

Simplified Speech #153 – Zombies!

Episode description

Zombies are everywhere! From movies and TV shows to video games and more, zombies are supernatural monsters that appear in almost every culture's folklore. In this episode, Andrew and Kassy talk about everything they know about these undead creatures.

Simplified Speech episodes feature two native English speakers having clear, natural, and easy-to-understand conversations about interesting topics, like zombies. Studying with this series helps you to improve your English listening skills and speak English naturally.

Fun fact

The word “zombie” first appeared in 1819 when poet Robert Southey used it in his book *History of Brazil* to refer to a rebel leader named Zumbi.

Expressions included in the study guide

- My [something]
- Game over
- To blank on [something]
- For days on end
- To the bitter end
- If you can't beat them, join them



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. The transcript has been edited for clarity.

Andrew: Hello there, everyone. My name's Andrew.

Kassy: And I'm Kassy.

Andrew: And this is the Culips English Podcast.

Welcome back to Culips. This is Simplified Speech, the Culips series that features clear, natural and easy to understand English conversations about interesting topics. Today, I'm joined by my cohost, Kassy. Hello there, Kassy.

Kassy: Hey there, Andrew. And hi, listeners. Guys, today we've got a fun and spooky topic for you because we're going to be talking about zombies.

Andrew: And I have to give a big thanks and shout out right off the bat here, Kassy to one of our listeners named Meshari who is a big zombie fan, and a loyal Culips listener. And Meshari sent us a message through Instagram and requested this topic.

Kassy: Yeah, Meshari actually left us a really great voice message. So, we thought we'd play it here for everyone to listen to. So, let's check out what Meshari has to say.

Meshari: Hi, Andrew. Hi, Kassy, I want to say thank you for this episode. And thank you to help me to improve my English. Now I can speak and listen and understand English. And for all the listeners who want to achieve this goal, believe me, you will.

Andrew: Wow, Meshari your English sounds excellent. Thank you so much for sending us an audio message. Kassy, usually when I say we hear from our listeners, it means that we receive an email or a message from them in writing but in this case, we actually got to hear from one of our listeners. So, I think this is just fantastic. And I would like to throw out this challenge to other members of the Culips community as well. Guys, if you want to practice your English speaking, and send us a voice message through Instagram or email, you know, you can just record something simply on your phone and send it in to us. We would love to hear it and include it in future upcoming episodes. So, Meshari, you've got the ball rolling here, and I would love to hear other Culips listeners participate like this as well. It's really, really cool. So, thanks again for your message and your topic suggestion. And guys, really thanks to everyone who's been supporting us with comments and messages and subscriptions, and follows, all of those good things that really help us build the podcast and reach more English language learners from around the world, we really do appreciate that. So, guys, we'll get started here with our chat about zombies in just a

moment but before we do, I want to let everyone know about the study guide and transcript that you can get for this episode. It's available on our website, Culips.com. C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And it's available for all Culips Members. It's a great study resource that we put a lot of time and effort into making so that you can get the most out of your study with Culips, build your English skills and reach your English learning goals faster. So, to become a Culips Member and to get unlimited access to all of our study guides, plus great other bonuses as well, just visit the website.

Kassy: OK, Andrew, let's get on to our chat about zombies.

Andrew: Zombies. Yeah. Now, I have to say, Kassy, I'm a little bit heartbroken, because Meshari had this great passionate topic request to talk about zombies but I'm not actually the best person to talk about this topic. I think, you know, zombies are a huge part of popular culture, TVs, movies, video games, but I'm not a huge consumer of zombie content. I haven't watched too many movies, or too many TV shows. Like, I know *The Walking Dead* is a really famous zombie TV show. I haven't seen it before. So, I'm not an expert, but let's try our best to talk about zombies as well as we can. How about you Kassy, are you a zombie person? Sounds funny to say that, a zombie person.

Kassy: "I am a zombie person!" No, I'm not a huge zombie fan. For example, I have not watched *The Walking Dead*, but there are a couple of more comedy centered zombie shows that I have watched, for example, one is called *Zombie Nation*. And the other one is called *iZombie*. And I loved both of those.

Andrew: So, I know that in different zombie movies and in different zombie TV shows every story is a little bit different about how the zombies are created and come to plague the earth. But just in general, Kassy, what is a zombie? For maybe some people who don't know, how could you describe a zombie?

Kassy: A zombie is a human that was usually infected with the zombie virus, and it causes them to turn into a crazed, undead creature that likes to chase living humans and eat their brains.

