



One-Quarter English: Episode 4 Transcript

PODCAST INTRO	
Jenna	Welcome back to One-Quarter English. I'm Jenna.
Mark	And I'm Mark. Thanks for tuning in. Over the next quarter of an hour we'll present the latest news headlines from around the world before discussing one of the topics in depth. Then we'll look at a difference between American and British English. After that, you'll find out how to use <i>few</i> , <i>fewer</i> , <i>little</i> , and <i>less</i> properly. You'll hear the fourth installment of a classic Sherlock Holmes story, and then we'll end the podcast with something fun. Enjoy the show!
HEADLINES	
Jenna	In a stunning turn of events this morning, Infrastructure and Housing Minister Claudia Ferenc announced her resignation, just days after reports surfaced linking her to a controversial land deal in the Rivermarch District. According to investigative documents leaked last week, Ferenc allegedly fast-tracked permits for a luxury condominium project in exchange for undisclosed campaign donations.
Mark	The Bureau of Consumer Safety has issued an urgent nationwide recall of over 300,000 units of the "GlowPup Interactive Dog," a popular electronic toy sold by WonderPlay Industries. The recall follows dozens of complaints that the toy's lithium-ion battery compartment can overheat and, in some cases, ignite.
Jenna	Finance Minister Henrik Cavallo confirmed that over 2,400 provincial government employees will be laid off over the next three months as part of a sweeping cost-cutting measure aimed at addressing a projected \$1.2 billion shortfall. Affected employees will receive severance packages and access to a career transition program.
Mark	In a 51.4% to 48.6% vote, residents of East Merton have backed the construction of a wind farm along the town's historic shoreline - a project that has deeply divided the community. Supporters argue the project will bring jobs and clean energy, while opponents say it will damage tourism and disrupt the habitat of the endangered dune owl.
Jenna	A routine renovation at St. Hildegard's Church in Glenport has led to the discovery of a long-lost 17th-century painting by Flemish master Pieter van Bloem. The 6-foot canvas, believed to be "The Martyrdom of Saint Aurelius," had been tucked behind a wooden altar panel, unnoticed for at least 120 years.
DISCUSSION	
Mark	I'd like to pick your brain on referendums, Jenna. What's your take on them?
Jenna	I think they're one of the few ways people can have a real, unfiltered say in politics. You vote on an issue, not just for someone to maybe do something about it later. It's extremely empowering.
Mark	Empowering, maybe — but also dangerous. People are being asked to make decisions on things they're not always equipped to understand in full. It's not because people are stupid, it's because most issues are deeply complex. A yes or no vote can't capture that.
Jenna	But isn't that a little condescending? I mean, voters can learn. Look at the Irish referendums on abortion and marriage equality — there were months of debate, citizen-led panels, real conversations. People took it seriously.
Mark	Some do, sure, but others vote based on slogans or fear. Take Brexit. Take back

	control. Catchy, but vague. Years later, we're still debating what it even meant. And once that decision was made, there was no going back. No room for compromise.
Jenna	But again — isn't that a failure of how the referendum was run, not the idea of a referendum itself? If we improve education, transparency, campaign rules, can't we make them better?
Mark	Maybe marginally, but the fundamental issue remains: complicated political decisions aren't best made with a binary choice. We have parliaments for a reason. Elected officials debate, amend, adjust. A referendum just says this or that, with no nuance.
Jenna	But sometimes we need a clean answer. Should a country leave a political union? Should a constitution be changed? These are questions that directly affect the people. Why shouldn't they decide?
Mark	Because the people are rarely unified. Referendums usually split countries 51 to 49. It's not clarity. It's division. And the losing side often feels completely ignored. That's not a healthy democracy.
Jenna	But isn't that true of elections too? Someone always loses. The key is making sure the process is fair and that people feel heard. I think referendums can complement representative democracy, not replace it.
Mark	Okay, I can agree with that. Complement is better than replace. I just think they should be rare, and only used when the stakes are extremely high. And even then, with clear safeguards.
Jenna	Fair enough. I'm not saying we should vote on the national budget every year. But when it's about the big stuff like identity, sovereignty, fundamental rights, people should be in the driver's seat.

