

## Chatterbox #150 – The Culips bookworm club

### Episode Description

There's nothing better than a good page-turner, is there? In this episode, Harp and Andrew talk all about reading. Join them as they discuss their reading habits, the books they had to read for school, and their favourite novels of all time.

### Sample Dialogue

Andrew: I love to read, and in the past, I was a big reader. But you know what? If I'm honest, I'm not really a big reader anymore.

Harp: Oh, interesting. I would have to say the same thing. I was actually a really big **bookworm** when I was growing up, and now I feel like I don't have time, or I'm maybe just distracted by other things, like watching TV or reading on my smartphone.

### Expressions Included in the Learning Materials

- To leave an impression on someone
- To be big on something
- A bookworm
- I feel you
- The wrong side of the tracks
- To speak to you
- To be on to something
- To be into something
- Magical realism
- Second-hand
- A letdown
- On the flip side
- To branch away



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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.

### Transcript

Harp: Hello, everyone. This is Harp.

Andrew: And I'm Andrew, and we're back with another Culips episode.

Harp: Yes. Make sure you check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com because there you'll find all our older episodes, and you can sign up and become a member.

Andrew: And becoming a member is great for taking your English studies to the next level, and we highly recommend that you do it. When you are a member, you get access to full transcripts of each and every one of our episodes along with detailed explanations of the key expressions we talk about, and you get quizzes to test your comprehension.

Harp: Exactly. So, make sure you go sign up and become a member. And we're also on Facebook and on Twitter, so come on over there and say hi. And if you like us, you should go to iTunes and rate us.

Andrew: Yeah. Give us a 5-star rating. Don't give us a 1-star rating.

Harp: No. Exactly. Don't give us a 1-star rating. But if you don't like us, definitely send us an email or comment on Facebook about what we can do to improve.

Andrew: Yeah. That's a good idea. So, Harp, what's new with you? How are things going?

Harp: Pretty good. I'm a little bit tired right now because I just came back from a work trip.

Andrew: A work trip? Like a business trip?

Harp: Yup. I was on a business trip to our Portland, Maine, office.

Andrew: Portland, Maine. I've been to Portland, Oregon, on the West Coast of the United States, but I've never been to Portland, Maine.

- Harp: Everyone thought, when I said that I was going to Portland, that I was going to Portland, Oregon. And then when I told them I was driving there, they got even more concerned because they thought, "How are you gonna drive all the way across the country?" And they just got confused. But no, I went to Portland, Maine, which is a beautiful little city. And I was there for a conference, and it was very, very interesting but exhausting.
- Andrew: Exhausting? But it's a nice little place?
- Harp: It's very nice. I really recommend you go there. I don't know if you've been to Maine before, but I'm a big fan.
- Andrew: I've never been there. I'll have to check it out sometime.
- Harp: Yup. You will. 'Cause Portland's right on the water, and it's got all these kind of old streets. It looks a little bit like Old Montreal but with a New England style.
- Andrew: OK. Very cool.
- Harp: Mmhmm. And it's lobster season, so that was wonderful.
- Andrew: Oh, yeah. They're **big on seafood** there, right?
- Harp: Yup. Exactly.
- Andrew: Cool. Cool. So today, we are going to do a Chatterbox episode, and in this kind of episode, we just have a conversation. And we talk about things that are interesting to us, current events, or Canadian culture. And today, we are going to chat about what?
- Harp: We're gonna talk about reading and books. We're gonna start with talking about kind of how we read and where we read. And then we're gonna talk about some of the books that we had to read.
- Andrew: Exactly. Some books in school that we were forced to read. And then we're gonna talk about our favourite books and authors that have **left a big impression on us**.
- Harp: Yup. So, I think we should get started. I'm excited about this topic.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's gonna be a good one. Let's start.
- Harp: OK. So let's start with talking about reading habits. First thing I wanna know, Andrew, are you a big reader?
- Andrew: I love to read, and in the past, I was a big reader. But you know what? If I'm honest, I'm not really a big reader anymore.

