

The British English Language Podcast



Improve your English language skills with Amy - a podcast with a British accent for intermediate level students

Episode 8 - My Octopus Teacher

Hey everyone! Welcome to this episode of The British English Language Podcast! My name's Amy and I created this podcast to provide a resource for intermediate level students to help understand the English language spoken with a British accent. During each episode I'll be discussing a different topic which I hope you'll find interesting, and today I decided to share with you my review of a Netflix documentary which was premiered in September last year - My Octopus Teacher.

The transcriptions for these episodes are free to access on my website - www.britishenglishlanguage.com. I definitely recommend using this resource whilst listening to give you an extra layer of learning as you become more familiar with grammatical structures and how words are written. So, let's get into this review!

Episode 8 - My Octopus Teacher

This documentary tells the true story of a man named Craig who is completely burnt out (exhausted) from years of hard work and months of difficulty sleeping. This had resulted in mental exhaustion and stress and was impacting his health and life on many levels. He decides to find peace in the wild waters of the Atlantic ocean, remembering that this was something he enjoyed exploring as a child. He begins diving in an area of kelp forest, which is a type of seaweed, off this particular part of the coast of South Africa. After some time spent exploring and adjusting his body to the cold temperatures of the water he meets an octopus. After witnessing some very strange and incredible behaviour from the octopus he decides to return back to this place and follow her every single day. The film then tells the story of what Craig learns about the octopus and from the octopus, as well as documenting the unusual relationship that develops between them.

I felt inspired to share my review of this documentary with you because it's one of the most moving films I've seen in a long time. In English when we say that we're 'moved' by something it means that we experience a strong emotional feeling which we feel in our hearts. We feel deeply affected by the thing that has moved us and we will often say that it has 'touched our heart'. Don't get confused by the verb 'to move'. Although they're the same word, they have completely different meanings depending on the context. I definitely felt affected by this film and the days after watching it I found myself thinking about it and also thinking about our relationship to nature and wildlife and it made me feel quite sad.

The film is beautiful in so many ways and I think it has a very important message to share with us. I think that the messages that people can take away from stories like these depend on the person watching, I think there's something for everyone and what we take away is very personal to us.

The octopus truly is an amazing creature. I had seen a documentary a few years ago talking about the intelligence of this animal, so I was aware that they are especially intelligent beings, but My Octopus Teacher showed this mental superiority with an emotional aspect too. Seeing the abilities of this animal and watching it behave in its natural habitat is captivating. The film explains that an octopus's intelligence can be compared with that of a cat or a dog, or even a primate. Essentially the octopus is a mollusc without a shell who has survived evolving over millions and millions of years. During the film we learn about the ways that the octopus can change colour, camouflaging itself to blend in with its environment and hiding from its predators such as sharks. We see the strange ways that the octopus moves and how it imitates things in order to deceive its hunters and not be noticed.

The underwater kelp forest is filmed excellently by Craig and he clearly has great talent as a videographer. I think his compassion for the plant and animal kingdoms shows through in his images which adds to the emotional element of the film. I admire Craig for his dedication to the octopus, visiting her every day and risking his safety by exposing himself to the dangerous waters. But I think it was worth it to allow us into this relatively unknown environment too and be able to share these valuable new discoveries with the world.

I think a good message to take away from this film is that wild animals have so much to teach us and if we listen carefully, with respect, compassion and care there is so much to be gained, so much reward and a really beautiful exchange to share.

I wonder if any of you have had any moving experiences with animals in the wild? Or maybe you feel a particularly deep connection to your pets at home. I've had some wonderful experiences with animals and I describe one special relationship in a previous episode called Part 2 of An English Girl in Uruguay. I also wonder if any of you have seen My Octopus Teacher? And if so, what did you think about it? And what lessons were you able to learn? I would love to hear from you so please send me a message via the contact form on my website - www.britishenglishlanguage.com. If you haven't seen My Octopus Teacher then I highly recommend watching it as I think it's something that everyone can enjoy! I recommend watching it in English with English subtitles. Craig has a South African accent but you'll be able to understand the story well, even if you miss some details.

And finally, if you'd like to support me in making this podcast then you can do that by clicking the 'Donate to Amy' button on my website. Alternatively you can subscribe to become a Patreon where you'll receive exclusive weekly episodes as well as one-on-one online English conversation classes! I'm so grateful for your support as it allows me to continue making this podcast and doing something that I love.

Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of The British English Language Podcast! I hope you enjoyed listening and I look forward to seeing you next time!