

# The Truman Show

(Drama/Comedy) (1998)

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*"We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented."*

## Major Characters

Truman Burbank.....Jim Carrey

A 29 year old insurance salesman who has unknowingly lived his entire life on the most popular TV show in the world.

Meryl.....Laura Linney

Truman's wife on the show, who sees no difference between her "real life" and her life as Truman's wife.

Christof.....Ed Harris

The television producer who created "The Truman Show" when Truman was born, and continues to direct it.

Marlon.....Noah Emmerich

Truman's best friend for his entire life.

Lauren/Sylvia ..... Natascha McElhone

Lauren is Truman's first romantic interest, and Sylvia is the actress who plays Lauren who tries to tell Truman about the reality of his life.

Truman's mother.....Holland Taylor

Truman's TV mom. In his real life, Truman was "the first child ever to be adopted by a corporation."

Kirk.....Brian Delate

Truman's father, who Truman thought he saw drown when he was a child.

## Plot Summary

This is the story of Truman Burbank, a 29 year old insurance salesman who lives in a comfortable town called Seahaven, which is located on an island, probably off the coast of Florida. Truman is a sincere and very nice person who begins to suspect that there is something very strange going on his life, and little by little, he learns the truth: Ever since he was born, Truman has been filmed for a live television show that is broadcast 24 hours a day to the rest of the world, and thus everything and everyone that he thinks he knows is in fact part of a giant television studio designed to record his life.

Truman begins to discover the reality of his world when the television producers of "The Truman Show" begin to make silly mistakes that give Truman an idea of what is really happening. After listening to a radio broadcast that seems to be broadcasting everything he is doing, and then seeing workers who look like they're fixing his own office building as if it were part of a movie set (which it is!), Truman decides he needs to get away from Seahaven. He tells his wife and best friend that he wants to go to the island of Fiji, where the family of a girl he once liked very much had apparently moved. Thus, the producers of the show must think of every possible way to convince Truman that it would really be much better if he stayed home in Seahaven, without of course, admitting to him that his whole world is actually a giant, fake TV studio.

Eventually though, Truman becomes determined to leave this island that he has never left before, despite his horrible fear of water (which began as a child when he thought he saw his father drown in a storm). As each way off the island is mysteriously blocked---from car to bus to boat---Truman grows increasingly closer to finding out the true nature of the world around him.

### **Words and Expressions that You may not Know**

*Truman begins another day, in the prefect city of Seahaven, with his beautiful wife and wonderful job.*

While the world he inhabits is in some respects **counterfeit**, there is nothing **fake** about Truman himself.

"Counterfeit" is a fake or fraudulent imitation or copy, and usually refers to money. If something is "fake," it is not real or authentic, but an imitation (such as fake paintings).

The Truman show is a **lifestyle**. It's a **noble** life...a **blessed** life.

"Lifestyle" is an important word for a way of living that reflects certain values( such as the gay or hippie lifestyle). "Noble" means honorable, and here, "blessed" means to be filled with happiness, though it can have a more religious meaning.

**Gross!**

A cool, slang and very common word for disgusting!

Maybe just my **love handles**.

An interesting and common expression for the extra fat that people get around their hips when they eat too much.

Here's a news flash just in.

A "News flash" is a piece of news that was just received.

An aircraft in trouble began shedding parts.

"To shed" means to lose skin or covering by a natural process, such as when snakes shed their skin. "Parts" refer to pieces of objects like cars or computers, and is very common in the expression "spare parts."

That's the whole kit and caboodle.

A funny, old fashioned expression meaning "everything."

Hey, think about that policy!

An "insurance policy" is the term used when buying any type of insurance (ie...the insurance contract).

Fiji.

An island in the Pacific Ocean.

If he's in a coma, he's probably uninsurable.

The medical condition where a person is alive but unconscious for an extended period of time, due to disease or injury.

Do you have a listing for a Lauren Garland?

A "listing" is an official word for a written record.

I got a prospect in Wells Park for you to close.