AMERICAN ENGLISH VS. BRITISH ENGLISH

Mark	Today we're going to take a closer look at vocabulary differences between American and British English, so let's dive right in. I think one of the most well-known examples is fries. What do you call them?
Jenna	We'd say chips for what you'd call French fries. And what you call chips, we'd call crisps.
Mark	I once ordered chips with a sandwich in London and was surprised to get what we'd call fries.
Jenna	You're lucky you didn't get the chips in your sandwich, Mark. Brits love a good chip butty.
Mark	Here's another common one: elevator. That's lift for you, right?
Jenna	Exactly. If you're in a building and want to go up a few floors, you take the lift.
Mark	That's one I've learned to adapt to. How about public bathrooms? In the U.S., we usually say restroom.
Jenna	Yes, that's one of the clearest differences. In the UK, we'd usually say toilet, or informally, loo. Restroom sounds overly polite to us, almost as if you're avoiding saying what you really mean.
Mark	Right, and bathroom might confuse some people, especially if there's no bath.
Jenna	Exactly.
Mark	Let's talk clothing. In the U.S., we say pants for what we wear over our legs. But I've heard that can cause some awkwardness in the UK.
Jenna	Oh, yes. In British English, pants means underwear. What you call pants, we call trousers. So if an American says, "I like your pants," it can raise some eyebrows.
Mark	Noted. And sweater?
Jenna	That's a jumper in the UK. Same garment, different name. And while we're on the topic, trainers are your sneakers.
Mark	Right. And petrol station. That's what we'd call a gas station.

Jenna	Exactly. And don't forget the boot of the car is your trunk. And the bonnet is your hood.
Mark	It's amazing how many little things diverge.
Jenna	It is, and yet we understand each other, eventually.
Mark	Now, we've talked American and British English, but there's another variation that blends both, and sometimes adds its own twist. Let's bring in our friend Steve to talk about Canadian English because it really does have its own flavor, doesn't it?
Steve	Absolutely, Mark. Canadian English borrows from both traditions, but we also have terms that are uniquely ours. For example, if you go to Tim Hortons and ask for a double-double, you're asking for a coffee with two creams and two sugars.
Jenna	I've never heard that before.
Mark	Same here. What else?
Steve	Well, in winter, you'll definitely need a toque.
Jenna	That's a winter hat, isn't it?
Steve	Exactly. A knitted cap, like what you might call a beanie in the U.S. or a woolly hat in the UK.
Mark	I've also heard of something called a duotang?
Steve	Yes! That's another Canadian classic. A duotang is a type of paper folder with metal prongs to hold loose-leaf paper. You'll see it on just about every Canadian school supply list, but the term isn't used much elsewhere.
Jenna	Fascinating. I don't think we have a specific name for that in the UK.
Steve	We also use washroom instead of restroom or toilet, which feels a bit more formal. And we mix vocabulary quite a bit. We use gas like Americans, but also say bank machine instead of ATM, which is closer to British usage.
Mark	Interesting. So you kind of split the difference.
Steve	Exactly. We say garbage like Americans. We wear sneakers, but runners is common too. We drive cars like everyone else, but might take them to the car park or the parking lot, depending on who you're talking to.
Jenna	Thanks for sharing, Steve. And to our listeners: whether you're wearing a jumper, a sweater, or just trying to avoid talking about your pants, we hope you've learned something new today.

GRAMMAR

Mark	Today we're going to tackle one of the trickier parts of English grammar. Those small but mighty words: little, less, few, and fewer.
Jenna	This topic is a real sticking point for learners of English, isn't it?
Mark	It really is. Even the most expert speakers mess this up sometimes. So let's start with the basics. What's the difference between little and few?
Jenna	The key distinction is whether the noun is countable or uncountable. Few is used with countable nouns - things you can count individually, like books or apples. Little is used with uncountable nouns, like water, money, or time.
Mark	Right. So you'd say, "There are few chairs in the room," but "There's little furniture." Because chairs are countable, but furniture isn't.
Jenna	Exactly. And the same applies when we talk about quantity decreasing - less and fewer follow the same rule.
Mark	So fewer for countables, less for uncountables?
Jenna	Yes. For example, "We had fewer guests this year," and "We had less traffic on the way."
Mark	Here's where people trip up: the grocery store. Signs often say "10 items or less", even though technically it should be "10 items or fewer."

