and Anna explore the 'Taylor Swift effect,' which refers to Taylor Swift's influence on her fans and society in general. They discuss the impact of her work, her personality, and the factors contributing to her remarkable success. If you're a Taylor Swift fan or simply want to learn more about her, give this episode a listen!

Fun fact

Did you know that you can now study Taylor Swift at universities? Some colleges and universities offer classes dedicated to analyzing her songs, influence, and impact on pop culture. Could you picture yourself majoring in the subject of Taylor Swift?

Expressions included in the study guide

- To live under a rock
- To relate to [someone/something]
- The girl/boy next door
- To hit in a different way
- To hold [one's cards close to [one's] chest]
- To have a bone to pick



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Chatterbox number 311, "The Taylor Swift Effect." Featuring, Andrew and Anna. Hi, Anna, how's it going?

Anna: Hi, Andrew. I'm great. How are you?

Andrew: I'm good. Anna, what are we talking about in this episode?

Anna: Well, that was a lovely introduction, Andrew. And today we're going to be talking about the Taylor Swift Effect and the huge impact that celebrities and influencers can have in our societies.

Andrew: Exactly. And I'm a little bit of a closeted Taylor Swift fan. I'm a fan, but I'm not really too loud about it. I don't tell too many people, but I am a Taylor Swift fan. So, I have to say that I'm looking forward to this episode. Why don't we just jump in and get started? Maybe with a definition, I think we should really clearly explain what we mean by the Taylor Swift Effect. And also, maybe we should explain who Taylor Swift is, it's possible that some listeners out there who maybe are **living under a rock**, don't know who she is, but Taylor Swift, of course, is the American singer-songwriter, and pop star. She's huge. She's the most streamed female artist on Spotify. And she has one of the highest grossing tours of all time. And highest grossing means made the most money. So, she's made a ton of money by selling tickets for her tour, one of the most famous concert tours ever. And when we talk about the Taylor Swift Effect then, we're referring to her huge impact on her fans and the ripple effect that this causes with behavior and consumerism.

Anna: Yeah, that's right, Andrew. And it's really her special ability to create this community that acts in harmony and collectively makes decisions, decisions that actually

end up having a huge effect on the economy. Like you mentioned, Andrew there, her recent tour, which there's loads of statistics about how it had a really big impact on the economy. So, I think lots of people are happy that she's going on tour, lots of businesses, but it's really this community that's so fascinating.

Andrew: By the way, Anna, do you know what Taylor Swift fans are called? They have a nickname.

Anna: Of course, an irrelevant question. Of course, I know what they're called. They're called Swifties. Swifties.

Andrew: Swifties. And are you a Swifty, Anna?

Anna: I am. I wouldn't say I'm the sort of person that's gonna go to a concert. But I am a Swifty. But I'm not a concert Swifty. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, like I said at the top of the show, I'm a fan. And I don't know if I would go to a concert or not. Right now, we're recording in late October of 2023. And as far as I know, she has a world tour coming up soon. And some of my students told me that she's not coming to Seoul. So, Seoul has been snubbed on the world tour, so I won't have an opportunity to see her. But yeah, I don't think I'm that level of fan. I'm not that big of a Swifty where I'd go to a concert. So, I guess we're kind of similar in that way Anna.

Anyway, so why don't we check out a recent example of the Taylor Swift Effect. And so probably many of our listeners have heard this story already because it's been all over the place in the media. But recently, Taylor attended an American football game, by the team, the Kansas City Chiefs. They play in the NFL, the National Football League, which I don't have the exact statistic in front of me, but just my gut feeling tells me that is the most popular sport in the USA. For many people football is life. It is like a religion almost in, in the States. So, extremely, extremely popular game and sport. And she went to that football

game to see the Kansas City Chiefs to support her new boyfriend who is a player on that team. And I don't watch football. So, I don't know but from what I've read online, I heard that he's a really great player. He's a superstar, and his name is Travis Kelce.

Anna: Right. And it was crazy, because this completely blew up everywhere. There are a couple of images of her at the game. And there was specifically one video of her walking with Kelce afterwards. It went crazy. It was everywhere. And one of the results of that was that there was a 400% spike in Kelce's jersey sales. 400% and not just that, it actually led to the highest rated NFL game of the week among female viewers aged around 12 to 49. And this was all reported by Fox Sports, but can you imagine a 400% spike just because she was there? And she attracted her fans, her you know, young age group fans or female fans. I mean, I'm sure she probably can't believe that it had that effect as well.

