

## Chatterbox #179 – 2016: The year in review

### Episode description

2016 is almost over, and 2017 is fast approaching. What are you going to remember most about 2016? In this special Chatterbox episode, all three of the Culips hosts discuss the most interesting and memorable personal and global events that happened this year. Come join Andrew, Suzanne, and Morag as they share their highlights of 2016!

### Fun fact

2016's calendar is exactly the same as 1994's calendar, in terms of days, dates, and festivals!

### Expressions included in the learning materials

- Big time
- A highlight
- A downer
- To blow [someone] away
- To steal [someone's] thunder



## Transcript

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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.

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Andrew: Hey, everybody, my name's Andrew.

Suzanne: Hi guys! Hi Andrew! It's Suzanne.

Morag: Hey, everybody, this is Morag.

Andrew: And we're back with another Culips episode.

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Andrew: Today we have a very special episode for everyone. Not only are all three Culips hosts here together at the same time, but it is our last episode of 2016! So, today we're going to take a look back at the year. This episode will be a Chatterbox episode and, in a Chatterbox episode, we just chat. We pick a specific topic and discuss it. And today's topic is 2016, a year in review. So, guys, 2016. Big year, right?

Morag: Oh yeah!

Suzanne: Yeah. It's been a year of big ups and big downs, I would say.

Morag: I would definitely agree. It was a pretty big year for the news.

Andrew: Yeah, so without going into the details, some of the big news stories that stand out to me this year, first of all, is Brexit.

Suzanne: Ugh, Brexit.

Andrew: Brexit! Do you remember Brexit? And of course Brexit, for all our listeners out there, is the event where the UK decided to separate from the European Union. So this is a blended word: *Britain*, the UK, *Britain* and *exit*. Together: *Brexit*. So we had Brexit. We had the American election, that was a huge, huge news story.

Suzanne: And all of the things that led up to that election, too. There were a lot of news stories throughout that whole period, right? Even leading up to that.

- Andrew: **Big time.**
- Morag: It was a long 8 months of constant news, yes. We also had things like the Olympics.
- Suzanne: Yes, that was fun.
- Andrew: I love the Olympics. And this year was especially good, Canada won a couple of really nice track and field medals, so I was happy this year with the Olympic results.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and also my favourite event is the gymnastics.
- Morag: Me too!
- Suzanne: And I got to really enjoy some of the US gymnastic girls. Simone Biles, she was pretty rock and roll, that was cool to watch.
- Andrew: She's really good, isn't she?
- Suzanne: Yeah, yeah, she was quite phenomenal, yeah.
- Morag: It's my favourite set of events as well, because I just don't understand how you can do that with your body. It's just kind of amazing, so.
- Suzanne: Right? It defies gravity and rules of physics.
- Morag: Yeah, how do you do that?
- Andrew: All right, so looking back, evaluating 2016, is there a special moment or special thing that you'll always remember? And maybe I'll ask this question to Suzanne first. What do you think, Suzanne?
- Suzanne: Yeah, I ... I think that for me, a really big event that happened that I will always remember is where the Cubs won the World Series this year, this past early November. And they hadn't won the World Series in 108 years! So this was a really big deal, that they finally broke the baseball curse and won the World Series.
- Andrew: Wow. The Chicago Cubs. The professional baseball team.
- Suzanne: Yes, the Chicago Cubs. They're a Major League Baseball team, the Chicago Cubs. And they're, like, what's called the underdog in their city because the Chicago White Sox are the, kind of, big, famous team from that city. And the Cubs are sort of the underdogs, the ones that never win. So it was really cool to root for the underdog team and see them rise up and finally win the big World Series match.

- Andrew: Go Cubs! That's awesome. Morag, what about you? What's something that you'll remember looking back at 2016?
- Morag: Well, I'm sorry, mine's a little more of **a downer**, but I think I'll remember this year as the year that a shocking number of celebrities died. I kept on being surprised, but I'm thinking primarily of David Bowie, Prince, Gene Wilder, Alan Rickman. So we've two actors and two, sort of, really big musicians. There were a lot more but, phew. Maybe it's just David Bowie going? It really hit me.
- Andrew: Yeah, David Bowie was one of my favourite musicians ever. Hugely influential. So cool. And, yeah, it was difficult to lose him this year.
- Suzanne: He was always himself. He never tried to change into being, you know, something that the media wanted or people wanted—he was always just his own iteration of himself and never apologizing for who he was.
- Morag: On the bright side, it meant that there were a lot of David Bowie tributes going around, so that was cool. We actually heard more of his music in everyday life, so, you know.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Morag: Bright side?
- Andrew: Yeah, and at least their music lives on. It's kind of cheesy to say, but we have all his records.
- Morag: And for some of the actors I mentioned, we still have their movies, so, you know.
- Suzanne: Yes.
- Morag: Yeah, Gene Wilder was actually the star of my favourite movie ever, *Young Frankenstein*.
- Suzanne: Oh yeah!
- Morag: That is just the greatest.
- Andrew: While we're on the topic of talking about music and movies: One of my favourite things about the end of the year time is reading people's top 10 lists of the movies they really liked from the year, or the albums that they really liked from the year. Now, we don't have time to do a full top 10 list, but is there one album that you listened to or movie that you watched or TV show that you saw in 2016 that was really awesome that you could share with us and maybe recommend to the listeners?

