

ESLR 0310 – Fall 2003

Movie Vocabulary/Idioms

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner
(1967. Info at <http://imdb.com/title/tt0061735/>)

This is a perfect movie to use in an ESL class because it meets many useful criteria:

- With the exception of Monsignor Ryan, the characters' English is clearly pronounced and easy to understand.
- With the exception of the parents of John Prentice and the housemaid Tillie Binks, the characters are well educated. Their dialog provides clear examples of almost grammatically perfect English.
- In the other cases, the dialog is still genuine and well-turned everyday English. In a few cases, you'll see idiomatic phrases and grammar specific to the Black (African-American) community.
- In any case, all of the dialog is a wealth of useful and colorful idioms, used in perfect context.



This is a great movie for lots of other reasons, as well:

- It's an excellent way to get exposure to a few of the Hollywood giants of yesteryear, most notably **Spencer Tracy**, **Katherine Hepburn**, and **Sidney Poitier**. These are good people to be familiar with if you want to "talk film" with classic movie *buffs* (fans).
- If you take the trouble to follow the movie carefully, you will find it an intellectually, culturally, and emotionally rewarding experience.

Here's a piece of trivia for you: Spencer Tracy died 17 days after filming was finished. Think about that as you listen to his great closing *monologue* (solo speech). It was a great way to finish a wonderful career.

Glory of Love [song, written by Billy Hill]

You've got to give a little, take a little,
And let your poor heart break a little.
That's the story of, that's the glory of love.

You've got to laugh a little, cry a little,
Until the clouds roll by a little.
That's the story of, that's the glory of love.

[Refrain:]

As long as there's the two of us,
We've got the world and all it's charms.
And when the world is through with us,
We've got each other's arms.

You've got to win a little, lose a little,
Yes, and always have the blues a little.
That's the story of, that's the glory of love.
That's the story of, that's the glory of love.

The sooner we **get it over with**, the better.

To **get something over with**: To finish unpleasant business quickly, so you can move on to more pleasant and fun things.

You may **be in for** the biggest shock of your young life!

The expression “to **be in for** something” has a couple of meanings, but here it refers to something about to happen which is unavoidable. The common *cautionary* (warning) expression, used here by Dr. Prentice, is “you may be in for a shock.”

Here are a few other common uses:

- He's **in for** a rude awakening.
- We're **in for** some tough times ahead.

...a **kinetic** sculpture.



The word kinetic comes from the Greek word for “moving.” A moving sculpture. Normally, a sculpture is a fixed, unmoving thing, like something carved from stone or cast in a metal such as *bronze* (an *amalgam* (mixture) of copper and tin).

Perhaps the most famous kinetic sculptures in modern art history are the *mobiles* by Alexander Calder; an example can be seen on the left.

Christina's **lunching** with...

This is an unusual case of the **Present Progressive** applied to the verb *to lunch*. You don't hear it much, but it is an intelligent and educated expression.

...filling hotel rooms with **originals** is brilliant!

“Originals” are the *original paintings* (or other media) of an artist.



You can see the **original** of DaVinci's *La Joconde* at the Louvre in Paris, France.

...instead of bad **reproductions**...

If you don't have the artist's **original** work, you may have a *reproduction*; a copy produced by hand or by a reproduction process.

...Mom gets her **commission!**

One way to make money selling other people’s work (such as fine art) is to make a **commission** on the sale; this is a *percentage* of the sale price (e.g., A ten-percent commission).

Your folks didn’t know you was coming!

Note the “failure” to use the 2nd-person Simple Past of *to be* (“were”). This is often found in the speech of less-educated people, and sometimes in the everyday

to be

Simple Present		Simple Past	
am	are	was	were
are	are	were	were
is	are	was	were

speech of moderately- and well-educated persons.

Isn’t she a **knockout?**



Knockout is an adjective; it’s how you describe a boxing *blow* (hit) that renders the opponent unconscious.

When someone is “a knockout,” they’re so beautiful they “knock” you “out” (unconscious).

...and **get that out of the way.**

To **get** something **out of the way**, is sort of like **getting** something **over with** (as described earlier). You **get** an unpleasant bit of business **out of the way** (not in your path) so you can proceed with the more pleasant things.



