



ESL Podcast 734 – Believing in Scary Things

GLOSSARY

Halloween – a holiday celebrated each October 31st when children wear special clothing and knock on doors to ask for candy, and when the spirits (ghosts) of dead people are thought to be present

* Last year, Adele was an angel for Halloween, but this year she wants to be a doctor.

evil – very bad, wrong, and immoral, intended to hurt other people

* Do you think people can be evil, or are only actions evil?

to lurk – to be present, but in a dark and hidden way, perhaps waiting to appear

* They had the feeling someone was lurking around their home at night, so they turned on all of their outdoor lights.

to dress up – to put on special clothing, either very fancy clothing for formal occasions, or “costumes” (disguises or clothing meant to change one’s appearance significantly)

* In Pablo’s classroom, most of the little boys want to dress up as superheroes and most of the little girls want to dress up as princesses.

creepy – scary and uncomfortable; making someone feel a little bit scared, fearful, or uneasy

* Isn’t it creepy to work alone in a convenience store late at night?

scared stiff – very frightened; terrified and unable to do anything because one feels too much fear

* If I had to sleep outside knowing the bears and wolves were right outside my tent, I’d be scared stiff!

(one’s) own doing – one’s own fault; resulting from one’s own actions or decisions, without the ability to blame anyone else

* If I fail the course, it’s my own doing. I didn’t study enough.

to kid (oneself) – to make oneself believe something that isn’t true; to trick or fool oneself

* Jay thinks he can become a millionaire overnight, but he’s kidding himself.

ghost – the spirit of a dead person, especially when it can be seen as a floating object

* Did you hear that sound? It must have been a ghost, because nobody else is here!



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witch – a person, usually a woman, with magical powers used to do bad things, usually thought to wear a long, black dress and a tall, pointed black hat and be able to fly while sitting on a broom

* Why do fairy tales usually show witches as ugly women with green faces and pointed noses?

zombie – the body of a person who has died but, in death, walks on Earth, but cannot speak

* Shelley wants to dress up as a zombie for Halloween, so she painted her skin white and tore her clothes to make herself look dead.

vampire – an immortal (cannot die) person with long, sharp teeth who walks at night or in darkness to bite the necks of people and drink their blood

* If sunlight kills vampires, then I guess we'll be safe during the daytime as long as we stay outdoors.

to have a field day – to have fun and do whatever one wants to do, as much as one wants to do it

* The kids had a field day, playing in the swimming pool and eating ice cream.

goosebump – one of many small, raised areas on one's skin, usually caused by cold temperatures or fear

* It's so cold in here, I have goosebumps! Could you please turn on the heater?

gullible – easily tricked or deceived; believing everything one is told

* How could you be so gullible as to believe it was okay to give that man your credit card number?

graveyard – cemetery; a place where dead bodies are buried and stone or wooden markers are placed in the ground above them

* I would never walk through a graveyard at night! It would be too scary.

cross – two straight pieces of wood that are connected together at a right (90°) angle, with the longer piece in a vertical position and the shorter piece in a horizontal position; the symbol representing the way in which Jesus Christ was killed; ✝; an object thought to provide protection against evil things

* Bianca is a Christian and she always wears a cross on a necklace.

garlic – a strong-smelling, root with many small pieces that can be broken off and peeled, used in cooking; a vegetable thought to provide protection against evil things

* This spaghetti sauce would be even better if it had more garlic.



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COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of these creatures would drink blood?
 - a) A ghost.
 - b) A zombie.
 - c) A vampire.
2. What does Ella mean when she says, “Don’t kid yourself”?
 - a) Stop acting like a kid.
 - b) Stop fooling yourself.
 - c) Stop telling so many jokes.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

one’s own doing

The phrase “(one’s) own doing,” in this podcast, means one’s own fault, resulting from one’s own actions or decisions: “If you don’t have any close friends, it’s your own doing. Why aren’t you friendlier when you meet people?” The phrase “to take some doing” means to be difficult and to require a lot of work: “Yes, we can finish the project by Tuesday, but it’s going to take some doing.” The phrase “to make (something) (one’s) own” means to personalize or change something in some way: “When Wally moved into his college dorm, he tried to make the room his own by painting the walls and hanging interesting posters.” Finally, the phrase “on (one’s) own” means alone, without help from other people: “Did you draw this on your own, or did you copy someone else’s drawing?”

cross

In this podcast, the word “cross” refers to two straight pieces of wood that are connected together at a right (90°) angle, with the longer piece in a vertical position and the shorter piece in a horizontal position (✝): “Camilo knelt before the cross to pray.” The verb “to cross” means to go across something from one side to the other: “How will we cross the river if the bridge is closed for construction?” The phrase “to cross (something) out” means to draw a line through text to show that it should be deleted in the next version: “Why did you cross out this section? I thought that was the best part of the story.” Finally, if someone is “cross,” it means that he or she is in a bad mood and is angry or frustrated: “Wynona was really cross when she found out she didn’t get the job.”



