

## Chatterbox #53 – Outer space

### Transcript

- Maura: Hello everyone out there, wherever you are in the universe.
- Harp: This is Harp.
- Maura: And Maura.
- Harp: At Culips.com.
- Maura: That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Harp: Bringing you another fantastic English podcast to help you learn English.
- Maura: You can go to our website, and you can check out all we have to offer, including becoming a member. And when you become a member, you can have access to the transcripts for our episodes, more detailed explanations, and even a quiz.
- Harp: Exactly. And we have a lot of episodes on our website. We have over 120 episodes. Check them all out, 'cause they're all really great.
- Maura: And we love getting comments from people, especially on our individual episodes, so we just wanna say thanks for leaving those comments, and keep on doing it.
- Harp: Yes. If you hear something you love, leave us a comment. Or if you have a question, leave us a comment. Today, we're bringing you our famous Chatterbox podcast.
- Maura: And that's where we chat about all different kinds of stuff, whatever's going on in Canada or the English-speaking world. Or sometimes it's just something cultural, whatever might interest you and whatever interests us.
- Harp: Today, we're talking about something that I think everyone is interested in.
- Maura: Well, yes, I would agree, because this thing that we're talking about is everywhere around the world.
- Harp: We're talking about space.
- Maura: Yes. **Outer space**, where the stars and the sun and the moon...
- Harp: And maybe the **aliens** live.

- Maura: Yeah. And maybe the **aliens**.
- Harp: So today, we're gonna break it down. We're gonna start by talking about space travel.
- Maura: And then we're going to talk about space knowledge, so, general stuff that most people know about **outer space**.
- Harp: And then we're just gonna give you a couple of idioms that are related to space.
- Maura: Because there are quite a few.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, let's start by talking about space travel. Harp, have you ever been to the moon?
- Harp: Yes. No, I'm just joking.
- Maura: So, maybe we should first say that neither of us has ever been to space.
- Harp: Not yet, but hopefully in the future.
- Maura: And you know, some people have travelled to space. And not just astronauts.
- Harp: Yeah, now there's this big trend towards space tourism.
- Maura: Right. For the very wealthy people who can afford the huge price to travel to space.
- Harp: Yeah, it's like **millions and millions** of dollars to travel to space. But some people seem to have a lot of money.
- Maura: Yeah. I don't think I'll be doing that any time soon, but I'm sure it would be **the adventure of a lifetime**.
- Harp: Yeah, it's definitely not gonna happen any time soon, but I've heard it's amazing.
- Maura: And didn't you say you heard something recently about a trip to Mars?
- Harp: I saw an article about a one-way trip to Mars.
- Maura: OK, one-way? So, you mean you go to Mars and you never come back?
- Harp: Exactly. So it was in a scientific journal that they think that in about 20 years, they're gonna have the ability to send people to Mars, but it's only one-way,

you don't come back.

Maura: That seems very risky and a little bit creepy.

Harp: Yeah. And do you know what the most interesting thing was?

Maura: What?

Harp: Four hundred people volunteered within a couple of days to go on a one-way trip to Mars!

Maura: Well, I guess they probably don't have very good lives back here if they're so happy **to leave them behind**.

Harp: Maybe, or I think it's just people so interested in space and going to **outer space** that they're willing to take the one-way trip.

Maura: Yeah. It seems kind of unbelievable, **so much so that** maybe you wouldn't take an offer like that seriously. You wouldn't really believe that you're going to Mars and never coming back.

Harp: Yeah. Actually, at one point in the article, they talked about how the public wouldn't wanna send people there, because it's a one-way trip.

Maura: Yeah.

Harp: It's kinda scary. You don't come back.

Maura: No, it is, it's very scary. But I wonder how many more people would like to do it if it was a return trip.

Harp: I think a lot more.

Maura: Yeah. If they could afford it, because I think if it wasn't so expensive, there would be even more people who would want to go for a trip out into the galaxy and look back on Earth and see what it looks like.

Harp: Definitely. If I could afford it, I would love to do it. You know, and that whole sense of no gravity, when you float in the air? That just seems so cool to me.

