



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

GLOSSARY

season ticket – a ticket that allows someone to see all of the events happening during a certain period of time

* Asa has season tickets to all the football games that his team plays this year.

opening night – the first night of performances of a play, show, or concert

* The play did very well on opening night, which caused even more people to buy tickets for later shows.

opening curtain – the beginning of a play when the curtain (heavy material in front of a stage) is opened

* Opening curtain was supposed to be at 8:00 p.m., but the play started 15 minutes late.

will call – part of the box office or desk where customers who have purchased tickets before an event go to get those tickets before entering a theater

* Lydia ordered tickets early and needed to pick them up at the will call window before the show started.

ticket taker – an employee at a theater who checks each customer's ticket and only allows customers with tickets to enter the theater

* The ticket taker stopped a couple of people who were trying to sneak into the theater without buying tickets.

best seats in the house – the best place to sit to see an entertainment event; the best section to sit in at a theater or stadium

* The musician was one of Rory's favorites, and he paid extra for the best seats in the house so he could be as close as possible to the stage.

balcony – a section of seats that is raised above the stage in a theater, usually located on the side wall or back wall of a theater

* Kamie climbed up many stairs to reach her seat, which was located in the balcony section overlooking the stage.

orchestra section – the main floor or level of a theater where viewers can sit; the best section of seats in a theater, close to the stage

* Dillon was able to sit in the orchestra section, so he got a close, clear view of everything that happened on stage.



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

to dim – for lights to slowly get darker

* When the lights began to dim, Josefina knew she needed to get to her seat before the room became completely dark.

act – one section out of multiple sections in a play; one of the main parts of a play's story, which is usually divided into two to four parts

* The play was divided into four acts, each of which was divided further into four scenes.

intermission – a break in between sections of a play; a short amount of time in the middle of a play when the play stops, giving the actors and audience time to rest

* Eric had enough time during the intermission to make a quick phone call.

to flicker – for lights in a theater to quickly come on and off; for lights at a theater to quickly flash on and off multiple times, meaning that the play is going to start again after a break

* The theater lights flickered, so Mr. and Mrs. Bonavita went back to their seats and prepared to watch the second half of the play.

standing ovation – a type of cheering where the audience shows how much they liked an entertainment event by standing up and clapping (striking ones hands together to produce sound)

* The singer was overwhelmed when she received a standing ovation at the end of her song.

staging – the task of designing and organizing the way a stage should look during a play or other performance

* The staging was very well done, and the design of the set looked very real.

direction – the task of telling actors how to perform in a specific way in a play, film, or other performance

* Because of poor direction, the actors seemed uncomfortable on stage.

could not have asked for – could not have hoped for; a phrase one uses to explain that conditions were ideal or as good as one could hope

* Mitsue's boyfriend gave her everything she needed and she could not have asked for more from the relationship.

big time – very much; to a significant or large degree

* Jason did his co-worker an important favor by taking his extra shift, but now his co-worker owed him big time.



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

CULTURE NOTE

Men in (the) Black

“To be in the black” means to make a profit, when a company receives more money than it spends. (The opposite is “to be in the red,” when you are losing money.) “Movie studios” (companies that make movies) sometimes make millions of dollars in profit on their films, and sometimes lose millions.

In 2012, the movie *The Avengers* was “released” (started to be shown in theaters) around the world, making more than \$1,000,000,000. The cost of the movie was “only” \$220 million, so the movie studio is so far about \$800 million in the black.

What’s interesting about movies like *The Avengers* is that most of the money is made outside of the United States. *Men in Black*, the 1997 “blockbuster” (movie that makes a lot of money), made more than \$500 million, with about 60% of that coming from outside the U.S. In fact, the international success of movies is so important to studios that one writer recently wrote an article called “How to Make a Hollywood ‘Hit’” (successful movie), in which she pointed out the “elements” (characteristics) of an internationally successful movie. Here are some of those elements:

- “Set the movie” (have the movie take place) in an “emerging market” (where new customers can be found) – or “nowhere.” Many internationally successful movies take place in a fantasy world, such as *Harry Potter*, *Avatar*, and *Lord of the Rings*.
- Use an “established” (already known) “brand” (idea, product, or service). *The Avengers*, for example, is based upon well-known comic books and characters many people are already familiar with.
- Get “bilingual” (speaking two languages) stars. Adding Antonio Banderas’s Puss in Boots character to the second *Shrek* movie helped “triple” (multiply by three) ticket sales in Spain and doubled them in Mexico.
- Make the movie in 3-D and IMAX. In 2011, 40% of the movie ticket sales in China, Brazil, and Russia were from 3-D movies. *The Avengers* was, of course, released in 3-D and IMAX, in addition to the “normal” way.