Andrew: Exactly. And that's how the zombies survive, right? It's from eating the brains of humans who are alive. And the zombies usually come alive at night, and they walk really slowly, right? They hold their hands in front of them, they walk really slowly looking for people to eat. And I think as far as I know, there's some special ways that you can kill zombies too, right? Or am I getting **my folklore** mixed up? What is the creature that you need to kill with a wooden stake?

Kassy: That's a vampire.

Andrew: Vampire, OK, yeah, I'm getting mixed up.

Kassy: Zombies, ironically, you have to chop off their head, because it's all about the brain. So, zombies, they can keep moving even if you chop their arms and legs and toes off. But if you chop the head off, that's **game over**.

Andrew: OK, so it's the head. The headshot that is important for zombies. So, OK, yeah. So, you've seen a couple of different series about zombies, Kassy, could you tell us about them?

Kassy: Yeah, so *Zombie Nation* is about a zombie plague that one person got infected with and then spread it around the globe. And now it's kind of like a dystopian TV show, you know, where in the future, like, they don't have electricity anymore, because there's nobody to run the power plants. But they still have a lot of conveniences, like, they can use solar panels, they still have those. So, like, they still have TVs and stuff. But it's, you know, like, five to 10 years after the zombie plague started. And one thing that I like about this show compared to maybe *Walking Dead*, which I've only really heard about, is that it's more comedic, so the characters aren't so serious, yeah. When I think of *Walking Dead*, I think of a very serious zombie show, which is not my style, while *Z Nation* is more, you know, acting silly, killing zombies in really weird ways, having like, really lazy people survive the zombie apocalypse, while all of the like, smart, hardworking people are dead. I don't know.

Andrew: OK, it sounds fun. And, sorry, I called it a movie before but it's actually a TV show.

Kassy: Yeah, TV show. And *iZombie* is actually I think better for people who aren't super into zombies. One girl gets infected, like, becomes a zombie. But she keeps her conscious, I guess you'd say. So, she's still human, kind of. She still has her brain functions. And she's still, she doesn't want to eat people. But she still needs the brains. And before she died, she was a doctor. So, what she did was she became a forensic scientist, like, a person who studies dead people and figures out how they died, like, solving murder mysteries. So, what she does is she found out that if she eats the brains of dead people, she can get visions of how they died and help solve their murder.

Andrew: OK, Kassy and that TV show was called, *iZombie*?

Kassy: Yes.

Andrew: It sounds a lot more complex than just your basic run-of-the-mill zombie show.

Kassy: Yeah, it's much more, you know, drama, backstory, character development than just like, "Kill the zombies! Runaway!" kind of TV show.

Andrew: Yeah, sounds cool. I might have to check that one out. Is it a current TV show? Like, is it on air right now?

Kassy: You know, I haven't watched in a while, I don't think so. But it was really popular on Netflix, like, two or three years ago.

Andrew: Speaking of Netflix, a zombie show that I actually have seen is a show called *Kingdom*. *Kingdom*. And it is a Korean show so maybe I can't really recommend it to people who want to learn English, but if you just want to watch a cool show, then you could watch *Kingdom*. It's a zombie show that is kind of historical fiction, I suppose. Like, it takes place hundreds of years ago in kind of medieval Korea. And yeah, it's really cool. It's really, really well filmed and well shot. So, the scenes are beautiful, and the scenery is beautiful. The costumes are beautiful. I love these kinds of period dramas from history. So, that's what attracted me to the show. It wasn't really the zombie element at first, but then you get to see a lot of cool battle scenes and cool fight scenes, where the regular people are fighting the zombies and it's actually pretty cool. So, it's not your typical run-of-the-mill modern zombie story. It's a totally different kind of zombie story that set in Korea back in the Joseon Dynasty, like, hundreds of years ago, but it was really exciting and fun to watch.

Kassy: Yeah, Korea has great zombie content. One of the most famous movies produced in Korea is *Train to Busan*, which is also zombie themed.

Andrew: Yeah, I've seen that one. And that movie was praised and really is highly regarded. And a lot of people say it's an awesome, awesome movie, which I agree, it was pretty fun. I enjoyed it. There was a follow up though, a sequel, and I haven't seen the sequel, but I heard the sequel is terrible. So, I don't know.

Kassy: I saw the sequel. I gotta say, I actually really liked it. Not for the plot or anything, but the child actors in that movie were so good. The adults, eh. But there were two—there was a little girl and a teenage girl, and they were amazing.

