

Network

(Comedy/Drama) (1976)

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Major Characters

- Howard Beale.....Peter Finch
An anchorman (TV journalist) for the UBS television network, who is fired after many years of service because of falling popularity ratings. He soon becomes an increasingly crazy national sensation after he announces he is going to kill himself on his own news show.
- Diana Christensen.....Faye Dunaway
A smart and driven TV programmer at UBS who is willing to do anything to make her shows popular, including using Howard as a modern day “prophet” (religious leader).
- Max Schumaker.....William Holden
The well respected producer of the UBS News who tries to keep the network from exploiting Howard’s growing insanity.
- Frank Hackett.....Robert Duvall
A power-hungry executive in the UBS network who supports Diana in her goal to do anything it takes, no matter how ridiculous, to create popular TV shows that will increase the network’s profit.
- Arthur Jensen.....Ned Beatty
The president of CCA, a company that has bought the UBS network, who tries to convince Howard that all of life is based on business.
- Edward Ruddy.....William Prince
The head of the UBS news division, who tries to balance Max’s fear of the news show losing its dignity and independence, and Hackett’s determination to make the news division profitable.
- Caroline Schumaker.....Cindy Grover
Max’s wife, who must face the fact her husband is having an affair.
- Laureen Hobbs.....Marlene Warfield
An intellectual black leader in the Communist Party who Diana decides to use in order to help make a weekly show about real acts of terrorism.
- The Great Ahmed Khan.....Arthur Burghard
The African-American leader of the “Ecumenical Liberation Army,” a tiny extremist political group that is engaged in various acts of political terrorism, including bank robberies and kidnapping (“Ecumenical” is an odd name for this group, since it refers to the world wide Christian church).

Plot Summary

This film is probably the greatest movie ever made about the American media. It is the story of Howard Beale, a giant of television journalism who is fired after many years of service because his TV ratings have started to fall (Ratings estimate the number of viewers that are watching a show). Alone because his wife had recently died, and depressed by the fact that he is going to lose his job, Howard announces to a national television audience that he will kill himself with a gun on his own news broadcast (an act, which he observes, should get “a hell of a rating”).

The announcement shocks the country, but Howard instantly becomes a news sensation himself, and he soon finds that he is allowed and even encouraged to say whatever he truly feels about the world around him, rather than just report the news. This is because Diana, whose entire life is obsessed with ratings and audience share, realizes that Howard is able to express “the rage of the American people.” Although Howard seems to be heading toward a psychological breakdown, Diana is convinced that Howard’s screams of “bullshit” will turn UBS into a profitable network for the first time in years.

Max is Howard’s best friend, and is determined to save him from Diana’s exploitation, as well as to save the dignity of the news broadcast at UBS. Yet Diana sees the news as just another entertainment show, and with the support of Hackett, turns the UBS network into a shameless but profitable business, filled with ridiculous but sensational shows such as “The MaoTse-Tung Hour,” which includes news film of “actual acts of political terrorism.”

A note on the historical background: The movie takes place in 1975, a time in which the United States was having major economic problems, including very high inflation and unemployment, in part due to the Arab oil embargo. Other major historical events from Watergate to the Vietnam War had recently occurred, and in general, with crime high and the economy bad, the country was in a very sour mood. *Network* does a very good job of capturing the general anxiety and spirit of those days.

A note on the corporate structures found in this film: In some ways, *Network* is as much about power struggles in corporate America as it is about the media in general. It is helpful for your general comprehension to understand the following corporate relationships that are presented in the movie:

CCA (the Communications Corporation of America) has recently bought UBS (the United Broadcasting Service, which is the 4th rated and worst national network in the US). Toward the end of the film, it is revealed that CCA itself was being bought by the “Western World Funding Corporation,” which is actually owned by the Saudi Arabians.....

A note on the language used in this film: The synopsis for this movie is one of the longest that Eslnotes.com has produced, in part because the language that is used is extremely rich with historical and cultural references that are key to understanding the development of the plot. There are also many amazing conversations and monologues that make for great cinema, but add to comprehension problems if you are not a native speaker. While this film will be a great challenge to understand, it is a true classic, and it is worth the extra time to try and internalize as much of this guide as possible.

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

Howard Beale learns his career in TV is almost finished, and thus he decides to end it all in front of his viewers...

The network news anchorman on UBS TV.

The most important TV journalist who reads the news on a program.

Howard Beale had been....the grand old man of news, with a HUT rating of 16 and a 28 audience share.

A “rating” is the estimated number of total viewers, while the “audience share” is the percent of TV viewers watching that show.

He became morose and isolated.

“Morose” is a strong word for depressed or bitter, while a person who is “isolated” is socially distant, and uninterested in being with people.

The two old friends got properly pissed.

Usually “pissed” means angry, though here it means drunk.

CBS/NBC/ABC

These are the three real major TV networks in the United States.

They were building the lower level of the George Washington bridge and we were doing a remote from there.

In this case, a “remote” is a news story filmed with a portable camera.

“Where the hell are you?! You’re supposed to be at the George Washington bridge?”

Note the common use of “the hell” in Wh questions, added to show emotion such as surprise or anger.

I hail a cab and say to the cabby “Take me to the middle of the George Washington bridge.”

“To hail a cab” is to signal a taxi with your hands.

A “cabby,” is, of course, a slang word for a taxi driver.

He says “Don’t do it buddy, you’re a young man!
You’ve got your whole life ahead of you.”

“Buddy” is another word for friend. Max is implying that the cabby thought he was going to commit suicide by jumping off the bridge.

I’m gonna blow my brains out right on the air.

“To blow a person’s brain’s out” is a dramatic expression meaning to shoot them in the head with a gun. To do something “on the air” is to do it on TV or radio, in real, live time.

You’d get a hell of a rating, I’d guarantee you that.

Another way to say a very high rating, or a big audience.

Execution of the Week. Assassinations. Mad bombers.

Mafia hit men. Automobile smashups.

An “execution” is the killing of a person, usually done by a government.

“Mafia hit men” are gangsters who agree to murder people, usually in exchange for money. A “smashup” is an accident.

It would put fucking Disney right off the air.

Max’s way of saying that an extremely violent show based on real life would get many more viewers than the “family shows” created by the Walt Disney company.

Sara Jane Moore. Squeaky Fromme. Patty Hearst. OPEC.

Various names in the news in 1975. Moore and Fromme were two women who tried to kill President Ford. Patty Hearst was the daughter of a rich publisher who was kidnapped by radical terrorists who later joined her kidnappers. OPEC is the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which represents those nations which control much of the world’s oil.

Two, one, cue, Howard.

A word that signals to an actor that it’s time to start speaking.

I’m going to blow my brains out right on this
program a week from today, so tune in next Tuesday.

“To tune in” to a TV show is to watch it.

What the fuck is going on, Howard?

A very crude but common way of asking a person what is happening.

Howard, what the hell are you doing?! Have you flipped?

If somebody “flips,” they have gone crazy.

Go to standby.

In this context, “standby” refers to the blank screen with a small printed message that TV stations will broadcast if they find themselves in an emergency, without anything else that they can use.

As UBS tries to recover from Howard's announcement, Diana searches for "angry" shows, while Max tries to save the news division from Hackett.

Lou, can't we clear out that downstairs lobby?

"To clear out" a building is usually to remove the people in it.

Every TV station and wire service.

News organizations, like Reuters and UPS, that sell new stories to newspapers and TV and radio stations.

We had to abort the show; what else could we do?

"Abort" is a powerful verb which means to cancel, stop or kill, before a natural ending, and usually because of sudden trouble that develops.

