

Real Talk #033 – How to talk about movies you like in English

Episode description

The cinema is such a powerful medium. Movies are a good way to pass the time, but they also have the power to change the world! In this Real Talk episode, Andrew and Suzanne will help you with vocabulary and expressions you can use to express yourself in English when talking about the movies you like.

Fun fact

The longest movie ever made is a Swedish film called Logistics. It's 857 hours long! It would take you over 35 days to watch it. Do you have the patience to watch it all?

Expressions included in the study guide

- The total package
- Stale
- From top to bottom
- To be dialled into [something]
- Out of this world
- To breathe new life into [something]



Transcript

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.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com, C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Hey, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Suzanne: And I'm Suzanne.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Hey, Suzanne.

Suzanne: Hi Andrew, how are you?

Andrew: I'm doing very well. How are you?

Suzanne: I'm doing well. I just baked some delicious banana nut muffins.

Andrew: Sounds delicious.

Suzanne: They're vegan, too.

Andrew: Yeah, that's one of the cool things about cooking with bananas, or I should say baking with bananas, is that you can often turn it into a vegan recipe because the bananas are so soft and you don't need to put the butter inside.

Suzanne: Yeah, there was no butter, just some vegetable oil, coconut oil, and flax seeds crushed up, which helped like an egg, kinda keep it together. So, yeah, all vegan.

Andrew: What kind of nuts did you put inside?

Suzanne: I put walnuts in the banana bread.

Andrew: Good choice.

Suzanne: Yeah. It's really—you know what? I couldn't find my pan, so I made muffins instead.

Andrew: Classic move.

Suzanne: Classic.

Andrew: Suzanne, today we are back with another Real Talk episode. And Real Talk is our series where we teach all of our listeners the English expressions that they need to know for real-world situations.

And today, we have a topic that has been requested many times by many different listeners, and that's how to talk about movies. Now, this topic is really big, and it would be impossible for us to cover talking about the many different facets of movies in just one episode. So I thought we'd narrow our focus a little, bit and today we'll teach our listeners how to talk about movies that they like, OK? We'll focus just on movies that we like.

But before we get into the nitty gritty of today's topic, I do wanna remind everyone that the best way to study with this episode is with our study guide. And there's lots of really great stuff inside the guide, like a transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, some of the key language that you'll hear in today's episode, there are also real life examples, a comprehension quiz, some prompts that you can use for journaling or for speaking practice. There's tons of good stuff in the guide, so just visit our website, Culips.com, and you can give it a download.

Suzanne: Awesome.

Our plan for today is that we're going to learn how to talk about movies that you like, which isn't always easy.

Andrew: Suzanne, do you have a favourite movie?

Suzanne: That's a hard one, Andrew, you know?

Andrew: Or can you think of a movie that you really like?

Suzanne: One of my favourite movies was Goodfellas. That's like a classic, fun, awful movie. Like, just, you know, funny but heartbreaking, you know, like, mafia high jinks. I really like superhero movies, like Wonder Woman. I really loved Wonder Woman, it was really great to see a woman being super strong and fierce on screen. That was great.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. I haven't seen either of those movies, to be honest with you.

Suzanne: Oh yeah?

Andrew: Goodfellas or Wonder Woman, so I can't add much to the conversation. But I know those are two really popular movies. A classic and also a newer one.

Suzanne: I have to say, I also really like Legally Blonde, which I know people are going to laugh at me about, I know. But I'm kind of the same age as Reese Witherspoon, maybe, so I kind of grew up with her and her movies, and I really liked, I just think she's so funny. So, yeah, I really like her.

What about you, Andrew, what's your favourite or some of your favourite movies?

Andrew: Yeah. Well, you know, it's funny, Suzanne, we were talking a little bit off air before we started recording this episode and we're saying that both of us don't watch movies as often these days as in the past because TV is so good these days.

Suzanne: I know.

Andrew: And so TV is very good and also, since I'm living in Korea and trying to learn Korean, I watch a lot more Korean movies these days.

Suzanne: Oh, nice.

Andrew: So, when I think about English movies, I have to really go back in time, and I'm not the best person to talk to about newer English movies. But one of my favourite directors of all time is Wes Anderson, and I adore almost all of his movies.

Suzanne: Yeah, I forgot about those movies, those are so good. Yes.

