

Chatterbox #99 – To bite the dust**Transcript**

Harp: Hello everyone. This is Harp!

Maura: And Maura!

Harp: And we're here bringing you your Culips ESL podcast.

Maura: And if you have never been, go to our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And there's all kinds of stuff for you there, including all of our previous episodes. And there's gotta be hundreds there now, **eh**, Harp?

Harp: Yup, I think a hundred and sixty.

Maura: Nice. So lots of other episodes for you to check out. And while you're there, you can also become a member. When you're a member, you have a transcript for all of our episodes. You also have more detailed explanations for the expressions we use, and even a quiz.

Harp: Yes. And today we're going to bring you a Catchword podcast. And this where we focus on slang expressions that you can hear on the streets in North America or also in some movies or on TV.

Maura: Right. We only bring you popular, up-to-date expressions.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: Now, today we're going to look at expressions that mean *to die*.

Harp: Yes. Expressions related to dying.

Maura: Which sounds so serious, but we're not going to make this a serious episode, because all of these expressions about dying are not to be used in any serious circumstance. You would never use these expressions if you were talking about a real person actually dying.

Harp: Yes. These are expressions if a thing dies or if someone dies who you don't know or you're not close to.

Maura: Right. So what we mean by that is someone who dies in the news that you don't know at all or a person that dies in a movie or a book, someone that's not really real. Anyone who is actually dying in real life, in the life of a friend or someone you know, these expressions are completely inappropriate.

Harp: Yes.

Maura: But the reason we decided to do an episode anyways, because there are so many expressions that mean *to die*.

Harp: Yeah, and there are fun expressions that you can hear out on the streets.

Maura: Yes. They're funny, they're not serious, and they're not used in any serious way.

Harp: Yes, so let's get started with the first expression.

Maura: OK, so the first expression is ***to bite the dust***.

Harp: Yes. ***To bite the dust***.

Maura: Mhmm. ***To bite the dust*** means *to die*. It means you're done, you're finished, it's over.

Harp: And one of the possible origins for this expression is, if you think back to the cowboy movies, where two cowboys would meet at sunset and they would have a **showdown** and they would pull their guns out and whichever one died would fall on the ground.

Maura: And the ground was dusty.

Harp: So he would bite the dust.

Maura: Right. So that cowboy would be dead. So, that's where this expression might come from. This expression's also been in different songs and you hear this one quite often in different media.

Harp: Yeah, there's a very popular song.

Maura: But you can search for yourself: Queen – *Another One Bites the Dust*. And you'll hear the song. Let's give some examples now with this expression.

Harp: OK, let's do it. Let's give some examples.

Maura: Hey, my sister went **skydiving** last weekend and I went to watch.

Harp: Really? Did it look scary?

Maura: Yeah, it looked really scary but also super exciting. I totally wanna do that before I die. Is there anything you wanna do before you **bite the dust**?

Harp: I'm a bit of a **chicken**, I don't know.

Harp: So in this example, two people are talking about things they wanna do before they die. But instead of saying *die*, they use the fun expression **bite the dust**.

Maura: Right. They're not talking about real people actually dying. They're just talking about one day, when they die, what things will they want to have done.

Harp: OK, so let's give one more example with this expression, **to bite the dust**.

Maura: Let's do it.

Maura: So, what are you doing this weekend? Do you wanna do something?

Harp: Yeah, sure. I don't really have any plans right now.

Maura: Well, I need to go to the mall because I need to get a new TV.

Harp: Oh yeah? What happened to your old TV?

Maura: It **bit the dust**. I need a new one.

Harp: I hate when things **break down** like that.

Maura: Yeah. It was old though, so I guess maybe it's time I got a flat screen.

Harp: Yeah, your old TV was a bit big and bulky.

Maura: It was ancient.

Harp: OK, we'll go to the mall this weekend.

Maura: So there's an example with **to bite the dust**, this time talking about a thing.

Harp: Yeah, in this example, the TV died.

Maura: Right. So, we can talk about things dying too, when they stop working and they're broken and they can't be fixed.

Harp: Yes, exactly.

Maura: So, **to bite the dust** was our first expression. Now let's look at another slang term for *to die*.

Harp: OK. The next expression is **to croak**.

Maura: Yes, **to croak**. This word has other meanings as well, so don't get confused, but it can also mean *to die*.

Harp: Yes, **to croak** is slang for *to die*.

Maura: Very simple definitions today, **eh**?

Harp: Very simple.

Maura: So first let's do an example with **to croak** talking about a person. But remember, not a real person that you know, some distant person that doesn't really exist in your real life.