Andrew: Yeah, it's pretty wild because she wasn't wearing a jersey to the game. And she didn't tell her fans to support her boyfriend by buying his jersey, it was just a natural side effect of her attending the game. So that is pretty wild. And that just goes to show how strong the Taylor Swift Effect is. And also, so many, like you said, female viewers tuned in. And I heard this was a real problem that the NFL was facing is that it couldn't really attract women to watch the games. So many guys love it and like I said earlier, it's like a religion. A lot of football games happen on Sundays. And Sunday is like going to the church of football. It's like a huge event. You have your buddies over, you watch the game, you know, it's like this all-day thing, but a lot of women don't tune in. And so, the NFL was faced with this crisis, like how can we attract women to become interested in watching the NFL? And then suddenly, Taylor Swift goes to this game, and then the ratings shoot up. And so many women tuned in to watch the game. And there was some debate, like, are they watching because of the sport? Or are they watching just to see Taylor? Because, you know, whenever there was a break in the action, the TV cameras would pan to Taylor and show her on the TV. So yeah, sports commentators weren't really sure, is this because of an interest in football or an interest in Taylor? But at the end of the day, it

doesn't really matter I guess for the NFL, they're happy, they have more eyeballs watching their games.

Anna: Absolutely. And so, all of these things, that's kind of what we mean when we say the Taylor Swift Effect. But it's not just limited to things like the NFL, there's also other areas and fashion, for example, music, she really has this effect, where everything she does has a really positive effect or attracts so many people or attracts so much attention.

Andrew: So, everyone, then to sum up what we're meaning here, when we say the Taylor Swift Effect, it's about her ability to inspire her fans, the Swifties, who then go on to inspire their friends and their connections and this reverberates throughout society.

Anna: Exactly. And then Taylor Swift is almost like the spark that sets a chain reaction in motion, influencing people who then in turn influence other people. And it's all really about this power of the community and how it resonates with many people.

Andrew: Anna, do you have any other examples of the Taylor Swift Effect? Have you heard or seen any others while, you know, surfing the net or talking with your friends or anything like that?

Anna: Well, her most recent tour, which was the Era's Tour, which is what we were talking about before, she did her American tour, and then she's coming to Europe. So, I know people are going crazy, and they were trying to get tickets. And these tickets, were selling out the minute that they were going on there. And in the opening week of her Era's Tour movie, the film made 95 or 95 to 97 million at the domestic box office. So, there's just so much demand for people to watch things by her, to hear her music, to see the films. And even that New Balance sneakers, I don't know if you heard about that one, Andrew.

Andrew: So, what I heard Anna, is that she wore a pair of New Balance sneakers, which I actually like New Balance sneakers, so I wear them also, but not because of Taylor Swift.

At least I don't think because of Taylor Swift. But maybe it's like this chain reaction. Maybe I'm like the last link in the chain who is buying them because of Taylor Swift. Who knows? But anyways, so Taylor wore a pair of New Balance 550s to the game. And then after, like the next week, following that game, it was reported that there was a 25% jump in revenue for the sales of that specific sneaker, and also units of that sneaker sold by 22%. So, that's just crazy, I don't even think she's sponsored by them or anything, right? But New Balance must be really thankful that they got that indirect endorsement from her.

Anna: Absolutely. And it's interesting, because as far as I know, Taylor Swift doesn't do many commercial collaborations, as far as I remember. But I mean, many people talk about her, and they say that she's the pop star of a generation. There's something different about her and the way that she is, the way that she holds herself to be this type of superstar. And I wonder Andrew, you know, why do you think Taylor Swift has such a significant influence on the music industry? Because there's many other singers out there, but there's not many people that are like Taylor Swift.

Andrew: OK, Anna, we're gonna test our Taylor Swift knowledge here.

Anna: OK.

