

Chatterbox #45 – Things children believe

Transcript

Harp: Hello everyone, this is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: At Culips ESL Podcast.

Maura: And you can go to our website, Culips.com—that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com—and there you can do all kinds of things. You can listen to our older episodes, you can become a member and get access to our transcripts and a more detailed explanation and a quiz, or you could also donate to help support our free podcast for you.

Harp: So today, we're bringing you a Chatterbox podcast.

Maura: And in our Chatterbox podcast, we chat about things that are happening in the news, we interview people, and we also talk about different cultural things that are happening in North America.

Harp: Yeah, different cultural aspects of Canada.

Maura: So, in this episode, we're going to talk about funny things that children believe.

Harp: Yeah, beliefs that children have in North America.

Maura: Yeah, in Canada and the US. And since our cultures are very similar, children across North America believe some funny things.

Harp: Exactly. And we thought of this episode because Easter's coming up soon.

Maura: Yeah, Easter is **just around the corner**. So, when I think about Easter, I think of **the Easter Bunny**.

Harp: Yeah, Easter is a holiday here in North America, in April.

Maura: Yeah, sometimes it's in April, sometimes it's at the end of March. It's always at a different time. And if you're interested in knowing more about the Easter holiday, you can check out our Culips episode about holidays in Canada.

Harp: Exactly, where we explain a little bit more about Easter.

- Maura: Yeah, and all the other holidays too. So, at Easter **the Easter Bunny** comes to visit.
- Harp: Yes, **the Easter Bunny** comes to visit and brings chocolates and candies and **treats** for all the kids.
- Maura: Right. So, **the Easter Bunny** is something that children **believe in** that comes to their house when they're sleeping and leaves candies and chocolates and sometimes toys for them, so that when they wake up on Easter, they have **goodies**.
- Harp: Yeah, exactly. So, children go to sleep and they **believe in** the middle of the night that this bunny comes to their house and puts candy and chocolate everywhere.
- Maura: Yeah, it's quite funny. So most of the time, **the Easter Bunny** is white. You might see it on cards or boxes of chocolates at this time of year.
- Harp: Exactly. So in some houses, **the Easter Bunny** will put the candy in a certain place, like a basket. Sometimes **the Easter Bunny** hides the candy, and then the kids go on a search for it.
- Maura: Yeah, I did that when I was young. We had to try and find the chocolates hidden around the house.
- Harp: Yeah, same at my house. And I remember even sometimes in June I would find candy that I didn't find from **the Easter Bunny**.
- Maura: Yup, that happens. It's funny, you know, as I was thinking about **the Easter Bunny**, I started to ask myself how big **the Easter bunny** was. Was it a little bunny or was it a big rabbit? We don't really know.
- Harp: No, and I don't think there's any sort of specific size for **the Easter Bunny**.
- Maura: Nope, just children believe that he comes during the night and leaves candy. And **we don't ask any questions!**
- Harp: We're just happy we got the candy.
- Maura: Exactly. So what do we know about the origin of this strange tradition of a big bunny coming to our houses?
- Harp: Well, **the Easter Bunny** tradition comes from Germany. And rabbits are a symbol of spring and **fertility**, and Easter always falls in the beginning of spring.

- Maura: OK, so we're not exactly sure. There are lots of different stories, but those are some ideas of where it might have come from.
- Harp: Yeah. There's not one exact story of where **the Easter Bunny** came from or where the story of **the Easter Bunny** came from.
- Maura: But there's so many possibilities, just like our next interesting creature that children **believe in**.
- Harp: Yeah, **Santa Claus**.
- Maura: Yeah. That one, I guess, a lot of you listeners have heard of before because he's a big symbol of Christmas, but he's also someone that children believe really exists.
- Harp: Yeah. Young children believe that **Santa Claus** comes into their house after they're asleep on Christmas Eve and leaves presents for them.
- Maura: So in a way, **Santa** and **the Easter Bunny** are very similar: they both come at night and they both leave presents and **goodies**.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, just like **the Easter Bunny** as well, **Santa Claus** started somewhere in Europe and then when people came to North America, they brought that tradition with them. And there's been so many influences along the way that shape the idea of how we see **Santa Claus**.
- Harp: Yeah. The idea now that most people have in their heads of **Santa Claus**, and kids especially, is an older man with a big white beard, wearing a red and white suit. That's the idea of **Santa Claus** now.
- Maura: Right. And children also believe that he has a long list of all of the names of the kids that were good and bad. And that was something that started in the **17th century** from a poem that was written about **Santa Claus**. And then there were other poems that had the idea of **Santa** having **flying reindeer and elves**. So all of these different parts of **Santa** have developed over the years and then children **believe in** that.
- Harp: Exactly. So, the idea of **Santa Claus** now came from lots of different little ideas.
- Maura: Yeah. The one thing that I never understood when I believed in **Santa Claus** was about the **chimney**.