Jenna	That's a classic one. It's so common that people hardly notice anymore, but yes, items are countable, so fewer is technically correct.
Mark	Got it. What about money?
Jenna	Money is uncountable, so you'd say, "I have little money," or "I have less money than last month." But you might say, "I have fewer coins in my pocket," because coins are countable.
Mark	Makes sense. Now, here's a common learner mistake: "I have less friends than before." That sounds okay in casual conversation, but it's technically wrong, right?
Jenna	That's right. Friends are countable, so the correct phrase would be "fewer friends." You could say "less friendship," if you're speaking more abstractly.
Mark	So we're really talking about two things—whether the noun is countable or not, and whether we're using the positive or comparative form.
Jenna	Precisely. Few and little mean a small number or amount, and fewer and less are used when comparing two quantities.
Mark	Before we wrap up, what about this sentence: "There's little hope left." Is that negative?
Jenna	Good question. Little and few can sound negative. They suggest not enough. If you say, "There's little hope," you're saying almost none. But if you say, "A little hope remains," it's more positive. Same with few versus a few. "Few people showed up" sounds disappointing; "A few people showed up" sounds more optimistic.
Mark	Subtle, but important.
Jenna	Exactly.

SHERLOCK HOLMES

Jenna	Okay, Mark. It's time for the fourth installment of The Speckled Band.
Mark	Hopefully we'll find out what or who killed Helen's sister.
Holmes	One moment, are you sure about this whistle and metallic sound? Could you swear to it?
Stoner	That was what the county coroner asked me at the inquiry. It is my strong impression that I heard it, and yet, among the crash of the gale and the creaking of an old house, I may possibly have been deceived.
Holmes	Was your sister dressed?
Stoner	No, she was in her night-dress. In her right hand was found the charred stump of a match, and in her left a match-box.
Holmes	Showing that she had struck a light and looked about her when the alarm took place. That is important. And what conclusions did the coroner come to?
Stoner	He investigated the case with great care, for Dr. Roylott's conduct had long been notorious in the county, but he was unable to find any satisfactory cause of death. My evidence showed that the door had been fastened upon the inner side, and the windows were blocked by old-fashioned shutters with broad iron bars, which were secured every night. The walls were carefully sounded, and were shown to be quite solid all round, and the flooring was also thoroughly examined, with the same result. The chimney is wide, but is barred up by four large staples. It is certain, therefore, that my sister was quite alone when she met her end. Besides, there were no marks of any violence upon her.
Holmes	How about poison?
Stoner	The doctors examined her for it, but without success.
Holmes	What do you think that this unfortunate lady died of, then?

Stoner	It is my belief that she died of pure fear and nervous shock, though what it was that frightened her I cannot imagine.
Holmes	Were there gipsies in the plantation at the time?
Stoner	Yes, there are nearly always some there.
Holmes	And what did you gather from this allusion to a band, a speckled band?
Stoner	Sometimes I have thought that it was merely the wild talk of delirium, sometimes that it may have referred to some band of people, perhaps to these very gipsies in the plantation. I do not know whether the spotted handkerchiefs which so many of them wear over their heads might have suggested the strange adjective which she used.
Watson	Holmes shook his head like a man who is far from being satisfied.
Holmes	These are very deep waters. Pray go on with your narrative.
Stoner	Two years have passed since then, and my life has been until lately lonelier than ever. A month ago, however, a dear friend, whom I have known for many years, has done me the honour to ask my hand in marriage. His name is Armitage - Percy Armitage - the second son of Mr. Armitage, of Crane Water, near Reading. My stepfather has offered no opposition to the match, and we are to be married in the course of the spring. Two days ago some repairs were started in the west wing of the building, and my bedroom wall has been pierced, so that I have had to move into the chamber in which my sister died, and to sleep in the very bed in which she slept. Imagine, then, my thrill of terror when last night, as I lay awake, thinking over her terrible fate, I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of her own death. I sprang up and lit the lamp, but nothing was to be seen in the room. I was too shaken to go to bed again, however, so I dressed, and as soon as it was daylight I slipped down, got a dog-cart at the Crown Inn, which is opposite, and drove to Leatherhead, from whence I have come on this morning with the one object of seeing you and asking your advice.
Holmes	You have done wisely. But have you told me all?
Stoner	Why, what do you mean?
Watson	For answer Holmes pushed back the frill of black lace which fringed the hand that lay upon our visitor's knee. Five little livid spots, the marks of four fingers and a thumb, were printed upon the white wrist.
Holmes	You have been cruelly used.
Watson	The lady coloured deeply and covered over her injured wrist.
Stoner	He is a hard man, and perhaps he hardly knows his own strength.
Watson	There was a long silence, during which Holmes leaned his chin upon his hands and stared into the crackling fire.
Holmes	This is a very deep business. There are a thousand details which I should desire to know before I decide upon our course of action. Yet we have not a moment to lose. If we were to come to Stoke Moran today, would it be possible for us to see over these rooms without the knowledge of your stepfather?
Stoner	As it happens, he spoke of coming into town today upon some most important business. It is probable that he will be away all day, and that there would be nothing to disturb you. We have a housekeeper now, but she is old and foolish, and I could easily get her out of the way.
Holmes	Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?
Watson	By no means.

