

EPISODE 13

LEVEL B2

READING COMPREHENSION



TITLES



"Julia, I need your help here," says Timothy, holding an envelope in his hand. "I am going to take your advice and send my tax return by post. I thought, since I am going to the post office anyway, I might surprise a friend or two by sending them something by **snail mail** (= traditional post as opposed to e-mail). I'm running into problems, though. If I'm writing to my sister, Deborah O'Leary, what do I write in front of her name: Mrs, Mrs. with a full stop after it, Ms, Ms. with a full stop?"

"Umgh..." For once, Julia does not immediately know the answer. She looks it up in a dictionary and delivers a short lecture. "Apparently, both **Mrs.** and **Ms.** are spelled with a full stop, and so are **Mr.**, **Prof.**, **Dr.**, **Gen.**, **Rep.**, **Sen.** and **St.**"

"St.?"

"For 'Saint!' Now listen: the plural of Mr. is **Messrs.**, so you'd say: We invited Messrs. Smith, Jones and Lobovsky. The plural of Dr. is **Drs.**: We consulted Drs. Smith, Jones and Lobovsky. The plural of Mrs. is **Mmes** or **Mmes.**, this time with or without the period. And one more thing. The general academic degrees **B.A.**, **M.A.** and **Ph.D.** are normally spelled with periods, although there are manuals which advise against it, so you'll have to use your own judgment on this issue. Similarly, **D.D.S.** for Doctor of Dental Surgery and **M.D.** for Doctor of Medicine are usually written with periods. Got it?"

"I sure did. I think I'm going to use the St. for my sister - what do you think?"

More contexts for the new words:

- **B.A.** stands for Bachelor of Arts. It is the first college degree in a subject such as literature, language, history or social science. Usually you need to study for three years to obtain this degree.
- **M.A.** stands for Master of Arts. It is an advanced college or university degree in such a subject. Usually you need to study for a further two years to obtain this degree.
- **Ph. D.** stands for Doctor of Philosophy. It is the highest college or university degree, or someone who has this degree.



EXERCISE 1

Decide if these sentences are true or false.

1. The degree of an MA is higher than a BA.
2. The plural of Mrs. is Messrs.
3. A doctor of medicine is an M.D.
4. St. Augustine is a saint.
5. Snail mail is another name for fast email.



EXERCISE 2

Match the question halves, then answer them.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1. Which of the titles in the text | a. for each of the titles in the text? |
| 2. Can you think of a person you know | b. snail mail? |
| 3. How often do you use | c. would your friends use to talk about you? |

ENGLISH IN USE



Many other abbreviations are commonly used in English. Among those typically causing difficulties for learners are those of Latin origin. Let's have a look at some of them:

- **etc.** (et cetera - and so forth) - We saw lots of lions, tigers, elephants, etc.
- **i.e.** (id est - that is) - The hotel is closed during low season, i.e. from October to March.
- **e.g.** (exempli gratia - for example) - You should eat more food that contains a lot of fibre, e.g. fruit, vegetables and bread.
- **et al.** (et alii / et aliae / et alia - and others) - The method is described in an article by Jones et al.

IDIOM CLOSE-UP



- A/ Whose permission do I need if I want to get a day off?
B/ You have to talk to John. He is **MISTER BIG** in this department.

Mister Big is the most important person in a place or organization.

PHRASAL VERBS CLOSE-UP



1. If you CALL (IN) ON somebody, you visit them for a short time.

*I thought we might **call in on** your mother on our way - I've got some magazines for her.*

2. If you CALL someone/ something OFF, you order a dog, or sometimes a person, to stop attacking someone or something.

*I shouted to him to **call his dog off**, but he just laughed at me.*



EXERCISE 3

Re-write the sentences keeping the same meaning and using the word in CAPITALS. Use the idiom and the phrasal verb you have learned.

1. Kevin is the most important person in his club.

BIG

2. Please tell the reporters to stop attacking this politician.

CALL

3. I visited my mother last weekend.

CALL

NEWS



ACADEMIC TITLES

It is common knowledge that academic titles awarded in different countries are not exactly equivalent. For instance, the social prestige attached to the degree of an MA is much greater in the US than it is in Poland. In Poland, you are expected to have an MA **by default**, and in many circles not possessing this degree is connected with some kind of social **stigma**. The reason lies in the basic **tenets** of the education systems of various countries. While in the US **vocational** education is considered perfectly acceptable, in many European countries being an engineer, or having 'only' a BA, is considered insufficient to make you a **well-rounded** individual.

GLOSSARY

- **by default** – as a standard rule
- **stigma** – when people disapprove of something, especially when this is unfair
- **a tenet** – one of the principles on which a belief or theory is based
- **vocational**– providing skills and education that prepare you for a job
- **well-rounded** - involving or having experience in a wide range of ideas or activities

KEY TO EXERCISES

Ex.1

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. True
5. False

Ex.2

1. c
2. a
3. b

Ex.3

1. Kevin is Mister Big in his club.
2. Please call off the reporters.
3. I called (in) on my mother last weekend.