So far over 900 fucking phone calls complaining about the foul language!

A truly great line: "Fucking" is a very vulgar and common adjective that is used to express strong emotion, and "foul language" refers to vulgar words like shit and fuck.

Tell them to go fuck themselves!

Note that beyond "fuck you," a person can say the same thing to people they are not directly speaking to!

They're all going to lead with it.

"To lead" with a story is to make it the first story on the news.

We got a stockholders meeting tomorrow at which we're going to announce the restructuring of management plan.

A "stockholders meeting" is the annual meeting where all investors (stockowners) in the company are told how it is doing. "To restructure" is a popular word in business meaning to reorganize a company.

I don't want this grotesque incident to interfere with that.

"Grotesque" is a powerful adjective meaning disgusting or horrible. An "incident" is a single event or interesting story.

You, Max, better have some answers for some of those nuts who come to stockholder meetings.

In this context, a funny slang word for crazy people.

Mr. Beale has been under great personal and professional strain.

"Strain" is another word for pressure, or perhaps a state of tension.

I've had it up to here with your cruddy division and its annual 33 million deficit.

If someone says that "they've had it up to here," this means they are sick or tired of it. "Cruddy" is a nice little word meaning bad, or of poor quality. A "deficit" is an important business word that refers to the amount of money owed beyond what is available.

We've got a limo at the freight exit.

A "limo" is short for limousine. "Freight" is any type of product that is delivered by truck or train, such as furniture or office equipment.

You're late for your screening, Max.

"To screen" a film or movie is to show it, often for a special audience.

You'll like the footage better than the stuff I showed you last time.

"Footage" refers to unedited news and video film.

Goddamn it!

A somewhat crude but very common way to express anger.

The consolidation of the revolutionary and radical movements.

A "consolidation" is the combining of two or more things.

"Radical movements" are political groups that struggle for a particular cause that is seen as too extreme by the majority of people.

We're going to see something really sensational.

An important word meaning amazing, extremely exciting or great.

The Flagstaff Bank of Arizona was ripped off last week by a terrorist group called the Ecumenical Liberation Army.

"To rip off" a bank is a colloquial way of saying to rob it.

There's a hell of a lot of liberation armies in the revolutionary underground.....and a lot of kidnapped heiresses.

"The revolutionary underground" is a general phrase referring to those radical political groups who fear being eliminated by the government. An "heiress" is the daughter of a rich person, and in this case refers to Patty Hearst.

Listen Max, I'd like another shot.

One way of saying another chance or opportunity.

I'd like to make some brief farewell statement.

A speech that is "brief" is short and direct, and "farewell" is a formal word for goodbye.

I have some standing in the industry; I don't want to go out like a clown.

To have "standing" in an industry is to have a good reputation based on many years of work.

It will be simple and **dignified**. You can check the copy.

If something is dignified, it is done with maturity, grace and dignity.
In this case, “to check the copy” is to verify words in print.

Ok, no booze today, Howard.

“Booze” is a common slang word for liquor.

Most of its tedious stuff of Lauren Hobbs and two fatigue jackets muttering mutilated Marxism.

“Tedious” is a useful word meaning boring, with too much detail.

The rest of the sentence is colorful, but unimportant; “Fatigue jackets” are green army jackets, popular with radical revolutionaries.

“To mutter” is to speak in an angry and low voice that is hard to hear, and a philosophy (or animal) that is “mutilated” has been torn apart.

Authentic stuff shot while the robbery was going on!

If film is “authentic,” it is true or genuine, and not staged or acted.

Note that “stuff” can be physical things, or as here, general acts.

I think we can get a hell of a movie of the week out of it and maybe even a series!

This is Diana’s way of thinking how a bank robbery can be turned into entertainment. A “movie of the week” was a different film that was shown on network television at the same time every week. A TV “series” is a program that is regularly shown, usually once a week.

Maybe they’ll take pictures of themselves hijacking 747s, bombing bridges, assassinating ambassadors.

“To hijack” a plane is to force it to fly to a different location than it was going to. “To assassinate” a person is to shoot them to death, but note the victim must be a politician, ambassador or other important person who is being killed for political reasons.

A series about a bunch of bank-robbing guerrillas.

Members of a military force that uses support in the general population to fight against a stronger, state supported army.

What are we going to call it? The Mao Tsetung hour?

A reference to the Chinese communist leader, who was considered a great revolutionary by many American radicals in the 1960s and 70s.

Strike force. Task force. SWAT.

These are special units in the police and military that deal with various crisis situations, such as kidnappings and other terrorist acts.

In a nutshell, it said the American people are turning sullen.

“In a nutshell” is an excellent expression meaning in brief, or in very few words. If somebody is “sullen,” they are sad and cheerless.

They've been clobbered on all sides by Vietnam, Watergate, inflation.
 "To clobber" a person is to hit them forcefully.

They've turned off, shot up, fucked themselves limp and nothing helps.
 A typical Diana line! "To turn off" in this context means to turn off both the TV and society in general, or to try and escape from society's problems. "To shoot up" is a dramatic phrasal verb meaning to take drugs such as heroin, with needles. "Limp" is another word for flaccid or soft, and thus if a man "fucks himself limp," he has so much sex that he can no longer stay hard.

The American people want somebody to articulate their rage for them.
 "To articulate" something is to express it well, and
 "rage" is a powerful word for strong and violent anger.

I don't want conventional programming. I want counter-culture, I want anti-establishment.
 "Conventional programming" would be traditional or typical TV programs, such as police shows. The "counter-culture" refers to people outside the mainstream of society, such as the hippies of the 1960s. If a person is "anti-establishment," they are against the major corporate and political powers that run the society.

This network is an industry joke.
 A way of saying that other TV networks don't take UBS seriously because it has such bad shows and is watched by so few people.

Next time I send an audience research report around, you all better read it or I'll sack the fucking lot of you.
 "To sack" a person is to fire them, and "the lot" is the entire group.

At the time CCA took control, the UBS TV network was floundering, with less than 7% of national TV revenues.
 "To flounder" is to move with great difficulty, or to try and regain balance.

I am submitting to the board of directors a plan for the coordination of the main profit centers.
 "To submit" is to officially give over or distribute. For any company, "the board of directors" are the officials that meet every few months to decide on general company direction. "To coordinate" is to organize or set up.

News divisions are expected to lose money, but to our philosophy, this is a wanton fiscal affront to be resolutely resisted.
 Hackett's way of announcing the news division will have to make money in the future. A "wanton affront" is a shocking and offensive act or statement, and "fiscal" is another word for financial.

Why was I led up to that podium and publicly humiliated in front of the stockholders?

A “podium” is the high part of a floor from which people can speak to an audience. “To humiliate” a person is to completely embarrass them, and “stockholders” are people who own stock in a company.

Howard announces to his viewers that life is filled with bullshit, as Max continues to fight Hackett for the independence of the news division.

I announced that I was going to commit public suicide; Admittedly, an act of public madness.

A key word in this movie, meaning total insanity or craziness.

I just ran out of bullshit.

Another key word in this film, and a critical concept in life. A crude but very common word for lies, nonsense, or anything said that is completely ridiculous.

Ok, cut him off! :: Leave him on! If this is how he wants to go out...

Here, “to cut off” someone is to stop broadcasting them over the air.

We don’t know why were going through this pointless pain and decay...

If something is “pointless,” there is no reason for it. “Decay” is a useful word referring to the physical process of rotting or decomposing.

If there is anybody out there who can look around this demented slaughterhouse of a world we live in.....

“Demented” is a good word for morally sick or depraved.

A “slaughterhouse” is where animals are killed and cut into meat.