Andrew: And please correct me if I'm wrong, but I think as far as I know, Taylor got her start at maybe on like a reality show or something. Or like, how did she first start? Initially, she wasn't really a pop star, right? She's like a singer songwriter doing country-style music. And I think that's how she debuted, right? So, she's got like very humble origins. It's not like she was just selected by a record company and then groomed to be a pop star. She's got this sort of, yeah, grassroots beginning, right? So, I think a lot of people sort of look at her and think that she's like a regular, everyday person, not this superstar. So, I think just because of the way that she started her career, maybe that makes her more relatable than some other stars. And then also just the way that she lives her life. You know, she's very honest in her lyrics talking about her personal life, talking about not just

positive things, but like a lot of breakups, right? She's kind of famous for having so many relationships and breakups. But that's another thing that she doesn't really hide. She's very honest about who she is, and the way that she lives her life. So, I think that's maybe what makes her unique, and probably what people can **relate to**.

Anna: Yeah, I think you touched on something really important there, which is there's a phrase that we have in English, which is **the girl next door**, and Taylor kind of is like that, she kind of seems like somebody you grew up with, but you lost touch with and now she's a superstar. Like, you kind of think that you'd be able to meet her, have a coffee with her, and it would be fine. She's approachable, she's relatable. You just feel like you know her when you don't know her at all, obviously, but the way that she relates to people, and like you said in her lyrics, it's so human. I think that's one of the things for me. And you're right, she did start at 17, around 17-16. And she was initially a country singer. And country music is really based around storytelling. So, I think from those beginnings, she kind of transitioned then she released an album called *1989*, she kind of reinvented herself a bit there and went in a slightly different direction. And I think that's a common theme with other artists that are able to kind of reinvent themselves, but still keep the essence of like who they are as an artist, like Madonna, for example, or maybe Rihanna. Like there's these few singers, superstars that are able to do that, like reinvent themselves, but not lose that.

And for me, it's the way she holds herself. Artists are different, and they move differently, if that makes sense. And she just holds herself in a way that I have a lot of respect for. She's obviously an extremely hard worker, I'm sure she has a huge team. There's no denying that, these big stars have a huge number of people behind them, but she will be driving that. So, I'm sure she's an extremely, extremely hard worker. And I don't know, she just comes across as somebody who has a lot of respect for herself and what she does. And recently she decided to rerecord her masters. The masters are like the original copy of your song because they were sold to an investment company. It's quite a long story. But so, I feel like she's an artist. And she's a performer. And she is a businesswoman. I mean,

she's just so many different things. But for me, the key is like her lyrics, what she writes about, it's like, there's things that you've always thought, but you've never had the words to describe it. And she just describes it in a song. And it's so catchy, and you can't stop listening to it.

Andrew: I think that's one of the reasons why I do like Taylor Swift. And maybe if she was this kind of pop star that was created by a record company, and it wasn't really an authentic person, then I probably wouldn't like her that much. But I remember I watched a documentary about Taylor Swift and apologies, listeners, I can't remember the name, but I'm sure you can find it on Netflix easily because that's where I found it. It was like a documentary, and it showed her in the studio a lot. And as a musician myself, I always love watching studio footage and watching people work in the studio and write songs. And I was impressed by just how much she was a part of the songwriting process. Like, of course, she has this huge team of songwriters. And you know, they need to make hits, like she's a business, right, they need to come out with super catchy songs, so that she can stay relevant. But it wasn't like she was doing nothing. She was a huge part of the songwriting process, coming up with the lyrics on her own, writing some songs on the piano and the guitar as well. And it was a real collaboration with her songwriting team. And so, to me, that's really impressive. And that's one of the reasons that I like her is because she's a genuine artist. She's not just this like manufactured pop star.

Anna: Oh, absolutely. She is an artist. She is a musician. She's a talented songwriter. I guess it's like the combination of all of the factors that don't come along very often, but they have for her. And I think with the fans, like if you look at fans for different things, like actors, or maybe sports stars, but I think fans go crazy for musicians. There's just something about music that people connect to on a different level than like a sports person or a film. I would say in general, I don't know if you agree with me, but I feel like people really love music artists, singers, and they just go crazy for them. You know, you see these videos of people at the concerts they're jumping around. I think it's just because all those people there feel like they know Taylor on some level because of the songs that she