- Harp: Oh, interesting. I would have to say the same thing. I was actually a really big **bookworm** when I was growing up, and now I feel like I don't have time, or I'm maybe just distracted by other things, like watching TV or reading on my smartphone.
- Andrew: Mmhmm. Exactly. You know, for the last couple of years, I was a student in grad school, and I had to do so much reading for school that I never had the chance to read just for fun, to read for pleasure. And so when I graduated, I was really stoked to be able to have time back just to read for fun and read books I wanted to read, but I actually haven't finished that many books since I've graduated. It's kinda sad.
- Harp: Hmm. That's interesting. Maybe you just needed a little break after reading so much in school.
- Andrew: It could be. But you know what? I think **you're on to something** with the smartphone comment. Because it's not necessarily that I'm reading less, it's just that I'm reading in a different way. So a lot of times before I go to sleep, I'll be looking at my cell phone and maybe reading the news or reading an article on my phone. And this is still reading, it's just not reading a book.
- Harp: Yes. I do the same thing. But now I'm gonna ask you a question about reading habits. And do you have a Kindle or an e-reader where you could read in bed like that?
- Andrew: I do have a Kindle, yeah.
- Harp: Oh, but you don't use that, you use your smartphone.
- Andrew: Yeah. But I have an old-school Kindle that has no Wi-Fi connection, so if I wanna read a website, I have to do it on my phone or computer.
- Harp: But you could read a book in bed on your e-reader.
- Andrew: You know what? It's very true. What about you? Do you have an e-reader?
- Harp: Nope. I don't. And I have to be honest, until very recently, I never even wanted one. I really like reading, like, a book! Like, I like the feeling of paper, and it's just... It's an excitement when you're finished the book. Or when you're just... Even right now, I'm looking at my book, and I'm just excited to read it. So I never thought I would want an e-reader, but I've seen some of the new ones, and they're pretty cool.

- Andrew: Yeah, I was like you. I was really against getting an e-reader to start with, just 'cause I thought it would be a distraction. And that's really why I got one that had no Internet connectivity, because I didn't want to have little messages pop up saying that I have an email, or I didn't want to get texts on it or anything because I'm easily distracted. But **I feel you**, you know? Reading a book, there's a certain satisfaction to flipping through the pages, for sure.
- Harp: Yup. And the other thing is I love going to the library and getting my books from the library. But I've recently discovered that you can get electronic books for your e-reader from the library.
- Andrew: I know. How convenient.
- Harp: It's amazing. That might make me buy an e-reader.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's pretty cool how you can just sort of download it for a week or two and read it online, read it digitally, and then it disappears. No going to the library.
- Harp: Yup. 'Cause I have to be honest. I'm always late returning my books at the library.
- Andrew: Yes. So, maybe this is a good choice for you.
- Harp: Yup. I think it might be. But we'll see. Do you go to the library a lot, or do you like to buy books from a bookstore?
- Andrew: You know what? I am a bit of both. I do like to go to the library, and I think it's a good resource. But these days, I like to read books that are written by my favourite authors when they first come out, you know? When there's a new book released, I like to read it right away. And usually, if the book is at the library, a lot of people think the same way as me, and there's a lot of holds. And it takes forever to be able to get that book from the library. So I usually just end up buying it.
- Harp: Yes, but now that they have the electronic versions, you could get it and put it on your Kindle.
- Andrew: Well, that's another thing. Or I put it on my Kindle, yeah.
- Harp: For me, it's really rare that I buy a book, and it's usually only when I'm travelling, and I've forgotten to bring a book with me.
- Andrew: Oh, yeah. Yeah, for sure. You don't wanna be travelling without a book.
- Harp: No, exactly. But typically, I go to the library. I love libraries.

Andrew: Now, what about **second-hand** bookstores, used bookstores? Do you like shopping there?

Harp: To me, it doesn't make that big of a difference. I just... I could go to them, but I typically just end up going to the library. I don't know, I really just like the library.

Andrew: I like looking through used bookstores because I liked old things. And sometimes you find some really cool treasures in the used bookstore, some of your favourite books with, you know, a different cover. Or you might see a first edition of a book, which is always rare and collectible. So, I'm kind of geeky in that way, so I like **second-hand** bookstores.

Harp: Cool.

Andrew: Mmhmm. But I gotta be honest with you. These days, I try just to not buy any books because in the last 5 or 6 years, I've moved a ton, and there's nothing worse than moving books.

Harp: I was thinking the same thing because I don't even have a bookshelf. I have no place to store books let alone move them. So I can't really buy books. That's why I find the library great because then I just return them.

Andrew: Yeah. So plus one point for the library and also for the Kindle.

Harp: Yup. For sure. All right, should we move on to our next topic?

Andrew: So, we are going to talk about books that we had to read in school.

Harp: Yes. Now, what book do you remember that you had to read and that you loved when you were a kid?

Andrew: Hmm. Well, each year in English class, we had to read a couple of books. So it was mandatory through the curriculum that the government sets up. But some books that I really remember liking were *Lord of the Flies* and also *Animal Farm*.

Harp: Hmm. Interesting. I didn't actually have to read those, but I have read them because my sister was assigned them.

Andrew: OK. Yeah. See, this is why I thought it would be interesting to talk about this because every grade usually has to read a different book, so nobody reads the same thing.

