

Psycho

(Drama) (1960)

© 2000 by Raymond Weschler

Major Characters

- Norman Bates.....Anthony Perkins
A friendly but somewhat strange young man who runs a secluded motel in Southern California, and who is, apparently, totally crazy (“Psycho” is a slang word---adjective and noun---for a crazy person).
- Marion Crane.....Janet Leigh
An attractive young secretary in Phoenix, Arizona, who apparently decides to steal \$40,000 dollars in cash from her boss’ client in order to quit her job and be with her secret boyfriend in California.
- Sam Loomis.....John Gavin
Marion’s secret boyfriend, a divorced businessman who runs a hardware store in the small town of Fairvale, California.
- Lila Crane.....Vera Miles
Marion’s younger sister who begins to look for Marion when she is reported missing.
- Milton Arbogast.....Martin Balsam
A private detective hired by Marion’s boss to help look for her.
- George Lowery.....Vaughn Taylor
Marion’s boss, who runs an office that sells property.
- Tom Cassidy.....Frank Albertson
A wealthy and unpleasant businessman who gives Marion \$40,000 in cash to put in the bank after he buys a house with Mr. Lowery’s help.
- Caroline.....Patricia Hitchcock
A coworker of Marion’s (Note that Patricia Hitchcock is the daughter of Alfred Hitchcock, this film’s legendary director).
- Sheriff Chambers.....John McIntyre
The head police officer in the town of Fairvale, who agrees to help Sam and Lila find Marion.
- Dr. Richmond.....Simon Oakland
A psychiatrist who is employed by the police to help explain what is in the heads of various criminals.

Plot Summary

This film starts out as the story of Marion Crane, a young and attractive secretary in Phoenix, Arizona, who is having an affair with Sam Loomis, a divorced man who runs a hardware store in Fairvale, California, a few hours away from Phoenix. One day Marion's boss asks her to put \$40,000 in cash into a bank account, and although she is a fine citizen who has probably never broken the law before, she suddenly finds herself a prisoner of her own desires. Thus, she appears to steal the money and to leave for California, in order to be with Sam.

In fact, this film is not really as much about Marion as it is about Norman Bates, the kind but strange manager of an isolated motel that Marion meets on her way to Fairvale. Norman's motel--The Bates Motel--- rarely gets customers anymore since the main highway was moved away, but Marion accidentally gets off the highway, and decides to spend one rainy night there before going to Fairvale the next day. That was a mistake.....

When Marion's boss discovers that Marion is missing, he hires a detective named Arbogast to search for her, and in the meantime, Marion's worried sister Lila also goes looking for her. Both end up at the hardware store of Sam Loomis, who seems to know nothing about where Marion could be. Soon, Sam, Lila and Arbogast begin their search for her. In the process, all three enter the deeply disturbing world of Norman Bates, one of the truly great psychopaths (crazy people) in the history of American film.

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

***Marion and Sam dream of a future together,
but soon she's back at her boring old job.***

I better get back to the office; These extended lunch hours are giving my boss excess acid.

Marion's way of saying her boss is getting so upset he's getting stomach pains. "Excess acid" is too much of a burning chemical in the stomach.

Why don't you call your boss and tell him you're taking the rest of the afternoon off?

"To take off" from work is to leave during normal job hours.

Well, you could laze around here a while longer.

"To laze around" is to relax and do nothing in particular. A "laze" is a lazy person, but the more common slang word is slacker.

Checking out time is 3pm.

Today, one says "check out" time (When patrons must leave a hotel).

I've heard of married couples who deliberately spend an occasional night in a cheap hotel.

A good alternative word for intentionally, or on purpose.

What do we do instead? Write each other lurid love letters?

A good little adjective meaning shocking, or perhaps disgusting.

In my mother's house, with my sister's picture on the mantel, and my sister helping me broil a big steak for three.