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CULTURE NOTE

How Adults Celebrate Halloween

Children usually “go trick-or-treating” (knock on doors to ask for candy) on Halloween, but many adults like to celebrate the holiday, too. Many people have “costume parties” where everyone dresses up in costumes for an evening of dancing, eating, and drinking. Usually there are costume contests with “prizes” (something one wins) awarded for the best costume. The “hosts” (the people who organize the party) often decorate the “interior” (inside) and “exterior” (outside) of their home with “fake” (artificial) spider “webs” (the very thin white or clear threads that spiders use to catch other insects to eat), “bats” (small mammals that fly at night), witches, and ghosts, and play scary sounds or music.

People with a more “macabre” (dark, scary, connected with death) “side” (characteristic, aspect to one’s personality) might enjoy visiting a graveyard on Halloween night, trying to scare themselves or each other. Or they might hide behind “grave markers” (pieces of wood or stone that show where a body has been buried) to “jump out” (quickly move from behind something to surprise another person) from behind the grave markers to “frighten” (scare) other people who are visiting the graveyard.

Still other people like to stay at home and watch “horror films” (movies that are intended to scare people, usually with a lot of violence). Many television channels show old horror movies like A Nightmare on Elm Street and Friday the 13th “leading up to” (on the days before) Halloween.

Not everyone participates in the Halloween “festivities” (celebrations). Some Christians believe that Halloween is evil, so their churches organize alternative festivals for “members” (people who go to that church regularly) to attend on Halloween night. These parties are sometimes called “harvest festivals” (celebrations of the food gathered from agricultural land), but the children who go normally dress up in costumes and receive candy, “albeit” (but; notwithstanding) from the church instead of from their neighbors.

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



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COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 734: Believing in Scary Things.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 734. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Visit us at eslpod.com. Become a member of ESL Podcast and get the Learning Guide for this episode. You can also like us on Facebook. Go to [Facebook.com/eslpod](https://www.facebook.com/eslpod).

This episode is a dialogue between Ella and Jimmy. It's related to Halloween and uses a lot of vocabulary related to scary things. Let's get started. Wah-ha-ha-ha ha-ha! [evil laugh]

[start of dialogue]

Ella: No matter what you say, I am not going out tonight. It's Halloween and evil things are lurking everywhere.

Jimmy: Come on, it's Halloween! It's the holiday when kids get dressed up and ask for candy. There is nothing evil or creepy about this day. If you're scared stiff, it's your own doing.

Ella: Don't kid yourself. This is the day when ghosts, witches, zombies, and vampires come out and have a field day. I've got goosebumps just thinking about it.

Jimmy: Do you mean you actually believe in all of that stuff? You are too old to be so gullible. I'm going out.

Ella: Look! Hurry up and close that door! There's a black cat. Oh my God. If you walk out that door, the next time I see you, it might be in a graveyard.

Jimmy: You're crazy and I'm leaving.

Ella: If you have to go, take these with you.

Jimmy: What are they?



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Ella: It's a cross and some garlic. You'll thank me later.

Jimmy: Ugh!

[end of dialogue]

Ella begins by saying, "No matter what you say, I'm not going out tonight." It doesn't matter what you tell me, she's saying, I'm not going to leave the house; I'm not going to go out somewhere tonight. "It's Halloween and evil things are lurking everywhere." "Halloween," you may know, is celebrated on October 31st. It is the eve of All Hallows' Day or, we would say in the United States, All Saints' Day, and traditionally it's been associated with spirits, ghosts, scary things, and people here in the U.S., especially children, dress up on this holiday and go around asking for candy. We've talked about Halloween on other episodes. Go back and listen to episode number 73.

Ella says that there are evil things lurking everywhere. "Evil" is bad, wrong, something that is very wrong, very, perhaps, immoral. "To lurk" (lurk) means to be somewhere, but to be hidden away, perhaps waiting to appear. We have an expression, "he was lurking in the shadows." He was waiting there, perhaps for someone to come by. It sounds like a dangerous thing, although it might not be. So "lurking" is waiting around, but hidden so no one can see you.

Jimmy says, "Come on, it's Halloween! It's the holiday when kids get dressed up and ask for candy." "Come on" means change your mind Ella, don't be so silly, don't be that way. This holiday – and by the way, it's not technically a holiday in the United States. You still have to work on Halloween. "It's the holiday when kids get dressed up." "To dress up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to put on different kind of clothing than you normally would. It could be clothing that's very formal if you're going to a wedding or a job interview. Or it could be a "costume," something that makes you look like a different kind of person, and that's the kind of dressing up that Jimmy is talking about here. On Halloween kids put on different costumes so they look like Spiderman, and...and, I don't know, Harry Potter. I haven't been paying attention recently.