- Harp: Sometimes. It really depends. For example, because my sister was a year older than me, often she would read a book in a year, and then I would read it the next year when I got to the same grade. But for some reason, I didn't have to read *Animal Farm* or *Lord of the Flies*, but I enjoyed both of them.
- Andrew: Yeah. I think what happens is that teachers have several books that they can choose from. And because it gets boring to teach the same book year after year after year, maybe they alternate between a couple. So that's right, your sister may have read one book but not you.
- Harp: Yup. Exactly.
- Andrew: What about you? What are some books that you remember reading from school?
- Harp: I remember reading *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton, which was a fantastic book, and I have read it so many times.
- Andrew: Yeah? You've read it again and again and again?
- Harp: Again and again. I really... I think I've read it maybe 20 times.
- Andrew: Now, it's funny that you mention this book because this is a book that I didn't have to read in school, but that I know some of my friends had to.
- Harp: Yeah. It was... It was a popular book that many people had to read.
- Andrew: Mmhmm.
- Harp: So, you've never read it?
- Andrew: I've never read it. What's it about?
- Harp: It's about a group of kids, a group of teenaged boys that grow up kind of on **the wrong side of the tracks**. And I think it's about the period of about 3 months that it follows them. It's... It's really well written, and when you're a teenager you kinda connect with it.
- Andrew: **It speaks to you.**
- Harp: Yup.
- Andrew: OK. Very cool. Now, **on the flip side**, what are some books or some stories that you had to read in school that you didn't like?
- Harp: I loved pretty much everything. I had a hard time reading Shakespeare. I have to be honest.



- Andrew: Mmhmm. Yeah, Shakespeare comes to mind for me too. It's kind of a love-hate relationship because I actually think his stories are really cool, but you have to work really hard to understand them.
- Harp: Exactly the same thing that I think.
- Andrew: It's not easy reading. It's almost, like, in a different language. The vocabulary is very old-fashioned, so you really have to put a lot of effort into reading Shakespeare. But it's great at the same time. I really enjoy it.
- Harp: Yeah. Definitely. I think I enjoy it when I've read it more than once, one of his plays or one of his poems.
- Andrew: For sure. Yeah. It gets more interesting every time you read it.
- Harp: Yup. Definitely.
- Andrew: Did you ever have to read a short story called *The Lottery*?
- Harp: Oh. I'm sure I did. This is making me think of something. Tell me a little bit about what it was.
- Andrew: It was a Canadian short story written... Oh, I can't even remember the author's name. But I think we had to read this in grade 10, and I just... I don't remember all the details of the story. But I just remember really hating it because I had to do an assignment about it. And I don't think I understood it very well. I just didn't like *The Lottery*.
- Harp: I think you should go back and read it now and see if you still hate it.
- Andrew: Hey, you know, that's right. I'd probably like it now.
- Harp: Maybe you understand it a bit more now?
- Andrew: It's like most things, you know? I hated math in high school, but if I had to do math now, I'd really like it. So, I think when you mature a little bit, you start to like some of these things you didn't like. I think **you're on to something**.
- Harp: Yup. I don't typically like short stories that much though, so that was definitely the... the topic in English that I didn't like to do.
- Andrew: Yeah. That's... That's funny. I agree. I don't like short stories.
- Harp: No. I feel you... You get involved with the character, and then the story's over. It's... It's just **a letdown**.
- Andrew: Yeah. It's too short.



- Harp: Mhmm. Exactly. I prefer novels.
- Andrew: Me as well. If we **branch away** from school now and just talk about some of our favourite books in general, what would you say your favourite books are? Maybe we'll start with when we were young, when we were kids. What type of books did you like to read as a kid?
- Harp: Like I was saying before, I was a really big **bookworm**, so I read a lot. I read everything I could get my hands on. If I try to think some of my favourites... I loved *Charlotte's Web*.
- Andrew: Mhmm. That was a good one.
- Harp: Yeah.
- Andrew: A good movie too.
- Harp: Yup. I really liked *Little Women*. I loved Nancy Drew books.
- Andrew: Nancy Drew. Yeah, for sure. I didn't read any Nancy Drew, but I was really **into** mystery stories. And I know Nancy Drew is a mystery series, so I read the Hardy Boys.
- Harp: I was just gonna guess that you read the Hardy Boys.
- Andrew: It's weird how these books are kind of gendered. These Nancy Drew stories are more for girls, and Hardy Boys are more marketed towards boys at least in our generation. I don't know if things are like that now.
- Harp: Yeah. I think they might still be, but I definitely read both. I read Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew.
- Andrew: Yeah. I loved mysteries when I was a kid, but it's funny because I don't read mysteries now.
- Harp: Nope. Me neither. So what about you? What were some of your favourite books when you were growing up as a kid?
- Andrew: Yeah, like I said, I loved the Hardy Boys. There was another mystery series called The Boxcar Kids. I don't know if you ever read those but...
- Harp: Nope.
- Andrew: They were awesome. I liked Judy Blume books.
- Harp: Yes. How could I have forgotten?

