

## Bonus episode #097 - Binge-watching

### Episode description

In this episode, Andrew shares about his experience binge-watching the new Netflix sci-fi series "The Three-Body Problem." He discusses the show's interesting premise, engaging storyline, and characters. By listening to this episode, you'll learn vocabulary related to TV shows, books, and the phenomenon of binge-watching.

**This episode will help improve your English communication skills in several ways:**

1. You'll hear natural, casual English spoken at a conversational pace as Andrew discusses the show's premise, characters, and his overall impressions.
2. You'll expand your vocabulary with words and phrases related to TV/movie plots, acting, adaptations from books, and giving opinions.
3. By listening to Andrew's story, you'll get practice understanding spoken English and comprehending someone's thoughts and viewpoints.
4. The topic of a popular sci-fi series provides cultural insight into this entertainment genre loved by many English speakers.

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Note: The transcript has been edited for clarity.

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**Andrew:** When's the last time you binge-watched a TV show or marathoned a TV show? I did that recently for the first time in a long time, and I'm going to tell you about that experience in this bonus episode, which is bonus episode number 97 of the Culips English podcast. I am your host, Andrew, and I will be your study buddy here, your English study buddy for today. If you're new to the series, let me quickly explain what I do here in the bonus episodes. I just tell you some stories from my everyday life as a Canadian person living abroad in South Korea.

And I hope that by listening to my stories, you'll be able to B.I.G.B. That is our goal here with this series. It is to build your English fluency, increase your cultural knowledge, grow your vocabulary, and become a better communicator. So, if you have those goals in mind, then you've come to the right place.

There is a 100% free interactive transcript and vocabulary glossary available for this episode. You can get it just by following the link that's in the description. And if you are a Culips member, then you'll also get a comprehension quiz, and I'll post the link to the comprehension quiz in the member-only area of our Discord server.

Now, speaking of Culips membership, if you're ready to take your English to the next level, if you're ready to get serious about your studies and want to see big jumps in your fluency, or if you just want to support the work here that we do at Culips, then becoming a Culips member is the best way to support us. As a Culips member, you'll get access to tons of different study guides and tools that we have designed to help you improve your English and to make the most out of listening to Culips. Plus, you'll get lots of other great bonuses, like invites to our member-only live streams and the member-only area of our Discord server. So, to sign up and become a Culips member today, and to support the work that we do here and allow us to keep making English lessons each and every week for learners all around the world, please visit our website, [Culips.com](https://www.culips.com), and you can sign up and become a member today.

So, everyone, today's episode's going to be a little bit of a shorter one. Shorter than usual, but I think that's OK. I actually have a very jam-packed weekend. I usually make these bonus episodes on the weekend before we upload them on Monday. And this weekend, I am going to be doing a 38-kilometer trail race through the mountains of a village in South Korea, down in the southern part of the country. So, I think that I'm going to be pretty occupied this weekend, and I don't want to **bite off more than I can chew**. Do you know that expression, "To bite off more than you can chew"? It means to take on more responsibility than you're able to handle. So, I'm going to keep this bonus episode a little bit on the shorter side for this week because I don't want to bite off more than I can chew and have to deal with producing a long bonus episode and having to do this trail running race at the same time. So, today's episode's going to be a little bit shorter, but I think you'll still enjoy it, and I'm going to talk about what I've been up to over the last week and a half or so in my free time, which is binge-watching a TV series on Netflix called ""The Three-Body Problem"". I'm going to share my thoughts and opinions about the show and also talk about binge-watching and marathoning TV shows in general. So, I hope you'll enjoy this story, and why don't we get right to it? Here we go.

Over the last couple of weeks, I've done something that I haven't done in a really, really long time, and that is binge-watch a TV show. Have you guys heard of this show? It's new on Netflix. It's called, in English, "The Three-Body Problem". Now, this is originally a book, a science fiction book, by a Chinese writer named Liu Cixin. Now, I'm probably pronouncing that incorrectly, but that's the best I can do right now. So, yeah, this book, "The Three-Body Problem", very famous, well-known science fiction novel, I believe. Unfortunately, I haven't read it. However, it's been adapted as a TV show, and it premiered on Netflix just recently, I think, at the end of March, and I accidentally came across it.