So, Jimmy says, "There is nothing evil or creepy about this day." "Creepy" (creepy) means scary, but also uncomfortable, something that makes you a little fearful or not very comfortable; "uneasy," we might say. Jimmy says, "If you're scared stiff, it's your own doing." "To be scared stiff" (stiff) means to be very frightened, to be very scared. You can't do anything because you are so afraid of what is going to happen or what is happening. Jimmy says if that's how



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scared you are, “it’s your own doing,” meaning it’s your own fault. It’s because of something you do, not what someone else is doing.

Ella says, “Don’t kid yourself.” “To kid (kid) yourself” means to make yourself believe something that isn’t true. “To kid,” as a verb, normally means to joke with, to say something that isn’t really true just to be funny. But the expression “to kid yourself” means, in a way, to play a joke on yourself, to make yourself believe something that isn’t true. She says, “This is the day when ghosts, witches, zombies, and vampires come out and have a field day.” A “ghost” traditionally has been defined as the spirit of a dead person. If you ever read the famous play Macbeth by Shakespeare, you know that there is the ghost of Banquo. When I was growing up there was a famous cartoon ghost, Casper. Casper the Ghost, whatever happened to him? I think he died! A “witch” is someone, usually a woman, who has magical powers and uses them to do bad things. If you saw the movie The Wizard of Oz, there were different witches in the movie; there were good witches and there were bad witches, however, in The Wizard of Oz. But normally a witch is someone we think of, again usually a woman, who has magic powers to do evil things.

A “zombie” is the body of a person who has died but still walks around the Earth, even though he or she cannot speak. So it’s a little different than a ghost; a ghost is just the spirit that can appear and disappear, that can travel through walls, and so forth. A zombie is a actual body – a dead body that walks around as if it were alive. Of course, all of these things are imaginary, but that’s what they are when you read about them in fiction.

“Vampires” are people who are immortal; that is, they never die. They traditionally have long, sharp teeth. They walk in the night, they can’t sleep, they bite people’s necks, and drink their blood. Sounds like an old girlfriend I had! The most famous vampire is probably Dracula, in English literature. The second would probably be those guys from Twilight. I don’t know. There was a famous movie Interview with a Vampire, with I think it was Tom Cruise – who some people believe is actually a vampire! I don’t know if that’s true or not.

So, we have ghosts, witches, zombies, and vampires that come out, that can be seen, and they have a field day. The expression “to have a field (field) day” means to have fun, to do whatever you want, as much as you want to do it. Ella says, “I’ve got goosebumps just thinking about it.” “Goosebumps” are little, small bumps or raised areas on your skin that are caused by either cold temperatures; that is, when it’s cold suddenly you may feel these little bumps on your skin. Some people say they can also be caused by fear. So the idea that something gives you goosebumps means that it makes you very afraid, very scared.



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There's actually a famous children's book series, very popular with young boys, at least it was a few years ago in the United States called Goosebumps. And, these are scary stories that were popular among fifth and sixth and seventh graders. Some of them are actually kind of interesting. They're easy English, and if you enjoy reading scary stories, and your English is still not ready for adult stories, well, Goosebumps is not a bad option – not a bad choice.

Jimmy says, "Do you mean you actually believe in all of that stuff (all of those things)? You are too old to be so gullible." "To be gullible" (gullible) means to be easily tricked or deceived, to believe everything that you are told. Jimmy says, "I'm going out (I'm going to leave the house)."

Ella says, "Look! Hurry up and close that door! There's a black cat. Oh my God. If you walk out that door, the next time I see you, it might be in a graveyard." Okay, so traditionally if you see a black cat you have bad luck, and that's what Ella sees when Jimmy opens the door. She says, "If you walk out that door, the next time I see you, it might be in a graveyard." A "grave" (grave) is where you put a body after it dies. A "graveyard," is also called a "cemetery," it's a large area where you have a lot of graves. What Ella is saying is that if Jimmy leaves he might be killed.

Jimmy says, "You're crazy and I'm leaving." Ella says, "If you have to go, take these with you." Jimmy says, "What are they?" She says, "It's a cross and some garlic. You'll thank me later." A "cross" is two pieces of wood or some material that form like a "t"; is the symbol of the Christian religion, where Jesus Christ was said to have died on a cross. That's why the cross is a symbol of Christianity. Traditionally the idea was that if you had a cross, you could hold it up and it would prevent evil beings from coming close to you or coming near you because they were afraid. It was essentially a symbol of God. "Garlic" traditionally in literature was thought to have protected you against vampires – people like Tom Cruise! So, Ella is offering Jimmy a cross and some garlic so he can protect himself against these evil beings that she believes. Jimmy says, "Ugh!" He's frustrated, he doesn't believe what Ella is telling him.

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

[start of dialogue]

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Jimmy: What are they?

Ella: It's a cross and some garlic. You'll thank me later.

Jimmy: Ugh!

[end of dialogue]

Our script was not written by a ghost, a witch, a zombie, or a vampire. It was written by the not very scary Dr. Lucy Tse.

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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