



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

GLOSSARY

to split up – to end a relationship, especially a romantic relationship

* Angie and Ronald split up because he wanted to have children and she didn't.

seven-year itch – the idea that most people will become tired of their marriage after about seven years and want to be with other people

* Good communication and honesty can prevent the seven-year itch from ruining your marriage.

unfaithful – not loyal; having a romantic relationship and/or sex with someone who is not one's wife, husband, girlfriend, or boyfriend

* Would you be able to forgive your husband or wife if he or she were unfaithful to you?

wandering eye – a tendency to flirt; a tendency to be interested romantically in people who are not one's wife, husband, girlfriend, or boyfriend

* Iago has a wandering eye and he's always flirting with his coworkers and clients, even though he has a girlfriend.

it's a shame – it's a pity; too bad; a phrase used to show that one feels sad about something that has happened

* It's a shame that they lost so much money in the stock market. Now they won't be able to retire as early as they had planned to.

marriage vows – the promises exchanged between a husband and wife during their wedding ceremony

* In their marriage vows, they said that they would love each other "for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."

lifelong – for the duration of one's entire life; until one dies

* Becoming a parent is a lifelong commitment because you will continue to worry about your children even when they are adults and have children of their own.

commitment – a promise to behave in a certain way; a promise to do something

* Stefan made a commitment to his employer, promising to work there for at least four years.

notion – idea; concept; a way of thinking about something; a way of understanding something

* Did you have any notion of what was going to happen?



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

out of date – outdated; old-fashioned; not belonging to the present time

* Your computer software is out of date. You need to get the new version.

conventional wisdom – common, public opinion; ideas that are generally accepted by most people

* Conventional wisdom is that children who are spoiled and get everything they want will turn out to be unpleasant adults.

short-term – for a short, limited period of time; not for very long; for a while

* Her short-term goal is to finish nursing school, but her long-term goal is to become a surgeon.

to renew – to begin something again; to extend the period of something

* How often do you have to renew your driver's license?

to go (one's) separate ways – to become interested in different things and end a relationship; to end a relationship, especially a romantic relationship, so that each person can do what he or she wants to do without the other person

* They love each other very much, but he wants to live in the States and she wants to live in Europe, so they decided to break up and go their separate ways.

contract – a legal document; a written agreement to do something

* Yela had to sign a 14-page employment contract when she started working for that company.

cynical – negative; pessimistic; believing that bad things will happen; not believing that anything good can happen

* Our manager is so cynical! He never thinks that any of our ideas are any good.

adultery – the act of a married person having sex with someone who is not his or her wife or husband

* Vicky got a divorce when she found out that her husband was committing adultery with his secretary.

la-la land – a place or time where one thinks or daydreams silly, imaginative, non-serious things that do not happen in real life

* The student never concentrates in class and is always in la-la land whenever her teacher asks her a question.



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How would Sunny describe marriage vows?
 - a) Out of date.
 - b) A short-term arrangement.
 - c) A lifelong commitment.

2. According to Igor, which of these ideas comes from la-la land?
 - a) Conventional wisdom.
 - b) Marriage renewals every seven years.
 - c) Long-term commitments.

WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

to split up

The phrase “to split up,” in this podcast, means to end a romantic relationship: “Why did Howard and Anita split up after being married for more than 25 years?” The phrase “to split (somebody) up” means to try to end a relationship between two other people: “I think my girlfriend’s dad wants to split us up because he doesn’t think I make enough money.” The phrase “to split (something) up” means to divide something into smaller sections: “The 10-hour workshop was split up into three sessions on three different days.” Finally, the phrase “to split the difference” means to agree to use a number in the middle of what two people are discussing: “The seller wanted \$100, and I didn’t want to pay more than \$80, so in the end, we split the difference and I bought the table for \$90.”

notion

In this podcast, the word “notion” means an idea or belief, or a way of thinking about or understanding something: “American society is founded on the notion of free speech.” Or, “Where did you get the notion that you’d become a company president by the age of 23?” In the plural, “notions” are small objects, especially those used for sewing: “I want to go to the fabric store to buy some thread, buttons, and other sewing notions.” As a verb, “to note” can mean to write something down quickly: “As he was reading the book, he noted his reactions in pencil on the side of the page.” However, the things that are noted down are called “notations” – not notions: “The doctor wrote so quickly that the pharmacist wasn’t able to read his notations.”