Andrew: Do you know what the sequel is called? I'm **blanking on** the name of that movie at the moment.

Kassy: It's not called Train to Busan 2 for listeners who want to research it. It is called *Peninsula* and it came out in 2020.

Andrew: 2020. OK, awesome.

Kassy: Yes.

Andrew: Oh, Kassy. We talked about zombies a little bit before you and I and you told me something interesting about American culture that I wanted to chat about, because this kind of blew my mind. You told me that in the States, there are actually zombie apocalypse preparation stores. And could you tell our listeners about this too because I think they'll find it as interesting as I did.

Kassy: Yeah. So, I don't know why but there are a large population of Americans that are just dying to have a zombie apocalypse. Like, their dream is for zombies to exist so that they can, you know, fight them, and live in the woods and escape normal life. It sounds crazy, I know. But it's a thing.

Andrew: I guess there's maybe some appeal to that. I don't really get it. I mean, if zombies were real, then you would want to fight them, right? So, yeah, I don't know. I don't get it, doesn't work for me. But there are some people who I guess would like to live out this fantasy of fighting zombies. So, there are actual zombie preparation stores then where people can buy supplies for a zombie apocalypse? Like, what's going on here?

Kassy: There are yeah, I think there's only, like, one or two. But there's a famous one in Las Vegas, Nevada. And when you go into that store, it's just full of zombie fighting memorabilia. You can buy, like, ration kits for, you know, meals if you have to be living in the wilderness **for days on end**. And they have like—I think they even have zombie spray, which of course doesn't actually work. And they have special goggles and like, toy gas masks, things like that.

Andrew: OK, interesting. So, *rations*. That's a good word to know that that you just mentioned there, rations. Rations are what we call, I guess, military food, most of the time, you know, the type of meal that is served to a soldier is called a *ration*. So, anytime you're watching a movie, listeners, where maybe it's in a war situation or a zombie situation or a survival situation, and you hear people talking about rations, it's talking about, like, a small portable meal that you can eat in this kind of outdoor situation when you don't have access to a grocery store or a kitchen to prepare food—rations.

Kassy: Exactly. Andrew, I know we're probably gonna wrap up the episode soon. But I have one question for you.

Andrew: OK, sure.

Kassy: OK, so, if there was a zombie apocalypse, would you wanna, you know, try to survive as long as possible? Or would you be like, dude, I want to be eaten in five seconds and just be done with it?

Andrew: No, I would want to try and survive as long as possible. You know, one of the things that is attractive about this kind of zombie fighter fantasy that we were talking about a moment ago, is getting in your car, and having all the streets be empty, and you can just drive around in your car as fast as possible and go to the woods and set up a survival base. This kind of thing actually does sound a little bit fun, and then have a big fight with the zombies and try to survive. Maybe you can, like, go to some secret laboratory and find the cure to the zombie virus or something. It's like living out a fantasy from a zombie movie, I guess. But yeah, I would fight as long as possible of course, Kassy, **to the bitter end**.

Kassy: I don't know if I agree with you. I think I would be so terrified of living in constant terror. Yeah, I think it depends on what kind of apocalypse but if it's a zombie apocalypse, I think I'd rather die early.

Andrew: **If you can't beat them, join them.** That kinda thing.

Kassy: Exactly. Yes.

Andrew: Well, everyone, I think we'll end the episode on this note. So, that brings us to the end. Thanks for listening everyone, and congratulations on doing some English listening practice today. You can go ahead, pat yourself on the back. Great job.

Kassy: Andrew and I are curious, what do you think about zombies? Or if there was a zombie apocalypse, what would you do? Would you want to be like me and die off quickly or be like Andrew and fight **to the bitter end**? Please let us know what you would do in this situation. You can do that by commenting on our Instagram, or on the comment section or the discussion forum on Culips.com.

Andrew: All right, guys, that's it for us today. But of course, we'll be back soon with another brand-new episode, and we'll talk to you all then. Take care and goodbye.

Kassy: See ya.

Detailed Explanations

My [something]

Expression

My [something] means one's knowledge about a specific topic. Native English speakers will put the possessive in front of the topic to show that they're talking about how much they know about the topic. Any possessive pronoun can be used, depending on who the speaker is talking about. For example, you've probably heard someone say, "**my English** isn't very good" or "**your English** is very good." In both cases, they're referring to their knowledge of English, rather than a possession called "English".

In this episode, Andrew talks about the characteristics of zombies and then asks: "Or am I getting **my folklore** mixed up?" In this case, **my folklore** is Andrew's knowledge of different folklore stories. He is asking whether he is using the correct folklore in his description.