A "mantel" is the shelf above a fireplace. "To broil" food is to cook it under a direct flame, such as at the bottom of an oven.

Whenever it's possible, I want to see you... under any circumstances, even respectability.

"Circumstances" are the conditions or facts that influence a situation. If a situation is "respectable," it is appropriate and not embarrassing.

It require patience, temperance, and a lot of sweating out.

"Temperance" is self-control or emotional stability. "To sweat out" a difficult situation is to endure it, but as a phrasal verb without a direct object, here meaning here to work hard, it is no longer used.

I sweat to pay off my father's debts, and he's in his grave.

A "grave" is a piece of land where dead people are buried.

I sweat to pay off my ex-wife's alimony, and she's living on the other side of the world somewhere.

"Alimony" is the money that a man is ordered to pay monthly to his ex-wife after they are legally divorced or separated.

A couple years and my debts will be paid off; If she ever remarries, the alimony stops.

"To pay off" a debt is to finish paying what is owed.

I haven't even been married yet. :: But when you do, you'll swing.

A very dated way of saying to have a good time. To "swing" literally means to move and back and forth from a fixed point.

And live with me in a storeroom, behind a hardware store in Fairvale?

A "storeroom" is a room for storing or housing things, and a "hardware store" sells goods for homes and gardens, such as tools, plumbing and heating equipment, etc.

You want to cut this off, go out and find somebody available?

"To cut off" a relationship is to stop it.

He's lunching with a man who's buying the old Harris street property. The old lease man.

“To lunch” is a rarely used verb today. A “lease” is a type of rental agreement for property (though used here to describe a man).

Headaches are like resolutions---you forget them as soon as they stop hurting.

A “resolution” is a promise to oneself to do something in the future, such as to quit smoking (“New Year’s resolutions” are common).

Teddy was furious when he found out I’d taken tranquilizers.

“Furious” means extremely angry. “Tranquilizers” are pills that are used to relax or calm people.

Your sister called to say she’s gone to Tucson.

The second biggest city in Arizona, an hour South of Phoenix.

You girls ought to get your boss to air condition you up.

“Air conditioning” is a system to cool air, but the phrasal verb above is no longer ever used.

Marion, will you get the copies of that deed ready for Mr. Cassidy?

A “deed” is a legal document that shows ownership of a building or a piece of land.

Come on, Tom, let’s go.

The most versatile phrasal verb in English, often taking on the meaning of the words that surround it. Here, a way to say “hurry up!”

Do you know what I do about unhappiness? I buy it off.

To “buy off” a person is to pay them so that they’ll be satisfied, though hear Cassidy uses it with unhappiness, meaning that money can prevent it.

Are you unhappy? Uh, not inordinately.

An interesting word meaning very, extremely or past normal limits.

Count’em. :: I declare!

Note that “count them”----> “count’em” in rapid speech. “I declare” is a very old-fashioned way of expressing surprise or shock.

Tom, a cash transaction of this size is most irregular.

A “cash transaction” is a business deal paid for in cash, as opposed to with a check. If an action is “irregular,” it is unusual or rare.

Put it in the safe deposit box in the bank, and we’ll get him to give us a check on Monday instead.

A box that is physically inside a secured area of a bank, where customers often keep their valuable possessions, such as jewelry.

He was **flirting** with you; I guess he must have noticed my wedding ring.
 “To flirt” with someone is to behave in a playful
 or lightly romantic way in order to attract their attention.

Do you feel **ill**?
 Another word for physically sick.

What you need is a weekend in Las Vegas---the **playground** of the world.
 A big piece of ground for playing sports or other games at school.

Aren't you going to take the pills? They'll **knock** that headache **out**.
 “To knock out” a headache is to eliminate it, and to knock out
 a person is to hit them so hard they fall unconscious, as in boxing.

I guess I'll go home and put this in the
 bank, and then go home and **sleep it off**.
 “To sleep off” a headache is to sleep
 as long as it takes to make it go away.