Every week, my wife and I usually watch one TV show together. That is kind of Korean dating show. It's a little bit cheesy, but it's fun, and we enjoy watching it together. And it's on Netflix, so we watch that show together, usually on Thursday nights on Netflix. And after we finished the show, we noticed a little advertisement for "The Three-Body

Problem", and something clicked. I was like, "Oh, I've heard of this book before. I've heard many good things about this book, that it's a really interesting and fun and thought-provoking novel." So, I said, "Hey, we should watch this show!" So, we turned it on. And I'm a science fiction fan. I wouldn't say I'm super, super hardcore, like some people are about science fiction. But I do really enjoy the genre. I love anything that's related to technology, discovery, science, aliens, the future. Those kinds of themes really are quite interesting to me. And I also heard that Brad Pitt was involved in the production of "The Three-Body Problem". And I got to say, I'm a Brad Pitt fan. He's a pretty cool guy and a great actor. So, I thought, well, let's check it out. So, we turned on "The Three-Body Problem" to watch the first episode.

And since we were watching a Korean show previously, our Netflix language was set to Korean. And I don't know if you guys know this about Netflix. I'm sure some of you are Netflix subscribers, and maybe some of you aren't. But with Netflix, you can set your language preferences. And depending on your language preferences, you'll have different options for how you view the content. And it's kind of weird. So let me explain.

"The Three-Body Problem" TV show takes place mainly in two locations. Half of the story is told in China, and half of the story unravels in the UK. And it goes back and forth between the past and the present. And the story that is told in China, obviously, is spoken in Chinese language. So, when we had our Netflix set to Korean, we could watch with Korean subtitles only, I believe. So, I didn't know that the show would be happening in Chinese. I thought it was just an English adaptation. But when we turned on the show, the opening scenes were in China. So, the dialogue was in Chinese. And my wife was watching with the Korean subtitles. And we had just finished watching our favorite Korean dating reality show. And it was getting close to midnight by the time we finished. So, I was trying to stay awake watching this show happening in the Chinese language with Korean subtitles. But I just couldn't do it. And I fell asleep. But it gave me a little glimpse about, like, what the show was going to be about. So, I thought, OK, I'm going to come back to the show later with the English subtitles and give it a watch.

So, a couple of days later on the weekend, when I had some free time, I fired up Netflix. I changed my language from Korean to English. And then I could access the English subtitles. And I was able to watch the show and understand it perfectly, especially the scenes that happened in China. So again, I'm not going to spoil this show for you. Don't worry if you are planning to watch it and you haven't watched it yet. Then I won't spoil it for you. But I'll just say a little bit about the general theme of the show so that you'll know what kind of show it is. And will be able to follow along here as I talk about it.

So, the **premise** of the show, and "the premise" is a word that we use to mean the story, the story behind the show, the premise follows a scientist, an astrophysicist. She's a Chinese woman. Her name is Ye Wenji. And after witnessing her father's death during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, she's sent to a secret military base. And there she makes a really big decision. And this decision has some enormous consequences. Her decisions ripple through time all the way to the present day. And scientists in the present have to deal with the decisions that she made in the past. And there are some big threats to humanity that become known to the whole world. So, a really interesting premise, a really interesting story.

And I became addicted to this show. As I said, I marathoned it. And I'm not talking about running here in this instance. When you marathon a TV series or maybe even a book series, it means that you watch it or read it in very quick succession. So, you go through all of the episodes or all of the books in a very short time. And I marathoned the series in, I guess, about a week. I think I watched one episode every day. And on Sunday, I watched two episodes. There were eight episodes in the whole series. So, it was around eight hours long. And I got to say, it was really interesting. It was really captivating. And it held my attention for the whole time. The story was awesome. I loved the story. And I wish I could go into it a little bit deeper. But as I said, it's a new show. And I don't want to spoil it for anybody who hasn't seen it yet. There are themes about history in the show, Chinese history, which is especially interesting to me. It deals with reality and technology, video games and crisis, and how humans respond in the face of a huge existential crisis. So, all of these themes are really fascinating to me. And I think that's what drew me to the story.

Interestingly enough, I have to say, this was one of the first times I watched a show the whole way through and was engaged and interested in the show the whole way through. And when one episode ended, I wanted to go to the next one. Unfortunately, due to my schedule, I usually don't have enough time to watch four hours of TV in one day or something. But if that were possible, then I probably would have watched one episode after the other after the other and just watched all of it in a day or two. Because I did feel like when one episode ended, I just wanted to move to the next episode right away. So, it had that really addicting story. I wanted to just go on to the next one right away. Each episode ended with **a cliffhanger**, which left you wanting more. So, I loved the story. I loved the themes of the story. But interestingly, and I think uniquely, cause I can't really say that this has happened to me with other shows or books, but I didn't really like any of the characters.