Maura: Yeah, and eating freeze-dried ice cream.

Harp: You know, I've actually had astronaut food before, where they freeze-dry it, and they take all the water and everything out?

Maura: Yeah?

Harp: Not so good.

- Maura: So, if we're talking about travelling through space, that definitely makes me think of the trip to the moon.
- Harp: Yes, the **infamous** moonwalk.
- Maura: Right. What's really interesting about America landing on the moon is that even now, years later, there are so many **conspiracies** that it actually didn't happen.
- Harp: You know, I don't think it actually happened.
- Maura: No? You're not sure?
- Harp: I'm not sure.
- Maura: What makes you doubtful?
- Harp: That we can't do it now.
- Maura: Yeah, you're right. That is a bit strange, because if we could do it so many years ago, then why wouldn't we be able to do it now? That's a good point.
- Harp: It just seems a bit odd to me. You know, I've heard all the **conspiracies** about the shadows and the gravity and all the different things, but to me, it just doesn't make sense. If we could do it back in 1969, why can't we send people to the moon now, in 2011?
- Maura: Yeah, that's a good point. The one thing that I always remember being debated is the flag in the picture of the man on the moon, because there's the moon, there's the astronaut, and then there's a flag—the American flag. And so many people have said that it shouldn't be opened and waving in the wind, because there's no atmosphere and there's no wind on the moon. That's one thing that I've heard debated.
- Harp: Yeah, it's all a bit **fishy**. I'll have to see it happen again in order to believe it.
- Maura: Yes, see it happen again. That's a good idea.
- Harp: Or maybe go to the moon.
- Maura: So, it seems like—hopefully—we're making some progress, and there'll be more space travel soon.
- Harp: Yes, and I heard that the last Apollo that went to the moon, they found more water there than they expected.
- Maura: Oh. So that means we might be able to live there? Or what does that mean?

- Harp: Yeah, exactly. We might be able to live there, because there's water.
- Maura: Hmm. I wonder what it will be like to live on the moon.
- Harp: I think it would be very weird. All right, let's move on to the second topic, which is about space knowledge.
- Maura: So, there are some things that most everyday people know about space and then there's other, way more complicated stuff that professional or **space enthusiasts** know that most people don't.
- Harp: Yeah. What do you know?
- Maura: You know, I don't think I know very much, which is funny, because I am interested in space and curious about it and when I was in university doing my undergrad degree, I actually took an introduction to astronomy class. But now that it's almost 10 years later, I don't remember very much.
- Harp: So, do you know the different **constellations** and can you find them in the sky?
- Maura: No, not really. I know the common **constellations** that most people know, like the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, and I think there's one like the Bear that's fairly common.
- Harp: You know, sometimes I just think I can see them, but really I can't. I've never been able to see them.
- Maura: No, I'm actually pretty horrible at **picking them out**, too. I think the Big Dipper and Little Dipper could be anything. I mean, if you connect the right dots, I can always see them. So I get confused.
- Harp: Exactly. 'Cause we're kind of making the imaginary lines, and the stars are supposed to be there. It's too complicated for me.
- Maura: Yeah, yeah. But some people are really good at **picking them out**, and some people know even more than other people.
- Harp: Yeah. There are definitely people out there who love astronomy and where the stars are and which stars they are.
- Maura: Mmhmm. Another really interesting thing you can do if you're in Montreal, and I'm sure they have it in lots of other cities too, is go to the **planetarium**, and then you can learn a little bit more about it. I did that, a few years ago, and we watched a short film about the **constellations**.