***Marion finds herself with a lot of money, and thus decides to
 leave her old life behind in order to be with Sam in California.***

Marion, what **in the world** are you doing up here?
 This curious expression is inserted into questions
 in order to show emotion such as surprise or anger.

I almost had an accident from sleepiness....so I intended to **pull over**.
 “To pull over” a car is to stop on the side of the road.

Am I acting as if there's anything wrong? :: **Frankly**, yes.
 A great little word meaning “to be totally honest,” which is used
 when you are about to say something that could be offensive.

May I see your **licensee**?
 The usual way a policeman refers to a driver's licensee.

There's an old **saying**; The first customer of the day is always the most trouble.
 A “saying” is another word for expression or a well known statement.

But I'm in no mood for it, so I'm going to treat
 you so **fair and square** that you won't have one reason....
 To treat a person “fair and square” is to treat them
 fairly, honestly and with respect, especially in business.

You can do anything **you have a mind to**. **Sick of the sight** of it, huh?

To have “a mind to” do something is a strong desire or wish. To be “sick of the sight” of something is to never want to look at it again.

Have a look around and see if there’s something that strikes your eyes.
If something “strikes your eyes,” it attracts or interests you.

I’ll have my mechanic give yours the once-over.
“The once-over” is a very slangy way of referring to a quick look or inspection, in this case of a car, to make sure that it has no problems.

Go ahead, spin it around the block.
“To take a spin around the block” is to drive a car around to see how well it drives. A city “block” is a set of building or land surrounded by streets.

Well, this is the first time the customer ever high-pressured the salesman.
“To high-pressure” a person is to try and convince them to do something, such as to buy a car. “To pressure” is much more common.

I figure roughly, your car plus \$700.
In this context, “to figure” is to estimate or guess, and “roughly” means approximately, or more or less.

I take it that you can prove that car is yours.
In this case, to “take it” means to believe, assume or accept as true.

I mean an out of state licensee---You got your pink slip?
Note that driver’s licenses are issued or granted by the individual states, and not the federal government. A “pink slip” is the official document that proves you own a car (though today, it’s often not pink).

I believe I got the necessary papers.
A reference to official documents such as licenses, pink slips, etc.

I think you better take it for a trial spin---I don’t want any bad word of mouth about California Charlie.
A “trial spin” is a test drive of a car. “Word of mouth” refers to the passing of information from one person to the next, and is often considered a critical form of free advertising.

Can’t we just settle this?
“To settle” a business deal is to agree on price and other conditions.

It’s not that I don’t trust you, but....
A polite way of telling a person “I don’t trust you...”

She looked like a wrong one to you? :: Acted like one.
A very dated way of referring to a person who looked suspicious.

Buzz me the minute she comes in.

A slangy and still used way of saying phone (as an imperative verb).

No, I haven't the faintest idea. As I said, I last saw your sister when she left this office on Friday.

"To not have the faintest idea" is to have no idea or guess at all.

Oh, for heaven's sake, a girl works for you for 10 years, you trust her.

A common expression to show emotion such as frustration or anger.

Well, I ain't about to kiss off \$40,000.

"To kiss off" something is a slangy way of saying to accept that it is lost and gone forever ("Ain't" is a very ungrammatical way of conjugating the verb to be---You should avoid using it).

I'll get it back, and if any of it's missing, I'll replace it with her fine flesh.

"Flesh" is a medical word for skin. This is Cassidy's way of saying that he'll make Marion pay back any money that she has stolen.

We'll track her, never you doubt it!

"To track" a person is to follow the markings they have left behind in order to find them. "To doubt" a person is to not believe them.

You checked with the bank? :: They never laid eyes on her.

To "lay eyes" on a person is a fancy way of saying to see them.

You trust her?! Hot creepers, she sat there while I dumped it out.

"Hot creepers" is a ridiculous and never used way of saying "Oh, my god!," in order to show strong emotion. To "dump" something out of a bag or other container is to let it fall out quickly.