Andrew: Yeah, but in particular The Royal Tenenbaums is one of my favourite movies of all time. It's just **the total package**. The acting is amazing, the scenery and the sets are just so unique and particular to Wes Anderson's directing style. The cinematography is good; the soundtrack is unbelievable. It's **the total package**, like I said. You laugh, you cry, it's all there.

So definitely I would say The Royal Tenenbaums is one of my favourite movies of all time, and I would highly recommend it to any of our listeners who haven't seen that movie before.

Suzanne: Yeah, it's a really funny, really good movie.

So, today, we're going to first listen to an example conversation about movies. And then after we listen to it, we'll go back and take a closer look at it and break it down and look at all of the expressions that we heard. And we'll also teach you some other useful vocabulary that's related to talking about movies that you like.

Andrew: Perfect. So let's get started by listening to that first example conversation.

Friend 1: I watched the newest Spider-Man movie last night. Have you seen it?

Friend 2: Is that the animated one?

Friend 1: Yeah, it's called Into the Spider-Verse.

Friend 2: Yeah, I haven't seen it yet, but I really want to. How was it?

Friend 1: It was incredible.

Friend 2: Yeah?

Friend 1: Absolutely. It's a must-see. The story was entertaining **from top to bottom** and the animation was **out of this world**.

Friend 2: That's good to hear. You know, I thought the Spider-Man series was getting a little bit **stale**. So I'm glad they managed to breathe some new life into the franchise.

Friend 1: I totally agree. Anyway, if you get the chance, make sure to check this one out. I think you'll love it.

Andrew: OK, Suzanne. So, in that example, we heard two friends talk about the newest Spider-Man movie, Into the Spider-Verse. And, actually, I think this was one of the last movies that I saw in the theatre in English. It came out, maybe, I wanna say 6 months ago or a year ago?

Suzanne: Yeah, I don't think I ever saw this one. Yeah.

Andrew: I totally agree with the character in this example, though, it was really an impressive movie. The animation was next level.

Suzanne: Wow, I gotta check this out.

Andrew: OK, so let's break down this example conversation a little bit. And the first thing that we should talk about is how to answer this question, "How was it?" Because when you're talking about a movie or a TV show and somebody asks you how it was, a very common question, right? How was it? How can we answer this question to talk about something that we like, a movie or a TV show that we like?

- Suzanne: Yeah, I mean, we have these great adjectives, you know, they're a little broad but they're really fitting, too. We can say it was amazing, it was incredible, right? Or, you know, like, if it's more of a maybe sweeter film, something that's a little more pulling at the heartstrings, we can say it was heartbreaking, or heartwarming, right?
- Andrew: Now, Suzanne, when I talk to a lot of my students, who are mostly Korean, they will say something like, "Oh, how was your weekend?" And they'll answer, "It was great, I watched a movie." And I say, "Oh, really, how was it?" And they'll say, "I felt touched." I don't know if this is a good way to answer this question. How does it feel to you, if you say I felt touched, when somebody asks you how was it?
- Suzanne: You can understand that they maybe felt emotion, but it's confusing. It's not something that you would normally use to describe a movie.
- Andrew: It's very rare that we would say this sentence in any situation, "I felt touched," so what's a better way, if you watch a movie and, you know, it's one of those movies that makes you have an emotional reaction, perhaps it's heartwarming, how could you describe that kinda movie? I guess heartwarming is a good word to use, isn't?
- Suzanne: I think heartwarming or, like, you know, you could, if you wanted to use the word touching, you could say it was a very touching film. You wouldn't say I felt touched, but you could turn that around say, like, you know, the film was very touching. It's just not a word we use very often.
- Andrew: Yeah, I never use the word touching. I would say it was sad, or it was a really emotional film.
- Suzanne: Or moving, you can say it was really moving.
- Andrew: Or moving, it was moving. Yes.
- Suzanne: If it's more of a serious film. I think that it's best to use more specific adjectives, you know? Something like it was a quiet film, it was more of a sensitive film that brought out a lot of emotion. That kind of thing is more interesting to hear than just it was an emotional movie or something, you know? Sometimes like emotional, how? Was it funny? Was it sad? So, yeah, I think being more specific is good.
- Andrew: Always better, for sure. So if we go back to the example, we heard the expression the story was entertaining **from top to bottom**. Story was entertaining **from top to bottom**.
- Suzanne: Yeah, I like that, I like that phrase.