Note the picture of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR)—the United States’ 32nd President—on Matt Drayton’s desk.

This is significant, as FDR’s presidency was known for its profound *liberalism*; a willingness to use government power to produce serious and important economic and social change, particularly in the service of *disadvantaged* people (people without access to resources and/or power).

**turtle soup and
tournedos**

Turtle soup is a soup made from turtle meat.



Tournedos is a cut of beef prepared in a special—and rather odd—manner. The word comes from the French expression “*tournant les dos*” (“turning the backs

Mr. Prentice:

Well, that sounds good, son...I mean, serious!

John Prentice:

Yes, it's serious.

This is little joke of *ambiguity*; it's based on two meanings for the word “**serious**.”

When you say that a relationship is “**serious**,” it means that the relationship is *committed*; that the man and woman are not just having fun for a little while, but that they are deeply in love and hope to build a life together.

When Dr. John Prentice answers his father, he uses the word in another way; meaning that he expects the racial difference between himself and his sweetheart to raise a **serious problem** with his parents.

What **the hell** difference does that make?

Interesting use of “hell” as an *intensive*. **Hell** is described in some Christian sects (religious subgroups) as a place where a person is tortured by fire forever, as punishment for being bad, or for not believing the right things.



“Hell” is a kind of “swear” or “curse” word, and is often used to *intensify* (give emotional emphasis to) an expression.

This sentence uses a common modified form of “What in the hell...?” or “What in hell...?”

You **reckon** to marry the girl?

Reckon: To figure out, to plan, to expect. The word “reckon” is a little bit *archaic* (old-fashioned), and its use is *colloquial* (conversational; not suitable for academic writing).

I take it Joanna's already **busted out** with the big news.

“**I take it...**”: This means, “I expect” or “I reckon...”.

Busted out: In this context, it implies that she was so excited that her important message to her parents came spilling out, like water “**busting out**” under high pressure.

...playing golf
with **Monsignor**
Ryan.

Monsignor: An *honorary* (showing special recognition and respect) title given to a Catholic priest. It often accompanies assignment to a specific role or position in a community or institution.

World Health Organization



The **World Health Organization (WHO)** is a branch organization of the United Nations.

The World Health Organization, the United Nations specialized agency for health, was established on 7 April 1948. WHO's objective, as set out in its Constitution, is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Health is defined in WHO's Constitution as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Source: <http://www.who.int/en/>

And that's the
whole
situation...**in a
nutshell.**

When you express or explain something "**in a nutshell**," this means you are explaining something as *briefly* as possible (with as few words as possible) while hopefully being fairly *complete*, explaining everything.

And there's a
great deal to
tell, isn't there,
Mom?

A great deal of something is the same as **a lot** of something.

...maybe there
was some way
to **break** this
gently.

To **break** a piece of news or information is to *reveal* (show, expose) it.

In the news business, "breaking" a piece of news usually implies that you are the first news source to publish this information.



...we'll have
your **blessing.**

"We'll have your *heartfelt* (emotional) acceptance of our plan." In this case Joey and John want their parents' **blessing** on their plan to marry.

I'll just **call it off.**

To **call off** an event or meeting is to cancel it.

When he puts on
his **American
eagle** face...



A serious face.

...call the library and see if they’ve got any **dope** on a “John Wade Prentice”.

Dope (*n.*): This is a slang term. In this context, it means **information**.

For example, there’s a popular “general knowledge” *column* (regular newspaper



article) by Cecil Adams, called “**The Straight Dope**” (meaning “the honest information”).

There’s no real **commitment**, and up to now nothing is **settled** at all.

Commitment (*n.*): Dedication, devotion to a person or project; a long-term plan to stay with a person or program.

Settled (*adj.*): When particles sink to the bottom, they *settle*. When problems are solved, they *are settled*.



Unless you two approve, and without any **reservations** at all,...

The word “**reservation**” has a number of meanings.

When applied to an expressed attitude (such as approval), a **reservation** is a *qualification* (an exception). In the story of this movie, Dr. Prentice is insisting that Joey’s parents *approve* (accept; agree) in every way, with no exceptions or secondary disapproving thoughts or feelings; not **reserving** (keeping; retaining) for themselves the right to disapprove in even some small way; with **no reservations**.

I’m just as **startled** as you must be.