In the sales business, a "prospect" is a potential customer, and the goal is "to close the sale," which is to make a sale.

You're going to lose a lot more than your teeth if you don't meet your quota.

In sales, the "quota" is the amount you are expected to sell for a given time period. It also refers to the quantity put aside or given to a particular person or group.

They're making cutbacks.

"Cutbacks" are reductions, and often used to mean a decrease in the number of people working at an organization.

It's a chef's pal!

A common and good word for friend.

It's a dicer, peeler and grater all in one!

Three useful words for the world of food. "To dice" is to cut into small cubes, "to peel" is to take off the skin, and "to grate" is to grind or rub into small pieces.

***Truman tells Marlon and Meryl that he feels the need to leave, and to see a little of the world beyond Seahaven.***

I've been thinking about **getting out**.

"To get out" is a good way of saying to go outside, or more generally, to leave.

You should try **stocking vending machines**.

"To stock" is to fill, or to equip. "Vending machines" are the large display cases that sell soft drinks and other food.

You get restless? Itchy feet? **Antsy?**

I had never heard the expression "itchy feet," but "antsy" is an excellent word for nervous, or perhaps anxious, in this case to leave or go far way in order to do something different.

Where **the hell** is Fiji?

Very common expression added in "Wh questions" in order to show surprise, excitement or other emotions.

You can't **just up and go**.

A grammatically curious little expression which means to leave.

**Bonus** time is **just around the corner**.

A "bonus" is the extra money an employee is paid for work well done, often at the end of the year. If something is "just around the corner," it is very close in either space or time.

You're **soaked**.

A useful adjective (and verb), meaning totally wet, including on the inside.

I **figured** we could **scrape together** \$8,000.

"To figure" is an interesting colloquial verb meaning to think. "To scrape together" means to gather, from various places.

We could **bum around** the world for a year on that.

"To bum around" is to wander from place to place, with no real goal.

**Mortgage** payments.

The money you owe the bank each month after borrowing money to pay for a house.

You want to be an explorer. This will pass.

"To pass" is often used to mean end, or terminate.

That's the whole ball of wax!

Another old fashioned "Trumanism" for "everything."

***Truman's past comes back to him, and reminds him why it's so difficult to leave, and yet why he feels that he must.***

Move out of the way!

If someone is "in the way," they're blocking the place where you want to go.

Sailing off into that storm.

"To sail" is to travel on the water, usually in a small sail boat.

Fixing the mower.

The tool that cuts grass.

I've been such a klutz all day.

A fun and interesting word for someone who is clumsy, or who is always getting into accidents.

I sprained my ankle

"To sprain" is to injure a ligament. Painful, and alas, common.

Let's go for a brewski.

A very slangy word for beer.

I'm a pretty dangerous character.

A "character" is a figure in a play or movie, or, in this case, a strange or odd person.

Everybody's pretending!

A critical verb for the movie. "To pretend" is to claim insincerely or falsely, though in this context, it is simply a general way to say acting.

Come on sweetie, honey.

Two common words for "dear" used among couples.

The sky, the sea, everything. It's a set. It's a show.

Here, short for a "movie set," the fake background where movie studios make films. The most famous ones are in Los Angeles.

Schizophrenia. It's an episode.

"Schizophrenia" is a horrible mental disease in which people lose track or reality. To have "an episode" of a disease is to have a bad attack of it.

I can't believe he married Meryl on the rebound.

"To rebound" is to literally bounce back. If you marry or date someone "on the rebound," you do so just after breaking up with someone else.

We've already got this on the greatest hits tape.

A tape of an artist's best loved songs, or in this case, TV shows.

***Truman hears and sees some very strange things...***

A beautiful day in paradise folks, but don't forget to buckle up.

"Folks" is an old fashioned but still used word for people, or perhaps parents. To "buckle up" refers to seat belts in a car.

Wait for the cue.

A "cue" is a signal or reminder, used often when making movies to tell actors when to begin saying their lines.