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

CULTURE NOTE

The Seven Year Itch is a “classic” (old, well known, and popular) American movie that was made in 1955. In this “comedy” (funny movie), a man sends his wife and son to go on a summer vacation while he stays in New York to work. He is a book reader for a “publishing company” (a company that makes books) and has just finished reading a book about the seven-year itch, which “claims” (states that something is true) that many married men “cheat” (have sex with someone they are not married to) on their wives after the first seven years of marriage.

The 38-year-old man is “determined” (strongly committed to something) to work hard and not live the life of a “bachelor” (an unmarried man) while his family is traveling, but then his life becomes “complicated” (confusing and difficult). A beautiful 22-year-old blonde woman played by Marilyn Monroe, a very famous and “attractive” (pretty and sexy) American actress, moves into the same apartment building. He invites the woman to come over and have a drink in his home.

The man spends a lot of time “fantasizing” (imagining situations, especially related to sex, that are not true) about having an “affair” (a sexual relationship outside of marriage) with the neighbor. But at the same time, he thinks about what it would be like if his wife had an affair with someone on her vacation. These fantasies are very funny to watch.

In the end, the man takes control of his wandering eye and decides not to cheat on his wife.

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



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 345: The Seven-year Itch.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 345. I'm your host...guess who? Dr. Jeff McQuillan, that's right, from Los Angeles, California – I should say beautiful Los Angeles, California, and the Center for Educational Development. I'm feeling good today!

Be sure to visit our website at eslpod.com, where you can download a Learning Guide for this episode. Our Learning Guides are 8 to 10 page PDF files that contains all of the vocabulary, definitions, sample sentences using our new vocabulary in different context, additional explanations of words that have additional meanings beyond what we talk about on this episode. You'll also find a cultural note, as well as some comprehension questions in the Learning Guide. Again, go to our website for more information.

This dialogue is called "The Seven-year Itch." It's about how husbands and wives sometimes separate or divorce because the man wants to find a new partner. Let's get started.

[start of dialogue]

Sunny: Did you hear the news? Nancy and Brian are splitting up.

Igor: How long have they been married?

Sunny: Eight years. I'm sure it was the seven-year itch. I bet Brian was unfaithful to Nancy.

Igor: How do you know? Maybe it was Nancy who had a wandering eye.

Sunny: Maybe, but it's a shame. They were such a nice couple. Doesn't anyone take marriage vows seriously these days? To me, it's a lifelong commitment.

Igor: If you ask me, I think our notion of marriage is out of date. Conventional wisdom is that everybody wants to be unfaithful after they've been married a few years. Why not make marriage a short-term arrangement? In my view, a marriage should last for seven years unless you want to renew. If you don't, you each go your separate ways.



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

Sunny: You make marriage sound like an apartment contract! Not everybody is as cynical as you are. I don't think that most couples think seriously about committing adultery, and many couples stay together for life.

Igor: You may live in la-la land, but I live in the real world.

Sunny: If that's the real world, I don't want to live there!

[end of dialogue]

Our dialogue begins with Sunny saying to Igor, "Did you hear the news (did you hear what happened)? Nancy and Brian are splitting up." "To spit up" is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to end a relationship, especially a romantic relationship. The person who ends the relationship is usually the one who is described as "splitting up with." For example "My girlfriend told me she was splitting up with me" – she wanted to leave me; I didn't want to leave her. That's the way it usually goes – or went, when I was dating! "To split up" has a couple of different meanings in English; take a look at our Learning Guide for some more explanations.

Well, Sunny says that Nancy and Brian are splitting up. Igor says, "How long have they been married?" Sunny say, "Eight years. I'm sure it was the seven-year itch." "To itch" is when you get a sensation on your skin that you need to scratch; that's an "itch" (itch). "The seven-year itch" refers to an idea that is popular, at least in the United States, that people will become tired of their marriage after about seven years. So, you get married, seven years later you decide, "Eh, maybe I'll find someone else." That's the "seven-year itch." It was also a movie, a very interesting movie. Take a look at our Learning Guide in the cultural note, where we talk about this movie, [The Seven Year Itch](#).

So, Sunny thinks that Brian and Nancy are splitting up because of the seven-year itch. She then says what women often say when they find out two people are splitting up that they know, "I bet Brian was unfaithful to Nancy." "To be unfaithful" means to be not loyal. When you are talking about a romantic relationship, it means having another relationship with someone else who is not your wife, husband, girlfriend, or boyfriend. So, if you are married, and then you start having a relationship, we would say "start seeing" another person, that would be "unfaithful."