- Harp: Yes, because **Santa Claus** comes into your house through the **chimney**.
- Maura: Right. And so many children don't have **chimneys**, which is a place where you have a fire burning that leads up to the roof. And so they would always ask "How does **Santa** get into our house if we don't have a **chimney**?" And it was always confusing.
- Harp: Yeah. We didn't have a **chimney**, so I think my parents just said that he was magical and he could get into the house.
- Maura: Yeah, that's believable. Considering that children believe he travels all over the world in one night, giving presents to all the children in the world, they could probably believe that he gets into your house somehow.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: And, you know, when you think about it when you're older, it's so hard to believe, isn't it?
- Harp: It really is. But I really remember believing when I was young that **Santa Claus** was coming. And I think my parents **used that to their advantage**. You know, they would say to me, "Well Harp, you have to be good or **Santa Claus** isn't gonna bring you a present."
- Maura: Yup, for sure. **Santa Claus** was used for that. Now, we have **the Easter Bunny**, which children **believe in**, and then we have **Santa Claus**, and then we have one more magical person who comes, again, to children's homes when they're sleeping.
- Harp: Yes, the **Tooth Fairy**.
- Maura: Yes. This one is not associated with any holidays. It's the **Tooth Fairy** and she can come at any time that a child has lost one of their teeth, a **baby tooth**.
- Harp: Yup. When you're a child and you **lose a tooth**, you put the tooth under your pillow and then the story is that when you're sleeping, the **Tooth Fairy** comes into your room, takes the tooth, and puts some money there.
- Maura: Yes. So, again, the idea of sleeping at night and then getting a present in the morning. And so it's very exciting when you're young and you **lose your first tooth**, because you get to put the tooth under the pillow and you're really excited because you're going to have some money in the morning.
- Harp: Yup. And it's hard to fall asleep, because you're so excited that the **Tooth**

Fairy is coming to give you money, and you wanna see the **Tooth Fairy**, and you believe so much that the **Tooth Fairy** is coming.

Maura: Yup. I remember when I lost my first tooth, I actually lost it. I mean that it fell out of my mouth in the snow on the playground, and so I didn't have my tooth and I was so worried because the **Tooth Fairy** wouldn't see my tooth. So my dad and I left a note for the **Tooth Fairy** so that she would know that I really lost my tooth.

Harp: That is an adorable story.

Maura: Well, it worked. I got my money the next morning.

Harp: I can just imagine. I can just **picture** little Maura writing a note to the **Tooth Fairy**: "Please Miss **Tooth Fairy**, leave me money. I lost my tooth."

Maura: Yup. And then some years later, of course, you realize that it was your parents and the **Tooth Fairy** wasn't coming.

Harp: That's so sweet, your dad writing the letter with you. It's really cute. Maura, I don't know where this story of the **Tooth Fairy** came from. Do you have any idea?

Maura: Well, it's so strange. I was actually really excited to find out, because I had never thought of it before, but the background is also so mysterious.

Harp: Really?

Maura: In the past, people believed that there were only certain ways to dispose of your tooth, or certain things that you had to do with your teeth after they came out of your mouth. Some people believed you had **to bury** them. Other people thought you had to burn them, and it was associated with having good luck. There were also some people that believed if someone else had your teeth, they had power over you. So yeah, we don't really know where this idea came from, but fairies are part of folklore, old traditions. So, somewhere over the years, the idea of the **Tooth Fairy** came about.

Harp: Interesting.