Startled (*adj.*): Suddenly surprised, astonished.

...if it meant that I would have to **take on** any special problems...

To **take** something **on** is to assume long-term responsibility for something:

- He **took on** that assignment.
- Together, they **took on** the task of planning their mother’s funeral.

...it’s almost in the form of an **ultimatum**.

Ultimatum (*n.*): An absolute demand. A negative response—saying “No”—will not be accepted.

If you reply negatively to an **ultimatum**, there will be *repercussions* (negative results).

...that's where it's at.	"...and that's the whole story. That's the whole truth as I see it."
...graduated Maxima Cum Laude ...	Maxima Cum Laude: Latin, [roughly] meaning, " With the Highest Honors. "
Monographs	A monograph is an academic, informative paper on some very specific subject. It's a rather "international" term.
...he doesn't bum free telephone calls, either.	To bum something <u>from</u> someone means to openly take something with no <i>intention</i> (plan) to return the item or pay for it. It's a common slang term.
...they might let me down for the first half hour.	To let someone down means to disappoint him or her. This can also take the form of the adjective phrase "let-down," as in "He felt let-down."
You're a phony !	Phony (<i>n.</i> or <i>adj.</i>): Fake; insincere. To call someone "a phony" is normally an insult, but note the way Dr. Prentice says this in a light-hearted way. This word can be used playfully among friends.
I have to be happy for her.	To be happy for someone means that you feel sympathetic to someone else's happiness. There are other emotions commonly applied to this form: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I'm ashamed for him. (He doesn't realize how badly he's behaving; he <i>should</i> feel ashamed, but doesn't.)• I'm sorry for them. (In this case, they also feel bad)• I'm excited for her! (She just got a promotion at work!)
Give me a lift to Market Street?	A lift: A ride (in your car).



You know it, doll!



“You know it!”: That’s true! I agree!

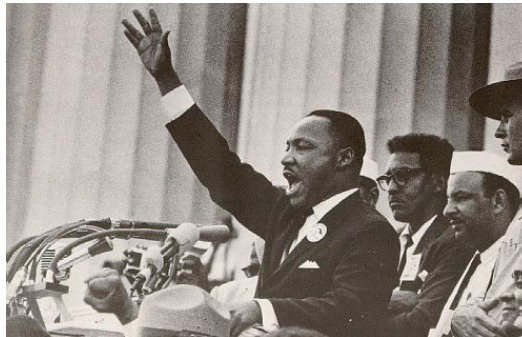
Doll: A rather *antiquated* (old-fashioned) term of affection for a girlfriend or friendly female acquaintance. You can still hear this from time to time, though.

I don’t **rustle** the cattle.

To **rustle** means to take care of cattle—or other grazing (grass-eating) animals—on open land.

Cowboys **rustle** cattle (and horses, etc.).

Civil Rights is one thing...



Civil Rights are basic rights held by a country’s citizens, *accorded* (acknowledged; understood, accepted) by the constitution of their country.

In the context of the movie, this term is referring to the **Civil Rights Movement**. This was a period of intense political *agitation* (“stirring up”) and activity by blacks in the United States, seeking to realize the guarantee of basic rights (voting, access to public services) to black people, as free and equal citizens of the United States.

Watusi

The **watusi** was a popular American dance, *derived* (taken) from a traditional East African dance.

Willy Mays



Great all-around baseball player, whose career spanned from 1951 to 1973. Jackie Robinson had already broken the “race barrier” in baseball, which allowed Mr. **Mays** to enter the major leagues. Although a great fielder, **Mays** was particularly well known for his hitting and running. When New York Giants manager Leo Durocher asked about **Mays’** performance in the minor leagues, he was told, “His hat keeps flying off.”

...take you and your young lady friend out for a **big spread** somewhere.

A “big spread” is a sort of homey, slangy expression for a very nice, multi-course restaurant meal.

...they're all **specialists**.

Specialists in the medical field are professionals who *specialize in* (concentrate on) one specific area.

Podiatrist	Doctor who treats foot ailments
Gastroenterologist (“GE”)	Digestive tract
Cardiologist	Heart
Neurologist	Nervous system (brain, etc.)
Oncologist	Cancer
Orthopedic Surgeon	Bone and ligature surgery

...or delivering a baby or **what have you**.