There's a big **cast** in the show with many characters, and they **just didn't really hook me** for some reason. And when I say, "they didn't hook me", it means that I didn't really feel a closeness to them, or I didn't really care about them. I didn't connect with them. I don't know. Maybe it wasn't so much the characters themselves, but the actors in the show. For whatever reason, I didn't really like any of the actors and I didn't think they were great matches for the role. Perhaps the show could have been better cast. Like most of the main characters in the show, except for one character who I really loved, who plays one of the detectives in the show. The actor's name, I had to look it up because I had never seen him before in anything else that I remembered. But his name is Benedict Wong, and he plays a character named Clarence in the show. And I really liked him. Any scene that he was in, I thought was great, and he did a wonderful job, and I really enjoyed watching his parts of the show. But the other characters, I don't know. I felt like, hmm, they could have been cast better perhaps. So, that was really weird. I don't think I've ever had that experience before where I really enjoyed a show. I wanted to marathon it. I wanted to binge it and just watch all of it as quickly as I could, but at the same time, I felt no closeness to the characters, and I didn't care about what happened to the characters at all, really. And I didn't think they were very realistic.

Anyways, I did watch the whole series, like I said, in just about a week, and loved it. I thought it was really cool, really thought-provoking, and it left me wanting more. Of course, because this is an adaptation of the book, right, it was originally a novel, and then changed to a TV format. As soon as I finished, I went online to read about some of the differences between the book and the TV series. And as you can imagine, there were many changes, many differences between the original book and its TV adaptation. So, I didn't want to read too much because as I started reading, there were like some spoilers, but just reading people's discussion about it on Reddit, that's where I went to.

There's a huge discussion community on Reddit about "The Three-Body Problem" and the whole trilogy of books, because actually this book is the first novel in a trilogy called the "Remembrance of Earth's Past" trilogy. So, there's this huge discussion forum about the novels, and TV show, and their impact, and the author, all of the things that you can imagine. There's a huge discussion community on Reddit about it. So, I went on there and I read a little bit about some of the differences. And immediately as I started to read, I thought, hmm, you know what? I think I have to read the book. So, I went to my favorite bookstore online and I went to the search window, and I just typed the letter "T" for "Three-Body Problem". "Three" starts with the letter "T", right? T-H-R-E-E. So, I just typed the letter "T", and the first result was "The Three-Body Problem" novel. So, I'm guessing I'm not alone that many, many people out there, maybe some of you listening out there, watched the TV show and then you came to the same decision that I did in that you have to read the original novel.

So, I, of course, live in Korea and I do enjoy reading in the Korean language, but I had a feeling that the content of this sci-fi novel might be a little challenging for me to read in Korean. So, I ordered the English language version of the book and usually shipping is very fast here in Korea. Usually if you order something online, you can get it delivered the next day or if things are really slow, it will take two days. But perhaps because this is the English-language version of the book or perhaps because so many people are going to buy it, it's going to take a week. So, I ordered it several days ago now and it still hasn't



arrived. I'm expecting it here in the next day or two, but I'm excited to jump into the novel and to start reading it and to see for myself what are the differences between the novel and the TV adaptation.

From what I've heard, the original **novel is actually rather dry**. And it's a little bit difficult at times to get through, but it's not too long. It's only, I think, 300 pages or so. So even if it's a little dry at times, I think it'll be worth it. From what I've heard and what I've read on Reddit, it seems like it's worthwhile to get through that first dry novel because the second and the third book in the trilogy are really exciting and it **picks up steam** as it goes along. That's a cool expression, "To pick up steam" as it goes along. That just means to get better and better and better. You could think of a steam train from back in the day. You know, you don't really see too many steam trains anymore or too many steam engines, but I'm sure you've probably seen them on TV or something like that. That's where my image of them comes from. I don't think I've seen one in real life. But you know, those old-school steam trains and steam engines, at first, they start very slowly, right? But once the engine starts going and develops, it gets up to speed. It gets better and better as time goes on.

So, this trilogy of books picks up steam as you go through them, and I really am excited to jump in and read the first novel. So yeah, I'm wondering, have you watched "The Three-Body Problem"? Did you enjoy it? Did you like the characters? Did you hate the characters? Did you like the story? Are you looking forward to season two? Have you read the book? Were you like me after you finished the TV show, you immediately went out and bought the book? I don't know. Let's have a little discussion about this on our Discord server. I think that would be a fun place to talk about it. And of course, the link to join our Discord server is in the description for this episode. So, I'm looking forward to hearing your thoughts about "The Three-Body Problem".