.....and tell me that man is a noble creature,.....that man is full of bullshit!

“Noble” is another word for honorable. A “creature” is a living being.

This is going out to 67 affiliates.

“Affiliates” are the local TV stations around the country that form part of the national TV network.

I was married for 33 years of shrill, shrieking fraud!

“Shrill” and “shrieking” sounds are both high and disagreeable, like a cat screaming in pain. In this case, “fraud” is a big lie, and perhaps Howard’s way of saying he and his wife never loved each other.

You were primarily responsible for this colosally stupid prank.

“Colossal” means extremely big, but it’s rarely used as an adverb, as it is here. A “prank” is a playful but foolish joke or trick, often done by kids.

It was unconscionable.

A powerful word meaning extreme, excessive, or perhaps immoral.

You and I go back 20 years, Ed.

Two people who “go back” 20 years have known each other that long.

I took this job with your personal assurance that you’d back my autonomy against any encroachment.

A “personal assurance” is a guarantee or promise. “Autonomy” is an educated word for independence, and “encroachment” is another word for interference.

Hackett is nothing but a hatchet man for CCA.

A “hatchet” is a small ax or chopping knife, and a “hatchet man” is the person in a company that does all the dirty work, such as firing people.

I too thought...that the reorganization of the news division would not be executed...until everyone had been consulted and satisfied.

If a plan is “executed” it is actually carried out and completed.

“To consult” with a person is to discuss something with them.

You sulked off like a child and engaged this network in a shocking and disgraceful episode.

“To sulk” is to be angry, often at something that isn’t that important, and thus “to sulk off” is to leave like an angry and silly child.

“To engage” a company in something is to get it involved, and a “disgraceful episode” is a shameful or humiliating incident or event.

Your position is no longer tenable, regardless of how management is restructured.

If a person’s position is no longer “tenable,” they will not be able to keep it, and in fact, this is Ruddy’s way of telling Max that he is fired.

We will coordinate our statements...to the least detriment of everyone.

To “coordinate” statements is to organize them so that they work or fit together well. “Detriment” is another word for harm or damage.

I’ve been sitting behind that desk...the dispassionate pundit reporting with seeming detachment...the daily parade of lunacies that constitute the news.

A “dispassionate” person is neutral or unemotional, and a “pundit” is an informed or educated observer. To do something with “detachment” is to do it without emotion. A “lunacy” is something that is crazy and “to constitute” the news is to make up the parts of it.

Knock it off, Arthur!

“Knock it off” is a great expression that simply means “stop it!”

Have the overnight ratings come in?

The scores that tell TV programmers how many people were estimated to have watched their shows the previous day.

It is irresistibly titled “The New Lawyers.”

If something is “irresistible,” it is too cute or adorable to resist.

The running characters are a crusty but benign ex-Supreme Court Justice.

“Crusty” is a good word for a person who is often in a bad mood, while “benign” means harmless. A “Justice” is a judge on the US Supreme Court, which is the highest court in the country.

The local district attorney, who is brilliant and sometimes cuts corners.

A “district attorney” is the lawyer who prosecutes accused criminals for the state. “Brilliant” is extremely intelligent. A person who “cuts corners” will sometimes break the law or cheat, if they think that they will not get caught and the act is not too serious.

Lady cops.

Female police officers.

A crusty but benign police lieutenant, who is always getting heat from the police commissioner.

A “lieutenant” is a middle ranking member of the police (or military). “To get heat” from a person is to get a lot of pressure from them, and the “police commissioner” is the person in charge of the police force.

The Arabs have decided to jack up the price of oil another 20%.

“To jack up” prices is to raise them.

New York City is still facing default.

“Default” is the official act of declaring bankruptcy, or the inability to pay money that is owed.

Diana realizes that Howard can change everything for UBS, and what the American people need is a person to “express their rage.”

I think we’ve lucked in to something.

“To luck in” to something is to find yourself in a great situation without ever having tried.

Are you suggesting we put that lunatic back on the air, yelling “bullshit”?

A truly great word for a crazy or insane person.

You're not going to get something like this dumped in your lap for the rest of your days, so you can't piss it away.

If an opportunity is "dumped in your lap," it is given to you just by chance (a person's lap is the section of leg above their knees, when they are sitting down). "To piss away" an opportunity is to waste it.

I can turn that show into the biggest smash on television.

In this context, a "smash" is a popular show, or huge success.

I see Howard Beale as a latter day prophet...a magnificent messianic figure inveighing against the hypocrisies of our time.

One of Diana's truly great and ridiculous statements; A "prophet" is a man who claims to be speaking directly for God, and a "latter day prophet" is simply one who makes such claims in modern times.

"Magnificent" is a powerful word meaning truly wonderful or great, and a "messianic figure" is a messiah, or great religious leader.

"To inveigh" is an educated word meaning to speak against, and "hypocrisy" is an important word describing the situation when people (especially politicians) say they believe something, but in fact act in ways that show they do not.

It will just go through the roof.

In this context, to become extremely popular.

Do you want to figure out the revenues of a strip show that sells for 100,000 bucks per minute?!

"To figure out" a problem is to solve it. "Revenues" is a business word for income. A "strip show" is a nightclub show in which women take off their clothes. "Bucks" is very common slang for dollars.

Frank, it's being handed to us on a plate. Let's not blow it.

"To blow it" is a great expression meaning to waste an opportunity, or more generally, to do something poorly.

We don't want to lose momentum.

An important word that means the force or general direction that something is headed in.

I'm going to be eyeball to eyeball with Mr. Ruddy on this.

Hackett's way of saying that he will be fighting Ruddy with all the power he has from his influence in the corporation.

I'm the one whose ass is going on the line.

A crude and slang way of saying that he is the one risking his job.

Top brass of a bankrupt television network.

The "top brass" of a company are its highest executive officers. If a company is "bankrupt," it doesn't have enough money to pay its debts.

A pornographic network news show? The FCC would kill us.

“Pornographic” is an adjective that means lewd or obscene, though it usually refers to sex. The FCC is the Federal Communications Commission, the governmental agency that looks after TV networks.

The FCC can’t do anything except rap our knuckles.

Hackett’s way of saying that the FCC doesn’t have the power to actually stop the show. Literally, to hit their fingers, but never used.

I don’t want to think about the litigious possibilities.

An adjective that refers to law suits.

The affiliates will kiss your ass if you hand them a hit show.

Hackett’s crude way of saying the affiliates will be grateful, as long as the show is popular and makes money.

This violates every canon of respectable broadcasting.

“To violate” a law is to break it, and a “canon” is an old word for an established law or behavior that has been accepted for a very long time.

We’re a whorehouse network.

A “whorehouse” is a house of prostitution, or brothel.

That’s very commendable, Nelson.

A rarely used but nice word for honorable or deserving or praise.

Your indignation has been duly recorded.

“Indignation” is angry disapproval, and if something has been “duly recorded.” it has been officially noticed or recognized.

I think we ought to give it a shot.

“To give it a shot” is to try and do something difficult or dangerous.

I might teach...whatever the hell one does when one approaches the autumn of one’s years.

Max’s poetic way of saying when one gets old.

They want Howard to go on, spontaneously letting out his anger.

To do something “spontaneously” is to do it without planning ahead of time, or without thinking or reflection.

Are you kidding?: I’m not kidding!

“To kid” is to joke around, or not be serious.

I said if you think I’ll go along with this bastardization of the news, you can have my resignation along with Max Schumaker’s.

The “bastardization” of something is the degrading or lowering of it. A “resignation” is the formal act of quitting or withdrawing from a job.