Morag: Yeah, yeah, I have an album, actually, that only came out a couple months ago. It only came out in September, but has totally **blown me away**. And that's Angel Olsen's *My Woman*.

Andrew: It's a good one. I like it too!

Morag: Yeah, it is so good. I don't know, just that woman's voice, it's wow—piercing. So I would very much recommend everybody go and check that out.

Suzanne: I've actually never heard her, so I'm really excited to discover a new artist. I have a movie and an album. I mean I'm sure a lot of people would say this, but the Beyoncé album *Lemonade*, that album was, I feel like, extremely influential this year and definitely was a good one.

Andrew: Well, Suzanne, you **stole my thunder** a little bit because I was going to say *Lemonade* was my favourite record of the year.

Suzanne: Really? Oh my gosh!

Andrew: In second place, I will put Beyoncé's sister, Solange.

Suzanne: Solange, yes!

Morag: Dude, that is an amazing album, yeah!

Andrew: Yeah, she has a record called *A Seat at the Table*. It was a good year from the Knowles sisters. So, I would recommend, maybe not as famous as her sister, but Solange. Good singer, good artist.

Morag: Great album.

Andrew: And great album.

In terms of TV, if you like nature and like documentaries, there's a reboot of the BBC series *Planet Earth*. And the original came out in 2006 and now, 10 years later, there's *Series II*. And it's amazing: BBC *Planet Earth: Series II*. A real beautiful look at some interesting plants and animals and ecosystems, so I would highly recommend it to everybody. I think it's my favourite TV show of the year.

Suzanne: Along those lines also, Andrew, there was a documentary that Leonardo DiCaprio made, called *Before the Flood*, that you can see online for free, on YouTube. And it's so informative and important to understand about our ecosystem and nature and climate change. It was very, very influential for me.

- Morag: I actually, I have something also along the same lines. My favourite movie was the new Werner Herzog documentary that came out through Netflix, about volcanoes. So, it's called *Into the Inferno*. It's about the relationships that people, or societies, build around volcanoes. It is really interesting and has some fantastic footage of just magma, which is always cool.
- Andrew: I love Herzog, so I will check that out for sure. I didn't actually know he had a new documentary, so, there we go. I'll watch it sometime soon. All right guys, we're almost out of time, but let's talk quickly about our personal 2016. We've been talking, sort of, about big, worldwide events so far. But what was your personal **highlight** of 2016? Morag, I'll start with you. Do you have something you can share with us?
- Morag: Yeah, I think my personal **highlight** of 2016 would be writing the very difficult test for potential entry into law school—and not ... not sucking.
- Andrew: Did you get your result?
- Morag: Yeah, I did. It's safe to say it was definitely good enough.
- Andrew: Wow, that's awesome. Congrats!
- Suzanne: That's great.
- Morag: That was a very difficult thing, but that was an accomplishment that I'm going to remember and be proud of no matter what ends up happening with that application. I will be proud of that result, so.
- Suzanne: That's awesome.
- Andrew: That's awesome. What about you, Sue? What was your **highlight**?
- Suzanne: I have something similar to Morag, where I finished writing my big ol' master's thesis and defended it. And I think I did really well in my defence. I researched things and I made sure that all of the holes in my paper and in my research were accounted for, so I had a good answer for all of my questions at my thesis defence. And then I graduated last week, so I finished grad school this year and completed those, you know, the requirements and got my diploma.
- Morag: Congratulations!
- Suzanne: That was **a highlight** and a positive note for 2016.

Andrew: Wow, way to go, guys. You're both making me look bad because I didn't have any big academic accomplishments this year, but one thing that I did do, that I will never forget, is I made a trip to Canada's Arctic and I visited the territory of Nunavut and the city of Iqaluit. And this is something that I've always wanted to do, visit the North and meet the people that live there, see the beautiful landscapes, breathe the fresh air, and I finally got to do it this summer, and it was an unforgettable experience. So, I think when I look back at 2016, I will remember the North.

Morag: That's amazing! I would love to do that, too, but good for you, yeah!