Harp: Yes, not a friend or someone in your family.

Maura: OK, let's do the example.

Maura: Did you watch that movie I lent you?

Harp: Yeah, I watched it last night.

Maura: It was pretty good, **eh**? I really liked it.

Harp: It was so good. But I couldn't believe it when he just **croaked** in the middle of the movie.

Maura: I know, it was really surprising. I couldn't believe he died either. But it was good, **eh**?

Harp: Yeah, it was a shocker.

Harp: So in that example, we're talking about characters in a movie and how one of them died, or **croaked**.

Maura: Right. So, again, we're not talking about any real people. Now, let's give another example with **to croak**.

Harp: Let's do it.

Harp: Hey, how's the goldfish that you won at the fair last week?

Maura: Well... it already **croaked**.

Harp: Really?

Maura: Yeah. You know, goldfish, they don't really have a long lifespan, so what can you expect? But he was cute.

Harp: Yeah, he was cute. That's too bad.

- Maura: So there's an example talking, this time, about a fish. A kind of pet, and in this case we said the goldfish **croaked**.
- Harp: Yes, but if it was someone who had a pet for a very long time and they were very upset, don't use this expression.
- Maura: Definitely. So, we use this expression because goldfish don't usually live for very long and you don't really have a relationship, usually.
- Harp: Usually.
- Maura: So, if someone does have a pet, especially a cat or a dog, for a long period of time, then, again, this wouldn't be appropriate, because it's not sensitive to the person's feelings.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely.
- Maura: OK, let's look at one last expression that means to die.
- Harp: So the last expression is **to kick the bucket**.
- Maura: Yes, **to kick the bucket**.
- Harp: And, again, this expression, **to kick the bucket**, has the same meaning as the other two, when something dies, it **kicks the bucket**.
- Maura: Right. If you **kick the bucket**, it's finished, it's over, it's dead. All right, so let's give some examples with **to kick the bucket**.
- Harp: All right. Let's start with our first example.

- Maura: So, I'm reading your favourite book right now.
- Harp: Oh, what do you think so far?
- Maura: I'm really enjoying it. I'm totally into it. It's a real **page-turner**.
- Harp: Did he **kick the bucket yet**?
- Maura: What? I didn't get to that part!
- Harp: I'm sorry I ruined the surprise.
- Maura: It's all right. It'll still be good and now I'll know what to expect. It's fine.

- Maura: So there's an example where we used **to kick the bucket**. And again, we're not talking about people or anybody close to us, we're talking about characters in a book.

Harp: Yes, not people close to us.

Maura: Now, as we showed you with all of these expressions, you could talk about people or things. So let's give you another example with things.

Harp: I was driving to work like normal, and my car just decided **to kick the bucket**.

Maura: Oh no! Like, on the side of the road or what?

Harp: Yeah, it was that quiet road near my house. There was no one else there, my car died, I had to walk for **miles**.

Maura: Oh no. So I guess you're **in the market** for a new car.

Harp: Definitely. I need a new car.

Maura: So, there's our last example with **to kick the bucket**. And this time it was a car that died.

Harp: Yes. And an interesting thing with this expression, **kick the bucket**, is a bucket list.

Maura: Yeah, there was a movie a few years ago called *The Bucket List*, and it was all about the things that you wanna do before you die, the things that you wanna accomplish in your lifetime.

Harp: Yeah, it's kind of popular right now, to have a bucket list, to write down things that you wanna do before you die.

Maura: Yeah, I think it's an important thing to at least have in mind. You wanna have a list of goals or things you wanna accomplish. Although I think it's very important, I don't have one. Do you?

Harp: No. I'm trying to think of something that would be on my bucket list but...

Maura: Well, now we have homework. We have to come up with the bucket list for ourselves.

Harp: Yeah. Any of you out there have a bucket list? And what's on it?

Maura: If you do, let us know. It would be interesting for sure.

Harp: OK, so let's do a quick recap for today. We started with **to bite the dust**.

Maura: And then we talked about **to croak**.

Harp: And we finished with **to kick the bucket**.

- Maura: And like we said, there are pages and pages of expressions that mean *to die*. Again, use them with caution and not in any serious way, but we'll include in our Learning Materials a list of other popular expressions that also mean *to die*.
- Harp: Yes, so check out our website, Culips.com, that's C-U-L-I-P-S.com.
- Maura: And if you don't become a member, you can always help support us by making a donation. We really appreciate all the support that we get.
- Harp: Yeah, definitely. We really appreciate it. And you can always like us on Facebook.
- Maura: And send us a message there 'cause we love chatting with you there. And we'll see you later, or on Facebook.
- Harp: Bye everyone!
- Maura: Bye!