Stand by, all extras.

"Stand by" are the words used on a movie set when the director is just about ready to shoot the next scene. "Extras" are actors who have small parts in the background of a film.

Change frequencies!

A "radio frequency" is the place on the radio band where a station is located.

We're back **on the air**.

The expression used when a radio or TV or radio station is actually broadcasting.

I have an **appointment**.

The word used for a pre-scheduled, official meeting (ie...you have appointments with doctors, lawyers, etc.).

It's none of your business.

One way to say "I don't want to tell you"!

I'm on to something, Marlon.

"To be on to something" is a good expression that you use when you think you are discovering something important that you did not know before, perhaps because it was kept a secret.

You look like shit.

"You look horrible." Vulgar, but common, even among friends!

Truman, if this is one of your fantasies...

A "fantasy" is a wild dream, or an unrealistic wish.

You're going to get both our asses fired!

"If you keep acting that way, we will both lose our jobs!"

Maybe I'm being set up for something

"To set up" somebody is a wonderful but complicated phrasal verb that means to arrange to trap, or to fool." A "set up" can also mean to make somebody look like they are guilty of a crime, even if they are completely innocent.

You would haul chickens in the summer for Kaiser?

"To haul" is to transport, often by truck. Kaiser is a company.

**Just between you and me...**

An excellent way to tell the person you're speaking to that what you are saying should be kept a secret.

Here's us at Mount Rushmore.

A famous place in the state of South Dakota with the faces of famous American Presidents carved into the mountains.

And they'll be another episode of "I Love Lucy" same time tomorrow.

Another word for an individual show or program within a series.

"I Love Lucy" was a very popular TV show in the 1950s.

Tonight we present the endearing, much loved classic.

A sweet word meaning "filled with love and emotion."

Full of laughter and love....but ultimately redemption.

A very difficult word to translate!: The act of self-forgiving that comes after doing something that makes up for having done something bad before. Check a bilingual dictionary!

Trials and tribulations.

A nice expression that means great difficulties.

What's your rush?

"Why are you in such a hurry?" Common.

This cable just snapped.

"To snap" is to suddenly break into two.

The elevator just plummeted down ten flights with nonunion workers! Just monstrous.

"To plummet" is a dramatic verb meaning to fall very quickly. Here, it fell 10 "flights" of stairs, or 10 stories. "Monstrous" is used here to mean "horrible," though this is not that common.

Amputation.

Another dramatic word, meaning the surgical removal of a body part, usually an arm or leg.

She's in pre-op.

An abbreviation for pre-operation. The room where patients stay before they go into surgery.

***The need to leave becomes irresistible, and Truman at last tries to start his long journey out.***

Can you pass along a message?

"To pass along" something to someone is to give it to them.

Scalpel.

The knife that doctors use to cut during surgery.

I'm not making my primary incision.

"An incision" is a cut made by a knife, often during surgery.

I'll just let someone else tidy up.

"To tidy up" is a nice little phrasal verb meaning to clean up, or organize things.

I would like to book a flight for Fiji.

A curious but common verb when reserving or buying a ticket.

Windy City, here we come!

Chicago, Illinois is considered "the windy city."

Pensacoloa, Des Moines.

Cities in the states of Florida and Illinois.

He's not going anywhere. He has to have it out with Meryl.

"To have it out" with someone is an interesting expression meaning to argue or discuss passionately.

A Volkswagen Beetle with a dented fender.

The "fender" is the part of the car that protects it from collision, and if its "dented," it's a little damaged on the surface.

They're on a loop.

A "loop" is a string or rope that bends back on itself.

"They keep going in circles, around and around."

We need more charcoal.

The little black pieces of coal used to barbecue food.

Early bird gathers no moss, rolling stone catches the worm. Right?!

Truman's destruction of two classic English expressions:

"The early bird catches the worm" means a person who wakes up early and has lots of energy will be successful. "A rolling stone gathers no moss" means, hmm, I'm not sure what it means, but it sure is famous! Perhaps that a person who continually travels will never have a place to call home. "Moss" is green algae that grows on rocks in the ocean.

