



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

GLOSSARY

changing of the seasons – the period of the time when the weather changes between winter/spring, spring/summer, summer/fall, or fall/winter

* Lauren enjoys the warm weather living in a tropical town, but she misses the changing of the seasons.

autumn – fall; the time of year when the weather begins to cool, between summer and winter

* A lot of kids would like autumn more if it didn't mean going back to school!

fall colors – the changing colors of leaves, especially red, orange, yellow, and brown

* The fall colors are beautiful in Vermont and other northeastern states that have a lot of trees.

chill – a mild coldness that makes one feel uncomfortable; a slight feeling of cold

* Be sure to bring a jacket because there's a chill in the air tonight.

to rake leaves – to use a plastic or metal tool with a long handle to sweep fallen leaves into large piles so that they can be removed from lawns or yards

* We'll need to rake leaves before we can play soccer, because right now there are so many leaves we can't even see the grass!

grumpy – bad-tempered; annoyed or slightly angry

* Stan woke up late and missed his bus, making him feel grumpy all day.

squirrel – a small animal that likes to climb trees and eat nuts and seeds

* At the park, there are squirrels everywhere, running and climbing trees.

to squirrel away – to save; to store for use later; to keep for the future

* Juan squirreled away enough money from his 20 years of working to retire early.

to put a damper on – to reduce someone's excitement, interest, or enthusiasm for something

* The heavy rainstorm put a damper on the outdoor party.

homecoming – an event in high school or at the university that includes a sports game and/or a dance, to which former students are invited

* Nearly 300 of our former students attended the homecoming game.



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

harvest festival – a celebration at the time when most food crops are harvested, usually with a lot of food, music, and dancing

* We spent the afternoon at the harvest festival, eating fresh apples and listening to some great bands.

hayride – the experience of sitting on hay (dried grass) while riding on a trailer pulled by a tractor on a farm, usually done for entertainment

* Each October, they go to a local farm where the kids can enjoy a hayride and pick out a pumpkin for Halloween.

bonfire – a very large, controlled fire outdoors

* We spent the evening playing music and singing around the bonfire.

s'more – a dessert made by roasting (cooking) marshmallows over an outdoor fire and putting it between two graham crackers with a piece of chocolate, almost like a sandwich

* S'mores are really messy, but they're delicious!

allergy – a physical reaction that makes one very sick or uncomfortable when exposed to a particular substance, especially sneezing or feeling itchy

* Many children have allergies to peanuts and other nuts.

party-pooper – a person who ruins the fun that other people are having; someone who is negative and will not participate in what other people are doing, making it less fun for them

* Everyone else is having a great time, so stop being such a party-pooper. Just relax and have fun!

hibernation – long periods of time when animals like bears sleep during the coldest parts of the year, not waking up during the day or night

* Bears have to eat a lot during the summer so that they have enough energy to keep warm during hibernation.

epiphany – a sudden feeling of understanding about something; an experience that changes how one understands or experiences something

* Traveling overseas for the first time was an epiphany that changed how Tamar viewed the world.



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the fall colors?
 - a) Purple and pink.
 - b) Black and brown.
 - c) Red and orange.
 2. Why doesn't Sean like harvest festivals?
 - a) Because the hay makes him feel sick.
 - b) Because he experiences motion sickness on hayrides.
 - c) Because he's allergic to s'mores.
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WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

chill

The word “chill,” in this podcast, means a mild coldness that makes one feel uncomfortable or a slight feeling of cold: “It’s only September, but I can already feel a chill that promises a cold winter.” When one is ill, one may have “chills,” the lowering of one’s body temperature, often making one shiver or shake: “Her illness causes her to feel hot one minute and chills the next.” “Chill” or “chill out” can also be used as an informal command telling someone to relax: “Chill! Mom won’t be home for another hour and by that time, we’ll have cleaned up the mess we made.” Or, “That big dog isn’t running after you anymore, so chill out.”

to put a damper on

In this podcast, the phrase “to put a damper on” means to reduce or lower someone’s excitement, interest, or enthusiasm for something: “The rain put a damper on their outdoor wedding.” A “damper” is a device that restricts (slows down or prevents) something from continuing or happening: “The damper on this machine regulates how much power goes into it.” Or, “The damper on the piano reduces the volume of each note.” The verb “to damp down” has a similar meaning: “Putting thick rugs in the room will help damp down the noises in it.” “Damp” also refers to moisture in the air: “Near the ocean, wet towels stay damp for longer periods of time.”



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

CULTURE NOTE

Harvest Festivals

“Thanksgiving” is the major harvest festival in the United States. It was first celebrated in 1621 in Massachusetts as a way for the “Pilgrims” (the white Europeans who began living in North America) to celebrate their “harvest” (the food taken from plants) by sharing foods with the Native American “tribes” (groups of people living together). Most Americans celebrate Thanksgiving each November, but there are also many local harvest festivals throughout the United States.

