



- Neil:** Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil and with me today is Rosie.
- Rosie:** Hello there.
- Neil:** Now Rosie, a slightly personal question to start with, but have you ever made a special gesture to someone you love?
- Rosie:** Well, Neil I'm a very romantic person and I always make small gestures to people I love. For instance, I like leaving small, romantic notes to my boyfriend around the house.
- Neil:** Well, that is very romantic! Have you ever been to Rome?
- Rosie:** Yes, I have. I lived in Rome for two months a few years ago and loved it.
- Neil:** Oh, right. Well, some people say that Rome is one of the most romantic cities in the world. In this programme we'll be discussing romance and Rome, but before that...
- Rosie:** It wouldn't be 6 Minute English without a quiz question, would it?
- Neil:** And here it is. What is the name of the river which runs through Rome? Is it:
- a) The Tiber
 - b) The Danube
 - c) The Rhine
- Rosie:** Neil, your questions are getting really, really easy. Of course the answer is a) The Tiber.
- Neil:** Well, I didn't know that you lived in Rome, did I? We'll find out at the end of the programme.
- Rosie:** So, romance and Rome. It sounds like an interesting story.
- Neil:** It is. It's about a gesture of love and a bridge in Rome. Listen to the first part of this report from the BBC's Alan Johnson. What exactly do people do on this bridge?

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It began with a scene in a book. A young couple came here to the ancient Ponte Milvio bridge. They put a bicycle lock around a lamp post, and then tossed the key down into the Tiber. They were meant to have locked themselves together in everlasting love. And the idea caught on. Rome's romantics started copying the gesture.

- Neil:** So, what gesture of love do people leave on the bridge, Rosie?
- Rosie:** They leave a small lock attached to the bridge. The idea came from a book – it symbolises a couple locking themselves together in **everlasting** love.
- Neil:** Everlasting love. It means lasting forever.
- Rosie:** That seems appropriate as they call Rome 'The Eternal City'.
- Neil:** It's a romantic gesture that's really **caught on**!
- Rosie:** Yes, it's caught on – meaning it's become popular – but perhaps a little too popular. I wonder how many people have made this gesture over the years.
- Neil:** Let's listen to the second part of this BBC report. What does the reporter describe seeing?

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Now I'm looking at thousands and thousands of little padlocks strung along the chains on the wall of the bridge. Each a symbol of eternal love, here in Rome, 'The Eternal city'. Eternal love, that is, until the city council shows up. It says the locks have to go. And as I watch, they're being taken away by men in overalls armed with bolt cutters.

- Neil:** What did he see on the bridge?
- Rosie:** The reporter described seeing thousands and thousands of padlocks attached to the bridge – a padlock is a type of small, u-shaped lock. But now the council have sent men in overalls – armed with **bolt cutters**!
- Neil:** Bolt cutters! These are like huge and very strong scissors, used for cutting through chains and locks. They're a very useful tool for bicycle thieves.
- Rosie:** Ha, bicycle thieves! Very good, Neil, you're very funny.
- Neil:** What? What do you mean?
- Rosie:** Bicycle thieves.
- Neil:** Yes, bicycle thieves.
- Rosie:** Well, obviously you made a reference to that because it's the name of a classic Italian film set in Rome.

- Neil:** No, never heard of it. Rosie, you seem to know rather a lot about Italy... Is there something you're not revealing here?
- Rosie:** Mind your own business! Back to the story... The **council** says that the padlocks have to go. The council is the local city government.
- Neil:** But what about all those people in love?
- Rosie:** It seems that the council aren't very **sentimental**. They say that the fabric – or structure – of the bridge is being threatened.
- Neil:** Listen to the final clip of this BBC report. What do the council say is threatening the bridge?

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The council says that rust from the padlocks threatens the fabric of the old bridge. The author of the book that sparked the locking tradition here says the authorities are making a big mistake. He says these symbols of love ought to be valued and respected, and left in place.

- Rosie:** What do the council say is threatening the bridge?
- Neil:** **Rust** from the padlocks is threatening the bridge. Rust is the orange material you get on metal when it gets wet and is then exposed to the air.
- Rosie:** That's right, they're **corroding**, meaning they're slowly getting damaged. But the author of the book who sparked – or started – the idea thinks it's a mistake to remove the locks. He thinks these symbols of love should be respected and left there.
- Neil:** And I agree.
- Rosie:** Oh, you old romantic, Neil.
- Neil:** Time now for the quiz answer. I asked you for the name of the river which runs through Rome. Is it:
- a) The Tiber
 - b) The Danube
 - c) The Rhine
- Rosie:** It's a) The Tiber.
- Neil:** Yes, yes, yes... you were right. You seem to be right about everything, Rosie, when it comes to Italy. So come on, reveal your secret!
- Rosie:** Well actually, I did live in Italy for two years and my boyfriend is Italian.
- Neil:** Ah, OK say that in Italian to prove it!
- Rosie:** OK, I will. Ho vissuto in Italia per due anni...

Neil: OK we believe you, that's enough! Join us again for more 6 Minute English from bbclearningenglish.com. Bye for now!

Rosie: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

everlasting	lasting forever
caught on	became popular
bolt cutters	device like strong scissors for cutting through metal
council	local government
sentimental	emotional
rust	the orange substance which appears on metal when exposed to water and air
corroding	slowly becoming damaged

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