Maura: Now, I wanna ask you, Harp, what age did you stop believing in these interesting magical creatures?

Harp: I don't think there was one specific moment. I just remember, as I got older, I started questioning it more in my head, but I had a younger sister so I don't

think I ever talked about it or asked my parents. I think I just started realizing, maybe around 10. I don't remember though.

Maura: Yeah, there's an age when children start questioning it, like you said. And then they start sharing stories, like, "Oh, I saw my mom putting the presents under the tree at Christmas," or "I heard my dad putting out the Easter eggs." So things start to become more logical and then, as children, we start to doubt that they're actually true.

Harp: Yeah. As we get older and smarter, we realize that these are just stories and it's really just our parents.

Maura: But it is fun, isn't it? It's fun when you're young to **believe in** magical things.

Harp: It definitely is. So today, we talked about beliefs that children have and we started with **the Easter Bunny**.

Maura: Mmhmm. And then we talked about another famous guy that kids **believe in**, which is **Santa Claus**.

Harp: And we ended with the **Tooth Fairy**.

Maura: Yes. You know, I wish I could **lose a tooth** right now. I **could use** some extra money.

Harp: Umm, I think that you should not think about that, and keep your beautiful teeth.

Maura: You're right. I don't think it will work anymore.

Harp: We'd love to hear what kind of beliefs that you had as children in your country. Did you **believe in the Easter Bunny** or the **Tooth Fairy**? Or were there other characters that you believed in when you were young?

Maura: Yeah. Share them with us, because it's funny to hear about things like this in other cultures.

Harp: Definitely.

Maura: So, if you want to learn more about this episode or any of our past episodes, you can go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Harp: And that's it for us today.

Maura: We'll talk to you soon. Bye!

Harp: Bye everyone!

Detailed Explanation

Just around the corner

In this episode, Maura says that Easter is **just around the corner**. This is an expression that means that something is coming up soon. For example, you could say “Your birthday is **just around the corner**” when someone’s birthday is in the next month.

We can say that something is **just around the corner** when it’s a few days away, a couple of weeks away, or even a month away. There’s no defined period of time that applies for **just around the corner**.

To believe in something

The verb *to believe* means to think something to be true. You could say to someone “I believe you” when they tell you something that you think is true. When the words **believe in** are used together, it means something a little different. For example, the phrase *I believe in you* is used when you have confidence in someone’s capabilities.

In this episode, Maura says that **the Easter Bunny** is something that children **believe in**. If we were to say that we believe **the Easter Bunny** (without the word *in*), we would be saying that we think something **the Easter Bunny** said is true. But when we say that children **believe in the Easter Bunny**, we mean that they believe **the Easter bunny** exists.

Another time that you might commonly hear the phrase **believe in** is in reference to God. Someone who believes that God exists could say “I **believe in** God.”

The Easter Bunny

Harp and Maura mention in this episode that there is no clear idea of what **the Easter Bunny** looks like. He is sometimes depicted as a white bunny. Sometimes he wears clothes and sometimes he doesn’t. The actual place of origin of **the Easter Bunny** isn’t certain but it was likely German settlers who came to North America in the 18th century who introduced it here.

The Easter Bunny can also be called the Easter Hare. Originally, children built nests and **the Easter Bunny** left its **treats** in these nests. One of the main differences between a rabbit/bunny and a hare is that hares have babies in shallow nests made of grass, while rabbits have babies in underground burrows. For this reason, it’s likely that this imaginary creature was originally called the Easter Hare, but the name *Easter Bunny* is more common now.

Interestingly, even though **the Easter Bunny** is a sign of **fertility** and leaves Easter eggs, when we do see **the Easter Bunny** in clothes, it's usually dressed as a male, and people often refer to **the Easter Bunny** as "he."

We don't ask any questions

Maura says in this episode that as children, **we don't ask any questions** about where the treats we find on Easter morning came from. What she means is that it seems unbelievable that anyone would think that a bunny comes to each house on this one night and leaves candies and other treats, but as children, **we don't ask any questions**. We simply believe what our parents tell us.

Another expression we could use is *to believe blindly*. We've already discussed what it means to believe in something. To believe in something blindly means that we believe in it without any proof of its existence.