Do you want to be an angry prophet denouncing the hypocrisies of our times?
 “To denounce” something is to speak out against it.

Yes, then grab it!
 “To grab” something is to physically seize or hold it, though here it simply means to take advantage of the situation.

There is some kind of corporate maneuvering going on.
 In this case, a good expression referring to the struggle for power within the company, and between the divisions of the company.

Hackett is clearly forcing a confrontation.
 A “confrontation” is a fight, battle or struggle.

I suspect that CCA will be upset at Hackett’s presumptuousness.
 If someone is “presumptuous,” they arrogantly assume that they can do or say things that they really should not.

The initial response to the new Howard Beale show was not auspicious.
 This word is never used, though “auspicious” means positive, in the sense that it suggests good things will happen in the future.

Monday’s rating dropped a point, clearly suggesting that the novelty was wearing off.
 The “novelty” of something is the interest it generates simply because it is new and different. If it “wears off,” it begins to get weaker.

Diana sets out to seduce Max, but she can’t convince him to let Howard be America’s new and angry modern day prophet.

Did you know that there are a number of psychics that are working as licensed brokers on Wall Street?
 A “psychic” is a person who claims that they can predict the future.
 A Wall Street “broker” buys and sells stocks in various companies.

Some counsel their clients by use of tarot cards.
 “To counsel” a person is to advise them. “Tarot cards” are special playing cards supposedly used by psychics to predict a person’s future.

They’re all pretty successful....even in a bear market and selling short.
 A “bear market” is one in which the stock market goes down, and is the opposite of a bull market. “To sell short” means to invest in a way that you make money if the company stock goes down.

If her tips were any good, she could wreck the market.

A “tip” is a small piece of helpful information.

“To wreck” something is to completely destroy it.

She said she was occasionally prescient.

A person who is “prescient” can predict the future.

“I just had a fleeting vision of you sitting in an office with a craggy middle aged man, with whom you are or will be emotionally involved.”

A “fleeting vision” is a visual image that lasts only a few seconds.

A person who is “craggy” is often upset and in a bad or sour mood.

This one operates on parapsychology.

The use of such things as mind reading, fortune telling and other powers that can’t be explained by known scientific laws.

She has trance-like episodes and feels things in her energy field.

This is a typical nonsense statement that people associate with mind readers and fortune tellers. A “trance-like episode” is a period of time when a person is so focused that it’s almost as if they are asleep with their eyes open. A “trance” is a condition of extreme concentration.

Sibyl the Soothsayer.

Diana’s discovery, who she wants to put on the Howard Beale show.

A “soothsayer” is a person who claims to be able to predict the future.

Give her two minutes on Friday, which is suggestively occult...

The “occult” is the world of the supernatural, such as ghosts.

Beale is too crotchety. He’s being irascible.

“Crotchety” and “irascible” are both fairly rare words for a person who is in a bad mood or easily irritated.

We want a prophet, not a curmudgeon.

A “curmudgeon” is another rare word for an irritable or bitter person.

He should do more apocalyptic doom.

“Apocalyptic doom” is an expression from the bible that refers to the end of the world, when all will die in huge fires.

I could make your Beale show the highest rated show in television if you’d let me have a crack at it.

To have or take “a crack at” something is to try and do it, especially if it is difficult.

TV is show biz, and even the news has to have a little showmanship.

“Show biz” is a common expression for the entertainment business, and “showmanship” is the art of entertaining an audience.

It's straight tabloid.

In this case, "straight" means pure or completely, and a "tabloid" is a newspaper that specializes in covering famous people.

If you're going to hustle, at least do it right.

"To hustle" is to work quickly, seriously and often long hours.

I don't like hassles.

A good word for problems or obstacles that get in the way of progress.

I wouldn't rule that out entirely.

To "rule out" something is to eliminate it as a possibility.

It was a fluke; It didn't work.

A "fluke" is a good word for an event that happened once by luck, but is not likely to happen again.

Tomorrow, Howard goes back to the old format and all of this gutter depravity comes to an end.

In TV news, a "format" refers to the general organization or content of the show. A "gutter" is the part of the street on the edge where many people throw garbage, and "depravity" is a good word meaning immorality and general social decay.

You hung around here just to pitch a loony show biz idea.

"To hang around" is to wait or stay in a particular place. "To pitch" an idea to someone is to try and convince them that it has great promise or potential. "Loony" is a good word for crazy or ridiculous.

What's your scam in this?

A "scam" is a trick or way of manipulating or cheating people, though here Max uses it to mean just an interest or goal.

My little visit was a gesture made out of your stature in this industry.

A "gesture" is an act taken to show one's true feelings. "Stature" is a good word meaning reputation or esteem, usually used in a positive sense, and achieved from many years of hard work.

I was in the audience, and I had a terrible school girl crush on you...

To have a "crush on" someone is to secretly like them very much.

Son of a bitch; I got a feeling I'm being made.

Max's way of saying he feels he's being sexually used by Diana.

I don't do anything on my first date.

The type of thing an innocent girl would say to a boy when they go out for the first time, so that they boy would not try to do anything sexual.

I had six years of analysis and pretended to be sane.

In this context, “analysis” is psychological counseling, and “sane” means emotionally stable, or the opposite of insane or crazy.

My husband ran off with his boyfriend and I had an affair with my analyst, who told me I was the worst lay he ever had.

“To get laid” is crude but common slang, meaning to have sex, and thus to be a “bad lay” is to be bad at having sex!

I apparently have a masculine temperament, I arouse quickly, consummate prematurely, and can’t wait to get my clothes on and get out of that bedroom.

A classic line from Diana; “Temperament” is one’s way of acting or thinking, and in this context, “to arouse” is to get sexually excited, while “to consummate” is to climax or have an orgasm.

I seem to be inept at everything except my work.

“Inept” is a useful word meaning incompetent, unable or bad.

Middle aged man reaffirming his middle aged manhood and a terrified young woman with a father complex. What sort of script can we make out of this?

“A father complex” is a psychological term for a girl who is obsessed with her father. A “script” is the written story for a movie, and a key word in this film, since Diana is obsessed with possible TV scripts.

What about your loves, lusts and allegiances?

“Lusts” are sexual attractions, and “allegiances” are people a person is loyal to. Note that these words are usually not used as plural nouns.

***Max and Hackett fight over the future of the news division,
and soon Howard tells America that they must become angry.***

I’m killing this whole screwball angry prophet thing.

Another word for silly, foolish or completely ridiculous.

He’s sharp.....and he had everybody cracking up at the meeting.

If someone is “sharp,” they are thinking logically and clearly.

“To crack up” is a good phrasal verb meaning to laugh out loud (though it can also mean to go crazy or have a nervous breakdown).

Last night I was awakened from a fitful sleep by a shrill, sibilant faceless voice.

A “fitful” sleep is restless or uneasy. A “shrill” voice is high, sharp and unpleasant. A “sibilant” voice has a hissing sound, like a snake.

I said, “what is this, the burning bush? For God’s sake, I’m not Moses,” and the voice said to me “And I’m not God, what does that have to do with it?”

“The Burning Bush” is a story in the Bible in which Moses speaks to God, whose voice comes out of the bush.

“Because you’re on television, dummy.”

A gentle insult word for someone who is not too smart.

For pete’s sake, I’m not asking you to walk.....preaching the Armageddon.

“For pete’s sake” is a common way to start a sentence when you want to show irritation or impatience. “The Armageddon” is the story in the bible in which the forces of good and evil fight as the world ends.

I think you’re having a breakdown and require treatment.

Short for a psychological breakdown, in which people lose control of their emotional stability.

I feel vivid and flashing, as if I’ve been plugged into some great electromagnetic field.