- Andrew: Yeah. Now, what does it mean exactly, **from top to bottom**? Because a movie doesn't have a top and it doesn't have a bottom.
- Suzanne: Yeah.
- Andrew: It just means from start to finish, right?
- Suzanne: Exactly, from start to finish. Exactly. 'Cause it's funny you say that but, when you're filming a scene, for example, you do say let's take it from the top.
- Andrew: Oh, that's true.
- Suzanne: Like, you do refer to the beginning of something in film-speak as the top of the scene.
- Andrew: Good point.
- Suzanne: Yeah, that makes sense, yeah, like it was really fun and exciting all the way through, right? It held your attention the whole time.
- Andrew: And this is really important these days because we're constantly distracted, right? We have these amazing phones in our pocket that are so interesting and so even when I'm watching a movie, it's common for me to check my phone several times.
- But if I don't do that and the movie is really engaging and interesting the whole time, then that is something special. That's something that I wanna share with my friends, like, "Oh, this one was so good, I was focused on the movie the whole time, I didn't even get distracted." So it's a good expression to use in that situation. And there's a couple other expressions that we could say for this context, like, "I couldn't look away." "I couldn't look away."
- Suzanne: Yeah, this is usually used in like action or, like, even like mystery, suspense.
- Andrew: Yeah, a suspense movie, I couldn't look away.
- Suzanne: I couldn't look away. Yeah, where you're on the edge of your seat, right?
- Andrew: Yes, exactly. To be on the edge of your seat, you're anticipating what's happening next and you're really just **dialled into the story**. You're completely focused on the story.
- Suzanne: Yes.

- Andrew: You could also say that a movie is really captivating, right? If the same situation occurs where you're really focused on the story and what's happening in the movie, you could say it was really captivating, captivating.
- Suzanne: Yeah, or even riveting. I've heard people say that word, too.
- Andrew: Riveting.
- Suzanne: It was riveting. It was riveting.
- Andrew: And all of these expressions are used to talk about focusing on the movie and not being distracted by other things.
- Suzanne: Or the movie really holding your attention.
- Andrew: Yes, exactly. And we could use all of these to talk about a TV show, as well.
- Suzanne: Totally. I'm thinking Game of Thrones.
- Andrew: Probably I'd say the hottest TV show around these days.
- Suzanne: Yeah, yup.
- Andrew: Unfortunately, I fell off the Game of Thrones bandwagon back in, like, season 2.
- Suzanne: What? Andrew!
- Andrew: So I have a lot of catching up to do. Don't spoil it for me, OK, Suzanne?
- Suzanne: I'm not, I won't.
- Andrew: I'm, like, 5 years behind here.
- Suzanne: I won't say a word.
- Andrew: OK.
- Suzanne: The next expression that we heard, that was about the animation, right? It was the animation was **out of this world**. **Out of this world**, what exactly does that mean? **Out of this world**.
- Andrew: Yeah, when something is **out of this world**, it's really, really good. You know, it's almost like it's better than anything that you could find on Earth. You'd have to go to a special alien planet to find something as good as this. A more advanced society, perhaps.
- Suzanne: Yes, a completely different plane.

Andrew: So if something is **out of this world**, it's really, really good. So the character in that example said the animation was **out of this world**. And you could use **out of this world** to describe any specific feature of the movie, right? The story was **out of this world**, or the acting was **out of this world**, or the soundtrack was **out of this world**.

So any specific element in the movie that you really thought was special, you can describe by using this expression, **out of this world**. There's some other similar expressions that you might hear as well, too, like it was genius, right? The acting was genius. The soundtrack was genius.

Suzanne: Yes. Or, like, the animation was mind blowing.

Andrew: Mind blowing. All of these kinda mean the same thing, essentially. Really, really fantastic, right? **Out of this world**, mind blowing, genius.

So, Suzanne, these are pretty much all of the ways that we can talk about movies that we like. But, in the example, we did hear a couple of other interesting expressions that I thought we should touch on quickly.

And one of those was that the Spider-Man series was getting a bit **stale**. OK, the character in the example said, "I'm glad to hear that the newest Spider-Man movie was good, because I thought that the series was getting a bit **stale**." So what does **stale** mean?

Suzanne: Well, in its literal definition, it's when something is getting old and not very good anymore. Maybe it's gross and you don't really wanna eat, like, **stale** bread, right? It's kind of stiff and not so flavourful.

Andrew: Not very fresh anymore. Yeah, I think that's the classic example, right? **Stale** bread, the bread that's, like, 4 days old and hard as a rock.