Holmes	Then we shall both come. What are you going to do yourself?
Stoner	I have one or two things which I would wish to do now that I am in town. But I shall return by the twelve o'clock train, so as to be there in time for your coming.
Holmes	And you may expect us early in the afternoon. I have myself some small business matters to attend to. Will you not wait and breakfast?
Stoner	No, I must go. My heart is lightened already since I have confided my trouble to you. I shall look forward to seeing you again this afternoon.
Watson	She dropped her thick black veil over her face and glided from the room.
Holmes	And what do you think of it all, Watson?
Watson	It seems to me to be a most dark and sinister business.
Holmes	Dark enough and sinister enough.
Watson	Yet if the lady is correct in saying that the flooring and walls are sound, and that the door, window, and chimney are impassable, then her sister must have been undoubtedly alone when she met her mysterious end.
Holmes	What becomes, then, of these nocturnal whistles, and what of the very peculiar words of the dying woman?
Watson	I cannot think.
Holmes	When you combine the ideas of whistles at night, the presence of a band of gipsies who are on intimate terms with this old doctor, the fact that we have every reason to believe that the doctor has an interest in preventing his stepdaughter's marriage, the dying allusion to a band, and, finally, the fact that Miss Helen Stoner heard a metallic clang, which might have been caused by one of those metal bars that secured the shutters falling back into its place, I think that there is good ground to think that the mystery may be cleared along those lines.
Watson	But what, then, did the gipsies do?
Holmes	I cannot imagine.
Watson	I see many objections to any such theory.
Holmes	And so do I. It is precisely for that reason that we are going to Stoke Moran this day. I want to see whether the objections are fatal, or if they may be explained away. But what in the name of the devil!
Watson	The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting-crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it across from side to side. A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one to the other of us, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey.
Mark	Come on! It can't end there. Who's the guy in the doorway?
Jenna	No idea. We'll have to wait until next time to find out.
	FUN
Mark	Alright, Jenna. Now it's time for something fun. I took a walk earlier and asked people to open their bags and show me one item they thought no one else had in their bags.
Jenna	Unusual items?
Mark	Exactly. No keys. No lip balm. No phones. We're talking obscure, slightly

	confusing, or just oddly specific items. You ready?
Jenna	Go for it, Mark.
Mark	What's something in your bag that you're pretty sure no one else is carrying?
Person 1	I have a paint swatch card from 2018. I still haven't painted the wall.
Person 2	A paperback copy of Wuthering Heights, a packet of soy sauce, and a rubber duck. Don't ask. Or do. But be ready for a long story.
Person 3	A folded-up paper fortune teller. It makes small decisions for me. Very reliable. Better than my horoscope.
Person 4	I carry a potato peeler because once, in 2019, I really needed one and didn't have it. Never again.
Person 5	A bag of googly eyes. I like to put them on inanimate objects at work. Morale booster. For me, not for the objects.
Mark	What about you, Jenna? What weird object do you have?
Jenna	Does this count?
Mark	What is it?
Jenna	It's one of those paper crowns you get from a Christmas cracker. This one hasn't been worn yet. I keep it in case someone forgets to celebrate something. I like to be ready. What do you have, Mark?
Mark	Me? Nothing.
Jenna	I don't believe you. You're blushing! Hand over your bag.
Mark	Oh, rats. Looks like we've run out of time.
	PODCAST EXTRO
Mark	And that's the end of this episode of One-Quarter English. We hope you enjoyed it!
Jenna	Tune in next time for more headlines, more in-depth discussions, another difference between British and American English, a grammar point explained, and more Sherlock Holmes. Plus there'll be something fun at the end. Bye for now!
Mark	Goodbye!