Here are a couple more examples with **my [something]**:

Tommy: This is a really nice table. Is it an antique?

Margaret: Thank you! And it is. We picked it up on the weekend.

Tommy: You know, if I've got **my history** right, I think tables like these were only made for a few years. If you hold onto this and keep it in good condition, you could probably sell it for a lot of money in a few years.

Margaret: Huh, we got it for pretty cheap. I'll look into that and see if it is one of those valuable antiques!

Hikaru: Wow, you're test score is really bad. I thought you were smart.

Sally: Hey, so what if **my math** is a bit bad. I'm smart in my other classes.

Hikaru: Are you at least passing the course?

Sally: I am, actually!

Hikaru: Well, that's what's important.

Game over Idiom

Game over means that something will end, usually in an unsatisfactory or unsuccessful way. In this episode, Kassy says, “So, zombies, they can keep moving even if you chop their arms and legs and toes off. But if you chop the head off, that’s **game over**.” In this context, **game over** means die. So, when you chop off a zombie’s head, it comes to an unsatisfactory end (from the zombies’ perspective anyway!) and it’s **game over**.

This idiom comes from the “game over” screen in video games. In some video games, when the players character dies, the players would see a “game over”, which would mean they failed the level, and must either restart from the beginning or quit playing the game.

You can also say “it’s game over”.

Here are a couple more examples with **game over**:

Yuri: Did you ever get a response about the loan you applied for?

Elisabeth: Not yet. And I’m starting to panic. If we don’t get this loan, it’s **game over**. We won’t be able to start our new business!

Yuri: Give it a few more days, then follow up with the bank. I’m sure they’re just busy or something. Don’t panic.

Elisabeth: Okay. That’s what I’ll do then.

Marshall: Man, that test was so hard. I’m so glad I was sitting beside Patricia. Can’t go wrong copying her answers, am I right?!

Ryan: Dude, what? No. I can’t believe you. If the teacher finds out you cheated on the test, that’s **game over** for you. You’ll be suspended for sure.

Marshall: Relax, the teacher won’t find out!

Ryan: Yeah, he will. He’s right over there and I think he heard you. He’s looking right at us.

To blank on [something]

Verb

To blank on [something] means to forget or be unable to recall information all of a sudden. Usually, people only **blank on things** for a short period of time. The term **to blank on [something]** is also most often used for information that is common to the speaker or that the speaker knows, such as a person's name. The most common and best example is when you forget a name, like Andrew did in this episode when he forgot, or **blanked on**, the name of the sequel to *Train to Busan*.

A variation on the expression is to draw a blank on something.

Here are a few more examples with **to blank on [something]**:

Penny: Was that Chelsea you were just talking to?

Lloyd: Chelsea! Yes, that's her name. I totally **blanked on** her name. I spent the whole conversation trying to remember it.

Penny: It has been five years since we saw her, so it makes sense you forgot her name!

Holly: One last step and then this will be fixed. I just need you to pass me the, uh. The tool there. What's it called.

Edward: This wrench?

Holly: Yeah, pass that over.

Edward: Did you just **blank on** the word for a wrench?

Holly: Are you going pass me the wrench or not?

Edward: Yes! Here you go.

Yvonne: Do you want to go see that new movie tonight?

Aisha: Which one?

Yvonne: I'm totally **blanking on** the title of it, but it's about space pirates.

Aisha: Oh! Yeah, I know the one. Let's go see it.

For days on end

Idiom

For days on end means a long time (as in several days in a row). In this episode, Kassy mentions a store that sells zombie fighting memorabilia. She mentions “you can buy, like, ration kits for, you know, meals if you have to be living in the wilderness **for days on end**.” So, you can buy ration kits that will help you live in the wilderness for a long time.

Sometimes people use this idiom to exaggerate how long something lasts. For example, someone might say “our son has no motivation. He sits in his bedroom doing nothing **for days on end**!” In this case, the time the son spent doing nothing may feel like days for the parents, but it may not have actually been that long of a time.

You can replace “days” in this idiom with any time measurement: hours on end, minutes on end, weeks on end or months on end.

Here are a couple more examples with **for days on end**:

Teddy: Welcome back! How are you feeling?

Alexis: Pretty good. After being sick **for days on end**, I'm so glad to finally have some energy again.

Teddy: Do you have enough energy to work hard today? Because we're a bit behind this week.

Alexis: I believe I do! Let's get to it.