- Andrew: And Beverly Cleary as well. She wrote the *Ramona* series. So those were always really cool. I also liked some picture books, like *Where the Wild Things Are*.
- Harp: Yeah. That's a good one.
- Andrew: It's a really good one. So, yeah, I read a lot as a kid, and I loved going to the library and reading books.
- Harp: Yup. What about when you were more of a teenager, or maybe even as an adult, what is a book that stands out in your mind?
- Andrew: Well, over the last two summers, for the last two summers, I've read a book by Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*. I read it two summers in a row 'cause it's so big, and I wanted to get the most out of it. So, that's something that's stuck with me for the last little while just 'cause I devoted so much time to reading it.
- Harp: Did you read it two times? Or you read it once over a 2-year span?
- Andrew: Good question. I read it two times. Two summers in a row I spent reading this book. But I really love it. It's great.
- Harp: Yup. I've read it once, but I... I think I could definitely read it again and find a lotta stuff that I missed the first time because it is a big, intense read.
- Andrew: Yeah. And, you know, I just have a poor attention span, and I find that if I really like something, it's good to invest the time to read it two or three times because I get so much more out of it.
- Harp: I'm the exact same because I get so excited about a book that I read it really quickly and then I miss something, so then I read it again.
- Andrew: Yeah. I know. It's a great strategy. What about you? What are some of your favourite books?
- Harp: One of my favourite authors is Isabel Allende, who is a Chilean writer. And her first book that I read was her actual first book, which is *The House of the Spirits*. And I've loved every single thing she's written. And I just read one of her latest books last week, and she's just amazing.
- Andrew: Really? I've never even heard of her.
- Harp: Ah, she's... She's wonderful. You have to read something. A lot of people compare her to kind of the writing of Gabriel García...
- Andrew: Márquez?

- Harp: Márquez. Yup.
- Andrew: Cool.
- Harp: But she's... I think she's even better, personally.
- Andrew: So is it kind of like a **magical realism**—type thing?
- Harp: It's more like political history with a little bit of magicalism. That's where the comparison comes from.
- Andrew: Sounds great.
- Harp: Ah, she's... She's wonderful. I really... I've read her books many times, and I think that Chile is my adopted country in Latin America just because of her.
- Andrew: Ah, very neat. I've been reading a lot of Margaret Atwood recently, too. My partner has been on a Margaret Atwood binge, so she's reading all her books and bringing them home from the library. And I've just been finishing them as they come. And they're really good. I really like Margaret Atwood.
- Harp: She's a great author, a great Canadian author.
- Andrew: And a good poet too. I don't know if you've read her poetry.
- Harp: Nope. I haven't actually.
- Andrew: Very talented lady.
- Harp: OK.
- Andrew: I have a book recommendation for you, actually, Harp.
- Harp: Oh, I'm excited.
- Andrew: Yeah. One of my favourite authors is a Japanese author called Haruki Murakami. And I've read almost all of his books, but I really like one called *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*. And I think you should check this book out. I think you'll like it.
- Harp: Hmm. What kind of... What style would you say it is?
- Andrew: Well, it's kind of this **magical realism**. It's kind of a drama, but there's a lot of almost sci-fi elements to it. It's just a real interesting adventure. And, it's great. It's a great story.
- Harp: Sounds very exciting.

Andrew: Yeah. But it's a long book, so be prepared.

Harp: OK. I think I'll... I think I'll check it out, check if the library has it.

Andrew: What about for me? Do you have any books you can recommend me?

Harp: I think you should definitely read Isabel Allende. You should start with *The House of the Spirits*. Another one...

Andrew: I just have a question for you. How do you spell that author's name?

Harp: OK. Her last name is A-L-L-E-N-D-E.

Andrew: OK. Cool. So, I'll have to do a search when I get home.

Harp: Yes. She's... She's wonderful, and I really... That's my recommendation for you.

Andrew: Right on. Well, I think we are good to end this episode now. We've talked all about books. We started by talking about our reading habits, and then we talked about reading at school and just our overall favourite authors.

Harp: Exactly. So remember to go to the website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com, and become a member.

Andrew: Yeah. Become a member, and we will talk to you next time.

Harp: Bye everyone.

Andrew: Bye.

## Detailed Explanations

### To leave an impression on someone

When something **leaves an impression on you**, it affects you in a very strong way. If something causes you to remember it clearly and for a long time, then that thing has **left an impression on you**.

In this episode, Andrew mentions that he and Harp will talk about authors who have **left impressions on them**. In other words, they will talk about their favorite writers—the ones who have affected them deeply and who have written memorable books.

So, if something or someone affects you strongly and remains clear and memorable, then the thing or person has **left an impression on you**. This expression is usually used to talk about positive experiences. For example, Andrew uses it to talk about his favorite writers. However, sometimes it is also used in a negative way. For example, it's possible to say something like, "Witnessing the car crash **left a strong impression on me**. Ever since then, I've been afraid to drive."

Here are a couple more examples with **to leave an impression on someone**:

Ricardo: Last week's speech by President Obama was very good.