writes. The funny thing is, maybe she's a little bit like Ed Sheeran, because I've heard Ed Sheeran talk about his songs. And he's like, "Oh, yeah, I wrote it in like three minutes." And you think, how is that possible? Like, how did you write something so clever and like, simple, but simple sometimes is the hardest thing to do. But you know, I feel like she's one of those people who's like, "Oh, yeah, I just, you know, I wrote it in like, five minutes." You know, one of her most famous songs like "Blank Space." She's like, "Oh, yeah, I just wrote that in like, three minutes." I find that really amazing and really, really admirable. I think she's an admirable person. And she's obviously worked extremely hard. And it's tough to be in the spotlight like that, you know, because being like that, in the spotlight comes with a lot of pressure, and, you know, responsibility. So, I'm sure that she feels that way, too. So, I have a lot of respect for people that are in that position, because I'm sure that it's not easy at all.

Andrew: Yeah, that's a really interesting point about musicians being the most admired more so than sports stars, or movie stars. I wonder why that is. But I tend to agree with you. I wonder if it's because we can listen to a song over and over and over again. But it's pretty hard to do that with a movie or a clip of a sporting event or something. I wonder if that has something to do with it.

Anna: I think it's to do with the fact that a song can just hit you at an emotional level, like something that you're going through or something that you feel it's like raw, it's more visceral. I don't know, there's just something about a song that just **hits us in a different way** than a sports game or a movie or whatever. And I think that's why bands, all these Swifties. And, you know, Rihanna has got her Navy and ...

Andrew: Is that what they're called? Rihanna's the Navy? I didn't know that.

Anna: Yeah, the Navy and Lady Gaga, for example, they kind of have a following because there's just something about music. I think that connects into just a different way, in my opinion, anyway.

Andrew: Yeah, that's really interesting. So, Anna, I wanted to shift the focus here just a little bit to ask you about the role that the media plays in the Taylor Swift Effect, because obviously, it's not just Taylor, that has a part to play, right? Also, the media is involved, the fans are involved. There's a lot of moving parts. So, what's your opinion on this? What do you think is the role of the media in producing the Taylor Swift Effect?

Anna: I'm not really sure because I mean, obviously, they will cover all of her life events. And as you saw with this NFL game, they kind of blew up everywhere, you know, and the media was covering all of that story. I don't know what her relationship has been with the media in the past, but she's quite a private person. So, I think in terms of her private life, she **holds her cards pretty close to her chest** deliberately to avoid that type of media coverage. I mean, obviously, it will have a big impact on spreading her tours, her music, etc. But I think for me, it seems like most of the media coverage is about her music or her tour, and she keeps her cards pretty close to her chest in terms of her personal life, which I also really respect as well, because I'm sure that's also extremely difficult to avoid people knowing about your private life. So, I really respect that as well. What do you think?

Andrew: Yeah, I think it's like a cycle that kind of feeds on itself, right? Like, for example, Taylor Swift goes to the football game, and then more people watch the football game. And then people talk about more people watching the football game. And then the next week, the game happens again, and she goes to another game, and then more people tune in, because yeah, it's probably the Taylor Swift Effect in action, right? Like, maybe you're a big Taylor Swift fan, so you say, "Oh, I got to watch the game on Sunday to see Taylor." And then you invite your friends to come over and watch it with you and it spreads like this. And so like, it just is like this cyclone that gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And so yeah, I think definitely, there's a huge role that the media plays. I mean, here living in South Korea, you know, this is not like a scientific survey or something. But I would say Taylor is not too popular here. Judging just from talking with my students, of course, there are some people who know who she is. But she doesn't have that huge level of fame that she does probably in other parts of the world, in North America, Europe and stuff, at least

here in Korea. So, if I didn't hear about Taylor through the media, then I wouldn't hear about her because it's not like the people in my social circle are talking about her. But yet still, I know all of these things about Taylor Swift. I know about this football game. I know about her new boyfriend, and that is all just because of the media. So, I think yeah, there's definitely a big role that the media plays in hyping her, for sure.