Both words mean vibrant and filled with energy. The “great electromagnetic field” could be nature, or the entire universe.

I’ve never felt more orderly in my life;
It’s a shattering and beautiful sensation.

In this case, “orderly” means calm and organized. If something is “shattering,” it is explosive or violent, though here, Howard means it in a very positive way.

It is the exalted flow of the space-time continuum,
save it is spaceless and timeless.

The words of a crazy person, or perhaps someone on illegal drugs. “Exalted” means worthy of great praise, and “a flow” is simply the movement of liquid, such as a stream. The “space-time continuum” is a concept made famous by Einstein, in which space and time intersect.

I feel on the verge of some great ultimate truth.

To be “on the verge of” something is to be extremely close to it (though usually one is on the verge of *doing* something).

The son of a bitch is a hit. The response is sensational.

“Son of a bitch” is a crude but common term for a mean or unpleasant man, though it is often used, as here, to refer to people in general. If a person is a “hit,” they have become very popular with the public.

That crazy son of a bitch Beale has caught on!

If a person “catches on” with the public, they become very popular.

All you grave robbers think about is that he is a hit.

A “grave robber” is a person who steals bodies from a cemetery, or more generally, any immoral person willing to exploit others.

Howard Beale obviously fills a void.

A “void” is an empty space, and here, it refers to spiritual emptiness.

It looks like he may go over bigger than Mary Tyler Moore!

“To go over bigger” than somebody else is to become more popular than they are (Mary Tyler Moore was a much loved TV star of the 70s).

If you want me out of here, you’ll have to drag me out kicking and screaming.

“To drag” somebody is to pull them, usually on the ground.

You think they’ll quit their jobs for you? Not in this recession.

A “recession” is an economic down turn in which many people lose their jobs. The mid 1970s was a period of a deep recession.

It’s a big, fat big-titted hit.

Ridiculous but colorful words. “Tits” are crude slang for female breasts.

I’ll be announcing projected earnings for this network for the first time in 5 years.

“Projected earnings” is one way of saying predicted profits.

Mr. Jenson will be sitting there in his chair, rocking back and forth, and he’ll say “That’s very good, Frank, keep it up.”

Note that people “rock back and forth” when they sit in a rocking chair. If a person tells you to “keep it up,” they are telling you to keep doing what you’ve been doing (in this case, making the company profitable).

So don’t have any illusions about who is running this network.

An “illusion” is a false or distorted view of reality.

I’ll put him in a hospital before I let you exploit him like a carnival freak.

A “carnival freak” is any strange human that people would pay to see, such as a man with two heads, or a woman with a beard.

I’m going to spread this whole reeking business in every newspaper....

“To spread” news is to make sure it is heard everywhere possible, and if something “reeks,” it smells horrible or rotten.

I must make my witness. :: Sure thing, Mr. Beale...

“To make witness” are words from the bible in which people agree to express what they see as a great truth. “Sure thing” is one way of saying OK.

Things are bad. The dollar buys a nickel’s worth, banks are going bust.

A “nickel” is 5 cents, and if a bank “goes bust,” it goes out of business.

The air is unfit to breathe.

Another word for unsuitable or too polluted.

“Please, let me have my toaster, and my TV and my steel belted radials.”

A type of tire, and for Howard, a stupid symbol of consumerism.

I don't know what to do about the depression and the inflation and the Russians and the crime in the streets.

A good list of the various worries that America had in the mid 70s!

I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!!!

If you refuse to “take” something, you refuse to accept it.

One of the most famous lines in the history of the movies.

They're yelling in Baton Rouge! Son of a bitch, we've struck the mother lode!

Note that son of a bitch can be used, as here, as just a general expression of excitement. “To strike the mother lode” is to find a main source of gold or other valuable mineral (Baton Rouge is in Louisiana).

Stick your head out the window and keep yelling!

Note the verb you use when you want to see somebody's head outside of a window.

In the Nielson ratings, the Howard Beale show was listed as the 4th highest rated show of the month.....

The “Nieslon ratings” are the actual rating used to measure the popularity of TV shows.

.....surpassed only by the \$6,000,000 Man, All in the Family and Phyllis.

To be “surpassed by” is to be exceeded by, or outdone by. The names that follow are in fact three very popular shows from the 1970s.

Diana and Laureen Hobbs prepare to bring weekly terrorism to America's viewers, as Howard continues to scream the horrible truth as he sees it.

I'm Diana Christianson, a racist lackey of the imperialist ruling circles.

A “lackey” is a very negative word for a servant or worker who will do anything for their boss. “The imperialist ruling circles” is a Marxist (communist) way of describing those who control powerful nations.

I'm Laureen Hobbs, a bad-ass commie nigger.

“Bad-ass” is a crude way to describe a tough or strong person. “Commie” is a silly slang word for a communist, and “nigger” is an very racist word for a black person, though some blacks will use it among themselves.

When a network says they want to put the ongoing struggle of the oppressed masses on prime time television, I have to regard this askance.

“The ongoing struggle of the oppressed masses” is a Marxist way to refer to the struggle of working people to fight for communism and justice (in theory). “Prime time” are the hours between 8 and 10PM, when there are the most TV viewers. To “regard something askance” is to look at it with great suspicion or mistrust.

The Ecumenical Liberation Army is an ultra left sect creating political confusion with wildcat violence and pseudo-insurrectionary acts.

Lauren’s view of her radical competition; “Ultra” means extreme, and a “sect” is a tiny group, often with a powerful leader. “Wildcat violence” is unorganized violence with no particular goal or strategy.

“Pseudo” means false, so “pseudo-insurrectionary” acts are those that in Lauren’s view pretend to be revolutionary, but in fact are not.

The Eccumenicals are an undisciplined gang whose leader is an eccentric, to say the least.

An “eccentric” is a person who acts very strangely. “To say the least” is an excellent expression that you use when you say something that in fact could be said much more strongly.

We’re talking about 30-50 million people a shot, which is a bit better than handing out mimeographed pamphlets on ghetto street corners.

In this case, “30-50 million people a shot” means that many people will be watching each program. “Mimeographed” is an old word for xeroxed, or copied, and a pamphlet is a small booklet that is usually stapled together. A “ghetto” is a very poor part of a major city.

I’ll be in LA until Saturday, and I’d like to get it rolling.

LA is Los Angeles, America’s most loved city.

“To get something rolling” is to get it started.

I’m going to make a TV star out of you, just like Archie Bunker. You’re gonna be a household word.

Archie Bunker was the main character in the TV show “All in the Family,” a very popular show about a conservative working class American and his family. A “household word” is a word or name known by most people. Celebrities like Elvis are household words.

What the fuck are you talking about?

Note that “the fuck” is a crude but common addition to wh questions, used to show emotion like anger (It’s safer to ask “what the hell...?”).

Miss Mata Hari and her skeletons in the closet.

Another of Diana’s personalities for the Howard Beale show.

A “skeleton” is the bones of a human body, but “skeletons in the closet” refers to information that people want to keep secret because it might be considered scandalous.

Another segment of “vox populi.”

This is a Latin term meaning “popular vote.”

Edward George Ruddy, Chairman of the Board of UBS, died today.

The “Chairman of the Board” heads the corporate board of a company, but is not necessarily the same as the CEO (the Chief Executive Officer), who runs the company on a daily basis.

He died of a heart condition, and woe is us.

“Woe” is great sadness, but it is, strangely, used in grammatical constructions like the one above.

What’s that got to do with the price of rice?

One way of saying “What does that have to do with this?”

Because the only truth you know is what you get over this tube!

“The tube” is a slang word that refers to television, and it is a very important word for this movie.