Someone who believes in something or someone with no proof or reason to believe can be called naïve. Here's an example:

Tamara: I believed in the Easter Bunny until I was 12 years old. I was a very naïve young girl.

Jamie: I can't remember when I stopped believing in things blindly. When I was little, I **didn't ask any questions**. I was just happy to get candy!

Fertility

Spring time is considered a time of **fertility**. Birds and many other animals have babies at this time of year, and trees and plants bud and flower after the long winter. All of these are signs of **fertility**, or the ability to reproduce. The rabbit is considered a symbol of **fertility** because of the large numbers of babies it can have.

In humans, **fertility** is talked about in a few different ways. We might consider a country's **fertility** rate when we look at the number of babies born there in a given year. Or we might say that a person who has many babies is very **fertile**. We also talk about the problem of **infertility**: the state of being unable to have a baby.

As mentioned above, the growth of trees and other plants is considered symbolic of **fertility**. If plants are growing well, the soil they're growing in must be **fertile**.

The **fertility** of soil or a womb is quite literal, but we can talk about **fertility** as a metaphor as well, with the phrase **fertile ground**. A dangerous workplace might be considered **fertile** ground for a labour union movement to start, or a great university could be considered **fertile** ground for learning.

Goodies/treats

These words can usually be used interchangeably. They often refer to sweets, such as candies or desserts, but don't always have to. Here are some other examples of how these words might be used to talk about special indulgences or pleasures:

Mom: If you get all your homework done. You'll get a **treat** at the end of the weekend.

Child: Oh! What kind of **treat**?

Mom: Well, that's up to you. Maybe you can pick a movie to watch.

In this case, we see that **treat** is used just for some special thing that the child can get as a reward.

A common use of the word **goodie** is when we talk about **goodie** bags. These are also called loot bags. They are small gift bags given to children at the end of a birthday party. Before the guests leave, the hosts of the party (usually the family of the child whose birthday it is) will often hand out little bags filled with **treats** for all the children who attended. These bags often include candies, but they can also include little toys or trinkets as well.

Santa Claus

Santa Claus is sometimes referred to simply as **Santa**. The North American idea of **Santa** is a mix of the Dutch character Sinterklaas, the English Father Christmas, and the Catholic saint, Saint Nicholas. As Harp and Maura say in the episode, **Santa Claus** is a character like the Easter Bunny who brings gifts and treats in the night while children sleep.

The ideas that helped shape the North American character of **Santa Claus** were brought here by European settlers, but those original characters have since been influenced by the more modern image of **Santa Claus** that's developed in North America.

This image is of a round, jolly, old man who has a white beard and moustache. He is usually **pictured** wearing a red jacket with white cuffs and a white collar, red pants trimmed with white, a black belt, and black boots. His white hair is often topped with a red hat, also trimmed with white.

The 17th Century

One way that we talk about historical time periods is by referring to **centuries**. A **century** is 100 consecutive years. *Consecutive* means one after the other, occurring in a row. The 100 years between the year 0 and the year 99 are referred to as the **1st century**. The next set of 100 consecutive years, 100–199, is referred to as the **2nd century**. In more modern times, the years 1600–1699 are called the **17th century**. The current **century**, from the year 2000 to 2099, is called the **21st century**. It's important to remember that when we hear **the 19th century**, it means the time between the year 1800 and the year 1899.

Flying reindeer and elves

Just like Santa Claus, **flying reindeer and elves** don't really exist. Santa Claus is a human, and humans obviously do exist! But Santa's a magical one, who can visit every home in one night and remember which kids have been good and which haven't. Similarly, **reindeer** are real animals. They're a type of deer called caribou in North America. However, they cannot actually fly! The word **reindeer** is used both for the plural and singular form. **Elves** (the plural of the word **elf**) are completely imaginary creatures that are like little humans with pointy ears and magical powers.

Magical **flying reindeer** are said to pull Santa's sleigh and **elves** are said to make toys in Santa's workshop.