“...**what have you**” is a common expression meaning “et cetera” (and so on and so forth, etc.).

He thought he got the **best breaks** because...

A **break** is unexpected help you receive toward a goal.

I wouldn't know how to **fault** him.

To **fault** someone is to “find fault with” that person; to find something wrong with that person's character.

To use “fault” as a verb, as Mr. Drayton does here, is educated and a little rare.

We're being pressurized.

“We're being put under pressure.”

What...caused your father to **chicken out** on our game of golf?



To **chicken out** on a plan or appointment is to cancel or be absent *out of fear*.

The Monsignor is humorously *alleging* (accusing; suggesting) that Matt Drayton cancelled the golf game out of fear that he'd be beaten.

It’s getting more like a **holy rollers’ meeting** every minute.

Holy Rollers is a playful slang expression for members of a *Pentecostal* Protestant church. Pentecostals are known for church services (“**meetings**”) where they express great



religious emotion by *ecstatically* (with intense joy) shouting and dancing. “Holy rollers” is a playfully satiric expression suggesting loss of body control, implying that the members “roll around” on the floor in their religious *fervor* (deep feeling). Actually, they may do that, from time to time. ☺

I read an article about you in **Commonweal**.



Commonweal is a magazine edited by Catholic *lay persons* (devoutly religious, but not clergy).

It has been published since 1924.

I’m **wholly** aware of it.

“**Wholly**” means *entirely* (completely).

This is a well-educated usage.

I **daresay** you will, as a matter of fact.

This is a word that evolved from the phrase “**dare to say**,” as in: “I **dare to say** you will.” It means “I think you will.”

Mrs. Drayton:

You do have beautiful thoughts, Mike.

“It’s my trade,” means “It’s my business.”

Monsignor Ryan:

It’s my trade, you know.

Another expression is “stock in trade,” as in “A senator’s trustworthiness is his stock in trade.”

What about **laddie** over here?



“**Laddie**” is slang of uncertain, but possibly *Celtic* origin for a **lad**, a boy. Celtic languages are the original, pre-English and pre-French languages from what are now the British Isles and parts of France.

The *corresponding* (associated) slang for a young girl is a **lass**, or **lassie**.

Since Monsignor Ryan is referring to Matt Drayton, and Mr. Drayton is obviously quite old, this is an *affectionate* (playful and loving) usage.

This man is quite a famous fellow **in his own right**.

To be famous, or a hero, or a threat **in one's own right** means:

1. That you achieved your goals without anyone's help, by your own *exertions* (hard work), and therefore
2. That your recognition belongs to you and no one else. No one else **has a right** to any of that recognition.

...congratulations are **in order**...

“Congratulations are **appropriate and required**.”

The child is **of age**.

This means “The child is **of legal age**.”

And this means, “The child is old enough to make up her mind for herself” (to make decisions about her own future).

...and **get** permanently **lost**.

When you tell someone to “**get lost**,” you're telling him or her very strongly, emotionally, and somewhat nastily that you don't want to see them; that you want them to go away.



...he **fell for** some girl from Panama.

This *roughly* (approximately) means, “He **fell in love with** some girl from Panama.”

...an absolute **bitch**.

This is a *disarming* (surprising) expression, coming as it does from the mouth of a sweet, well-educated young lady.

“**Bitch**” is *very strong, very insulting slang* for a woman you *despise* (strongly dislike) because of her attitude. The word literally means “a female dog.”

...a quite
ruthless streak.

Ruthless (*adj.*): Devoid of pity or compassion; pitiless, unsparing, merciless (OED). This all means the person will do anything to achieve his or her goals, even if it means others will suffer.

Streak (*n.*): This word has many meanings, but in this context, it refers to a relatively **small**, and usually **negative**, aspect of one's character. Here's another common expression using "streak:"

- He has a stubborn **streak**. (He's a little stubborn)

Fighting liberal
façade...
reactionary
bigot.



Façade (*n.*): This word come to us from the French, and refers to an idea in *architecture* (building design). A façade is a pleasant front built over a simple and unpleasing building.

Reactionary (*adj.*): A term from politics. A **reactionary** (*n.*) is someone who fights political change, sometimes reacting with violence.