- Harp: Yeah, I did that, actually, in India, I went to the **planetarium**. And I have to admit, I actually fell asleep during the show.
- Maura: Well, it's dark and it feels like the night time, so it kind of puts you to sleep.
- Harp: Yeah. And her voice was very soothing, so I just I fell asleep. I wasn't bored, it was just the environment.
- Maura: Yeah, yeah. But I think that's it. You have to know a little bit about it. Most people know a little bit about the cycles of the moon. Like, they know it's a full moon, or a half moon, or it's almost a full moon.
- Harp: Yeah. Most people know the full moon, 'cause that's when crazy things happen.
- Maura: But it's true that a lot of people believe when there's a full moon that people act a little bit strange. And a lot of people do crazy things, or they're emotional. There are a few different things that happen in life that people still do connect to the cycles of the moons.
- Harp: Definitely. Do you believe in **UFOs**, Maura?
- Maura: I don't think I do. I'm not sure though.
- Harp: OK, so a **UFO** is an unidentified flying object.
- Maura: Right. So, something flying in the sky and we don't know what it is. So it's not an airplane or a helicopter or a jet or some other thing that humans made that flies in the sky. And usually what is flying a **UFO** is an **alien** or an **extraterrestrial** or **Martian**, so some other creature from another planet.
- Harp: Exactly. And I remember growing up and watching a lot of shows when they would talk about farmers seeing **UFOs** or people seeing **UFOs** and they would kind of recreate what had happened. So I think I actually might believe in **UFOs**.
- Maura: You know, I kind of do, and I want to, but then I think, if they really existed, I feel like we would have had more contact by now.
- Harp: But then I think, the universe is so big, are we really the only ones? I don't know. It's so complicated.
- Maura: So yes, I would agree that maybe other life forms exist on other planets, but I don't think that we've made contact with them. Yeah, we don't know and that's where, I guess, all the mystery comes from.
- Harp: And the fascination, because we don't know.

- Maura: I would say that a lot of people are kind of like we are, in between, not sure, not sure what to believe. Most people are kind of open to the idea. But who knows?
- Harp: Really, I think most people don't think about it, so...
- Maura: Let's move to the last thing we're going to do today, and that is different expressions that are related to space.
- Harp: Yeah, let's look at some space-related idioms.
- Maura: So, the first one is **Are you from Mars?**
- Harp: No, I'm not from Mars. I'm from Earth.
- Maura: So, you might get asked if **you're from Mars**, or ask someone if **they're from Mars**, if they're very strange and bizarre, doing things differently than how most people do.
- Harp: Yeah. I think kids use this expression the most.
- Maura: Yeah. But again, with this, you wanna make sure you ask a friend or someone you know. You don't say this to someone you don't know very well, because it could be rude then.
- Harp: Yeah, and don't ask your boss.
- Maura: Yeah. But if you're joking around with a friend, and your friend is acting very strange, you might ask them if **they're from Mars**.
- Harp: Yeah, sometimes when you're being silly I ask, "**Are you from Mars?**"
- Maura: And what's another expression that's related to space?
- Harp: Another fun expression is **out of this world**.
- Maura: **To be out of this world**. If something is described as **out of this world**, it means that it is excellent, great, superb.
- Harp: Yeah, it's exceptional. So if something's **out of this world**, it's really different and great and fantastic.
- Maura: Yeah. It's almost like it's better than anything we've seen on this world, so it must be from a different planet, because it's just so good that we've never seen anything that good around here.
- Harp: Yeah.

- Maura: So, you could use it for anything. You could use it for a performance, or you could do it for something that someone's made, like cooking or furniture, anything.
- Harp: Yeah. For example, if you see a toy. If it's really different and unique and exciting, you could say, "Wow, that toy is **out of this world**."
- Maura: Right. So it's new and different and really fun.
- Harp: Yes.
- Maura: And you could also **reach for the stars**. That's the third and last idiom we're gonna talk about today that's related to space: **to reach for the stars**.
- Harp: Yeah. **To reach for the stars** is working towards a goal. So the stars in this expression are the goal. You reach for them. You try to touch the stars. You try really hard to achieve something.
- Maura: Yeah, so the stars are above you and you work in order to one day get that star and reach your goal.
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: Now, talking about the stars also makes me think of the song about the stars that kids sing.
- Harp: I love it. Do you wanna sing it for us?
- Maura: Twinkle, twinkle little star  
How I wonder what you are  
Up above the world so high  
Like a diamond in the sky  
Twinkle, twinkle little star  
How I wonder what you are
- Harp: Wow! Maura, you're such a good singer.
- Maura: Well, I sang it a lot when I was a kid.
- Harp: So cute.
- Maura: So, there is so much to discuss about space. Really, it's an endless universe, for real!
- Harp: Exactly.
- Maura: So, today, what we could talk about was space travel, what has happened, or

supposedly happened, and what might happen in the future.