Anna: Oh, yeah. And I mean, she benefits from that as well. You know, there's no denying that, like, there's an expression in English, which is like, no publicity is bad publicity. So, even if it's something that's really bad, you're still getting out there, you're still getting your name out there, people are finding out about who you are. I'm not sure if everyone would agree with that statement. But I'm sure you know, it benefits her in a way to be talked about in the press and things like this, because then more people can find out about her. So, there's obviously that knock on effect as well of that, but anything she does just blows up in the media, just blows up in the press, anybody that she's seen with, any romantic interest. I can just imagine her or other celebrities that have these sort of things. And they're like, "Why do people care?" Like, who cares, you know? And I mean, that in the nicest way possible, like, I would be really happy for anybody that's starting a new relationship, if that's what they want, but like, really, who cares? Like, just let them get on with it because it sells, you know, it sells? People want to hear about these sorts of things. But you know, really, you've got to think like, really? Is that what's covered in the newspaper like Taylor Swift going to an NFL game? I'm sure she would agree that maybe there's something else slightly more interesting or important that we might want to be focusing on, you know, but well, it is what it is.

Andrew: Anna, final question here for you before we wrap things up. And I really want to know your perspective on this, because it doesn't really apply to me as much. But I'm curious like, especially in like style and fashion, how much impact does Taylor have in women's fashion? And have you ever put together an outfit or shopped for some clothes, because you've seen Taylor Swift wear something that you thought looks amazing?

Anna: would say preppy, cute style, and its kind of been reinvented as well over the years. So, I mean, I'm sure she has a lot of influence on some people's taste, but it's not my particular taste, I've got to be honest. But she's definitely got a kind of a preppy style. She's also got the trend of like wearing red lipstick, that always kind of makes me think of Taylor. And she wore a couple of really beautiful dresses and outfits when she was going to award ceremonies and things. But I think if I compare with somebody like Rihanna, for example, who's another big singer, pop star, I think she's got more of an influence than somebody like Taylor Swift. So, I think they're very different artists, of course. But I think yeah, I would say that Rihanna is more of a fashion person. And when I think of Taylor Swift, I really think of the music and the lyrics and, and the tours and things like this more than fashion.

Andrew: Taylor Swift just dresses like she hangs out at country clubs and rides horses.

Anna: Yeah. And she's just chill. And she just yeah, little jumpers, and the little dresses and skirts and boots and things like that. Yeah, she just looks like a normal person. And I think that is the biggest thing that appeals to people. She looks like somebody that you know, that lived on your street when you were younger that you played with outside, and now she's this famous superstar.

Andrew: OK, Culips members, Anna and I are going to keep our conversation going just for a few minutes here just to say thank you for being a Culips member and to show our appreciation. So, Anna, we have three rapid fire questions. The first one is I'm curious, do you have a favourite Taylor Swift song? What's your favourite song of hers?

Anna: Oh, my goodness. Where to start? I love "Blank Space." I love "Karma," "Wildest Dreams," "I Forgot You Existed." I love loads of them. There's another one which is like, "Welcome to New York." I love that one as well. What about you?

Andrew: I think I like "Shake It Off" the most.

Anna: Oh, the classic. OK. All right. Feel good tune.

Andrew: Yeah, what's the one, "Say you will remember me?" What's the lyric in that one?

Anna: "Wildest dreams"? Yeah.

Andrew: Weirdly enough I have that on my running playlist.

Anna: Oh!

Andrew: Yeah. It's like a low-energy song. But for some reason, it helps me to run to that tune. And the lyrics are a little bit weird. I gotta be honest in that one. Whenever I listen to the lyrics, I'm like, I don't know what to think about the song but overall good song.

Anna: Yeah, great song. I love her new one, Karma as well. There's this line in there where she's like, "Karma is the breeze in my hair on the weekend, aren't you sad for you that it's not?" So, ah the lyrics in that song are just really good. So yeah, that's definitely one of the recent ones that she did, which are really nice.

Andrew: I don't think I've heard that one. I'll go listen after we finish recording.

Anna: Oh, you'll love it. It's so catchy. So catchy.

Andrew: Rapid fire question number two. Do you think this romance between Taylor and Kelce, will it last?

Anna: I have absolutely no idea. And I think if they want it to last, it can last. If they don't, it won't. Like I really don't have any opinion on those sorts of things. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, me too. Don't know. Don't care. Best of luck to them. Yeah.

Anna: Yeah. Like, do what you want. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Like, let them be, definitely.