Suzanne: Oh, I have one more thing. It's been really wonderful doing this podcast with you guys, too.

Andrew: Hey, yeah, that's a new thing, right?

Morag: It's actually been really fun, yeah.

Suzanne: Yeah!

Andrew: Yeah, hopefully in the future we can record some more episodes with all three of us and listeners, people out there, if you liked listening to this style of episode, definitely let us know because if it's something people are interested in, we can continue to do these three-people shows in the future.

That brings us to the end of today's episode. Thank you so much for spending your time listening to us. Our website is [Culips.com](http://Culips.com), and if you want to learn more about how you can study with us and improve your English, just visit the website. It's [C-U-L-I-P-S.com](http://C-U-L-I-P-S.com). If you wanna contact us, you can reach us through our Facebook page, [facebook.com/culipspodcast](https://facebook.com/culipspodcast), or you can email me directly. My address is [andrew@culips.com](mailto:andrew@culips.com).

Well, this was our last episode of 2016 and, guys, we really appreciate your support during the last year. We've got lots of big plans for the future and we can't wait to see what 2017 brings. Happy New Year's everyone—we'll see you next year!

Suzanne: Yay, Happy New Year!

Morag: Have a wonderful 2017, guys!

## Detailed Explanations

### Big time

**Big time** is a term with multiple meanings. Today, we're going to focus on using **big time** as a phrase used for emphasis.

Used in this way, **big time** means more than usual or to a large degree. In conversation, **big time** is most often used at the end of a statement to add intensity to what was just said. For example, someone might say, "I need to clean my house this weekend, **big time**." By putting **big time** at the end of the statement, they're emphasizing that they have a lot of cleaning to do.

You can also use **big time** as a response to a statement or question made by someone else. In this context, **big time** indicates enthusiastic agreement, as well as stressing the extremity of the subject. For example, in this episode Andrew responds to Suzanne's statement that there were a lot of news stories around the American election by saying, "**Big time**." Here, Andrew is agreeing with Suzanne and emphasizing that there was a lot of news around that subject.

Here are a couple more examples with **big time**:

Claudette:	Do you want to come to my dinner party on Friday? A bunch of us are getting together and making pizza.
Pat:	I don't think I'll be able to make it.
Claudette:	Oh yeah? Do you already have fun plans for Friday?
Pat:	No, I have work to do over the weekend, <b>big time</b> . I won't be having any fun this weekend at all!

Ruth:	I'm feeling like it might be time for dinner. Are you getting hungry?
Dylan:	<b>Big time!</b>
Ruth:	OK! We can go out and grab a bite to eat if you're really hungry.
Dylan:	Great idea.



## A highlight

In this episode, we talk all about the **highlights** of 2016. **A highlight** is the best or most interesting part of something. So, when Andrew asks Suzanne and Morag what their personal **highlights** were in 2016, he's asking what their favourite, most memorable, or more interesting parts of the year were.

While you can use **a highlight** to talk about the most interesting part of something, it's almost always used to describe things that are positive. If the most interesting part of something is also negative or depressing, you wouldn't call it **a highlight**.

Think about the last trip or vacation you took. What are the moments that you remember the most? Are they the best and most remarkable things that happened on your trip? If so, you can call them the **highlights** of your trip!

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

Mason:	Don't you look pleased! What happened?
Ola:	I just went for the most amazing meal of my life! The only part of me that isn't happy right now is my wallet. It was pretty expensive.
Mason:	Wow, the best meal of your life? That's a pretty big claim. What was the <b>highlight</b> of the meal?
Ola:	I had an avocado salad as an appetizer. I can't explain what was so different about it, but it was the tastiest salad I've ever eaten!
Mason:	I'll have to check this place out.

Leopold:	Did you enjoy your trip back home?
Abby:	It was great! It's always so nice to see my family.
Leopold:	Did you get to see everyone you wanted to see?
Abby:	Yeah, we had a big family dinner the night before I left. Everyone was there, even my two cousins who I haven't seen in years. It was definitely the <b>highlight</b> of my trip.
Leopold:	That sounds lovely!

## A downer

When something or someone makes you feel sad, depressed, or unhappy, it's **a downer**. This is a slangy and informal expression, most often used in spoken conversation.

A person who is **a downer** makes people around them feel sad. Similarly, you can call a situation or event **a downer** if it makes people unhappy.

For example, in this episode Morag apologizes for being **a downer** when she mentions the high number of celebrity deaths in 2016. She can be called **a downer** in this situation because she is reminding everyone of sad events, which is likely to make everyone feel less happy.

This is an easy expression to understand if you know that *feeling up* is another way to say you're happy, and *feeling down* is another way to say you're sad. So, **a downer** is something that brings you down, or makes you feel sad.