A chimney

As Harp says in this episode, a **chimney** is a structure that can be seen on the roofs of houses. The **chimney** actually extends into the house and only the part of it that sticks out of the roof can be seen from outside. **Chimneys** are used to move hot air, gases, or smoke from a fireplace, boiler, or furnace up and out of the building. A **chimney** is usually a vertical column, which means that it goes up and down as opposed to side to side and it is like a tube. As mentioned in this episode, not all houses have **chimneys**.

To use something to your advantage

When Harp says that her parents **used Harp's belief in Santa Claus to their advantage**, she means that her parents could convince her to behave well because they knew she wanted to get presents from Santa Claus. They knew that Santa Claus was not real but **used the fact that Harp thought he was to their advantage**. There are many things that we can **use to our advantage**. If we check the weather before leaving the house and see that it's going to rain, we can **use this information to our advantage** by taking an umbrella. The expression means using your resources in a way that benefits you. In Harp's parents' case, their resource was a naïve child who still believed in Santa Claus, which benefitted them because they could get her to behave well. Here's another example:

Kim: How are you feeling about your interview tomorrow?

Tanya: I'm feeling confident. I can **use my experience working with their main competitors to my advantage**.

The Tooth Fairy

As Maura and Harp say in this episode, the **Tooth Fairy** is a fabled figure who goes around in the night leaving money in exchange for teeth that have fallen out of children's mouths. A fable is a story about a supernatural or extraordinary person or event. The **Tooth Fairy** is an American fable.

Baby teeth

The term **baby teeth** refers to the first set of teeth a person gets. They can also be called milk teeth or primary teeth. They usually begin to fall out around 5 or 6 years of age and are all gone by 12 or 13 years of age. They are replaced by adult teeth or secondary teeth.

To lose a tooth

When a tooth falls out, we say we have **lost a tooth**. In Maura's case, she literally did lose her tooth and couldn't find it, but we use this expression even if we know exactly where the tooth is.

To picture something

After Maura tells Harp her story about writing a note to the Tooth Fairy explaining why there was no tooth under her pillow, Harp says she can **picture** little Maura. Harp was not there when Maura wrote the note, but because she has been told the story and she knows Maura, she can imagine what little Maura would have looked like writing this note.

A picture is a visual representation of a person or thing, such as a photograph, a painting, or a drawing. When used in the way Harp does in the episode though, it is not a real visual representation at all. Instead, it is only a mental image.

Could use

Maura says that she **could use** some extra money from the Tooth Fairy. That means that she would like to have a bit of extra money, that it would be helpful if she had some extra money. Another example is: *I'm so tired. I **could use** a nap.*

To bury something

To bury something means to dig into the earth and place the thing there and then cover it with dirt. We could say it is common in North America **to bury** our dead. Or we could say we are looking for **buried** treasure. Despite its spelling, this word is pronounced in most of North America like *berry*, the fruit. But in some regions, people pronounce it more like it's spelled, to rhyme with the word *hurry*.

Quiz

1. Which of the following does NOT describe someone who is naïve?
 - a) someone who is unquestioning
 - b) someone who asks a lot of questions
 - c) someone who believes in something blindly
 - d) someone who believes in the Tooth Fairy

2. What are the years of the 16th century?
 - a) 1601–1700
 - b) 1600–1699
 - c) 1501–1600
 - d) 1500–1599

3. In North America, which of the following is NOT typically considered a symbol of fertility?
 - a) a decaying leaf
 - b) buds on a tree
 - c) eggs
 - d) a rabbit

4. In August, which event would we NOT say is *just around the corner*?
 - a) the end of summer
 - b) the beginning of the school year
 - c) Easter
 - d) Labour Day

5. Which of the following statements means that you're confident in the existence of ghosts?
 - a) I believe ghosts.
 - b) I believe in ghosts.
 - c) I believe on ghosts.
 - d) I believe for ghosts.

6. Which of the following is NOT part of how Santa Claus is typically pictured in North America?

- a) a red jacket and pants
- b) white trim on the cuffs and collar
- c) a black belt and black boots
- d) flying rabbits

7. Which fabled figure is NOT mentioned in this episode?

- a) the Easter Bunny
- b) the Tooth Fairy
- c) Jack Frost
- d) Santa Claus

8. Which of the following is NOT a goodie or a treat?

- a) a reward
- b) candy
- c) watching a movie
- d) a punishment

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