Andrew: And I guess probably listeners can tell already the answer to this question. But question number three. How much of an influence does Taylor Swift have on you personally? Are you influenced by her? Do you check out her new albums when they drop? Do your friends or coworkers listen to her albums? Or are they influenced by her?

Anna: Yeah, definitely. I'll check out her new album. And I think the way that she influences my personal life is just that I listened to her music, you know, every now and again, I'll put on a Taylor Swift song, or it'll come on shuffle, and I'll sing around my house or whatever. I'm annoying my neighbour, I'm sure, singing extremely badly. What about you, Andrew?

Andrew: Yeah, I have a slight **bone to pick** with Taylor Swift. And that is that she releases too many things. Like, if I go onto Spotify, there's all like special editions of this album and then like re-mastered or Taylor Swift special version, and I love listening to music on vinyl. And recently, they've re-released Taylor Swift's whole catalog on vinyl. And I heard that, because she's so huge like, there's not too many vinyl pressing plants in the world these days. It's kind of like a, you know, an old medium, I suppose. So, there's not too many plants. But the Taylor Swift albums are selling so well, that they're just taking over all the pressing facilities. And so other bands can't press their vinyl. And so, there's a huge like delay in albums being released on vinyl these days because of Taylor Swift. So, I do like to check out her new music, but I just wish she wouldn't produce so many special editions of everything. Just one album would be fine. But yeah, I mean, that's a small complaint.

Anna: Yeah, but there is a reason behind that with the Taylor Swift version, which comes back to the thing about her masters because she wanted to rerecord them because of that

issue that she had with somebody selling her original masters who now owns the original masters. So, she's rerecording them. So, there is a reason behind that. But yeah, I know what you mean. It's kind of like Taylor's Version, the normal version, the special edition bonus content or whatever it is. But yeah, her albums are really, really good. I mean, she's released a lot of stuff. So, there's a couple of albums that maybe I haven't been as interested in, but she's just great. She's a great artist.

Andrew: All right. Well, let's leave it at that. Thank you, everybody, and we'll talk to you next time. Bye!

Anna: Bye!

Andrew: That brings us to the end of this lesson. Talk to you next time. Bye!

Detailed Explanations

To live under a rock

Idiom, informal

At the beginning of this episode, Andrew explains who Taylor Swift is, just in case some listeners are living under a rock and aren't familiar with her.

To **live under a rock** is an idiomatic expression that means to be uninformed about something widely known. If a person is living under a rock, they're disconnected from the world around them, isolated from news, and clueless about what's happening out there. To remember this idiom, you can visualize a person literally living under a rock: with no internet or any other connection to the outside world.

This expression is typically used when expressing surprise about somebody not knowing something major, common knowledge, current events, or big news. For example, if your friend hasn't heard of a very famous actor, you might say, 'Have you been living under a rock?' It's a lighthearted and playful way to emphasize that they should really be aware of this actor because he's very well-known.

You can also use this expression with modal verbs, such as 'might' or 'must.' For example, you might say to someone, "If you haven't heard of the Beatles, you must be living under a rock. They're one of the most iconic bands in history!"

Here are some examples using **to live under a rock**:

Sophie: Have you watched the TikTok video I sent you?

Will: What's TikTok?

Sophie: What do you mean what's TikTok? **Have you been living under a rock?** It's one of the most popular social media platforms! I can't believe you haven't heard of it.

Jade: Hey, we're going to watch the *Men in Black* trilogy on the weekend, are you in?

Nick: Wait, there's a third movie? I had no idea! I **must have been living under a rock**.

To relate to [someone/something]

Verb phrase

When discussing Taylor Swift's significant influence on the music industry, Andrew and Anna suggest that what makes her so unique is that people can **relate to her**. They say this is because of the way she started her career and her honesty about life in her songs.

To **relate to someone** means to connect with them on a personal level. If you relate to a person, you understand their feelings, usually because you've experienced something similar. When you relate to someone, it means you know how it feels to be in their situation. This expression helps communicate empathy and support, letting a person know that you understand what they are going through.

The expression is often used in the phrase "I can relate." For example, if a friend tells you that their boss is annoying them, you might say, "Yeah, I can relate." This means that you've experienced a similar thing in the past, therefore you know how your friend feels about it.