Igor says, "How do you know? Maybe it was Nancy who had a wandering eye." A "wandering eye" means a tendency or typical behavior of "flirting," of trying to



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

get other people interested in you romantically, who are not your wife, or husband, boyfriend, or girlfriend. So when we say a man has a “wandering eye,” that means he’s in a relationship, but he’s always trying to get the attention of other women. Igor is saying that Nancy, the woman in this relationship, had the wandering eye.

Sunny says, “Maybe, but it’s a shame” – it’s too bad. When you feel sad about something, you may say, “It’s a shame.” “They were such a nice couple. Doesn’t anyone take marriage vows seriously these days?” Your “marriage vow” (vow) is a promise; your “marriage vows” are promises that a husband and wife makes to each other. You can also use the word “vow” as a verb: “I vow I will make sure that I do the vacuuming tonight, dear.” “I vow” – I promise. “Marriage vows,” then, are promises between a husband and a wife. When you have a marriage – when you have a wedding ceremony, that’s when you exchange these promises – these “vows.”

Sunny says, “To me, (marriage is) a lifelong commitment.” “Lifelong” (one word) means for your entire life, until you die. A “commitment” is a promise to behave in a certain way, a promise to do something. So, marriage is “a lifelong commitment.”

Igor says, “If you ask me the (if you want my opinion), I think our notion of marriage is out of date.” “Notion” means idea or concept, a way of thinking about something. Igor is saying that our notion of marriage is out of date. “Out of date” means the same as old-fashioned or outdated, something that doesn’t belong to the present time.

Igor continues, “Conventional wisdom is that everybody wants to be unfaithful after they’ve been married a few years.” “Conventional wisdom” means common opinion, public opinion, ideas that are accepted by most people. Something that is “conventional” is something that is typical; it’s the way it’s always been done. “Conventional wisdom is that everybody wants to be unfaithful. Why not make marriage a short-term arrangement?” he asks. “Short-term” means for a short or limited period of time. “In my view,” Igor continues, and you know he’s getting himself into problems by saying this, “a marriage should last for seven years unless you want to renew.” “To renew” means to continue to do something for a longer period. If you become a member of ESL Podcast, you can “renew,” you can, each month, continue your membership.

Well, Igor thinks that you should be able to renew your marriage. “If you don’t, you (should) each go your separate ways.” “To go your separate ways” means



ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

to end the relationship, especially a romantic relationship, so each person can do what they want to do – not be married anymore.

Sunny, of course, doesn't agree. She says, "You make marriage sound like an apartment contract!" "Contract" is a legal, written usually, document between two people. So, Sunny is saying you make marriage sound like it's just like any other agreement. "Not everybody is as cynical as you." "To be cynical" (cynical) means believing that bad things will happen, not believing anything good can happen. You're being negative, pessimistic – he's "cynical."

Sunny's saying that Igor is cynical about marriage. She says, "I don't think that most couples think seriously about committing adultery, and many couples stay together for life." "Adultery" (adultery) is when a married person has sexual relations with someone who isn't his wife, or her husband; that would be "adultery." Not a good thing – don't recommend it!

Igor says, "You may live in la-la land, but I live in the real world." "La-la land" is an expression that means a place or time that is imaginary, that is silly, that it is not a serious way of looking at life. You're saying to someone you are wrong, you are living in an imaginary world – you're in "la-la land." A lot of people describe Los Angeles this way – of course, "la-la" is spelled LA (hyphen) LA!

Sunny says, "If that's the real world, I don't want to live there!" Guess who will be sleeping on the couch tonight!

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

[start of dialogue]

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ESL Podcast 345 – The Seven-year Itch

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Sunny: You make marriage sound like an apartment contract! Not everybody is as cynical as you are. I don't think that most couples think seriously about committing adultery, and many couples stay together for life.

Igor: You may live in la-la land, but I live in the real world.

Sunny: If that's the real world, I don't want to live there!

[end of dialogue]

The script for this episode was written by Dr. Lucy Tse – who's never had the seven-year itch!

From Los Angeles, California, I'm Jeff McQuillan. I haven't had the seven-year itch either! We'll see you next time on ESL Podcast.

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