

Close Up 3 – Catching Up – Part 2

Transcript

Hello everyone. This is Maura with the Close Up podcast at Culips, C-U-L-I-P-S.com. In this podcast we listen to real conversations and look at them closely. In this episode we are going to listen to a conversation involving two friends catching up, but more importantly they are sharing an embarrassing story about a friend.

This episode makes me think of my own embarrassing stories, which I won't share with you because, well, they're embarrassing.

Let's listen to Fred and Tara talk about this embarrassing story.

Tara: **Guess** what happened to her the other day?

Fred: **I don't know. What?**

Tara: Well, since starting her new job, Linda has found it a bit difficult. Her boss seemed to be bit of a **tyrant**. One of her nice colleagues has been **showing her the ropes**, so things have started **looking up**.

Fred: That's good.

Tara: It was good. Then, last week she went to the **washroom**. When she opened the door, she **walked in on** her boss going to the washroom.

Fred: Oh no! What did she do?

Tara: Of course, she felt so **embarrassed**. She said sorry and left as quickly as she could.

Fred: And has she seen her boss since?

Tara: Yes, but he doesn't even **make eye contact** with her.

So Tara introduces her story with the **Guess what?** expression. We say **guess what?** when we have some interesting news to share.

Examples could be, “**Guess what?** I got that job I had applied for.” Or “**Guess what** Shaun told me? He told me that Jen is having a baby.” The news that follows the expression **Guess what** can be anything that is interesting.

Tara is talking about her friend Linda.

Tara: **Guess what** happened to her the other day?

And Fred replies with:

Fred: **I don't know. What?**

This is a common response to the **Guess what?** Often people respond with ‘I don't know,’ because they don't know the answer. Sometimes, if they have an idea, they might try to answer. Like “**Guess what?**” “Did Jen have her baby?” “No, but I got a new job.”

In this case, Fred doesn't know so he says, “**I don't know. What?**” And then Tara explains:

Tara: Well, since starting her new job, Linda has found it a bit difficult. Her boss seemed to be a bit of a **tyrant**. One of her nice colleagues has been **showing her the ropes**, so things have started **looking up**.

Tara refers to Linda's boss as a **tyrant**. This is a person who is a leader, in a position with a lot of power. When someone is referred to as a **tyrant** it is often because they are abusing their power, being cruel and harsh to the people he or she is in charge of.

In general, we know that Linda's boss is not a super nice person and she is not getting along with him very well.

Then Tara goes on to explain:

Tara: One of her nice colleagues had been **showing her the ropes**, so things had started **looking up**.

First idiomatic expression here is **showing her the ropes**. This means to explain or show someone how to do something. I imagine this comes from a sailor being taught to sail. And in being taught to sail, someone showed him the ropes, as ropes are such an important part of sailing. So Linda's colleague had been helping her learn her new job.

And because her colleague was helping her out in a new position, things had started **to look up**. This expression means 'to get better' or 'to improve.' When things **look up**, it means that things are getting better, and by 'things' we mean everything to do with the situation, or even life in general. We cannot use this expression with people. I'll explain this difference more in lipservice at culips.com

Fred then gives feedback on Tara's story about Linda.

Fred: That's good.

Tara: It **was** good.

Why does Tara emphasize **was**? She emphasizes it to show that the situation was good in the past. This means that the situation is not good now.

Another example: "It's such a nice day out today." "It **was** a nice day. Now it's raining." I emphasize the past to show that it is no longer true in the present.

Tara continues:

Tara: Then, last week she went to the **washroom**.

Probably you know the word **washroom**. I just wanted to mention that depending what country you are in people refer to this place differently. In Canada we almost always say **washroom** or bathroom. In a public place, we may say restroom.

In other countries though, like England and Australia, they use the word 'toilet.' In Canada, we don't usually use this word.

The last part of Tara's story is the climax.

Tara: And when she opened the door, she **walked in on** her boss going to the washroom.

To walk in is easy and straightforward enough. **To walk in** a room is to enter the room. **To walk into** a wall, means to hit the wall by walking.

Sometimes we have a verb followed by two prepositions, like in this case, and it changes the meaning. **To walk in on** is to walk into a place and see someone doing something private, which you are not supposed to see.

For example, last year, I **walked in on** my mom wrapping my Christmas present. I wasn't supposed to see my present before Christmas and it was an accident.

In this episode, Linda **walked in on** her boss in the washroom. This is definitely a private matter and was an accident too.

Fred: Oh no! What did she do?

Tara: Of course, she felt so **embarrassed**. She said sorry and left as quickly as she could.

Linda felt so **embarrassed**, means Linda felt shy and ashamed and wanted to disappear. People feel self-conscious when they are **embarrassed**. When people feel **embarrassed** their faces often turn red. I am sure you can imagine how Linda felt after walking in on her boss in the washroom, completely **embarrassed**.

Fred then asks:

Fred: And has she seen her boss since?

Tara: Yes, but he doesn't even **make eye contact** with her.

To make eye contact is what we use to explain when two people's look into each other's. When I am taking the bus, I often make eye contact with a lot of people. I am looking around, out the window and sometimes my eyes meet with another person's. So we can make eye contact with strangers or we can make eye contact when we are talking to people we know. I have also heard that it is really important to make eye contact with your audience when you are giving a speech.

And unfortunately, I can't make eye contact with any of you, because this is simply a voice podcast. Naturally, you have to be able to see someone to make eye contact with them. In the future, we hope to bring you video too.

Guess what? This is now the end of this episode.

Let's listen to the dialogue one more time.

Tara: **Guess** what happened to her the other day?

Fred: **I don't know. What?**

Tara: Well, since starting her new job, Linda has found it a bit difficult. Her boss seemed to be bit of a **tyrant**. One of her nice colleagues had been **showing her the ropes**, so things had started **looking up**.