Marion checks into the Bates Motel, gets to know the curious Norman Bates, and decides to take a shower....

Gee, I'm sorry. I didn't hear you in all of this rain.

A meaningless filler word, often used at the beginning of sentences.

We have 12 cabins, 12 vacancies.

A "cabin" is usually a tiny wooden house, though here it refers to room's in Norman's motel. A "vacancy" is an available room.

Oh, I thought I had gotten off the main road.

The primary or principal street or highway in an area.

There is no sense dwelling on our losses; We just keep lighting the lights and following the formalities.

There is “no sense” in doing something means that there is no reason to do it. “To dwell” on something means to continually think or talk about it. “Formalities” are usual actions required by rule or custom, such as changing the bed sheets in a hotel.

Your home address. Oh, just the home town will do.

In this context, a way of saying that will be sufficient or enough.

There’s a big diner about 10 minutes down the road, just outside of Fairvale. 15 miles.

A “diner” is a small restaurant, usually right by a major road.

A “mile” is a unit of measurement, about 1,600 meters.

Boy, it’s stuffy in here.

“Boy” is another meaningless word often used at the beginning of sentences. If a room is “stuffy,” the air is heavy and not fresh.

There’s hangers in the closet and stationary with “Bates Motel” printed on it, in case you wanna make your friends back home feel envious.

“Hangers” refer to clothes hangers, for hanging clothes in closets.

“Stationary” refers to paper (as well as goods such as pencils and pens).

“Envious” means to be jealous of a person’s good fortune. Note that “want to” -----> “wanna” in rapid speech.

If you want anything, just tap on the wall.

“To tap” means to strike or hit gently.

I don’t set a fancy table, but the kitchen is awfully homey.

“To set a fancy table” means to set up a dining table with expensive or elaborate silverware, glasses, etc. “Awfully” is a widely used adverb meaning very, and “homey” means pleasant, like a nice home.

OK, you get yourself settled.

In this context, to get settled means to wash, put clothes away, relax, etc.

I’ll be back as soon as it’s ready, with my trusty umbrella.

A sweet adjective of affection which means reliable or dependable.

I won’t have you bringing strange young girls in for supper!

An old-fashioned word for dinner.

By candle light, I suppose, in the cheap erotic fashion... of young men with cheap erotic minds?

A “candle” is a thin stick of wax with a string at the end which burns for light. “Erotic” is a dangerous adjective referring to sexual desire.

Oh, I refuse to speak of disgusting things because they disgust me.

A great adjective (and noun) meaning repulsive or very unpleasant.

Go tell her that she won't be appeasing her ugly appetite with my food or my son.

"To appease" means to try and satisfy, especially by accepting demands.
An "appetite" is a desire for food, or in this case, for sex.

Or do I have to tell her because you don't have the guts?!

"Guts" are literally stomach intestines, though here it means courage.

My mother, uh, what is the phrase? She isn't quite herself today.

A "phrase" is an expression or saying. If a person "isn't themselves," they are acting strangely, or differently than they normally do.

You shouldn't have bothered; I really don't have much of an appetite.

"To bother" to do something is to go to the trouble of doing it.

As long as I fixed the supper, you may as well eat it.

A way of saying "should." Note that "might as well" is more common.

Eating in an office is just too officious; I have the parlor back here.

"Officious" is an educated word meaning too eager in offering services. A "parlor" is a room set aside for business, reading or other functions.

You're very kind.

A sweet word for nice or gentle.

The expression "eats like a bird" is really, uh, a falsity.

If a person "eats like a bird," they eat very little.

A "falsity" is a rarely used word for a lie or falsehood.

Birds really eat a tremendous lot.

"Tremendous" means great in size or degree.

My hobby is stuffing things---you know, taxidermy.

A "hobby" is something that a person enjoys doing in their free time.