Detailed Explanation

Eh

This is probably the most famous Canadian word! If you visit any shops for tourists while in Canada, they will probably have some T-shirts, postcards, or coffee mugs with this word on them. Canadians use the word **eh** to turn a sentence into a question. When Canadians say **eh**, they are usually looking for your opinion on what they just said, and they often expect that you will agree with them.

In this episode, Maura says **eh** a few times. When talking about the number of episodes at Culips, Maura says to Harp, "There's gotta be hundreds now, **eh**, Harp?" Maura thinks there are hundreds, but she's not completely sure, so she is asking Harp to confirm.

Later, Maura says that there are "very simple definitions today, **eh**?" She is expecting Harp to agree with her, which Harp does.

Maura also uses **eh** twice in the dialogue examples. In these cases, she says something is good, and the person having the conversation with her agrees.

To pass away

The slang expressions for *to die* that we talk about in this episode are not respectful or appropriate to use to talk about people you know personally or that others were close to. When you want to be respectful, you can say *to die* or *to pass away*.

People use the expressions in this episode to talk about things or people they don't know, like famous people, or fictional people in movies or books. People would also not use these expressions to talk about people's beloved pets, because these expressions are not very sensitive to people's feelings.

To bite the dust

To bite the dust is the first of the expressions that means *to die*. The possible origin is a cowboy being shot and falling onto the dusty ground to die. In this way, he "bites" the dust.

There is a really famous song by the band Queen called *Another One Bites the Dust*. Check it out on YouTube!

Here's another example with **to bite the dust**, with two people playing a videogame:

Iris: Hey! I'm gonna get your last defense.

Frank: Oh, no you're not!

BAM!

Iris: And he **bites the dust**!

A similar expression is *to bite the big one*, which also means *to die*.

A showdown

A **showdown** is when at least two opposite sides come together to end their differences. This could be between individual people or groups of people.

In this episode, we talk about a **showdown** between two cowboys in the past. The two cowboys would meet in the town. They would shoot at each other at the same time and the one who kills the other wins the **showdown**. It's crazy to think that this is how people used to settle problems!

Now, you can have a **showdown** in poker, when the players lay their cards down face up to determine the winner. You can also have a **showdown** when two people or groups come together to try to come to a resolution, like in business. **Showdowns** are not peaceful, respectful discussions; they are meetings that have a winner or loser.

Here's an example with **showdown**:

Brett: We're meeting with the group that wants to tear down the heritage building downtown to build condos. Of course, we're fighting to keep it up!

Cindy: Sounds like it's gonna be a **showdown**.

To go skydiving

To skydive is go up in a plane and jump out of it with a parachute on your back. Some people are professional **skydivers** and others do it once or twice in their lives, with a professional. It is a very exciting, and some would say dangerous, thing to do. This is a common activity that people want to do before they die.

As with most activities in English, this is often not used as a verb by itself, **to skydive**, but with *go* and then the *ing* form of the word, **to go skydiving**.

Unnatural sounding: Andrea **skydived** last weekend.

Natural sounding: Andrea went **skydiving** last weekend.

Here's a short list of the names of some other activities that sound more natural when used in this form:

To go hiking

To go skiing

To go running

To be a chicken

When someone is called a **chicken**, it means that they are afraid. Someone might be called a **chicken** because they're scared of many things in general or of something specific.

This expression was the focus of a past Culips episode. If you'd like to check that out, go to Culips.com and search for the word **chicken** in the search bar!

In this episode, in one dialogue example, Harp says that she is a **chicken**. She is afraid to go skydiving and afraid to do any adventurous activities.

Here's another example with **chicken**:

Mike: I don't want to jump into the water. This diving board is so high!

Veronica: Don't be a **chicken**! Just do it!

To break down

This two-word verb, **to break down**, has a few different meanings that are quite different from each other. Here are the differences in use, including the explanation for how we use it in this episode.

At Culips, we often use **to break down** in the introduction to our episodes. We say that we are going **to break down** an explanation for you. In this case, **to break down** is to talk about all the different details in a way that is easy for people to understand.

In this episode, Harps uses **to break down** to talk about a television that stopped working. When something breaks and doesn't function, we can use **to break down**, especially for mechanical or large items like cars.

Here's another example with **to break down**:

Amanda: My car **broke down** on the side of the road this weekend and I was stuck in the snow.

Katherine: Oh no! I hope you didn't have to wait too long for someone to help you.