People in Ozark, Arkansas celebrate each October at the Harvest Music Festival, which is a four-day event where many bands “perform” (make music for an audience to listen to). The “origins” (how something began) of the festival are in the agricultural harvest, but now the festival focuses more on music.

The Harvest Festival Original Art & Craft Show is held throughout the West Coast from September through December. Again, the origins of the festival are in the agricultural harvest, but this particular show focuses on “arts and crafts” (things made by people, not machines). The three-day event also includes “live” (not pre-recorded) music and food.

Some harvest festivals celebrate the harvest of a particular “crop” (plants grown for food). For example, the Texas Rice Festival in the town of Winnie celebrates rice farming in Southeastern Texas. It started in 1969 and has grown into a week-long event with a “carnival” (games and rides), parades, cooking contests, a car show, dances, and more.

The North Dakota Grape Harvest Festival, held each August, celebrates the grape harvest with music, food, wine tasting, “vineyard” (the land where grapes are grown) tours, music, and a “grape stomping contest,” in which people take off their shoes and socks and step on grapes to make juice for wine.

Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – c; 2 – a



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 723: Things Associated with Autumn.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 723. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

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This episode is called "Things Associated with Autumn," or fall, the season that in the United States comes between the months of, say, September and December. We're going to talk about vocabulary – things that we would talk about or relate to the fall or autumn. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Erin: Smell that!

Sean: Smell what?

Erin: Can't you smell the changing of the seasons? I love autumn. The fall colors are out and there's a chill in the air.

Sean: That means I'll be raking leaves every weekend when I should be watching football.

Erin: How can you be so grumpy when you see cute little squirrels squirreling away their nuts for the winter?

Sean: That just means they're running across the roof even more often, waking me up every morning.

Erin: Not even you can put a damper on my good mood. I can't wait for homecoming games and especially the harvest festivals. They'll be hayrides, bonfires, and s'mores!

Sean: As you know, I have hay allergies and those bonfires are a danger to the environment. And I don't like s'mores, in the summer or in the fall.



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

Erin: How can you be such a party-pooper?

Sean: The only good thing about the fall is that it's right before winter when bears go into hibernation, so I won't have to worry about running into one. Hey, what's this?

Erin: This is a cup of hot chocolate to put you in the fall mood. Drink up and we'll go for a walk outside. It's a beautiful day and a walk will help you see all that you're missing.

Sean: I'll drink the hot chocolate, but don't expect any epiphanies.

[end of dialogue]

Erin begins by saying to Sean, "Smell that!" Sean says, "Smell what?" Erin says, "Can't you smell the changing of the seasons?" The "seasons" are the four periods of the year: summer, spring, fall, and winter. The "changing of the seasons" is when we go from one season to another. Erin says, "Can't you smell the changing of the seasons? I love autumn." "Autumn" is another word for fall. Erin says, "The fall colors are out and there's a chill in the air." "Fall colors" refer to the leaves on the trees that in many parts of the country – in the U.S. – change colors in the fall as the leaves begin to die and fall to the ground during winter. Autumn is full of fall colors in the northeastern and midwestern parts of the U.S., and also in parts of California. When I was growing up, you could drive out into the country or along one of Minnesota's rivers and see the beautiful orange and yellow of the trees as the leaves changed or turned colors. So, that's what fall colors refer to. A "chill" is a low temperature, when it isn't warm out. It isn't freezing, it's somewhat between warm and freezing, but on the cold side, so a little cold.

Sean says, "That means I'll be raking leaves every weekend when I should be watching football." "To rake (rake) leaves" means to collect the leaves that fall off of the trees, to collect them from your lawn – the grass in front or behind your house – to collect them all together and to either put them in a bag to get rid of them or some people use them as part of their fertilizing process, to put them back into the ground after treating them somehow. When I was a child, sometimes we would burn the leaves, put them all in one big pile and burn them. They don't do that very much anymore; it's not safe and it also causes a certain amount of smoke pollution. But, that's what it means to rake leaves. There's a noun, "rake," which refers to the tool, the thing that you use. It's sort of like a broom, and you use it to move the leaves to put them all into one place. So, "to



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

rake,” as a verb, means to use that plastic or metal tool to clean off the leaves, if you will, from your lawn or grass.

Erin is excited about the autumn coming. Sean, however, sees the negative side, that he will have to rake leaves instead of watching American football, which traditionally is played in the fall and early winter.

Erin says, “How can you be so grumpy when you see cute little squirrels squirreling away their nuts for the winter?” “To be grumpy” (grumpy) means to be annoyed, angry; not really mad, just sort of negative about things. Not being nice to other people, perhaps being overly sensitive to other people’s remarks, that’s grumpy. It might be the way a wife describes her husband when he is not in a good mood, when he isn’t feeling well for example. Erin says that there are little squirrels squirreling away their nuts for the winter. A “squirrel” is a small animal that likes to climb trees and eat nuts and seeds. I grew up in Minnesota, where there are lots of squirrels. “To squirrel away” as a verb means to save, to store for later, to keep for the future. The idea is that that’s what squirrels do; they gather food for the wintertime. “To squirrel away” means to save for something; to “save up,” we might say.