So that is going to bring us to the end of today's bonus episode, everyone. Another episode is in the books. Before I let you go, I want to share this week's completion code with you. I want you to make an example sentence using this episode's completion code. You can share it in the comments on our Instagram, our YouTube, or our Discord server.



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And by doing that, you will let me know and you will let our community know that you made it all the way to the end of this episode.

So, this episode's completion code is going to be: "Binge". Binge. I want you to make some kind of example sentence using this word "binge". You can binge watch a TV show, just like I did with "The Three-Body Problem". So, leave a comment with a sentence that you've made using this word "binge" to talk about maybe a TV show, or movie series, or book series, that you binge watched or binge read.

And one little last reminder here before I really, really, really let you go. This is now the end of bonus episode 97, and bonus episode 100 is coming up really, really quickly. As I've mentioned in past bonus episodes, to celebrate reaching bonus episode number 100, I'm going to feature your stories in bonus episode 100. Thank you to all of the people who have been sending in stories. It's been really overwhelming, and we've had great support, but I want to invite everybody who wants to participate in this bonus episode production challenge to help me out and to send in your audio file sooner than later. So, there's not too much time remaining. If you are thinking about participating, please go ahead and send me your audio file with your story as soon as you can. The best way to send it to me is by email at [andrew@Culips.com](mailto:andrew@Culips.com) or by DM through our Discord server. My username on Discord is Andrew, so I'm pretty easy to find. You can just send me a DM through the Discord. OK, I'm going to let you go for real now. Take care, everybody, and I'll talk to you next time. Bye-bye.

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## Glossary

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1. **Bite off more than I can chew:** This expression means to take on more responsibilities or tasks than one is able to handle. In the episode, Andrew decides to keep the bonus episode shorter than usual because he has a 38-kilometer trail race over the weekend. He wants to avoid taking on too much and not being able to manage everything effectively. Example: "I decided not to volunteer for the extra project at work because I didn't want to bite off more than I could chew."
2. **The premise:** The premise refers to the basic idea or story upon which a show or book is built. Andrew describes the premise of "The Three-Body Problem" as the story of a scientist whose decisions have a huge impact on humanity. This concept is what drives the story forward. Example: "The premise of the novel revolves around a world where dreams can be controlled and manipulated."
3. **Drew me to the story:** To be "drawn to the story" means to be attracted or made interested in it. Andrew was drawn to "The Three-Body Problem" because of its interesting themes and the involvement of Brad Pitt in its production. The elements of the story piqued his interest and made him want to watch the show. Example: "The mysterious setting of the book really drew me to the story."
4. **A Cliffhanger:** A cliffhanger is an ending that leaves the audience in suspense, typically at the end of an episode of a serial drama. Andrew notes that each episode of "The Three-Body Problem" ends with a cliffhanger, making him excited to watch the next one to find out what happens. Example: "Last night's episode ended on a cliffhanger, and now I can't wait to see what happens next."
5. **Cast:** The cast consists of the group of actors who play characters in a movie, play, or television show. In discussing "The Three-Body Problem," Andrew mentions the cast and how, except for one actor, he didn't feel connected to the characters they portrayed. Example: "The cast of the new movie has been announced, and it includes some very talented actors."

6. **Didn't hook me:** When something "didn't hook" someone, it means it failed to capture their interest or attention. Andrew felt this way about the characters in "The Three-Body Problem," stating that despite enjoying the plot, he didn't feel engaged with the characters on an emotional level. Example: "I tried reading the book everyone's talking about, but it just didn't hook me."
7. **The novel is rather dry:** Describing a book as "rather dry" means it is somewhat boring or lacks excitement. Andrew refers to others' opinions that the original novel of "The Three-Body Problem" can be unengaging or hard to get into at times. Example: "I found the history textbook to be rather dry and difficult to get through."
8. **To pick up steam:** This expression means to start to gain momentum or improve after a slow start. Andrew uses it to describe the book trilogy "The Three-Body Problem," indicating that the series becomes more exciting and engaging as it progresses. Example: "The fundraiser started off slowly but began to pick up steam as more people became aware of it."

## Episode credits

Host and preparation: Andrew Bates

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