One other use of **to break down** is to talk about a person. When a person **breaks down**, it means that they become emotional and lose control. A person who **breaks down** is very upset about something.

Here's an example with this use of **to break down**:

Wendy: When I was talking to Tina last night, she just **broke down** and started to cry.

Olivia: That's too bad. She's really upset about getting such a low test score. I hope she can start to feel better soon.

To croak

Here's the second expression that means *to die*. **To croak** is used to mean *to die*, but again, it's not very respectful. A croak is a low sound that certain animals make, especially frogs. So if you hear someone say that a frog croaked, they're probably talking about the noise.

When people die, they might also make a sound like a croak, and this is why **to croak** is a slang term for *to die*. We thought this was kinds of a creepy connection, so we didn't want to talk about it in our episode!

To kick the bucket

To kick the bucket is the third expression we look at that means *to die*. This expression can also said as *to kick the can*.

In 2007, there was a film called *The Bucket List* that was about two men completing activities on a list of things to do before they died. Before this film, the expression **to kick the bucket** was known, but the term *bucket list* was not. This film created the term *bucket list* and now people use it when they talk about the things they want to do before they die.

A page-turner

When a book is very exciting and you always want to keep reading it, it can be called a **page-turner**. The reason is that you want to continue to turn the pages of the book to keep reading because it's so interesting or exciting.

Here's an example with **page-turner**.

Sonya: I can't stop reading that book you lent me.

Helen: It's a real **page-turner**, isn't it?

Miles vs. kilometres

In Canada, we use kilometres to measure long distances. We also spell it *kilometre* and not *kilometer*.

But in speech, when we talk casually about distance, we often say **miles**. Harp says, in one of our dialogue examples, that she walked for **miles**, which means that she walked a long distance. When we are giving a more exact distance, Canadians would usually say they walked for a certain number of kilometres.

In songs, you will especially hear **miles** instead of kilometres. *Kilometres* just does not sound as nice as **miles**. And it's easier to find a word that rhymes with *miles*!

Here are a couple of examples showing the difference in use:

Dean: I miss Jen so much. I'd walk for **miles** just to see her again.

Fiona: Good news for you, because she's coming back next week!

Tanya: It's about 500 kilometres between Toronto and Montreal.

Jack: So, are you going to drive or take the bus?

To be in the market

If someone is **in the market**, it means that they are looking to buy something. What they are going to buy is usually indicated earlier in the conversation or by saying what the person is **in the market** to buy. For example, Maura says that someone is **in the market** to buy a new car.

If you imagine someone walking around in an actual market, they're probably at the market because they want to buy something. It's the same idea, but the expression can be used to talk about buying anything and no one needs to be at an actual market.

George: I'm just looking at this house that I saw for sale in our neighbourhood.

Peter: Oh, I didn't know you were **in the market**! That's exciting.

Additional expression that mean *to die*:

To breathe one's last breathe

To cash in one's chips

To give up the ghost

To buy the farm

To meet one's maker

To turn up one's toes

To pass away

To go to a better place

These last three expressions are a little more tactful, and you could use them in more delicate situations, such as when a loved one or family member has died. They all imply a peaceful, restful journey, so they are more appropriate to use when people are feeling sad and missing someone they cared about.

Quiz

1. Which is a famous and especially Canadian word that turns a sentence into a question?

- a) OK
- b) yeah
- c) eh
- d) neh

2. *To bite the _____* means *to die*.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) *dirth*
- b) *dust*
- c) *must*
- d) *ground*

3. Which of the following sounds the most natural?

- a) He went diving this weekend.
- b) He dove this weekend.
- c) He did diving this weekend.
- d) He played diving this weekend.

4. What does it mean if someone calls you a chicken?

- a) You're cold.
- b) You're noisy.
- c) You're afraid.
- d) You walk around a lot.

5. Which of the following statements is NOT a meaning for the verb *to break down*?

- a) to talk about and explain in detail
- b) to stop functioning
- c) to lost emotional control
- d) to crack your back

6. *To croak* means *to die*. But what kind of a sound is a croak?

- a) the sound that a frog makes
- b) the sound that a car makes
- c) the sound that a cat makes
- d) the sound of a fish splashing

7. When do Canadians often use *miles* to talk about distance?

- a) in a casual way
- b) in an exact way
- c) in songs
- d) both (a) and (c)

8. When someone wants to buy a car, we can say that person is _____ for a new car.

Please fill in the blank.

- a) in the market
- b) on the market
- c) going to the market
- d) nowhere near the market

Answers

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