Sean says, “That just means they (the squirrels) are running across the roof even more, waking me up in the morning.” He’s saying that because the squirrels are going to be so active trying to save food for the wintertime, they will be running on top of his house and he will get woken up in the morning because of it. I have squirrels that climb on the top of my house all the time, and you can hear their little feet as they run across the roof.

Erin says, “Not even you can put a damper on my good mood.” “To put a damper (damper) on (something)” means to lessen or reduce someone’s interest or enthusiasm or excitement. “The heavy storm put a damper on the outside party.” It lessened people’s enthusiasm for something. Erin says that not even Sean and his grumpy mood can put a damper on her good mood. The word “damper,” along with the word “chill,” has some other meanings in English. Take a look at our Learning Guide for some additional explanations of those.

Erin says, “I can’t wait for homecoming games and especially the harvest festivals.” A “homecoming game” is an event in a high school or at a university typically in the fall, that includes some sort of sports game and usually a dance or some sort of party. The word “homecoming” comes from “come home.” In this case, former students, people who used to go to a school, are invited back on homecoming day or homecoming weekend to go to the sports game, often an American football game, and then to a party – although usually they don’t go to



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

the parties, that's just for the current students. Homecoming is a big event in most American high schools and in many American colleges and universities. There are dances; there are all sorts of things associated with that custom.

A "harvest festival" celebrates the time when farmers go out into the fields and get the food that has grown during the summertime; we call that the "harvest." "To harvest," as a verb, means to go out and collect the food – the corn, the wheat, other food that you are growing and bring it in, and it is popular in many places. Again, I can speak mostly from my own experience in the Midwest there are lots of harvest festivals in the fall, in September and October, celebrating the end of the growing season and, of course, giving thanks, was the original idea, for the food that one has received or one has taken from the fields from where the food grows.

She says, "They'll be hayrides, bonfires, and s'mores!" A hayride (hayride) is when you sit on a long, flat trailer that's being pulled by either some sort of farm machinery, like a tractor, or horses, and it's basically a form of entertainment. You go for a little ride out into the countryside or into the farm. We used to go on hayrides when I was a child. We would go out away from the city and you could have a hayride. Usually it was organized by some sort of group, and everybody paid a small amount of money to go on this hayride. "Bonfires" (bonfires) are large fires outdoors. You remember I mentioned about burning the leaves when I was a child. Well, if you did that outdoors, out in the field somewhere, we might call that a "bonfire" if it's a large fire. It's a controlled fire. It's not just burning everything around, it's in one specific small area. "S'mores" (s'mores) is a kind of dessert made in the summertime and in the fall with marshmallows, a piece of chocolate, and two crackers, what we call "graham crackers." It's like a little chocolate and marshmallow sandwich. It sounds disgusting – doesn't sound very good, but it tastes okay.

Sean says, "As you know, I have hay allergies and those bonfires are a danger to the environment. And I don't like s'mores, in the summer or in the fall." "Allergies" is a physical condition, where you have a reaction to certain substances. It could be some parts of a flower, it could be a type of food; some people have food allergies to peanuts for example. He, Sean, has hay allergies, what we more commonly would call "hay fever," even though it isn't a fever; you don't have a high temperature like you would normally in a fever. Sean says the "bonfires are a danger to the environment," because of all the smoke, which is why in many places you can no longer have a bonfire – in the United States, anyway.



ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

Erin says, “How can you be such a party-pooper?” A “party-pooper” (pooper) is a person who ruins other people’s fun, someone who’s negative, who doesn’t participate, or doesn’t want anyone else to have fun at a party or some celebration.

Sean says, “The only good thing about the fall is that it’s right before winter when bears go into hibernation.” “Hibernation” is a long period of time when animals, like bears, sleep, usually during the coldest part of the year. Sean says because the bears are in hibernation he won’t have to worry about running into one; that is, unexpectedly finding one, which of course might be dangerous. Then he says, “Hey, what’s this?” Erin says, “This is a cup of hot chocolate to put you in the fall mood.” “Hot chocolate” is liquid, usually water or milk mixed with chocolate and heated up. She says, “Drink up (meaning drink it all) and we’ll go for a walk outside. It’s a beautiful day and a walk will help you see all that you are missing.” Sean says, “I’ll drink the hot chocolate, but don’t expect any epiphanies.” An “epiphany” (epiphany) is when you have a sudden understanding of something, an experience that somehow makes you understand something that you never understood before.

Now let’s listen to the dialogue, this time at a normal speed.

[start of dialogue]

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ESL Podcast 723 – Things Associated with Autumn

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[end of dialogue]

Our scriptwriter is never grumpy; she's always a happy person. She's Dr. Lucy Tse, and we thank her.

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us again here on ESL Podcast.

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