Shannon: I agree. I was very moved by the president's words.

Ricardo: They **left quite the impression on me** too.

Shannon: I think historians will one day see the speech as being very significant.

Ricardo: I think you're correct. It seemed like the kind of speech that will go down in the history books! I'm glad I got to witness it!

Ben: Did you have any role models when you were younger?

Beth: I always looked up to Roberta Bondar. She was Canada's first female astronaut and is an amazing scientist.

Ben: Wow, cool.

Beth: She visited my school when I was in grade 7 and she **left a strong impression on me**. She is one of the people who inspired me to study science, actually.

Ben: Ah, so that's why you're a physics major?

Beth: Yup!

**To be big on something**

When you're **big on something**, you really like it. In this episode, Harp talks about a trip she took to Portland, Maine. She mentions that she ate lobster there and Andrew responds by saying, "Oh, yeah. They're **big on seafood** there, right?" Harp confirms that the people of Maine are indeed **big on seafood**. In other words, seafood is popular in Maine because the people who live there really like it.

So if you really enjoy something, then you're **big on that thing**.

This is a very casual slang expression and should be avoided in formal situations and writing.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **to be big on something**:

Irving: What do you want for dinner tonight?

Seth: I was thinking of cooking a chicken and then we can have Brussels sprouts on the side with a garden salad.

Irving: Sounds good but I'm not **big on Brussels sprouts**. Could we have broccoli or something instead?

Seth: Yeah, sure, I can make broccoli instead, no problem.

Irving: Thanks!

Barb: Did you invite Sally to the party on Saturday?

Karen: Yeah, I did, but she can't make it.

Barb: Oh yeah? What's up with her?

Karen: She has a softball tournament out of town.

Barb: Oh that's too bad. I didn't realize she was that serious about softball.

Karen: Oh yeah, she's **big on sports**. She's always been involved in softball, for as long as I can remember, at least.

Barb: That's great. Anyway, we'll miss her at the party.

Karen: Hopefully she can make it next time.

## A bookworm

A **bookworm** is a person who really likes to read. In this episode, Harp says that she was **a bookworm** when she was a child. She like enjoyed reading very much and read as many books as she could.

This idiom dates back to the 1590s. When we call someone **a bookworm**, we compare them to the kinds of bugs, like beetles and silverfish, that sometimes lay their eggs in books. Before we had nice warm libraries and houses to store books, it was easy for bugs to sneak their way into a book and lay eggs. If you opened up a book and came across a page full of little creepy crawlies, then you spotted some **bookworms**.



Originally, the expression **a bookworm** was used to poke fun at people who liked to read. These days, however, it is a cute and endearing way to refer to a book-lover.

Although we can call anyone who loves books **a bookworm**, the expression is most often used when talking about kids who love reading.

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

Kay:	How's your son doing these days?
Teresa:	He's doing great! He just started grade 3.
Kay:	Good for him! What subject is his favorite?
Teresa:	He loves reading.
Kay:	Oh, he's <b>a bookworm</b> , is he? That's fantastic!
Teresa:	Yup, he's always got his nose in a book!

Sandy:	I was at the bookstore last weekend and I saw the cutest book. I just had to pick it up for your daughter. I know she's <b>a bookworm</b> . I think she'll love it.
Kurt:	Oh, thanks so much. This book does look really great!
Sandy:	Yeah, I just thought the cover was so cute!
Kurt:	Thanks so much for the gift!
Sandy:	Oh, no problem. I hope your daughter enjoys it.



**I feel you**

When you **feel** someone else, you understand the other person's feeling, viewpoint, or perspective. In this episode, Harp says that she prefers reading paper books instead of electronic books on an e-reader. In response, Andrew says **I feel you**. In other words, Andrew understands Harp's viewpoint and rationale about why she likes reading paper books.

This expression is only used in the form **I feel you**. It would be weird (and the meaning would be very different) to say something like *I feel him* or *she felt them*. It is also a casual expression and should be avoided in formal contexts.

So, when you understand someone else's feelings or perspective, you can tell that person **I feel you**.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **I feel you**:

Earl:	I'm hungry. Should we order a pizza or something?
Alyssa:	I'd rather eat something a bit healthier.
Earl:	All right, <b>I feel you</b> . How about sushi?
Alyssa:	Yeah, that sounds good.
Earl:	Perfect. I'll go pick some up from the shop down the street.
Alyssa:	Great!

Fred:	How's the project coming along?
Kim:	Very well. It should be finished by the end of the week.
Fred:	Sorry, did you say by the end of the week? You realize we need to submit it to the professor tomorrow morning, right?
Kim:	Yeah, I know. But I think we should ask for an extension. If we work on it a little longer, I think we can get a much higher grade.
Fred:	Hmm. <b>I feel you</b> , but I have assignments for other classes that I need to work on too. This project needs to be done by tomorrow or I'm going to fall behind on my other work.
Kim:	Oh, really? I didn't realize that. OK, I guess I'll just try to finish up the project tonight and we can submit it tomorrow.