Suzanne: Exactly. And so, in the example, when we're talking about films or, you know, a TV show or a comic book or something, we're saying that maybe the story line, right, those movies were getting really boring and just unoriginal and uneventful. It wasn't exciting anymore, it wasn't fresh. So, yeah, getting a bit **stale**, like a 3-day loaf of bread.

Andrew: And we often hear this expression used to describe movies that have many sequels or follow-ups.

Suzanne: Yeah, that's true.

Andrew: Spider-Man is a great example. How many Spider-Man movies are there now? Lots. And all of the superhero movies, the different series that there are, you know, we could say, “Ah, they’re getting a little bit **stale**, they’re a little bit boring to watch.” But in the example, we heard one of the speakers say that they **breathed new life into the franchise**. They **breathed new life into the Spider-Man franchise**. So here franchise means series, we talk about a movie franchise as being a series of movies, like the Star Wars franchise. Or the Lord of the Rings franchise.

Suzanne: Yup.

Andrew: It’s just meaning a group of connected movies.

Suzanne: Yup, exactly like the Avengers.

Andrew: Yeah, a topical selection.

Suzanne: Isn’t that coming out soon?

Andrew: I think it just came out yesterday in Korea, where I am living.

Suzanne: Oh my gosh, I have to go see that next week.

Andrew: You’ll have to go see it.

Suzanne: Oh my gosh.

Andrew: And **to breathe new life into something** means to save it or revive it, right?

Suzanne: Yeah, exactly. Bring it back.

Andrew: You could think of, maybe, somebody that’s choking or drowning and you provide CPR on that person and bring them back to life, right? You’re **breathing new life into their lungs**. And we can use this image to talk about saving a movie series or a movie franchise.

Suzanne: Yeah, I think that kind of happened with Star Wars, right, a little bit. Bring in new characters, they bring in a little bit of a, maybe a new planet or something, a new set, a new atmosphere. And, suddenly, we **breathe new life into a franchise**. So, yeah.

Andrew: Exactly.

Well, Suzanne, I think that about brings us to the end of today’s episode. And I wanna thank all of our listeners for listening and we hope that you learned about some new ways to talk about movies that you like. There’s lots and lots of good expressions here in this episode.

- Suzanne: Absolutely. And don't forget that our website is Culips.com, and you can get the transcript of this episode and the study guide with practice exercises at Culips.com.
- Andrew: We're also on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter.
- Suzanne: Everywhere.
- Andrew: And I think we're most active probably on Instagram and YouTube these days. So if you would like to follow us, just visit your favourite social media site and search for the Culips English Podcast and you'll be sure to find us.
- Suzanne: Yeah, and we'll be back soon with a brand-new episode.
- Andrew: Sounds good. We'll talk to you then, everyone. Bye.
- Suzanne: All right guys. Bye.

Detailed Explanations

The total package

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew says that the movie *The Royal Tenenbaums* is **the total package**. He means that this movie is great in every way. **The total package** is something that is good in every way.

Here are a couple more examples with **the total package**:

Ophelia:	I just saw an interesting movie called <i>Arrival</i> . Did you see it?
Cassie:	I love that movie! Amy Adams stars in that, right?
Ophelia:	Yes, she does. She's amazing.
Cassie:	I know. She can dance and sing. She's good in dramatic roles and in comedies. She's the total package .

Wendy:	You seem happy. What's up?
Bianca:	I am happy. I just got off the phone with my new boyfriend.
Wendy:	A new boyfriend? You didn't tell me! What's he like?
Bianca:	He's so sweet. And funny. And tall and handsome. And he sends me flowers! And he's nice to me and my mother.
Wendy:	Wow, sounds like he's the total package .
Bianca:	So far, so good!

Stale Adjective

Stale is when something is not fresh. The common example is **stale** bread, meaning bread that is a few days old and doesn't taste good. You can say a movie series, a class you're attending, or a relationship you have is **stale** or getting **stale**. In this sense, it means it is no longer exciting or moving.

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

Yujin:	I heard you broke up with your girlfriend. That's sad.
David:	A little. But we weren't right for each other. We didn't have much in common and didn't do many things together.
Yujin:	I understand. Relationships like that get stale after a while.
David:	That's right. Stale —that's a good word for it. Anyways, it was a mutual break-up. No problem.

Vicky:	How's that great history class you take on Tuesdays?
Patricio:	Well, it's not as good as it was before.
Vicky:	That's strange. How come?
Patricio:	I used to like it because the teacher was funny and interesting. But now, he's just saying the same jokes and there's no classroom interaction. The whole thing got stale .