Raphael: Are you and Sophia fighting or something?

Juan: No, why do you ask?

Raphael: I haven't seen her in a while. She used to come by all the time.

Juan: No, she likes to go to different cities and stay there **for days on end**. When she gets bored, she'll come back. We still talk every night, don't worry.

Raphael: Ah, okay. As long as you guys are still doing well. Tell her I say hi next time you talk to her.

Juan: I will.

To the bitter end

Idiom

To the bitter end means that someone will do something hard or unpleasant until it is finished. This idiom implies that the speaker expects that the task will end badly or unpleasantly. However, that doesn't mean that the end will actually be bad or unpleasant. For example, Andrew says he "would fight as long as possible... **to the bitter end**" if a zombie outbreak occurred.

This often appears after aggressive verbs or verbs that mean to endure. That's because the experience as well as the ending itself are "bitter". You can also say **until the bitter end**. Some popular versions include sticking it out **until the bitter end**, fighting **to the bitter end**, staying **until the bitter end**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to/until the bitter end**:

Abbie: I'm really excited that this new project is moving forward. I was hoping management would approve it.

Zachary: You should thank our team leader then. She fought for this project right **to the bitter end** and it still almost didn't get approved.

Abbie: Wow, really? But it's such an awesome idea! Well, I'll definitely thank her when I see her.

Joshua: Have you seen that new movie? The horror movie about the haunted mansion?

Brett: Yeah. Took my girlfriend with me.

Joshua: Really? Does she like horror movies?

Brett: Not at all, but she said she'd see it with me because I like them. But she insisted on staying **until the bitter end**. Which was kinda sweet, you know?

Joshua: It is sweet. You should take her to a romantic comedy next time.

Brett: I think I will, yeah.

If you can't beat them, join them

Proverb

If you can't beat them, join them is a proverb that means that if you have an opponent that is too strong to be defeated, then it is better to be on their team. The idea is that, winning is the most important thing, and by joining the other team, you can avoid loss or defeat.

For example, let's pretend a group of elementary students race each other to one of their houses after school. Some of them take a short cut. A few others see the cheaters and realize that they will lose. They might say "**if you can't beat them, join them**" and then take the short cut as well, even if they don't agree with cheating. In this scenario, winning is the best option.

You might also see it spelled in the more casual form "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

Here are a couple more examples with **if you can't beat them, join them**:

Paula: I heard you and your girlfriend adopted a cat. I thought you hated people who have cats.

Alex: Yeah, I did. I never understood why people liked cats so much. But my girlfriend has always loved cats, so I figured, hey, **if you can't beat 'em, join 'em**.

Paula: And is it as bad as you imagined it'd be?

Alex: Honestly? I love the little fur ball. It's adorable and I can't stop taking pictures of it. I've become the type of person I used to dislike, and I'm happy with that.

William: This new software the company has us using is so complicated. Why couldn't we just keep using the program we were using before?

Fatima: Seriously? That program was so outdated. It wasn't syncing with any of the clients' programs, and we kept having data problems.

William: What, so just because no one else wanted to keep using the old software, we've got to switch?

Fatima: Pretty much. **If you can't beat them, join them**, you know?

Quiz

1. Which of the following means something will end badly?

- a) The game
- b) Spill over
- c) Game over
- d) Take over

2. What does to the bitter end mean?

- a) Until something pleasant is finished
- b) Until you eat something bitter
- c) Until the bitterness fades
- d) Until something unpleasant is done

3. Which of the following means that the opponent is too strong, so you might as well be on their team?

- a) If you can beat them, join them
- b) If you can't beat them, join them
- c) If you can't bless them, jump them
- d) If you can bump them, jostle them

4. What does for days on end mean?

- a) A short time
- b) Two days
- c) A long time
- d) Forever

5. Which of the following means to suddenly forget something?

- a) To blank on [something]
- b) To bank on [something]
- c) To break on [something]
- d) To base on [something]

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. Do you watch zombie TV shows or movies? If so, which is your favourite and why? If you don't watch them, why not?
2. What is the first thing you would do if you saw a zombie?
3. If there were a zombie outbreak, do you think you would be more like Andrew, fighting until the bitter end; or would you be more like Kassy, calling it game over?
4. Imagine you escaped to the wilderness during a zombie outbreak. Describe how you would survive for days on end.
5. If zombies weren't an option for a movie or TV show's monster, which supernatural creature or folklore story do you think would make good replacement? Why?

Quiz Answers

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

Episode credits

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