Fred: That's good.

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Fred: And has she seen her boss since?

Tara: Yes, but he doesn't even **make eye contact** with her.

Don't forget to visit our website, culips.com, for any further explanations or transcripts, and to quiz yourself to see how much you learned today. If you have any questions you can always email us at questions@culips.com

I hope you learned something today. This is Maura at Culips, ESL podcasting and I will talk to you again soon.

Bye.

Detailed Explanations

Guess what?

I already explained this part in more detail in Part 1 of Catching Up.

I can give you a couple more example or similar versions:

“**Guess what** I did? I told him I didn’t like him.”

“You’ll never **guess what** happened to him? He got fired from his job.”

Guess what? is a super common expression.

Tyrant

Tyrant is a word often used in politics or where one person has all control. And as it is not a compliment at all, you may not need to use this word very often. You may use this word a lot if you talk about politics a lot or know someone who can only be described this way. A **tyrant** is like dictator.

From **tyrant** (noun - person) we get the words:

Tyranny (noun - thing)

Tyrannical (adjective)

Colleagues

This is the more formal word for someone you work with. When I am talking with my friends I usually just say, ‘someone I work with’. Both are fine, one is just more formal, more adult.

If you are in school you say ‘classmate’ or ‘someone in my class.’

A bit of a...

When native speakers talk to each other they often speak fast. When we speak fast the sounds of words often change from how they look when they are written.

This expression here is one example of how words change when they are spoken.

In **a bit of a** the **'of'** sounds more like 'ov'. And we say it all together. It sounds like 'abitova'. We don't pause between each word. This is especially true with small words.

Here is a different example with **'of'** and how it sounds different when we speak.

Example: "There are a lot of people here." Sounds like 'alotta'.

In this case the **'of'** becomes an 'a' sound.

To show someone the ropes

The connection to sailing I mentioned in the episode is my own theory. I think there is nothing wrong with creating your own theories if it helps you remember new expressions!

Another possibility is that this expression comes from show business. When you **show someone the ropes** you show them how to raise and lower the curtain, how to work.

Look up

The first and most literal definition of the verb **to look up** is to physically look into the sky or towards the ceiling; to turn your head or eyes up.

In this episode it was not a person that was looking up. When we say **'it is looking up'**, it means to improve or get better.

Here is a good one for language learners. You can also **look up** a word. When you search for a word in a dictionary you can say, "I am **looking up** a word in the dictionary."

It **was** a nice day

Placing emphasis or stress on any word can change the focus of the sentence. I will give you some examples, all from one sentence.

Example: He didn't know she stole the bike.

He didn't know she stole the bike.

Meaning – He didn't know but other people did

He didn't know she stole the bike.

Meaning – someone thought he knew who stole the bike. The speaker is making clear that he did not. He knows now.

He didn't know she stole the bike.

Meaning – He didn't know she stole the bike. He wasn't sure. He thought that it may have been her.

He didn't know she stole the bike.

Meaning – He knew the bike was stolen but he didn't know who did it.

He didn't know she stole the bike.

Meaning – He thought she borrowed the bike, or paid for the bike. He didn't know she stole it.

He didn't know she stole the bike.

Meaning – He didn't know she stole the bike. He knew she stole something but he didn't know it was the bike.

Washroom

Like I said in this episode, there are some differences between countries in how we usually talk about this place. In any case, you can do the opposite of what is normal. In Canada we use '**washroom**' or '**bathroom**' and in the UK they use **toilet**. I just want you to know that although this vocabulary is more common in these countries, you can use '**toilet**' in Canada and '**washroom**' in the UK without any trouble.

Here are a few slang words for **toilet**:
(there are many more!)

Potty (actually a training toilet for children)

The jon

The can

And a common slang term in the U.K.:

The loo

*Don't use these slang terms unless you feel REALLY comfortable with someone. I rarely use these terms. I included them because they are fun to know and used in film and television.

To walk in on

There are lots of two-word verbs and like in **to walk in on**, three-word verbs, with '**walk**'. I will give you just one other example with walk (there are lots).

To walk out – meaning to quit or stop doing something

Example: I **walked out** of the meeting.

Quiz (see the answers at the bottom of this lipservice)**1. Did Fred already know what had happened to Linda?**

- a) yes
- b) no
- c) we don't know
- d) Fred doesn't know Linda

2. How does Linda feel about her new job?

- a) She loves it
- b) She hates it
- c) She finds it difficult
- d) She finds it easy

3. What kind of person is Linda's boss?

- a) not very nice, unkind
- b) very nice, happy
- c) sad and depressed
- d) quiet

4. What does it mean, "to show someone the ropes"?

- a) to show how machines work
- b) to show sailing techniques
- c) to show someone a good time
- d) to show someone who something works

5. We heard the expression, “to look up,” which meant to improve. Does it have any other meanings?
- a) yes
 - b) no
6. What kind of washroom was it?
- a) a single private one
 - b) a public one
 - c) an outhouse
 - d) She doesn't say
7. Who did Linda walk in on in the washroom?
- a) a colleague
 - b) her boss
 - c) Fred
 - d) Tara
8. What happened after Linda walked into the bathroom?
- a) She went in
 - b) She washed her hands
 - c) She left right away
 - d) She stayed for a chat
9. How did Linda feel?
- a) angry
 - b) sad
 - c) jealous
 - d) embarrassed
10. What has happened between her and her boss since then?
- a) She doesn't even look at him
 - b) He argues with her
 - c) They talk to each other more
 - d) They laugh about it

Answers: 1.B 2.C 3.A 4.D 5.A 6.A 7.B 8.C 9.D 10.A