Bigot (*n.*): Someone who holds on to a belief or ideology in an unreasoning, and sometime *spiteful* (mean, hurtful), way.

**We Can Work It
Out** [song]



A loving reference to a fine song by the Beatles.

Monsignor Ryan doesn't come anywhere close to *faithfully rendering* (correctly reproducing) the melody of the song. 😊

Try to see it my way
Do I have to keep on talking till I can't go on?
While you see it your way,
Run the risk of knowing that our love may soon be gone
We can work it out! We can work it out!

Think of what you're saying
You can get it wrong and still you think that it's all right
Think of what I'm saying
We can work it out and get it straight, or say good night
We can work it out! We can work it out!

[Refrain:]

Life is very short and there's no time
For fussing and fighting my friend
I have always thought that it's a crime
So I will ask you once again

Try to see it my way
Only time will tell if I am right or I am wrong
While you see it your way
There's a chance that we might fall apart before too long
We can work it out! We can work it out!

[Repeat refrain]

[Repeat last stanza]

I've just **wrangled**
an invitation to
dinner.

Wrangle (v.t.): **4.** To get (something) *out of* a person by **bargaining**; to obtain by wrangling (OED).

Whatever
happened to
whatsizname?

"Whatever happened to what's-his-name?"
"Whatever happened to...I forget his name...?"

Homer **had the
inside track.**

To "**have the inside track**" means to have an *advantage* in a race; something helpful that others don't have in competition. The expression comes from horse racing. The idea is that the "inside" track of a racecourse is **shorter**, and therefore *advantageous* (giving an advantage) for getting to the finish line first and winning the race.



Daiquiri Ice,
Honeycomb Candy,
Cocoa Coconut,
Jamoca Almond Fudge,
Mocha Jamoca,
Peanut Butter and Jelly,
Cinnamon Banana Mint,
Fresh Oregon
Boysenberry Sherbet

Daiquiri: An alcoholic drink flavor involving rum, sugar and lime.

Boysenberry: A specially bred berry related to the raspberry.

Sherbet: A frozen desert made *without milk*.



...whatchoo **tryin'**
to pull, here?!?

When you "**try to pull**" something, it means you're trying to fool or trick people around you, in order to steal, win, or get something that is not yours.

...smooth-talking,
smart-assed
niggers.

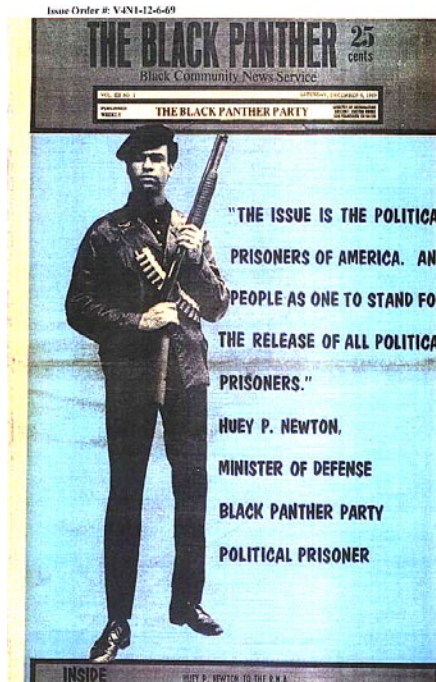
Smooth-talking means pretty much what it sounds like: It's an adjectival phrase to describe someone who is good at using fancy language to fool or convince people.

Smart-assed is adjectival, and a crude expression. It means, "You *think* you're more intelligent than you, in fact, are."



Nigger: Old Southern U.S. slang for black people. While it is generally considered **very** negative and insulting when used by a non-black person, this usage in this scene serves to show that the term is in fact used quite freely in the black community, and means "a useless or worthless person."

...**Black Power**...



This is a reference to a popular expression in the black community in the 1960's in the U.S.

The expression was *coined* (invented) by the **Black Panther movement**, a militant black organization founded in the 1960's, and dedicated to protection of the black urban community from white racist violence, often coming from the *predominantly* (mostly) white police forces.

You **read** me, **boy**?

To “**read**” somebody means to **hear** and **understand** them, in slang. Tilly is asking John: **Do you understand me?**

...30 or 40 **bucks** it'll cost...!

Buck: Slang for a U.S. dollar.