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

Zola:	What an exhausting coffee date! I don't want to go back to work, I just want to curl up and watch something funny.
Rupert:	Whoa, what happened over coffee? That's a pretty extreme reaction to a coffee date.
Zola:	Nothing really happened. It's just that hanging out with Shirley always makes me feel so sad. She's such <b>a downer</b> .
Rupert:	How so?
Zola:	All she ever does is complain. She is such an unhappy person! Every time I hang out with her, I come away feeling down.

Sylvie:	I want to watch a movie. Do you have any suggestions?
Justin:	What about <i>Children of Men</i> ? I love that movie and haven't watched it in ages.
Sylvie:	No way! That movie is a real <b>downer</b> . I've cried both times I've seen it.
Justin:	OK, OK. We can watch something more lighthearted, then.
Sylvie:	Thank goodness.

## To blow [someone] away

**To blow [someone] away** is a phrasal verb construction that means to surprise and delight or greatly impress. When something **blows you away**, you are shocked and pleased by it at the same time.

For example, in this episode Morag talks about an album that **blew her away**. In other words, the album shocked her in an enjoyable way: she was surprised by how good the music was.

So, the next time you are shocked in a positive way by something, whether it's an experience, an object, a piece of news, or something someone else does or says, you can say that it **blew you away**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to blow [someone] away**.

Bradley:	Did you have fun on your birthday last week?
Lena:	I had a great time! My friends actually planned a surprise party for me.
Bradley:	I don't think I've ever heard of a surprise party that ended up being a real surprise. You didn't know anything about it beforehand?
Lena:	No, I had no idea! They completely <b>blew me away</b> . I'm so happy I have friends who are awesome and organized enough to do something like that for me.
Bradley:	No kidding!

Edgar:	How's it going?
Phoebe:	I'm doing great, thanks!
Edgar:	You sound really happy! Do you have some good news to share or something?
Phoebe:	You're right, I do have good news! I just found out that I got accepted to the grad school program of my dreams. I'm totally shocked and really happy.
Edgar:	Sounds like the news really <b>blew you away</b> . It shouldn't have though; I always knew you'd get in!

## To steal [someone's] thunder

**To steal [someone's] thunder** is to do something they were planning to do before they could, and therefore gain the success or attention they were expecting to have.

This expression is a little tricky to understand just from its definition, so let's look at some examples. Imagine that you have a piece of good news that you were planning to tell your friend, but someone else tells them first. In this example, you can say that they **stole your thunder**.

In this episode, both Andrew and Suzanne were planning to say that Beyoncé's *Lemonade* was their favourite album of 2016. However, because Suzanne talked about her favourite album first, Andrew had to pick a new album to share. So, Andrew says that Suzanne **stole his thunder**.

So, when you **steal someone's thunder** you do something that someone else planned to do first, meaning that the other person can't do that thing anymore or will not receive the same benefits from it.

Here are a couple more examples with **to steal [someone's] thunder**.

Jenna:	I'm so mad at my sister! I can't believe she could be so selfish!
Oscar:	Oh no, what did she do?
Jenna:	She told our parents that I'm engaged! I was planning to go visit them this weekend and tell them the good news, but she <b>stole my thunder</b> !

Katarina:	You know the proposal I've been working on for months, the one for the big client at work?
Jeremy:	Sure do. Weren't you supposed to deliver it next week?
Katarina:	I was! It was all planned for months, but now it doesn't matter. There's no point.
Jeremy:	Why, what happened?
Katarina:	One of my coworkers, who helped me put the proposal together, held a meeting with the client last week and told them all about it. Now they think that he's the one who came up with the idea.
Jeremy:	That's awful! He completely <b>stole your thunder</b> .

## Quiz

1. **A downer is a person or thing who makes people feel:**
  - a) surprised
  - b) sad
  - c) angry
  - d) happy
  
2. **Which of these phrases is the most appropriate to describe a situation where someone did something you were planning to do before you could do it yourself?**
  - a) "They robbed me."
  - b) "They patched me up."
  - c) "They stole my thunder."
  - d) "They sank my battleship."
  
3. **What do you call the best and most memorable part of an experience?**
  - a) a delight
  - b) a spotlight
  - c) a lowlight
  - d) a highlight
  
4. **If you want to emphasize the amount or intensity of something, you could end your sentence with which of the following?**
  - a) show time
  - b) run time
  - c) small time
  - d) big time
  
5. **If something blows you away, it surprises and \_\_\_\_\_ you.**
  - a) delights
  - b) angers
  - c) concerns
  - d) amuses

## Quiz Answers

1.b    2.c    3.d    4.d    5.a

### Episode credits

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