Harp: Exactly. And then we moved on to space knowledge and things that people know about space.

Maura: Mmhmm. And things that we know about space. And then we also talked about idioms, different expressions that we have that are related to **outer space**.

Harp: And then Maura sang us a lovely little song about the stars.

Maura: Yeah, you couldn't forget that part.

Harp: It was wonderful!

Maura: Aw, thanks. So, don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com, and check out all we have there. And if you go to iTunes, give us five stars if you think we're **out of this world**.

Harp: Exactly. So that's about it for us today. This has been Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: Bye everyone!

Maura: See you later!

## **Detailed Explanation**

### Outer space

This term refers to any region outside of the atmosphere of the Earth. When a space shuttle leaves Earth's atmosphere, it goes into **outer space**. We can also just say *space* or *the cosmos*.

Here's an example with the term **outer space**:

Frank: Did you watch the shuttle *Endeavour* launch yesterday?

John: I sure did! Man, I'd really like to be an astronaut and go into **outer space** someday.

### Aliens, extraterrestrials, and Martians

An **alien**, or **extraterrestrial**, is a life form that doesn't come from Earth. There's no difference in meaning between these terms, but **alien** is more common, and **extraterrestrial** is more scientific. A **Martian** is a creature specifically from the planet Mars. Many science fiction books and films use these terms.

Here are a couple of examples:

Dan: Do you believe in **aliens**?

Jeff: Yeah. A lot of scientists say that we're probably not alone in the universe, so I guess there must be **extraterrestrials** out there somewhere.

Will: I watched the movie *War of the Worlds* last night.

Ian: Was it any good?

Will: Yeah, it was really good. It's about **Martians** invading Earth.

The word **alien** can also be used to describe someone from Earth, but from another country. It's not really a very nice thing to call someone, so it's most often used as part of the term **illegal alien**, which describes someone who's in the country illegally, without a passport or the necessary visa.

All three of these words, **alien**, **extraterrestrial**, and **Martian**, can be used either as nouns or adjectives.

### Millions and millions

In this expression, the word *millions* is repeated for emphasis. This expression is often not literal; it's frequently used as an exaggeration that just means *a lot*.

Here's an example of that kind of exaggeration:

Billy: Oh my gosh, there are **millions and millions** of mosquitoes out tonight!

Sam: Yeah, it's terrible. Let's go back inside.

### The adventure of a lifetime

The phrase **the adventure of a lifetime** can be used to describe any kind of really exciting experience, especially if you think it will be the most exciting experience in your life. The word *adventure* in this phrase can also be replaced with other nouns, such as *experience*, *opportunity*, or *journey*. **Of a lifetime** usually just means that it's the best of that thing you'll experience in your entire life.

Here's an example of the phrase **the adventure of a lifetime** being used to describe a one-of-a-kind experience:

Daniel: One of my goals in life is to one day climb Mount Everest.

Rod: Wow! That would be **the adventure of a lifetime**!

### To leave something behind

In a metaphorical sense, **to leave something behind** means to move on with your life and finish or forget about something that happened in the past, especially something traumatic or painful, in order to continue your life. In this episode, Maura says that people who want to go to Mars forever and **leave their lives on Earth behind** them must not be very happy here. This expression can also be used for something physical that you don't take with you.

Here's an example of the metaphorical sense as well as one for the more physical meaning of this expression:

Bettina: Are you excited to start university this fall?

Stu: I sure am. I can't wait to **leave all the bad memories I have from high school behind**.

Dave: It looks kind of cloudy. Should I take my umbrella with me?

Julia: No, I've got mine, and you're already carrying your bag. You can **leave your umbrella behind**.

#### So much so that

This expression means *to such a degree that* or *to such an extent that*. In this episode, Maura says, "It seems kind of unbelievable, **so much so that** maybe you wouldn't take an offer like that seriously." Another way of saying this could be "It seems kind of unbelievable, so unbelievable that maybe you wouldn't take an offer like that seriously." Maura's saying that if you received an offer to go to Mars, the offer would seem so far-fetched that you might not believe it was actually real.