This tube is gospel; The ultimate revelation.

“Gospel” is a religious word that means complete truth.

“Ultimate revelation” is Howard’s way of referring to truth that comes directly from God.

This tube is the most awesome, goddamn force on the whole godless world!

“Awesome” is a popular way of saying great, amazing, fantastic, etc.

Who knows what shit will be peddled for truth on this network?

Note that “shit” can refer to anything, from junk to news stories.

“To peddle” something is try and sell it on city streets.

Television is a goddamn amusement park. It’s a circus, a carnival, a travelling troupe of acrobats.

An “amusement park” is a place with many rides for kids, such as Disneyland. A “troupe of acrobats” is a group of people who walk on ropes that are high off the ground, usually in circuses.

Go to your gurus!

A “guru” is a religious leader, often of a small group of followers.

This is mass madness, you maniacs!

“Mass madness” is insanity or craziness that is effecting lots of people at the same time. “Maniac” is a great word for a crazy person, or a person who is obsessed with just one thing.

UBS was running at a break-even point.

In this context, a “break-even” point is when a business takes in just enough money to pay its expenses, but not enough to make a profit.

Negative cash flow.

This refers to the situation where a business is spending money faster than they are earning it (the opposite of positive cash flow).

The projected rate of return on invested capital.

A reference to the money that investors in a company can reasonably hope to make over a certain amount of time.

If merger is accomplished, it will become the most profitable center in the entire CCA empire.

In a business context, a “merger” is the legal combining of two or more companies (In this case, CCA and UBS).

Max and Diana begin an affair, and soon Max’s marriage falls apart.

I bumped into Sybil the Soothsayer last week.

“To bump into” a person is to see them just by chance.

So far, all that has happened has been one many splendid night.

An expression for a wonderfully romantic and enjoyable night.

His agent called and said absolute ‘nix.’ :: You can’t win them all.

“Nix” is a slang word which means no. “You can’t win them all” is a common expression that is used after a person reports that they were not as successful as they would have liked to be.

The MaoTse-tung Hour is turning into a big pain in the ass.

A crude and common expression which refers to anything that has become a difficult problem, and generally one that won’t go away.

The FBI turned up in Hackett’s office and served us with subpoenas.

“To turn up” is to arrive, often unexpectedly. “Subpoenas” are legal documents that force people to do things such as appear in a court, or turn over notes or other evidence.

We’re standing on the first amendment freedom of the press and the right to protect our sources.

The “first amendment” to the US Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of the press. “Sources” are those people who tell reporters valuable information, and who reporters insist have a right to remain unidentified (anonymous) because of the first amendment.

They’ll hit us with “Conspiracy with intent to commit a crime.”

A “conspiracy” is the coming together of two or more people, usually for the purpose of committing a crime.

Walter says we'll all wind up in federal prison.

"To wind up" somewhere is to finish there. "Federal prison" are those prisons operated by the national government, and not any of the 50 states.

Six weeks of litigation and the Mao Tse-tung hour can carry its own time slot.

"Litigation" is a legal term for the act of suing in court.

A "time slot" refers to a particular time of the day, such as 8-9 PM.

What's really bugging me now is my daytime programming.

If something is "bugging" you, it is bothering or annoying you a lot.

NBC has a lock on daytime programming with their lousy game shows.

To have a "lock on" a particular time is to dominate it. "Lousy" is a great word for bad, or more specifically, of poor quality. "Game shows" are those TV shows in which people compete for prizes.

I'm thinking of doing a homosexual soap opera. "The Dykes."

"Soap operas" are those TV shows that air during the day that deal with the tragic and complicated lives of common people.

A "dyke" is a crude word for a female homosexual, or lesbian.

"The heart rendering saga of a woman hopelessly in love with her husband's mistress."

If a story is "heart rendering," it is deeply emotional and most likely very sad or tragic. A "saga" is an interesting word for a long story or adventure. A man's "mistress" is a woman with whom he has a sexual relationship, often in exchange for financial support.

I thought it would...blow over in a week. Just a menopausal infatuation.

If something "blows over," it dies out or weakens. "Menopause" refers to that time in life when women lose their ability to have children (starting around 50). An "infatuation" is a sexual or emotional obsession with another person.

After all the senseless pain we have inflicted on each other, I'll be damned if I'll stand here and let you tell me you're in love with somebody else!

"To inflict" pain on another person is to force it on them. "I'll be damned if..." is a curious way of saying "I will not accept..."

This isn't some broad that you picked up after three belts of booze.

A "broad" is a silly slang word for a woman. "To pick up" women (or men) is to meet and talk with them, often at a place like a bar, in order to later establish a romantic or sexual relationship.

"Booze" is liquor, although "belts of booze" is rarely if ever used.

Your last roar of passion before you settle into your emeritus years.

A lion “roars,” and a “roar of passion” is a poetic expression for a great explosion of sexual desire. “Emeritus” is the honorary title given to a professor at a University who has retired after teaching many years.

Is that it? She gets the winter passion and I get the dotage.

A powerful line! “Dotage” is the condition of being old and weak.

I won't give you up easily, Max.

In this case, to “give up” a person is to let them leave in order to be with somebody else.

She's television generation; She learned life from Bugs Bunny.

The great cartoon rabbit (and a major influence on my own life).

She's very carefully devised a number of scenarios for all of us to play.

“To devise” is to plan or invent, and a “scenario” is a possible story for a movie or play.

Here we are going through the obligatory Act 2---

“Scorned wife throws peccant husband out” scene.

“Obligatory” is another word for required. “Scorned” means filled with anger and contempt, though the more common word is scornful.

“Peccant” is guilty or sinful, but this word is rarely used.

She does have one script in which I kill myself.

A “script” is the written form of a movie or play.

An adapted television version of “Anna Karenna.”

“To adapt” a book into a film is to change it in any necessary way to be able to work in the new media (“Anna Karenna” is a Russian novel).

You're in for some dreadful grief, Max.

“Dreadful” is a powerful adjective meaning horrible or perhaps painful.

“Grief” is great sadness or sorrow.

Diana and her communist TV stars work out the details of their show, and Max reveals to the world the horrible truth about corporate capitalism.

It received a 47 share. The network promptly

committed to 15 shows with an option for 10 more.

“Promptly” is another word for immediately. In this context, an “option” is a legal word for a right, but not a requirement.

There were the usual contractual difficulties.

A common expression for all lawyers that work with contracts!

“Gross proceeds should consist of all funds the sub-licensee receives, and not merely the net amount remitted.”

Typical “lawyer talk” found in a contract, meaning that the total income is considered to be what is received, and not just what is paid. Language like this is why so many people hate lawyers!

Don’t fuck with my distribution costs!

Laureen’s way of insisting that she wants to be paid for the costs of producing and sending out her TV show. The gentle words of a true “Communist businesswoman.”

I’m already deficiting 25 grand a week.

In this case, “to deficit” is to lose, though this word is never used as a verb (A deficit is the amount of money that is still needed to pay off expenses). A “grand” is a common slang word for \$1,000 dollars.

I’m paying William Morris 10% off the top.

To pay a person 10% “off the top” is to pay them as soon as money is received, before any other expenses (William Morris is a famous talent agency that represents famous actors in Hollywood).

I’m giving this turkey \$10,000 per segment, and another \$5,000 for this fruitcake.

Two funny words that are used to describe people who one considers strange, crazy or possibly stupid.

The Communist Party won’t see a nickel out of this show until syndication.

In a TV context, “syndication” refers to the selling of the show to local stations across the country, in order to air old episodes that have already been shown on national television.