## The wrong side of the tracks

The expression **the wrong side of the tracks** is used when we want to talk about people who come from a rough or poor part of town. In this episode, Harp says that a character from the book *The Outsiders* comes from **the wrong side of the tracks**. In other words, this character lives in a poor or underprivileged neighbourhood.

This expression originated in the 1800s. Railroad lines were built all across North America and towns were built around the tracks. Nice neighbourhoods developed on the side of the rail lines where no pollution or smoke blew. This meant that the other side of the tracks, which was dirtier and more polluted, was where people who couldn't afford to live on the clean side of the town had to live. This is why these days we use the expression **on the wrong side of the tracks** to talk about neighbourhoods that are dirty, poor, or underprivileged.

So, if someone comes from **the wrong side of the tracks**, they grew up in an undesirable part of town that is dirty, poor, or dangerous.

Here are a couple more examples with **the wrong side of the tracks**:

Angel: I just finished reading a fantastic book, *The President*. It's about this kid who came from **the wrong side of the tracks**. He was born into a poor family and was a petty criminal for most of his teenage years.

Brad: Sounds intriguing.

Angel: Anyway, without giving too much of the story away, it turns out that in the end that boy grows up to become president of the USA. It was a great read.

Brad: Sounds like something I'd enjoy too. Mind if I borrow your copy?

Pearl: You'll never believe what happened to me last night. I was at a cafe and one of the Smith kids spilled a glass of water all over me.

Sheldon: Unbelievable.

Pearl: I wasn't too offended. Accidents happen, you know. But what really shocked me was that the kid didn't offer any apology or anything. He just laughed at me.

Sheldon: That's ridiculous. I have to say though, I'm not surprised. The whole Smith family is from **the wrong side of the tracks**.

Pearl: You're right. Anyway, the whole incident put me in a bad mood.

Sheldon: I'm sorry to hear that.

### To speak to you

When something (like a song or a piece of art) **speaks to you**, you have a strong emotional connection to that thing and think that it is very special and important. In this episode, Harp says that the book *The Outsiders* is really loved by teenagers. This book **speaks to them**. In other words, teenagers love this book because they understand and relate to the themes and characters that are present in the novel.

So, if you have an emotional connection to and a special understanding of a thing, then you can say that thing **speaks to you**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to speak to you**:

Billie: Turn up the radio! I love this song.  
Cecilia: Really? What's so special about it?  
Billie: I don't know, it just **speaks to me**.  
Cecilia: Really? It's so lame though.  
Billie: Yeah, it's kinda lame, but it reminds me of last summer. Pump it up!  
Cecilia: OK, OK.

Tim: This painting is exquisite.  
Rex: I agree. It really **speaks to me**.  
Tim: I love the way the artist combined colour, depth, and texture to create a very emotional image.  
Rex: Oh, absolutely. Her technique is amazing, too.  
Tim: She is truly a fantastic artist.

### To be on to something

When you are **on to something**, you have a feeling that you will soon discover something important or make a breakthrough. In this episode, Andrew says that Harp is **on to something** when she talks about being distracted by her smartphone when she tries to read. Andrew says this because he thinks Harp has discovered one of the major reasons why he reads less these days: smartphone distraction!

So, if you think of a good idea that might help you make an important discovery or reach a significant conclusion, then you are **on to something**. Or, if your way of thinking will help you to figure out a new and more efficient way of doing something, then you are **on to something**. We use this expression when an idea or way of thinking will lead to a new discovery or insight.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be on to something**:

Jose: Have you seen my navy blue tie?

Jill: It isn't in your drawer?

Jose: No, I checked and didn't see it.

Jill: When was the last time you wore it?

Jose: It was when I was on a business trip in New York.

Jill: Well, maybe you forgot to unpack it and left it in your suitcase?

Jose: Oh, you may be **on to something** there. I'll go check.

Jill: Yeah, go have a look.

Phil: Hey Dallas, do you mind if I have a word with you?

Dallas: Not at all. What's up?

Phil: Well, I was looking at the monthly sales report last night and I think our company could increase its profits if we adjusted our marketing campaign.

Dallas: Oh yeah?

Phil: Yes. Check out these numbers.

Dallas: Wow. These figures are impressive. I think you're **on to something** that could be really big for the company.

Phil: You think so?

Dallas: Yeah. I think you should show the manager these numbers. If he is as impressed as I am, you might be promoted!

**To be into something**

When you are **into something**, you are very interested in that thing. In this episode, both Andrew and Harp mention that they were really **into** mystery novels when they were kids. However, these days they aren't fans of the mystery genre. Although they both really enjoyed and were interested in reading mystery novels as kids, they prefer to read other types of books now that they're adults.