From top to bottom Idiom

From top to bottom refers to all of something. Similar expressions are from start to finish, from head to toe, and from cover to cover.

Here are a couple more examples with **from top to bottom**:

Wei:	Did you memorize your speech for Saturday?
Nathan:	Of course. No problem.
Wei:	Are you sure? Can I trust you?
Nathan:	For sure! I memorized it from top to bottom , backwards and forwards. I know it 100%. Don't worry about me!

Sally:	Did you go over the list I sent you?
Zane:	The production checklist?
Sally:	Yeah, that one.
Zane:	Of course. I went over it from top to bottom . I checked off every box. It's in good hands.

To be dialled into [something]

Idiom

To be dialled into [something] is to be fully concentrated on something. You are very focused on it. You can also tell someone to dial it in. That means you are telling that person to concentrate harder.

Here are a couple more examples with **to be dialled into [something]**:

Gregory: Hey, I called you three times. What's going on?

Levonte: Oh, I was watching a documentary.

Gregory: So you didn't hear your phone?

Levonte: I guess so. I **was so dialled into what I was watching**. It was on international diplomacy—so fascinating. You should watch it.

Yasmina: Honey, I have a question about our taxes. Do you have a minute?

Daniel: Oh, honey, I'm sorry. I'm in the middle of a chess match. **I'm so dialled in** right now.

Yasmina: When will you be available? I need to do this soon.

Daniel: I understand. In about 10 minutes. Is that all right?

Yasmina: OK. Good luck!

Out of this world

Idiom

Out of this world means that something is so amazing that we can't imagine it comes from this planet. It feels like something that would come from an advanced alien civilization. You can say **out of this world** for anything that you find is very impressive, even a person.

Here are a couple more examples with **out of this world**:

Henry:	Have you ever tried a virtual reality helmet?
Priya:	No, not yet. I've been meaning to check that out.
Henry:	You totally should. It's out of this world ! It'll blow your mind.
Priya:	Where did you go?
Henry:	There's this cool place by my office. I can take you any time this week, if you want.

Heather:	Oh, I heard you met my friend John.
Brianna:	I did. Last weekend.
Heather:	What did you think of him?
Brianna:	Pretty interesting guy. Did you know he's been on Mount Everest?
Heather:	Yeah, I know.
Brianna:	Then he does all these crazy things in the desert, but he also finds time to teach biology at the university. He's done so many things. And he's so funny!
Heather:	I know. He's out of this world . He's a good friend.

To breathe new life into [something]

Idiom

To breathe new life into [something] is to revive something or to make it better. Think of giving someone CPR. You are actually breathing fresh air into their lungs and possibly saving the person's life. The same can be said about a movie series, TV series, company, event, or even relationship.

Here are a couple more examples with **to breathe new life into [something]**:

Winston:	Do you like the James Bond movie series?
Erik:	No way. I stopped watching those a long time ago.
Winston:	Have you seen the ones with Daniel Craig as James Bond?
Erik:	No, actually.
Winston:	Those are really impressive movies. It seems Daniel Craig breathed new life into the series . I'd suggest you watch the movies with him as Bond.

Chris:	How are things at the office?
Rita:	It's been great lately.
Chris:	Really? How come?
Rita:	We have a new boss. She's super friendly and has so many great ideas. She's really breathing new life into the company .

Quiz

1. Which of the following does NOT have the same meaning as from top to bottom?

- a) from head to toe
- b) from cover to cover
- c) from start to finish
- d) from 1 to 100

2. What does out of this world mean?

- a) something kind of interesting
- b) something crazy
- c) something very amazing
- d) something strange

3. If you are dialled into something, you are _____.

- a) playing it
- b) enjoying it
- c) focusing on it
- d) listening to it

4. What does stale mean?

- a) hot and humid
- b) flavourless
- c) exciting
- d) odorous

5. If someone is the total package, she is _____.

- a) good at many things
- b) interested in many things
- c) works for a delivery company
- d) tries to do many things

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What is your favourite aspect of a film? Do you focus on the acting, the story, the cinematography, or the storyline most?
2. Why do you watch movies or TV shows? Do you watch them to experience emotions, to escape your daily life, or to learn more about the world?
3. What kind of movie do you find riveting, that you can't look away from?
4. When is a time in your life when you are really dialled into something?
5. What is something that happened to you in the past 5 years that breathed new life into your life?

Quiz Answers

1.d 2.c 3.c 4.b 5.a

Episode credits

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