You fucking fascist! Did you see the film we made of the San Marino jail breakout?

Note that there is a long and honored tradition of communists accusing each other of being “fucking fascists.” A “breakout” is an escape from a jail or prison.

You can blow the seminal prison infrastructure out your ass!

A funny but grammatically difficult insult. “Blow it out your ass” is a very vulgar and somewhat dated way of saying “fuck you,” and generally speaking, the “it” is rarely replaced by another direct object, as Laureen does here. In this case, “the seminal prison infrastructure” refers to the political organizing of prisoners. “Seminal” is a word that means seed, or the beginning of an organization, and “infrastructure” is an important word referring to physical foundations, such as streets.

I’m not knocking down my goddamn distribution charges!

“To knock down” the price of something is to reduce it.

Subsidiary rights.

A legal term referring to legal rights that one has beyond an actual book or movie, such as the right to translate it into other languages, or produce it as a play.

We all know she's brainy.

An interesting but fairly rare word for very intelligent.

Before we start digging into our chateaubriand...

"To dig into" food is to eat it with great hunger and enthusiasm.

"Chateaubriand" is a French word for a very good piece of meat.

That's our channel!

Another word for a TV station.

When one company wants to take over another company, they simply buy up a controlling share of the stock.

In most cases, to own a "controlling share" of stock in a company, you must own 50.1% of the stock.

Somebody called the Western World Funding Corporation. It is a consortium of banks and insurance companies who is buying CCA...

A "consortium" is a legal word for a combination of many businesses.

They won't tell the SEC, the FCC, the Justice Department.

The SEC is the Securities and Exchange Commission, and is responsible for regulating the sale of stocks.

They're buying it for the Saudi Arabian Investment Corporation.

An "investment corporation" just buys other companies.

Clarence, take it easy!

A very common way of telling an angry person to calm down.

All of those Arab petrol dollars are washed through Switzerland and Canada and the biggest banks in this country.

"Petrol dollars" refers to the money Arab nations made by selling oil. Money that is "washed" through various banks is hard to follow back to its original source, which makes it easier to avoid various American investment laws.

The Arabs have screwed us out of enough American dollars to buy General Motors, IBM, ITT, ATT, DuPont and US Steel.

"To screw a person out" a lot of money is to steal it from them. General Motors and the others were, and still are, some of the biggest American corporations.

I want them wading knee deep in telegrams at the White House!
 “To wade knee deep” in water is to walk through water
 (or in this case, telegrams), that is as high as your knees.

I want the CCA deal stopped now!
 A “deal” is an important word for an official agreement.

The show is an unmitigated disaster. The death knell.
 If a disaster is “unmitigated,” it is complete or absolute. A “death knell”
 is the sound that a bell makes at a funeral, in respect for the dead.

Maybe we’re overstating Beale’s clout with the public.
 “To overstate” is to exaggerate. “Clout” is a good word for influence.

By tomorrow morning, they’ll be suffocating in telegrams.
 “To suffocate” is to die from an inability to breathe.

The SEC could hold up this deal for 20 years if they wanted to.
 “To hold up” a deal is to prevent it from taking effect.

A few hours ago I was Mr. Jenson’s handpicked golden boy, the heir apparent.
 In this context, a “handpicked golden boy” is the person that a boss
 feels has the most potential to rise in the company. An “heir apparent”
 is a person who is most likely to take the position or title of a person
 who retires or leaves (in this case, head of the CCA Corporation).

He isn’t stupid enough to withdraw the #1 show on television out of pique!
 “To withdraw” a show is to cancel it. “Pique” is a rare word for anger.

That’s the wrath of God!
 “Wrath” is a good word for extreme anger or rage.

I’ll strangle him with a sash cord. Jesus!
 “To strangle” a person is to kill them by putting pressure on their throat.
 A “sash cord” is a decorative ribbon or rope.

I already booked my flight. I got the red eye.
 “To book” a flight is to reserve it. A “red eye” flight is one that flies
 between the East and West coast, arriving early in the morning.

The final revelation is at hand; I’ve seen the
 shattering vulgarizations of ultimate clarity.
 The nonsense words of a crazy person. Funny, but meaningless.

Mr. Jenson explains to Howard the nature of the Universe, and Howard explains it to all his viewers.

They tell me you're a mad man. :: Only desultorily.

In this case, a "mad man" is not angry, but crazy or insane. "Desultory" means jumping from one place to another, so the adverb here doesn't really make sense. Of course, it's being said by a crazy person.

I'm as mad as a hatter. :: Who isn't?

To be "mad as a hatter" means to be completely crazy. "Who isn't?" is a fun response to say to somebody who has just told you something amazing or interesting about themselves.

You have meddled with the primal forces of nature Mr. Beale, and I won't have it!

"To meddle" with something is to disturb it, or interfere with it. The "primal forces of nature" is Jenson's way of talking about the most basic laws of the universe, which he thinks are the laws of business! "I won't have it" is his way of saying "I won't allow it!"

It is ebb and flow, tidal gravity, it is ecological balance.

"Ebb and flow" refers to the fading and rising water level at a beach. "Tidal gravity" is the force of the moon that effects the water levels that the beach has. "Ecological" is another word for environmental.

There is only one holistic system of systems...one vast, interwoven, interacting, multi-variant multi-rational dominion of dollars!

Jenson's colorful way of saying that the whole universe is just one giant system of constantly moving dollars. "Vast" is a good word for huge, and "interwoven" means interconnected,

Marks, rubles, pounds and shekels.

The currencies of Germany, Russia, England and Israel.

The atomic, subatomic and galactic system of things today.

"Subatomic" refers to the universe of the very tiny (atoms), and "galactic" refers to the universe of the very big (galaxies).

You will atone!

"To atone" is a religious word which means to do whatever is necessary to repay for a sin or crime that was done in the past.

Am I getting through to you, Mr. Beale?

"Do you understand me, Mr. Beale?"

You...howl about America and democracy.

“To howl” is to make a loud and long cry, like a wolf or dog.

We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies.

An “ideology” is a system of political or social beliefs, such as socialism.

The world is a collage of corporations inexorably determined by the bylaws of business.

“Inexorable” is an educated word for something that can’t be stopped.

“Bylaws” are the rules that a business agrees to follow after it is created.

It has been since man crawled out of the slime.

“To crawl” is to move on hands and knees, like a baby.

“Slime” is the unpleasant sticky or muddy liquid that is produced by certain animals like fish or snails.

No war of famine, oppression or brutality.

“Famine” is mass hunger, “oppression” is the condition of being treated cruelly and “brutality” is extreme cruelty or mistreatment.

One vast and ecumenical holding company....
in which all men will hold a share of stock.

Note Jensen’s ideal dream of the world is both capitalist (a giant holding company) and socialist (in which all men hold stock).

All anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused.

“Anxieties” are great worries, and if they are “tranquilized,” they have been calmed and soothed.

I have chosen you, Mr. Beale, to preach this evangel.

“To preach” is to speak of great truths, like ministers in a church.

An “evangel” is an important religious or philosophical speech, though this word is rarely used.

That evening Howard Beale went on the air to preach the corporate cosmology of Arthur Jensen.

“Corporate” is the adjectival form of corporation. “Cosmology” is a branch of philosophy that studies the origins of the universe.

It was a radiant eruption of democracy.

“Radiant” is a nice adjective meaning glowing or shining.

An “eruption” is an explosion.

We know democracy is a dying giant, sick, decaying and politically corrupt....writhing in its final pain.

“To writhe” is to twist, curl up or squirm in great pain.

What is finished is the idea that this great country is dedicated to the freedom and flourishing of every individual in it.