Here are a couple of examples with the expression **so much so that**:

Professor MacKay: Ernest Hemingway's experiences in war had a profound effect on him, **so much so that** several of his works were about war.

Matt: It was sure windy last night.

Jack: Yeah, **so much so that** a tree on my street fell over!

#### Infamous

The word **infamous** means *famous for something bad or controversial*, or for something that has a bad reputation. Historical figures who are known for bad things are often called **infamous**. The meaning of this word is very similar to *notorious*.

Here are some examples with **infamous**:

Jerry: I had dinner with an old professor last night. It was quite an experience!

Dean: Why's that?

Jerry: Well, he's always been an **infamous** drinker, and sure enough, he got very drunk!

Bob: Have you heard of Jack the Ripper?

Cindy: Yeah, he was that **infamous** murderer in London a long time ago, right?

#### A conspiracy theory

**A conspiracy** is a secret plan carried out by several people or an organization or a government, usually something illegal or devious. For example, if several prisoners talked together and planned to kill one of their guards so they could escape, it would be **a conspiracy** to commit murder.

**A conspiracy theory** is a theory that explains a given event as being the result of a **conspiracy**.

Many **conspiracy theories** are controversial and not officially accepted. For example, Maura and Harp discuss the **conspiracy theory** that America's moon landing was actually filmed in a studio, and never really happened.

Here's another example using the term **conspiracy theory**:

Linda: Do you think that the American government was actually responsible for the assassination of President Kennedy?

George: No, that's just **a conspiracy theory**. I don't think it's true.

In this episode, Harp and Maura talk about “**conspiracies**” when they actually mean “**conspiracy theories**.” This is a shortening of the phrase used commonly by many Native English speakers, but if you want to make sure that you’re well understood, it’s probably best to remember the difference between **conspiracy** and **conspiracy theory** and keep these terms separate when you speak or write.

### Fishy

If someone refers to something as **fishy**, it means that he or she does not believe it, or is suspicious of it. If you don’t trust someone, you can say that there is something **fishy** about them. Likewise, if a situation is **fishy**, there’s something strange about it that makes you feel uncomfortable or apprehensive.

Here are some examples with **fishy**:

Lisa: Last night there was a guy on the train who kept staring at me. There was something very **fishy** about him.

Anne: Yeah, he sounds really creepy.

David: There’s something **fishy** going on here. The lights in my house are on, but I know I turned them off before I left!

Mike: That’s really weird. Maybe you should call the police.

We did an entire episode about the term **fishy** in April 2010, so check out that episode if you’d like to learn more about this topic!

### An enthusiast

**An enthusiast** is someone who really enjoys doing a certain activity, or is really interested in a certain subject. For example, a biking **enthusiast** loves to ride their bike, and a sports **enthusiast** enjoys playing or watching sports, and probably knows a lot about sports too. In this episode, Maura mentions that **space enthusiasts** probably know a lot of things about outer space that most other people don’t.

Here are some examples:

Cara: I've always loved golf. I play almost every weekend.

Peter: Wow! You're a real golf **enthusiast**.

Steve: I hear you're a big art **enthusiast**, Amy.

Amy: Yeah, that's true. I especially love modern art.

#### A constellation

**A constellation** is a group of stars that's visible from Earth at night and that's been named by someone. **Constellations** are usually named after something that they resemble if you draw certain lines between the stars, such as the Big Dipper and Draco the Dragon. Many **constellations** are named after Ancient Greek characters, such as Orion and Cassiopeia.

#### To pick something out

**To pick something out** is a phrasal verb that can have a few different meanings. One of its meanings is *to locate something* that's hard to find or see, such as **a constellation**. Some synonyms for this meaning of **to pick something out** are *to distinguish* and *to identify*.

**To pick something out** can also mean *to choose* or *to select* from a variety of options, such as **to pick out a nice outfit** to wear.

Here are some examples for each of these meanings:

Jake: Can you see Helen?

Natasha: No, I can't **pick her out** in this huge crowd.

Sam: Where's the Big Dipper?