"To stuff" something is to fill it with some material, such as cotton.

"Taxidermy" is the bizarre hobby of stuffing dead animals.

I hate the look of beasts when they're stuffed.

A "beast" is any animal, especially a big and dangerous one.

You know, foxes and chimps.

A fox is a dog-like wild animal, and a chimp is an animal that looks fairly close to a monkey.

Birds look good when they're stuffed because they're passive to begin with.

If a person (or animal) is "passive," they are usually gentle and accept what is done to them without fighting back.

It's a strange hobby. Curious.

Odd, strange or bizarre.

It's cheap, really. You know, needles, thread, sawdust.

"Needles" are small metal and pointed instruments for sewing.

"Thread" is a fine string of cloth, used in sewing. "Sawdust" is dust made from pieces of wood that have been sawed.

The chemicals are the only thing that cost anything.

Any substance or element produced by chemistry, such as insect poisons or different types of gasoline.

It's more than a hobby. A hobby should pass the time, not fill it.

Norman's way of explaining how much he loves stuffing birds.

I run the office, tend the cabins and grounds, and...do errands for my mother.

"To tend" to something is to take care of it. In this case, "grounds" refer to the property around a building. "Errands" are things one needs to do outside the house, such as buying groceries or getting a car fixed.

Do you go out with friends? :: Well, a boy's best friend is his mother.

One of the greatest lines in this movie!

You've never had an empty moment in your life, have you? :: Only my share.

In this case, an "empty moment" would be a time without great desire, activity or focus. "Only my share" is Marion's way of saying she has as much unhappiness (or emptiness) as anyone else.

Where are you going?.....I didn't mean to pry.

"To pry" into the affairs of another person is to try and find out things about their personal lives (To pry open a door is to force it open).

People never run away from anything.

To go away or leave, often as a way to hide.

We're all in our private traps, clamped in them, and none of us can ever get out.

If a person is "clamped down," they are stuck or physically forced tightly against something else. However, this is rarely used.

We scratch and claw....only at the air and each other.

"To scratch" is to try and stop an itch by rubbing or tearing with your fingers. "To claw" is to scratch, pull or violently seize or take.

And for all of it, we never budge an inch.

"To budge" is to move just slightly. An "inch" is a unit of measure about the length of a person's thumb or pinky finger.

Sometimes we deliberately step into these traps.

A device used to capture an animal.

I don't mind it anymore.

"It doesn't bother me anymore."

I feel like I 'd like to go up there and curse her
and leave her forever. Or at least defy her.

"To curse" somebody is to call upon a god or spirit to bring them bad fortune or misery. "To defy" a person is to refuse to do what they order you to do.

She had to raise me when my father died. I was only
four and it must have been quite a strain for her.

A "strain" is a feeling of tension or great pressure.

He talked her into building this motel; He could've talked her into anything.

"To talk a person into" doing something is a common way of saying to convince them to do it.

A son is a poor substitute for a lover.

A "substitute" is an alternative or replacement.

Another one of Norman's great observations.

Who would look after her? She'd be alone up there.

In this context, to "look after" a person is to take care of them.

Wouldn't it be better if you put her some place?

:: You mean an institution?! A Madhouse?!

In this context, an "institution" is a insane asylum, or any place where mentally disturbed people are housed. A "madhouse" is a slang term for such a place.

I didn't mean to sound uncaring.

One way of saying insensitive or unconcerned.

The laughing and the tears and the cruel
eyes studying you! My mother, there?!

"Cruel eyes that study" is Norman's poetic way of describing people who stare at others (To stare is to keep looking at).

I meant well. :: People always mean well.

"To mean well" is to wish for the best for someone in your heart.

They cluck their thick tongues and shake
their heads and suggest....oh so very delicately....

"To cluck" is to make the sound a chicken makes. To do something "delicately" is to do it with great care, concern or sensitivity.

It's not as if she were a maniac, a raving thing....