I guess were being spontaneous.

A wonderful word! If you do something "spontaneously," you do it without planning ahead, but just as soon as the idea comes to you.

What about Atlantic City?

A city in New Jersey that is famous for casino gambling.

I'm going to throw up

The phrasal verb for vomit. Unpleasant, but common.

Beautifully synchronized, don't you agree?

If something is "synchronized," it is planned to function well together, at the same time.

I don't know what got into me!

The thing to say if you do something really stupid and you want to apologize (or at least pretend like you're apologizing)

Truman, that's our turnoff.

The exit from a freeway onto city streets.

New Orleans, Mardi Gras, woooo!

New Orleans is a wonderful American City in the state of Louisiana which is famous for the "Mardi Gras," an annual festival where people sing, dance and eat lots of sausages.

We made it, Truman! We're over the bridge!

A fascinating example of the complexity of prepositions! One might think "over" means "on," yet as used by Meryl in this dramatic scene, it means "no longer on." Is language amazing, or what?!

I'm sure they're exaggerating.

"To exaggerate" is a great verb meaning to describe something in a way that is much greater than it really is.

I have my Seahaven Bank Card.

The bank card with which Truman can get money from ATMs (Automated telling machines).

Truman, looks like a leak at the plant.

A "leak" refers to the escape of a gas or liquid from a pipe or other container. A "plant" can refer to many types of places, including, as here, a nuclear power plant.

We had to shut her down.

"To shut something down" is to close it. Note that factories or other work places may be affectionately referred to as "her."

The whole area has been evacuated.

"To evacuate" an area is to force the people in it to leave because of a dangerous situation, such as a chemical leak.

***Unable to leave the island, Truman realizes  
that even Meryl is part of his problem***

Next time were going to have to file charges.

The official act of accusing someone of committing a crime.

Why do you want to have a baby with me? You can't stand me.

If you "can't stand someone," you hate or strongly dislike them.

All natural cocoa beans from the upper slopes of Nicaragua!

The "slope" is the side of a mountain.

What the hell does this have to do with anything?!

A very common expression added to "Wh questions" to show surprise, anger and other emotions.

You're having a nervous breakdown.

A psychological term referring to emotional exhaustion which is so severe that it leads to an inability to function normally.

How can anyone expect me to carry on under these conditions?

"To carry on" doing something is to continue doing what one was doing before.

It's like the whole world revolves around me.

"To revolve around" something is to continue to circle it.

You sure that's not wishful thinking?

An excellent expression to describe the opinions of people that you may in fact think are what they really want.

Who hasn't sat on the john and had an imaginary interview on "Seahaven Tonight."

"The john" is a classic colloquial term for toilet.

Everybody seems to be in on it.

A common, grammatically interesting construction: Not a phrasal verb, but two prepositions in a row, meaning to know about something that is supposed to be a secret.

Pneumonia.

A serious disease that attacks the chest and lungs.

I know that feeling, once the good things just slipped away.

"To slip away" is to leave secretly, or perhaps slowly over time.

***Truman's father is bought back to life, as  
Cristof tries anything to keep Truman on the island.***

Stand. by crane cam.

A "crane" is a large and tall machine that moves heavy objects (as well as a bird with a long neck). "Cam" is the equipment that lets a camera slide across the ground to film a scene.

Fade up the music...and now a close up.

The language of film directors: "To fade up" is to gradually increase the volume, and a "close up" is a scene where the camera is usually close to the faces of those being filmed.

I'll make it up to you, son.

A nice little expression meaning to do good things in the future that will offset bad things that were done in the past.

An entire human life recorded on an intricate network of hidden cameras.

A good word meaning complex, or with many tiny parts.

I don't know about you, but I've been on pins and needles.

An interesting expressing meaning to be anxious or nervous.

Welcome to "TruTalk," our forum for issues growing out of the show

A "forum" is a place for open discussion between many people.

