

Storm Trooper, Hands Up!

When I travel I feel really alive. There is something about getting away from my daily routine that helps me see things from a different perspective. I find it exciting, refreshing, and inspiring(1). Even when I travel to familiar places, such as England, I'm open to learn, and I thoroughly(2) enjoy observing. Another thing that I love about traveling, is the unpredictability(3) of it. Sometimes the unexpected happens. Recently, I went back to England for a couple of weeks to visit my family. While I was there, I visited the historic town of York with my sister. I have been to this rural city many times, but I never get tired of going there. I think, for me, it is just about(4) a perfect place. First of all, it's beautiful. It's cathedral, fourteenth century buildings, and Roman wall, are both perfectly preserved, and fully used(5). It's very clean, very green, and also prosperous. It's a university town, so it has a culture of learning, and it is also very arty. By arty, I mean that there are many places in York where art of all kinds can be experienced. You even find it in the streets. Now, I expected to see(6) buskers on the streets: people playing an instrument, or singing for money. But, as my sister and I walked into the heart of the city, we had a little surprise. Standing at the side of the pavement, dressed completely in white, hard, plastic, and carrying a long, black gun, was a Storm Trooper, a Star Wars Storm Trooper. We were delighted. We had never seen one in person (7) before. He was standing around, displaying his costume for money. I asked if I could take a photo of him, and he suggested that my sister take one of both of us. He handed me the gun, and we posed for a "Hands up!"(8) photo. He told me that he had bought this genuine costume in the '80's for quite a lot of money, and now he was having fun making money by wearing it. Brilliant! It's a good idea. Perhaps our politicians can get out their old costumes, dress up, and make some money to help with the financial crisis. Disney costumes would be the best for them. Anyway, I was thrilled to be with a Storm Trooper, especially considering that I was the one with the gun, and the force.

1. 'Exciting, refreshing, and inspiring'. A list of adjectives like this is a great way to make yourself sound natural when you speak English. It's worth choosing and practicing a few adjectives that you feel comfortable with, so that you can throw them into conversation. Here are a few examples of lists of adjectives:

- a. The situation was difficult, uncomfortable, and negative.
- b. My teacher is encouraging, knowledgeable, and positive.
- c. The project was long, ambitious, and expensive.

2. 'Thoroughly' is a very English sounding word. It means 'fully' or 'totally', but there are specific occasions when we use it.

a. We thoroughly enjoyed the play. (You will hear it most often with the verb 'to enjoy'. It sounds most natural when it is in front of the verb. Note: if you hated the play, you would probably say, "We completely/ absolutely hated the play", you wouldn't use 'thoroughly' with 'hated'.

b. Wash the pot thoroughly before using. (it is often used with 'to wash' in instructions).

3. 'Unpredictability' is a difficult word to say. It's meaning is 'the not knowing, and the changeability' of a situation. Let's practice the pronunciation:

Un-pre-dicta-bility

4. 'Just about' is a highly useful phrase used in front of adjectives, 'the' + adjective, and before or after verbs. It's meaning is 'almost completely'. Used by itself (as a response) it means 'more or less'.

- a. It was just about the worst party I've ever been to.
- b. She is just about the best singer in the whole competition.

- c. He ran just about the whole mile. He just about ran the whole mile.
 - d. We painted just about the whole building. We just about painted the whole building.
 - e. Did you understand the lecture? Answer: Yes, just about / more or less.
5. 'Fully' is another word that means 'completely', and is used after a past participle.
- a. The hospital has been fully renovated.
 - b. The project is fully funded by donations. *Note:'fully funded' is one of the more common uses of 'fully'.
6. 'A busker' is a person who entertains on the street by playing an instrument or singing.
- a. The busker was fully clothed in silver.
 - b. That busker is just about the best that I've ever seen.
7. 'In person' means 'live' or 'in the same place' when referring to an individual.
- a. I've never seen that singer in person, but apparently she's quite beautiful.
 - b. I've seen pictures of the Queen, but the other day, I saw her in person.
8. "Hands up!" is usually what is said when someone is arrested. Other phrases are "Stick them up!" (meaning your hands, though this phrase is used mainly playing), or "Drop them!" if the person is carrying a gun.
- a. "Drop them buddy, and hands up!"

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