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 78 – Seeing a Play.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 78. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

Today's episode is going to be about going to the theater to see a play. Let's go.

[start of story]

I ran into my neighbor Dennis yesterday afternoon. He asked if I wanted two tickets to the theater. He had season tickets but couldn't go to this performance. It was opening night of Shakespeare's The Tempest. I jumped at his offer and invited Lucy to come along.

We arrived at the theater half an hour before opening curtain. We had the tickets in hand and didn't need to pick them up at the will call window. The doors to the theater were open and we handed our tickets to the ticket takers standing in the doorway.

We looked for our seats and were pleasantly surprised to find that we had some of the best seats in the house! I thought we would be sitting in the balcony, but we were in the orchestra section in the center. This was great! The lights dimmed and the curtain went up.

At the end of the second act, there was an intermission. Lucy and I went into the lobby and bought drinks from the bar. After about 15 minutes, the lights flickered and we went back to our seats.

After the last act, the audience gave the actors a standing ovation. This was the best play I had seen in ages. The acting was superb, and the staging and direction were fresh. I couldn't have asked for a better theater experience. I owed Dennis big time for giving me his tickets.

[end of story]

In this episode, we went to the theater to see a play. I begin the story by saying, "I ran into my neighbor Dennis yesterday afternoon." "To run into someone" means to meet someone whom you weren't expecting to meet.



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

Dennis asked me “if I wanted two tickets to the theater.” A “theater” is a place where you go and see a play – a live, dramatic performance. Dennis had season tickets. “Season (season) tickets” are tickets for several different performances – by the same group of actors, in this case – during a certain period of time. Usually, season tickets for a theater include all of the performances for the four or five months, perhaps more, when the theater is having performances.

You can have season tickets to a lot of different kinds of events. You could have season tickets to a professional football team, or to a college football team, or to a professional soccer team. That means you have tickets for all of their games throughout the entire year, throughout the season when they are playing. Sometimes the season can go across two different calendar years. It might start in September and end in May of the following year, but we would still call those “season tickets.” I say that Dennis “had season tickets but couldn't go to this performance,” couldn't go to this particular night when the play was being performed.

“It was opening night of Shakespeare's The Tempest,” I say. “Opening night” is the first night that the play can be seen. It's the first night of the performance of the play or concert or whatever the event is. This was Shakespeare's The Tempest – one of my favorite Shakespeare plays, actually. I say that “I jumped at his offer.” “To jump at” something means to immediately accept it, to enthusiastically accept it. “The beautiful woman asked me to dance, and I jumped at the opportunity.” For some reason, my wife didn't like that. I'm not sure why.

I say that I “invited Lucy to come along” – to come with me. “We arrived at the theater half an hour before opening curtain.” So, we arrived at the building where the play was going to be performed 30 minutes before it began. “Opening curtain” is when the play begins. I say, “We had the tickets in hand,” we had them with us, “and didn't need to pick them up” (or get them) “at the will call window.”

A “will call window” is a place where you get your tickets if you have already purchased them in advance, before the performance. Sometimes, you buy a ticket and perhaps you don't have a chance to get them mailed to you, although nowadays a lot of these things are done electronically. If that happens, you can go to the theater, to the “will call window,” and that's a place where you pick up tickets you've already paid for, typically. I say, “The doors to the theater were open and we handed” – or gave – “our tickets to the ticket takers.” A “ticket taker” does exactly what you might expect. He takes your ticket from you and allows you into wherever you're going – in this case, the theater.



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

Lucy and I “looked for our seats and were pleasantly surprised” – meaning it was a good surprise – “to find that we had some of the best seats in the house.” The expression “the best seats in the house” means the best place to sit in order to see some event, for example in the theater or a stadium. The best seats in the house would be the seats perhaps right next to the theater stage or right next to the performers. “House” here doesn’t refer to an actual house where you live. We don’t mean the best chairs in your home. We mean the best place to sit in an auditorium or theater in order to see and enjoy the performance. I say, “I thought we would be sitting in the balcony.”