So, if you have a strong interest in something or enjoy doing an activity, then you can say that you're **into** it.

This is a casual expression that is best avoided in formal contexts.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to be into something***:

Jessie: Check out this new pair of running shoes I got.

Otis: Wow. They look really cool! I didn't know you were **into** running.

Jessie: Yeah, I run at least three times a week.

Otis: Oh, good for you!

Jessie: Yeah, I got this new pair of shoes because I'm training for a marathon. I'm planning to run my first one next year.

Otis: That's so cool. Well, I'm sure these new shoes will help you out a ton.

Jessie: That's the plan!

Noah: I don't know if you're **into** baseball at all, but I've got a pair of tickets to the game tomorrow. Want to go?

Loren: Hey cool. Yeah, I love baseball. What time does the game start?

Noah: Three in the afternoon.

Loren: Perfect. I work until 2pm but I should be able to make it to the stadium before the game starts.

Noah: Right on. So should we meet outside of Gate 5?

Loren: Excellent. I'll see you there around 2:50pm.

Noah: See you then.

## Magical realism

**Magical realism** is a literary genre in which magical or unbelievable things occur within a realistic setting. In **magical realism** novels, the environment where the story takes place appears logical and realistic; however, extraordinary, magical, or unbelievable events happen. In novels in the **magical realism** genre, magic happens right alongside everyday, normal life.

In this episode, Andrew and Harp talk about some of their favorite authors, Isabel Allende and Haruki Murakami, two writers who are associated with **magical realism**.

The style is was made famous by the Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez, whose most famous books are *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

Here's one more example with **magical realism**:

Stanley: I'm looking for a new book to read. Do you have any suggestions?

Peter: I just finished a great book last week. Do you like **magical realism**? If so, you'll like this book for sure.

Stanley: Cool. What's the name of the book?

Peter: *Midnight's Children*, by Salman Rushdie.

Stanley: Oh, I've read that one already! But yeah, it's a good read!

Peter: Yeah, I really enjoyed it.

## Second-hand

If a thing is **second-hand**, it means that it has been previously used. In this episode, Andrew asks Harp whether she likes going to **second-hand** bookstores. This is just another way to ask whether Harp likes going to used book stores.

So, when something is not brand new but instead has been previously owned, we can describe it as **second-hand**.

Some popular places to buy **second-hand** goods include thrift stores, garage sales, antique shops, and Craigslist.

Many people prefer to buy **second-hand** items because these items can cost much less money than similar items bought brand new from a store.

Here are a couple more examples with **second-hand**:

Tyrone: Are your kids playing hockey this year?

Michael: My wife and I considered it but it's so expensive to buy them all the equipment they need.

Tyrone: Oh, I just by my son **second-hand** equipment. It's much more affordable than buying brand new gear each year.

Michael: Oh yeah? That is a good idea actually.

Tyrone: There's a great used sports equipment store downtown. It's where I always go to shop.

Michael: Thanks for the tip. I'll talk to my wife about it and see what she thinks.

Christina: Hey, I love your jacket.

Pat: Oh, thanks! I bought it yesterday at a **second-hand** shop.

Christina: I love the look. It's super vintage.

Pat: Thanks. Yeah, I like it too.

### A letdown

Something that disappoints you can be called **a letdown**. In this episode, Harp says that short stories are **a letdown** because they end before the story really gets started. In other words, because short stories are short and the characters don't fully develop, Harp thinks they are disappointing and doesn't enjoy reading them.

So, if something disappoints you (like maybe you received some bad news or something unfortunate happens) then that thing can be called **a letdown**.

This expression also has a phrasal verb form. When you **let somebody down**, you disappoint them in some way. For example, imagine that you made plans to have dinner with your best friend and your best friend was really looking forward to seeing you. If you suddenly had to cancel the dinner plans because something else came up, you might let your friend know by telling him, "I'm sorry to **let you down**, but I have to cancel our plans to have dinner together."

So, if something is a disappointment, it is **a letdown**. And if you disappoint someone else, then you **let them down**.



Here are a couple more examples with the expression **a letdown**:

Crystal: I have some bad news for you.

Dwayne: Oh now. What?

Crystal: Well, the Maroon 5 concert tomorrow has been cancelled.

Dwayne: What? Are you serious?

Crystal: Yeah. Apparently the singer has a serious cold and has lost his voice.

Dwayne: That's such **a letdown**.

Crystal: I know. The band said they'd reschedule the concert once their singer is healthy again.

Dwayne: I guess we should hope he makes a speedy recovery then.

Crystal: Yeah, definitely.

Kerry: Well, I guess we'll have to call off the canoeing trip.

Elaine: Why?

Kerry: Take a look at the weather forecast, nothing but rain, rain, rain.

Elaine: Man, what **a letdown**. Can't we go even if it'll be a little wet?