“To flourish” is to grow strong, healthy and prosperous.

It’s a nation of 200,000,000 transistorized, deodorized, whiter-than-white steel belted bodies, as replaceable as piston rods.

Another of Howard’s attacks on consumer society. A “transistor” is an electronic part found in radios and TVs, “deodorant” is used to eliminate body smells, detergents advertise that they get clothes “whiter than white,” and the best car tires are “steel belted.”

A “piston rod” is a part in a car engine.

Is ‘dehumanization’ such a bad word?

A powerful word that refers to the psychological or physical process of turning people into machines or other nonhuman beings.

The whole world is becoming humanoid.

A disturbing word for a being that is part human and part machine.

Nobody cared to hear his life was utterly valueless.

A strong adverb meaning completely or totally.

I’m counting on you to talk some sense into the lunatic.

“To count on” someone is to depend on them. “To talk some sense” into a person is to try and convince them to be rational or reasonable. A “lunatic” is a good slang word for a crazy person.

A couple more weeks and the sponsors will be bailing out.

In this context, “sponsors” are the corporations that advertise on a TV show. If you “bail out” of a project, you decide to abandon or leave it.

This is a breach of contract.

A common legal expression for the breaking of an agreement.

Max separates from Diana, and soon, Diana and Frank plan the final separation between Howard and UBS....

I’m tired of all this hysteria about Howard Beale!

“Hysteria” is a condition of wild excitement in a crowd.

You’re in a morbid, middle aged mood.

A good adjective to describe a person obsessed with death and disease.

I feel guilty and conscience stricken and those things you think sentimental.

A person who is “conscience stricken” is deeply troubled by something that they have done. “Sentimental” generally means too emotional.

I'm beginning to get **scared shitless**.

A crude but excellent expression that means very scared or nervous.

You're dealing with a man who has **primal doubts**, and you've got to **cope with it**.

A person who has "primal doubts" has basic or fundamental concerns about the meaning of life. "To cope with" something is to deal with it, or at least to learn to accept it.

The Howard Beale show was down 11 points; Hysteria **swept** the network.

Note the past tense of "to sweep," here meaning to spread everywhere.

He's a **plague**, He's **small pox**, He's **typhoid**.

Three very unpleasant and potentially deadly diseases.

If we wanted **hell-fire**, we'd get Billy Graham.

A type of Christian preaching in which the audience is warned they will burn in hell if they don't accept Jesus Christ (Billy Graham is a very famous Christian preacher).

We don't want **faith healers** or **evangelists**.

"Faith healers" are those people who claim to cure sick people if they are willing to prey. An "evangelist" is a type of Christian preacher.

Full fledged messiahs don't come in bundles.

Anything that is "full fledged" is genuine and real. A "messiah" is a great religious leader. If something "doesn't come in bundles," this means it is rare and hard to find.

Let me have another **crack at** Jensen.

To have "a crack at" something is to get an opportunity, in this case to change Jensen's mind.

I don't like the way this little script of ours is **turning out**.

A very common phrasal verb which means to end or finish.

All you'll get from me is another couple months of **intermittent sex** and **recriminant** and ugly little scenes like the one we had last night.

"Intermittent" means occasional, or happening with pauses in between.

"Recriminant" is a rarely used word to describe a fight in which the two sides continue to accuse each other of bad things.

I'm sorry, you're not the worst fuck I've ever had.

Note that "fuck" can be used as a noun to describe the sexual skills of a partner. Very crude.

You don't puff or make death-like rattles.

In this case, "to puff" is to breath out quickly and with great effort.
A "rattle" is the quick shaking sound that a snake makes.

You're rather serene in the sack.

"Serene" is a good word for calm or peaceful,
and "in the sack" is another way to say in bed.

Why does a woman always think that the most savage thing
she can say to a man is to impugn his cocksmanhip.

"Savage" is another way to say terribly cruel or abusive.
"To impugn" is to criticize or attack, and "cocksmanhip" is
a funny word referring to sexual skill (since a "cock" is a penis).

I gave up comparing genitals back in the school yard.
The medical word for sexual organs.

You're being docile as hell about this.
Calm or unemotional.

You're not the boozier type, so I figure a year or two before you crack up.
A "boozier type" is a person who drinks a lot. Here, "to crack up" is to
have a nervous breakdown from too much psychological stress.

Indifferent to suffering, insensitive to joy...all of life
is reduced to the common rubble of banality.

Max's poetic way of describing Diana's obsession with TV ratings.
"Rubble" is the destruction that is left after a building has been destroyed,
and "banality" is the condition of being uninspired and dull because it is
so common and predictable.

You even shatter the sensations of time and
space into split seconds and instant replays.

"Instant replays" are the replaying of events immediately after they
happen, and is a very popular device used in Sports programming.

Virulent madness.

One way to say deadly insanity.

"Wayward husband comes to his senses, returns to his wife...
heartless young woman left alone in her arctic desolation."

"Wayward" is an educated word for unpredictable and stubborn.
"Arctic" refers to a cold and icy climate, and "desolation" is an
unhappy word for sadness and loneliness.

"Music up with a swell..."

A reference to the fact that many movies end with a sudden increase in
the sound of the accompanying music, for dramatic or romantic effect.

Mr. Jenson feels were too catastrophic in our thinking.
 In this context, “catastrophic” is another way to simply say negative, since a catastrophe is a great disaster.

I argued that this was a volatile industry.
 “Volatile” is a good word for quickly changing, or possibly explosive.

He suggested with a certain sinister silkiness that volatility in business reflected bad management.
 “Sinister” is a fun adjective that means evil or very threatening.
 In this context, “silkiness” means smoothness, though it’s never really used in this way.

That puts us in the shithouse.
 The “shithouse” is a crude way of referring to a bathroom, or more generally, any undesirable place. This is Diana’s way of saying that this puts them in a desperate situation.

The teen and 18-34 categories, which are our key core markets.
 Those parts of the market that are seen as the most important to the success of a company (in this case, teenagers and people aged 18-34).

I think Joe ought to spell it out for us.
 “To spell out” a situation is to describe it in great detail.

We’re talking 40, 45 million loss in annual revenues.
 A business expression for yearly income.

You want to know the flak I’m getting from the affiliates?
 “Flak” is a slang word for overly strong criticism or verbal abuse.

Intractable.
 Stubborn and inflexible.

What would you fellows say to an assassination?
 Another word for guys. Note that in rapid speech, fellows----->fellas.

In fact, it will make a hell of a kick off show for the season.
 The first or opening show of a new year.

We’re talking about a capital crime here; The network can’t be implicated.
 A “capital crime” is one in which the criminal can be sentenced to die for their crime (such as murder).

A fusillade of automatic rifle fire.
 A “fusillade” is the firing of many guns at the same time.

The extraordinary incident occurred in full view of his millions of viewers.
 A useful word for amazing, remarkable or beyond what is ordinary.

Network

Possible Questions for ESL Class Discussion

1. Have you seen any recent talk shows like “The Jerry Springer Show”? What would Diana think? What would Max think?
2. Is TV news just another type of entertainment? How are they the same? How are they different? Was Max too idealistic in thinking that news should be more about integrity and good journalism than about making money?
3. What do you think of Mr. Jenson’s speech to Howard? Does everything in the world really revolve around business?
4. Who was crazier; Howard or Diana? Mr. Jenson or Lauren Hobbes?
5. Do Americans really need someone like Howard to “articulate their rage”? What about in your country?
6. If you had been watching TV the night that Howard told people to yell out their anger, what you have done?
7. What does this film tell us about the “free press”?
8. Were there any characters in this film that were truly admirable?