Many U.S. citizens watching this movie at this time in history (2003) will get a *chuckle* (light-hearted laugh) at how *inflation* (monetary loss of value) has *eroded* (worn away) the value of the dollar since 1967: In 2003 dollars, fixing the bashed door and fender of Frankie's car would probably cost *at least* \$500!

Senile

“**Senile**” is the adjective form of the noun **senility**.

Senility is a word which has pretty much been made *obsolete* (no longer used or useful). The new expression is **Alzheimer's Disease**. This is the terrible, *debilitating* (draining away energy and body function) disease where the elderly slowly lose brain function, and eventually die.

There oughta be a law!

An old expression, meaning that the person is disgusted and disappointed with behavior that is nevertheless perfectly legal. Here, Frankie (the black fellow with the custom car hit by Matt) is saying there ought to be a law against old folks driving.

Take my word for it, Matt Drayton really **stands for** something in this town!

There’s never been a single public issue on which Matt Drayton didn’t **take a stand** and **spell it out.**

“Take my word for it...”: You can believe what I say.
To stand for something: To **be a symbol** for something. This usually means that you symbolize **good ethical and moral standards.**

Interesting! Another idiomatic use for “stand!”

A **“stand”** is a place where a leader in a military *campaign* (battle) **“takes their stand,”** claims a piece of territory and “stands” there, indicating possession and control of it.



When you **“spell something**



out,” you are working to make sure your words are direct and *unequivocal* (can’t be interpreted in more than one way).

Is your Passport **in order?**



“Is your Passport up-to-date and ready to use?”

Note the difference in meaning between this use of the expression and the earlier expression, “congratulations are **in order.**”

You’re so **wrapped up in** Joey’s excitement...

Wrapped up in: To be “wrapped up in” a subject or current events means that they surrounded you. The idea is that you therefore aren’t seeing other things, which may also be very important.

...behaving like a couple of escaped lunatics.



Lunatic (*n.*): This used to be a term for a mentally ill person. It has since become a slang term applied to someone you think is being irrational or silly.

The word comes from the Latin *luna*, “moon.” It was once believed that mentally ill persons were affected by the Moon.

He's not himself, Mike.

“He's not behaving normally; please don't think he *always* acts like this....”

I don't understand nothing no more...

Note the triple negative! This is not grammatically “correct” English.

Obviously, Tilly is just piling up negatives in order to emphasize the negative here.

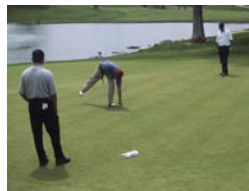
Oh, **come off it!**

This probably evolved from the expression, “**Get off your high horse!**” and accuses someone of *patronizing* (“talking down” to) you, like a **superior**.

You're saying they should “**come off their high horse**” and meet you on the ground and talk to you at your level, as **an equal**, not as a superior.



...when you took nine shots on the seventh green.



This is golf lingo. It once took Matt nine *putts* (close shots) to hit the golf ball into the hole on the seventh *green*. A **green** is a specially maintained place on a golf course around the hole.

Nine shots on the seventh green! *Shameful!!!*

You're a pontificating old poop!

Pontificate (*v.i.*): **2. a. intr.** To act the pontiff, ...; to behave or speak in a pompous or dogmatic manner (OED).

“**Old poop**”: An interesting idiom. Normally, “poop” is mild slang for excrement (“shit”). When you call someone an “old poop,” however, you are just accusing them of having lots of ideas that are no longer useful to anyone.

You're **off-balance**.



"You're not mentally (or emotionally) stable."

I **happen to** believe, I **happen to** know...

This is a way of expressing *understatement* (emphasis by making small).

When you say that you "**happen to**" believe or know something, the direct, literal meaning is that you believe it or know it "by chance;" by a lucky accident. Of course, the reality is that you are *intensely* (strongly) personally interested; it is no accident. Therefore, you are *understating* the situation, and this actually emphasizes your point.

That will be the day!

"That's unlikely! That is not likely to happen!"



Sherry

A light-colored, strongly alcoholic wine, originating in (originally coming from) Spain.



Bourbon

A liquor made from corn, originally from Kentucky (U.S.).

My husband will be down **directly**.

