

CPI2 USA Gary Younge's American Road Trip

Gary Younge is a feature writer and columnist for The Guardian. In this short film, he narrates his road trip across North America, from Denver to Las Vegas.

BEFORE YOU WATCH

Discuss the following questions:

- What is a road trip? Have you ever been on a road trip?
- What are the pros and cons of this kind of travel? Do some destinations lend themselves more to road trips than others? Why?
- What do you expect him to see? What do you think he will comment on?

NOW WATCH THE FILM AND COMPARE YOUR ANSWERS.

COMPREHENSION CHECK

Watch the film again and answer the following questions:

1. What are the four ingredients of American mythology?
2. How long was the journey?
3. What geographical features does he mention?
4. America has developed an entire infrastructure built for the car. Give examples.
5. Why does he say "The country consumes oil like a junkie."?
6. What does he see when he leaves the interstate?
7. Why do British people think they know America well?
8. According to Gary, what don't British people understand about America?
9. What was always in the background during his trip?

Transcript

There are few things as iconic as the American road trip, and it's not difficult to see why. It **encompasses** the key ingredients of American mythology: individualism, mobility, independence and **pioneering**.

We started our trip in Denver and **headed** towards Las Vegas. 750 miles that start in the city, wind around the Rockies, **skirting** creeks and rivers, down canyons, over mountains and alongside the rich, red rock of Utah, across the deserts of Arizona and into Nevada's neon veneer.

America is built for the car. Being unable to drive here is like being unable to read. The country's developed an entire infrastructure of chain hotels, motels, fast food **outlets** and gas stations that mean that whatever the terrain, when you stop, you somehow always feel you could be anywhere.

The country consumes oil like a junkie. **Utterly** dependent, it offers it at a price almost cheaper than water and manufactures cars that **guzzle** it by the gallonful. It gets it into fights, makes a few people rich, and, when the price goes up, can cost people their jobs. But it just can't stop.

Only when venturing off the interstate for food do you see what you've been missing while driving. Towns of just a few hundred, counties of just a few thousand, some look like time forgot, but signs of change are everywhere.

Sleep you get where you can find it. You stop when you're done. The precise place is less important than the precise moment. You could go on forever, just not today. So you check in so you can check out. You sleep and then you start all over again.

As Britons, we think we know America, even if we've never been there. From childhood, its landscapes seem familiar to us from television and cinema. But that familiarity is **illusory**. One of the main things we don't understand is its vastness, its big skies, huge plains, **overwhelming** vistas that impress and intimidate in equal measure. And throughout that huge space that multi-million dollar industry that is election season follows you everywhere. You sense its **hum** in the background wherever you are. Though I did not once ever hear anyone talking about it. You can ignore it but you can't avoid it.

Vocabulary

Find the words **in bold** in the transcript, which correspond to the following definitions:

1. not real, although it seems to be
2. completely, totally
3. moved in a particular direction
4. a low, continuous sound
5. introducing ideas and methods that have never been used before
6. a shop/store or an organization that sells goods made by a particular company or of a particular type
7. to drink something quickly and in large amounts
8. going round the edge of something
9. includes a large number or range of things
10. very great or very strong

Grammar

Look at the underlined phrases in the transcript. What is the difference between "**few**" and "**a few**"?

Read paragraphs 4 and 5 again. Underline all the countable nouns and circle all the uncountable nouns.

For more information and practice: <https://www.englishclub.com/grammar/nouns-countable.htm>. After studying this page, follow the link at the bottom: "Uncountable nouns" and read on. Try the Countable/Uncountable nouns gap-fill games: <https://www.englishclub.com/esl-games/grammar/nouns-un-count.htm>