Angela: I don't know. I can't **pick it out**. There are thousands of stars in the sky!

Tina: I don't feel like going to a bar tonight, let's just go to the video store and **pick out a movie** to watch.

Raj: OK! That sounds like a good idea to me.

#### A planetarium

**A planetarium** is a place that has a large room where images of space are projected onto the ceiling and/or the walls. People go to **planetariums** to learn about space. Classes of students often go to **planetariums** on school trips, to learn about planets, stars, constellations, and other things in outer space.

#### A UFO

The word **UFO** is an abbreviation that stands for *unidentified flying object*, and it usually refers to an alien spaceship. Another common term for an alien spaceship is *a flying saucer*, because some disc-shaped (or saucer-shaped) objects have been seen in the sky and were thought by some to be alien spaceships.

Many people have reported seeing **UFOs**, but these objects have never been proven to be alien spaceships! Sometimes **a UFO** turns out to be a military aircraft or a special balloon used by scientists for measuring atmospheric conditions, but some **UFOs** remain unidentified.

Here's an example using the term **UFO**:

Eric: That scene in the movie when the **UFOs** were attacking the White House was cool!

Dan: Yeah, the special effects were really good.

#### Are you from Mars?

This expression means that you think the person you're asking is acting very strangely or silly. By asking someone if **they're from Mars**, you're jokingly saying that only an alien would act so strangely. A similar expression is *Are you crazy?*

Here's an example:

Mary: You know what my favourite snack is? Jelly bean and pickle sandwiches.

Jessica: **Are you from Mars?** That's the weirdest combination I've ever heard of.

### Out of this world

You can use this expression to talk about an amazing experience or item, but it's not usually used to talk about people. As Maura explains in this episode, we say that something is **out of this world** because it's so exciting or different that it's almost as though it comes from another world. This expression is usually used only for things that are truly amazing, not for things that are just good or slightly better than average.

Kurt: Was the movie good?

Beth: It wasn't just good, it was **out of this world!** I think it's the best movie I've ever seen.

Karen: How was your trip to Africa?

Stacey: It was **out of this world!** It was so spectacular! I'll remember it for the rest of my life.

### To reach for the stars

This idiom means *to aim for your most ambitious or highest goals*, because what's higher than the stars? If someone tells you **to reach for the stars**, they're telling you to follow your dreams, to try your best and do what you want to do, even if it will be difficult.

Here's an example:

Paul: I've decided to quit my job and go to law school. It's always been my dream to become a lawyer.

Diane: Yes, **reach for the stars**, Paul! Good for you!

**Quiz**

1. **Students sometimes go on school trips to a planetarium to learn about which of the following subjects?**
  - a) outer space
  - b) constellations
  - c) inner space
  - d) two of the above are true
  
2. **Which of the following things can the word *fishy* be used to describe?**
  - a) a terrifying situation
  - b) a funny experience
  - c) a strange person or situation
  - d) a person who likes fish
  
3. **Which of the following people would be most likely to be described as infamous?**
  - a) a thief known for committing a daring bank robbery
  - b) a singer known for her beautiful voice
  - c) a scientist known for making a breakthrough discovery
  - d) a teacher known for helping many students

**4. What is a conspiracy theory?**

- a) a plan carried out by several people to do something devious
- b) the belief that digital piracy is not unethical
- c) a theory believed and studied by several people but kept secret
- d) a theory that explains an event as being the result of a conspiracy

**5. If you have an amazing experience, which of the following expressions could you use to describe it?**

- a) out of the universe
- b) out of this world
- c) off of this world
- d) outside of the galaxy

**6. Someone living in another country without a passport or the proper visa is which of the following?**

- a) an illegal alien
- b) an extraterrestrial
- c) an illegal Martian
- d) an unfamiliar

**7. Which of these expressions means *to work towards your highest goals*?**

- a) to grasp at the stars
- b) to touch the universe
- c) to reach for the stars
- d) to be from Mars

**8. For many people, going into space would be which of the following?**

- a) the adventure of the life
- b) an adventure of the lifetime
- c) the adventure of a lifetime
- d) adventure of life

## **Answers**

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