Directly (*adv.*): Shortly; soon. This is a formal and educated expression.

I **set the terms**, Mama.

To **set the terms** of an agreement is to define what points *are* being agreed upon and what points *are not* being agreed upon.

...so just **shut up**, and...

This is a very disrespectful thing for a son to say to a father. You have to conclude Dr. Prentice is feeling superior to his father at this moment.

I **worked my ass off**.

When you **work your ass off**, this means you work very, very hard. If you say this as a complaint to someone (as Mr. Prentice does to his son in this scene), this means you now feel unappreciated for the work you've done.

...so you wouldn't have to be **stoking** furnaces and could **bear down on** the books.

To **stoke** (v.t.): To feed a fire with fuel (e.g., wood, coal).

To "**bear down on**" something means to apply force or pressure to something. **Bearing down on the books** means studying.



I don't care what your mother says; maybe she's **gone haywire**, too.

When something "**goes haywire**," that means it is malfunctioning; it is broken and doesn't work right.

You've got to **get off my back**.

"You've got to leave me alone, quit bothering me, stop pestering and nagging me."

Would you go out there and **see after** my Mother?

To "**see after**" someone means to take care of them; to help them.

...**cliché** phrases of comfort.

Cliché (n.): Another word from the French! A **cliché** is a phrase or idea that may tend to be overused or overextended (used in an inappropriate, or "easy" way).

I'm completely **stumped**.

To **stump** (v.t.): To "be stumped" means to *not* have a solution for a problem, and to feel uncertain whether you **will** have a solution in the future!

I'll be a **son-of-a-bitch**...

A **son-of-a-bitch** is a worthless or bad person; calling someone this is very (*very!*) insulting; you are saying the person's mother was a dog.

Matt Drayton is saying he realizes that he was wrong; that he was a son-of-a-bitch.



Note the statue of the Hindu god **Shiva** in the background of a shot.

There was a lot of interest in Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, etc.) in the 1960's in the U.S., and the presence of this bit of statuary in this household reflects that. There may also be some symbolic significance, as **Shiva** is a god of *change*, and this movie is about change.

I was **flabbergasted**, and while I was still being **flabbergasted**...

To **flabbergast** (*v.t.*): This is a *colloquial* (spoken, not commonly written) term. It means to be completely surprised and stunned.

It's kind of a "silly" word (it certainly sounds silly!), and should only be used when the state of *astonishment* (surprise) being described is also a bit silly.

...the marriage **was on**, no matter what...

When a planned event **is on**, that means it is still scheduled to take place; people still expect it to happen.

Q: It looks like it's going to rain. **Is** the party still **on**?

A: Yeah. If it rains, we'll just take the party inside....

...some kind of romantic **haze**,...

Haze (*n.*): A mist in the air that *obscures* (lessens, reduces) vision.

...which made her, **in my view**...

In my view: To my way of thinking; in my way of looking at things; according to my analysis.

...three hundred platitudes...

Platitude (*n.*): A cliché (see above). A platitude is a short expression that is intended to give help and wisdom to the hearer.

Generally, this word is used *pejoratively* (negatively) to indicate that the "wisdom" being offered is a bit too simple, and therefore inappropriate, for the complex situation being faced.

...**in the final analysis** it doesn't matter **a damn** what we think.

"**In the final analysis**...": After all factors and ideas are *considered* (looked at and thought about); in the end.

A damn: Interesting use of the word "**damn**" (a mild curse) as a noun. The idea is that "a damn" isn't really very useful, so if something **isn't worth a damn** or **doesn't matter a damn**, then it's really not important, is it?

...the two of you
will just have to
ride that out.



To **ride** something **out** means to stay with a difficult situation (e.g., the interracial marriage) until the problems are solved and you can enjoy the blessings of commitment to that decision.

...and I say,
“**Screw** all those
people!”

Screw is a swear (curse) word; it's a little milder than “fuck.” Mr. Drayton is saying he does not intend to give any respect to the people he's *alluding* (referring) to in this statement.

...a **pigmentation**
problem.

Pigment is the substance in something that gives it its **color**.

...some **bastard**.

Bastard (*n.*): A nasty slang term for a person without a father, or without parents.

Figuratively, a bastard is an emotionally abandoned person who, in turn, emotionally abandons others—a mean person.