Televisionary.

A clever word created for this movie. Refers to Christof, who had "vision," or creative genius, in making this TV show.

This exclusive interview.

The adjective used when a person agrees to talk only to one particular reporter or news organization.

The catalyst for the recent dramatic events.

An important word meaning "the immediate cause of."

Truman's father Kirk, and his attempts to infiltrate the show

"To infiltrate" is a powerful verb meaning to secretly enter into an organization or physical place.

We had our close calls in the past.

An excellent expression referring to those situations when a disaster or bad event *almost* took place.

A breach of security.

A "breach" is an official word for a violation, or perhaps a hole or gap.

The first intruder to be a former cast member.

An "intruder" is someone who comes in to an area even though he is clearly not wanted. The "cast" of a movie or play are those people who act within it.

I've got to say, writing Kirk back in---a master stroke.  
Another way to say "a brilliant move or decision."

Let's remind viewers of exactly why  
dad was written out in the first place.  
If a character in a movie is "written out," he is eliminated.

Finally, I came up with the concept of Kirk's drowning.  
"To come up with" something is create it, or think of it first.

When Kirk read the synopsis for the "death at  
sea" episode, he was disappointed, to say the least.  
A "synopsis" is a summary or brief version of a written  
text. "To say the least" is an excellent and common  
expression that is used when you want to suggest  
that a much stronger statement can be made and still be  
true ("Einstein was pretty smart---To say the least!").

His eagerness to leave his mother's womb.  
"Eagerness" is strong desire or enthusiasm. A "womb"  
is the place where a baby develops inside the mother.

Truman was the one who arrived on cue.  
Movie making slang for "right on time."

Enormous revenues now equivalent to the gross national product...  
An important term in economics, referring to the wealth  
that any given nation produces in a year (often referred to  
as the GNP). "Gross domestic product" (GDP) is similar.

All those staggering revenues are created by product placement.  
"Staggering" is a powerful adjective that means overwhelming.  
"Revenues" refer to income, and "product placement" is an  
increasingly popular form of advertising in which companies  
pay to have their products placed in movie scenes.

Operators are standing by.  
What every late night "infomercial" says at the end of their  
program, when trying to sell a product: "Operators are waiting  
for you to call." If you watch TV at 3am, you've heard this!

You're a liar and a manipulator.  
Someone who exploits and uses people for his own  
advantage. A very negative and powerful word.

I love to reminisce with former members of the cast.  
An interesting verb which means to talk about old times.

You think because...you flirted with him...  
"To flirt" is a widely used verb referring to when people communicate with each other in a light, romantic way.

A few minutes of airtime to thrust yourself  
and your politics into the limelight.  
"To thrust" is a verb which means to push forward, but note it often has a sexual connotation. The "limelight" is a key word which means the center of media attention or public curiosity.

Mockery.  
An object of ridicule, or a pathetic imitation of something important. A powerful word that is used often in the expression "a mockery of justice."

A vague ambition.  
An adjective which means unclear or uncertain.

What distresses you...is that Truman prefers his cell.  
"To distress" is to emotionally hurt. A "cell" can be a biological term, or as here, a reference to a prison cell.

Television's first on-air conception.  
The biological word for when a sperm and egg are united to form an embryo. An interesting concept in this context, though it seems to simply suggest TV pornography!

Well, another television milestone.  
A "milestone" is a word that means a major or unprecedented accomplishment.

How's it going? :: Vital signs are good.  
A medical expression that refers to such things as heart rate, pulse, breathing, etc.

This is about the great variable; When will death occur?  
A mathematical word that refers to something with many future possibilities or variations in outcome. This is a key concept for insurance companies.

Stabbed in the heart by the tip of a runaway beach umbrella.

"To stab" is a violent verb meaning to attack with a knife.  
A "runaway" anything is something that is moving while out of control, in this case perhaps because of the wind.

No way to guard against that kind of thing.

In this case, to "guard against" something is to protect oneself.