The “balcony” (balcony) is the section of seats that is above the main floor where the seats are. It’s sort of like the second, or perhaps third or fourth, area above the main floor where you sit – what’s sometimes called the “orchestra section,” the section that would be right next to the orchestra, if there were an orchestra for a musical performance such as an opera. The balcony is either on the side of the theater or in the back of the theater, above the main floor of the theater. Sometimes balcony seats aren’t very good because they are located at a greater distance than the seats that are on the main floor or the orchestra section.

I say that “the lights dimmed and the curtain went up.” “To dim” (dim) means to make the lights get darker slowly. So, you are lowering the level or the intensity of the lights. “Dimming the lights” doesn’t mean turning the lights off completely; it just means making them darker or making the area where you are darker.

I say, “The lights dimmed and the curtain went up.” “The curtain went up” means to say that the performance began. The “curtain” here refers to a large piece of material, usually made of cloth, that hangs at the front of the stage. When the play begins, the curtain goes up, or sometimes the curtain is drawn on both sides. It moves on both sides so that you can then see the actors and what is called the “scenery” – the physical background for the play.

I then say, “At the end of the second act, there was an intermission.” The word “act” here is used to describe a section or part of a play. When we talk about a play “in three acts,” there are three major parts of the play, or three major sections of the story. “Intermission” (intermission) is a break between sections of the play. Typically, there’s one intermission in a play that comes somewhere in the middle of the play, or a little after the middle of the play. “Intermissions” are generally short – 10 or 15 minutes is typical.

This intermission was 15 minutes. After the intermission was over, after the 15 minutes were over, “the lights flickered.” “To flicker” (flicker) is for the lights in a theater or anywhere to quickly come on and off. This could happen because



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

you're having electrical problems. But when it's done in a theater, it's a way of indicating to everyone who is standing outside the theater, or inside the theater, that the play is going to start again, that intermission is now over. It's a sign for you to go back and sit down in your seat. This has nothing to do with the popular photography website "Flickr," which is spelled without an "e" for some reason.

I say that "after the last act, the audience gave the actors a standing ovation." A "standing ovation" (ovation) is when everyone stands up on their feet and claps. That's called a "standing ovation." I say, "This was the best play I had seen in ages." "In ages" means in a very long time. "The acting was superb" – that is, excellent – "and the staging and direction were fresh."

"Staging" (staging) is the design and organization of the things on the actual stage where the play is performed – where they put the chairs, where they put the table, and so forth. "Direction" refers to what the director does. The director is the person who tells the actors how to say their lines, how to act, how to behave during different parts of the play. All of that would be part of the direction. I call the direction "fresh." "Fresh" here means new. It doesn't seem as though the director just took old ideas and put them up there. He came up with something new.

I close the story by saying, "I couldn't have asked for a better theater experience. I owed Dennis big time for giving me his tickets." The expression "could not have asked for" is used to explain certain ideal conditions, to explain that the situation was as good as I could hope for. It's the best possible situation; it could not have been better. That's why we say we "couldn't have asked for more." It wouldn't be possible, because this was already so good.

"To owe someone big time" means very much – to be in someone's debt, to have to pay someone back a great deal because of something they have done for you. In general, the term "big time" just means very much. And that's what I'm saying at the end of the story.

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

[start of story]

I ran into my neighbor Dennis yesterday afternoon. He asked if I wanted two tickets to the theater. He had season tickets but couldn't go to this performance. It was opening night of Shakespeare's The Tempest. I jumped at his offer and invited Lucy to come along.



ESL Podcast 78 – Seeing a Play

We arrived at the theater half an hour before opening curtain. We had the tickets in hand and didn't need to pick them up at the will call window. The doors to the theater were open and we handed our tickets to the ticket takers standing in the doorway.

We looked for our seats and were pleasantly surprised to find that we had some of the best seats in the house! I thought we would be sitting in the balcony, but we were in the orchestra section in the center. This was great! The lights dimmed and the curtain went up.

At the end of the second act, there was an intermission. Lucy and I went into the lobby and bought drinks from the bar. After about 15 minutes, the lights flickered and we went back to our seats.

After the last act, the audience gave the actors a standing ovation. This was the best play I had seen in ages. The acting was superb, and the staging and direction were fresh. I couldn't have asked for a better theater experience. I owed Dennis big time for giving me his tickets.

[end of story]

Thanks to our wonderful scriptwriter, Dr. Lucy Tse, for her wonderful scripts, and thanks to you for listening.

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

English as a Second Language Podcast was written and produced by Dr. Lucy Tse, hosted by Dr. Jeff McQuillan. Copyright 2013 by the center for Educational Development.