Kerry: I don't know about you, but I don't want to sit in a boat all day getting soaking wet. It's not my idea of fun. We'll just have to postpone it until next weekend.

Elaine: All right, you're right.

### On the flip side

In this episode, Andrew and Harp talk about books they liked reading in school, and then **on the flip side**, they talk about the books they didn't like reading in school. When we talk about a situation from a different (usually opposite) perspective, we can use the expression **on the flip side**. In other words, Andrew and Harp talk about books from school that they liked, and then they talk about the opposite, books from school that they didn't like.

This expression has an interesting origin. It was first used by radio DJs to describe vinyl records. There is the A side, which is the first side of a record, and there is the flip side, which is the opposite or back side of a record. These days we use this expression to talk about looking at something from a different perspective. So if something is examined **on the flip side**, it is looked at from a different point of view.

Another way **on the flip side** can be used is when you're saying goodbye to someone. Sometimes people will say, "See you **on the flip side**" or "Catch you **on the flip side**" right before they say farewell to a friend. This just means *see you later*. Since this is a casual way to say goodbye, it is fine to use with your friends, but you wouldn't want to use it when talking to your boss.

Here are a couple more examples with the expression **on the flip side**:

Bruce: How's the job search coming along?

Johnnie: Very well, actually. I had two job offers last week.

Bruce: That's awesome. Which one will you take?

Johnnie: It's hard to say. One offers a slightly higher salary, but **on the flip side**, the other job has a better benefits and vacation package.

Bruce: Sounds like you have a big decision to make.

Johnnie: Yeah, definitely.

Bruce: Congrats anyways. I'm sure you'll make the right choice.

Johnnie: Thanks!

Carolyn: Good job today, Lee. I'll see you tomorrow!

Lee: Hey, thanks Carolyn. Catch you **on the flip side**.

Carolyn: You bet. Good night.

Lee: Bye.

### To branch away

In this episode, Andrew uses the phrasal verb **to branch away** when he transitions the conversation from books that he and Harp read in school to books that they like in general. We can use **to branch away** when we move away from one thing on to a related thing. So even though Andrew changes the specifics of the conversation topic, the conversation is still about books.

So, when something or someone slowly transitions away from something or someone else, then we can use **to branch away**.

Here are a couple more example with **to branch away**:

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Ed: Can we talk about the presentation we have to make next month?

Robin: Sure, no problem.

Ed: Well, I would like **to branch away** from what we've done in the past. I have some new ideas that I think could make our presentations much more interesting to watch.

Robin: Sounds great. What were you thinking?

Ed: Well, I thought we could use a new software program to help make our slide show more visually appealing.

Robin: Sounds good to me. Why don't you make a couple of demonstration slides and then show them to me and we can go from there?

Ed: Awesome!

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Casey: Do you still keep in touch with any of your friends from high school?

Curtis: No, not really. What about you?

Casey: No, me neither. I **branched away** from that group of friends shortly after I graduated and started university.

Curtis: The same thing happened to me, actually. I moved out of town to go to university and made a new group of friends.

Casey: I'm still friendly with my high school friends, but we don't actually hang out anymore.

Curtis: Same here. We're friends on Facebook but we don't see each other.

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## Quiz

1. **If you really like to rollerblade, then you are what?**
  - a) on top of rollerblading
  - b) upon rollerblading
  - c) on to rollerblading
  - d) into rollerblading
  
2. **If you understand someone's perspective or emotions, you can tell that person what?**
  - a) I touch you.
  - b) I feel you.
  - c) I know you.
  - d) I have you.
  
3. **How do you feel when something is a letdown?**
  - a) confused
  - b) timid
  - c) disappointed
  - d) excited
  
4. **What adjective can we use to describe something that has been previously owned?**
  - a) thrifty
  - b) vintage
  - c) second-hand
  - d) old
  
5. **How do you feel when a novel speaks to you?**
  - a) like you have a special connection to the story
  - b) like you hate all the characters in the book
  - c) like you want to read the book in a different language
  - d) like you thought the book was too long

- 6. Which type of neighbourhood do you come from if you come from the wrong side of the tracks?**
- a) a rich neighbourhood
  - b) a middle-class neighbourhood
  - c) a clean neighbourhood
  - d) a poor neighbourhood
- 7. If you read a lot of books, then what are you?**
- a) a bookbuddy
  - b) a bookbunny
  - c) a bookthumb
  - d) a bookworm
- 8. What does it mean if you're on to something?**
- a) You believe in something.
  - b) You are entering an open space.
  - c) You are close to making a discovery or having an insight.
  - d) You are standing on top of some furniture.
- 9. What does it mean if you're big on something?**
- a) You really detest that thing.
  - b) You really like that thing.
  - c) You really hate that thing.
  - d) You really don't care about that thing.

## Quiz Answers

1.d   2.b   3.c   4.c   5.a   6.d   7.d   8.c   9.b

## Episode Credits

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