***Truman escapes from the  
cameras as crisis comes to Seahaven.***

What's he doing in his basement?

The bottom floor of some houses, that is actually underground.

Give me a close-up of his torso.

An anatomy term for the trunk of the human body, which does not include the arms, legs or head.

**Zoom in.**

"To zoom in" is an excellent verb meaning to bring a camera closer to what you want to see in order to make it bigger.

I got a six pack of cold brewskis with our name on them.

A "six pack" refers to those drinks which are sold in packages of six cans or bottles.

Come on, pal. Come on, buddy.

Both "pal" and "buddy" are used to mean friend, though be aware that both can also be used sarcastically among people who certainly do not consider themselves friends.

Come out, come out, wherever you are.

What children say when they are playing the game "hide and seek" and they want their friends to show where they have been hiding themselves.

Cut transmission!

In this context, meaning "stop broadcasting the TV show!"

Give me the remote.

Short for "remote control," the wonderful little box that allows you to change TV channels without moving your lazy bones.

Just find the son of a bitch!

Crude, but common, for bastard, jerk, creep, etc.

Get some flashlights. This guy's not going to glow in the dark.

"Flashlights" are the portable light bulbs that you need when the electricity goes out. "To glow" is to shine, or give off light.

The media is having a feeding frenzy with this

To be "in a frenzy" is to be acting with extreme excitement or emotion. This expression refers to the intense behavior of reporters when they discover a sensational story.

Every network has a pirated shot of Marlon.

"A stolen or inappropriately taken picture."

The sponsors are threatening to rip up their contracts.

The companies that pay to advertise on a TV show, or in the case of The Truman Show, to pay for "product placements."

Sweep the harbor.

You can "sweep" the floor with a broom, or in this case, move powerful lights across an area while looking for something.

The lighthouse camera is up.

A "lighthouse" is the tall building in the ocean that ships look for when trying to figure out where they are in relation to land. If anything mechanical is "up," it likely means functioning.

***Truman fights his creator in his most  
courageous attempt to find the truth.***

Resume transmission.

Another way to say "continue" after something has been temporarily stopped.

I got two to one he doesn't make it

Whenever people use two numbers in an "x to y" type of expression, they usually mean that if they were gambling, they would consider this the odds of something happening.

I need you to talk to the guys on the ferry.

A type of ship that usually carries people back and forth between two places on the opposite sides of a body of water.

**The bottom line** is that they can't drive the boat; They're actors!  
 A useful and common expression that means  
 "the simple and most important fact."

We're going to be accessing the weather program now.  
 "To access" is one of those abstract verbs that can mean to  
 get, use, reach or possibly obtain. In this context, a "program"  
 probably refers to a computer software program.

Enter in the coordinates now.  
 An interesting word for bits of information,  
 including for physical location.

Capsize him.  
 "To capsize" is what happens to a boat if it turns over in  
 the water. Rarely used as a transitive verb, but there it is.

Tip him over.  
 "To tip over" someone is to push them so that they'll fall over.

He's going to drown and he doesn't even care.  
 "To drown" is to die in water by not being able to breath.

The same lies, the same deceit.  
 A nice little word meaning misrepresentation or falsehood.

Say something, God damn it...You're live to the whole world.  
 A vulgar but common way of expressing anger. It's much safer to  
 eliminate "God" and just say "dam it." The second sentence means  
 "the whole world is watching."

Where's the TV Guide?  
 The most widely read magazine in the United States (!),  
 devoted completely to your local television program schedule.

# **The Truman Show:**

## **Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion**

1. Is Christof an immoral person? Even if you could show that Truman was probably a happier person in Seahaven than most people are in the "real world"?
2. Do you think the technology to make "The Truman Show" will ever be possible? Is it already?
3. Is the "right to privacy" a controversial issue in your country?
4. If you were hired as an actor on "The Truman Show," would you try to tell Truman about the real world?
5. If Truman had died on the boat during the computer generated storm, would Cristof had been guilty of murder?