You can also use this expression in the negative, as in "I can't relate." For example, if someone tells you about their problem, but you have no idea what it feels like because you've never had anything like that happen to you, you might say: "I can't really relate."

Andrew and Anna refer to Taylor Swift as "relatable." The adjective "relatable" is a very common way to describe someone or something that people can relate to.

Here are a couple examples with **to relate to [someone/something]**:

Jennifer: Hey Zach, how was your weekend?

Zach: We spent all weekend choosing materials for our new house. Renovating it is way more stressful than I imagined.

Jennifer: **I can relate.** When we bought our house, it took us a year to finish it up. It seems like a never-ending process.

Kelly: I'm so tired! I haven't slept in weeks. The baby is always crying, I just don't know what to do.

Richard: That sounds tough. I **can't really relate**, you know, because I don't have children, but I can only imagine how exhausting it must be.

The girl/boy next door

Idiom

When discussing what makes Taylor Swift stand out, Anna points out that she seems like somebody you grew up with, somebody you know. Anna affectionately refers to her as "the girl next door."

The expression **the girl next door** literally means that the girl lives close to you, usually in the next house. However, this expression is often used idiomatically. "The girl next door" or "the boy next door" is a phrase we use to describe a type of person who is friendly, simple, and easy to approach. When a woman is described as the girl next door, it means she comes across as just an ordinary person, not famous or wealthy, leading a normal life.

If you think about it, most famous people often appear pretentious, glamorous, and not easy to relate to because their lives are so different from ours. Taylor Swift, on the other hand, is different – she's genuine, approachable, and relatable, just like any other person who lives in your neighborhood.

Describing someone as "the girl/boy next door" is a positive expression that you can use as a compliment. It indicates that you feel comfortable around the person, as if they were an old friend. This expression is often used to describe people who are famous or popular but don't act like big stars and just seem like ordinary, down-to-earth, regular people.

Here are a couple examples with **the girl/boy next door**:

Sam: So, Annie, how's your first week here at the office going?

Annie: Not so bad, thanks! I like it here.

Sam: And what do you think about our boss?

Annie: She's lovely! Very nice and approachable, like **the girl next door**. I'm quite surprised! My former boss was nothing like her.

Rose: Natalie tells me your college friend is coming by tonight. So, what's he like?

Frank: Oh, Jake's great! He's easygoing and friendly. He's **the boy next door**, you know. I'm sure you'll love him.

To hit in a different way

Slang

When discussing why musicians are admired more than other famous people, Anna suggests that the reason is that songs hit us at an emotional level, they hit us in a different way than sports games or movies.

When something hits you, it means it has a strong impact on you. The verb "to hit" is commonly used to describe how a piece of art, music, literature, or any experience evokes strong emotions. In this episode, Anna compares the effect music has on people to the way other things affect us. By saying that music **hits us in a different way**, she means that it has a unique impact, on a whole other level. If something hits in a different way, it resonates with people, making a bigger and more profound impression.

For example, if a book impressed you greatly, more than any other book you've ever read, you might say it hit you in a different way. This expression is a good way to describe something that's particularly special and stands out from anything else of a similar kind.

A similar slang expression, "to hit different," has become popular on social media lately. It's used to talk about a different, typically better, impact of things that normally don't have such a significant effect. One of Taylor Swift's songs is titled "Hits Different." Give it a listen to hear how she uses this expression!

Here are a couple more examples with **to hit in a different way**:

Tyler: How was your trip to Iceland?

Katy: Oh, it was wonderful! I've always wanted to see the Northern lights. I've seen thousands of pictures but experiencing them in real life just **hits you in a different way**.

Tyler: I can imagine!

Tony: Do you have any plans for tonight?

Sarah: Dean is taking me to a hockey game. I've never been to one before!

Tony: Oh, you're going to love it! Watching it live **hits in a different way**. The energy, the cheering crowd, the tension. It's a whole different experience!

To hold [one's] cards close to [one's] chest

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew asks Anna about the role that the media plays in the Taylor Swift effect. In response, Anna explains that while the media has a significant impact on Taylor's music, when it comes to her private life, she prefers to hold her cards close to her chest to avoid that type of media coverage.

The idiom **to hold [one's] cards close to [one's] chest** originates from the act of keeping playing cards physically close to your body, preventing others from seeing them, when playing games like poker. However, it has evolved into an idiomatic expression, meaning to be private and not divulge every detail of something. When someone holds their cards close to their chest, they are keeping their plans and thoughts secret.

For instance, if a scientist is conducting research but isn't revealing the exact nature of what they're trying to test or discover, you can say that they are holding their cards close to their chest.

Variations of this expression include "to play [one's] cards close to [one's] chest" and "to keep [one's] cards close to [one's] chest." These three variations share the same meaning and can be used interchangeably.

An expression with the opposite meaning is "to lay [one's] cards on the table," which signifies being open, honest, and not concealing anything.

Here are a couple more examples with **to hold [one's] cards close to [one's] chest**:

Jeff: So, do you guys have any plans for your 10th anniversary?

Sally: Tim said he's planning a weekend getaway, but **he's holding his cards close to his chest** on the details! I'm so excited, can't wait to find out what he's prepared.

Michael: I've heard you're looking for another job? Is that true?

Emma: Yeah, but I'm **keeping my cards close to my chest** for now. I need to make sure I get the new job before I hand in the resignation letter.

To have a bone to pick

Idiom, informal

In this episode, Andrew and Anna discuss the influence of Taylor Swift on their lives. Andrew mentions that he has a slight bone to pick with Taylor because her frequent vinyl releases create delays for other artists trying to press their albums.

The expression **to have a bone to pick** means to have a problem or complaint. This idiom is a polite way to address an issue that's bothering you, allowing you to discuss it with someone without being confrontational. It's a softer and more diplomatic approach to let someone know that there is an issue that needs to be resolved, as opposed to directly stating that you have a problem with them.

For example, if you're unhappy with the way your colleague organized the files, you can initiate a conversation with them by saying, "I have a bone to pick with you."

It's common to use quantifiers with this idiom, such as "a little," "a bit of," or "slight," as Andrew did in this episode. People often say things like, "I have a bit of a bone to pick with you" or "I have a little bone to pick with you" to indicate that the issue may not be major but still should be discussed.

Here are a couple more examples with **to have a bone to pick**:

Simon: Hey, Teresa. I **have a bit of a bone to pick with you**.

Teresa: Oh, what is it?

Simon: You've been leaving dirty dishes in the sink. You know the rules, right? No dirty dishes in the sink. We have a dishwasher for that.

Teresa: My bad! It won't happen again, promise.

Paul: I really like getting my groceries delivered! It's so convenient and saves me so much time.

Lucy: I do that as well sometimes, though I do **have a bone to pick with those services**. They use way too many plastic bags! Sometimes they just put one item in a separate bag, it's ridiculous!

Quiz

1. **If a friend says to you that you're living under a rock, they mean that _____.**
 - a) you really like rock music
 - b) you enjoy spending time in nature
 - c) you have a minimalist lifestyle
 - d) you're unaware of something well-known

2. **Which of the following does NOT reflect the meaning of the verb "to relate to someone?"**
 - a) Understanding how they feel
 - b) Having been through a similar experience
 - c) Not trusting them
 - d) Feeling connected to this person

3. **True or false? The girl next door describes a relatable person.**
 - a) True
 - b) False

4. **If you don't talk about your plans and intentions, you _____.**
 - a) lay your cards on the table
 - b) hold your cards close to your chest
 - c) hit the cards in a different way
 - d) keep the cards under a rock

5. **If you have a bone to pick with someone, it means that _____.**
 - a) you're really good friends
 - b) you don't understand them
 - c) you have a complaint or issue to discuss with them
 - d) you want to share a meal together

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Are you a Swifty? How do you feel about Taylor Swift's work?
2. Can you share a story about a moment when you really related to someone or something in your life?
3. Can you think of a song or piece of art that has hit you in a different way?
4. In what situations do you usually hold your cards close to your chest?
5. Can you think of a situation where you had a bone to pick with someone? What happened?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

Hosts: Andrew Bates and Anna Connelly

Music: *Something Elated* by Broke for Free

Episode preparation/research: Andrew Bates

Audio editor: Marshall Vaillancourt

Transcriptionist: Heather Bates

Study guide writer: Alina Morozova

English editor: Andrew Bates

Operations: Tsuyoshi Kaneshima

Image: Nickpanek620 (Pixabay.com)