A “maniac” is a completely crazy or insane person, and “to rave” is to talk loudly, quickly and wildly. A common term is “a raving maniac.”
Note the wonderful use of the subjunctive tense (“as if she were...”)!

She just gets a little **mad** sometimes.

Note that “mad” means both angry, and as here, crazy.

I stepped into a private trap back there and I’d like to go back and try to pull myself out of it.

Marion’s way of saying that she would like to give back the money before she gets herself in even deeper trouble.

Lila, Sam and Arbogast get to know each other, and soon Arbogast finds himself in Norman Bates’ mysterious and dangerous world.

They tell you it’s guaranteed to **exterminate** every insect in the world, but they do not tell you whether it’s painless.

“To exterminate” is a powerful verb meaning to kill an entire group of people or species of animal or insect.

If you are in this together, it’s none of my business.

To be “in” on a plan is to be a part of it. This is Lila’s way of wondering if both Sam and Marion had worked together to steal the money.

Let’s all talk about Marion, **shall** we?

In American English, “should” has generally replaced “shall,” though it’s still occasionally used in tag questions such as this one.

Who are you, **friend**? :: My name is Arbogast, friend.

The use of “friend” to address a stranger is something I’ve never heard, but there it is! However, people do still use “buddy” in this way.

You better tell me what’s going on and tell me fast. **I can take just so much**.

Sam’s way of saying he can only accept so much uncertainty or worry before he starts to go crazy or get extremely angry.

Now **take it easy**, friend.

A very common way of saying calm down (as well as goodbye!)

Sam, they don’t want to **prosecute**, they just want the money back.

“To prosecute” is a legal term which means to officially charge or accuse a person with a crime. In reality, the state is the prosecutor, but a victim’s wishes can influence what the state decides to do.

Did you come up here on just a **hunch** and nothing more?

A “hunch” is an excellent word for a belief that is based on a feeling or intuition, instead of known facts.

All I want to do is see Marion before she gets into this too deeply.

Note you “get into trouble” very deeply, or just a little.

Did you check Phoenix? Maybe she had an accident or a holdup?

A “holdup” can mean a delay caused by a problem, though today most people would only use it to refer to a bank robbery.

We’re always quickest to doubt people who have a reputation for being honest.

“To doubt” a person is to not trust or believe them. An interesting line from a private investigator, who is trained to be suspicious.

She’s not back there with the nuts and bolts, but she’s in this town somewhere.

“Nuts and bolts” are the small metal tools that fasten or hold things together. Hardware stores usually carry huge amounts of them.

The last two days I’ve been to so many hotels my eyes are bleary with neon.

“Bleary” is a word used to describe eyes that are red from being tired, and therefore cannot see clearly. “Neon” refers to the type of bright colored lights found on the signs of Las Vegas casinos.

This is the first place that looks like it is hiding from the world.

Arbogast’s way of saying that the Bates Motel is located in a place where few people would ever see it.

Today is linen day; I always change the beds once a week, whether they’re being used or not.

“Linen” refers to bed sheets, table cloths and clothes made from this material. “To change the beds” is to change the sheets on them.

I hate the smell of dampness. It’s such a, uh, I don’t know, creepy smell.

If something is “damp,” it is wet. “Creepy” is a great adjective meaning very unpleasant in a scary sort of way (Bats flying at night are creepy, and of course, so is Norman Bates!)

I’ve been trying to trace a girl that’s been missing for about a week now from Phoenix.

“To trace” a person is to try and find them by following their footsteps or other markings (One way of saying to track).

Do you mind looking at this picture before committing yourself?

“To commit” to an opinion or belief is to decide to stick to it or keep it. Note that a person can also commit to another in a relationship.

She may have used an alias; Marion Crane’s her real name.

An “alias” is a false name that people use to hide their true identity.

I don't even bother with guests registering anymore; One by one, you drop the formalities.

In the US, it is a law that hotel guests be officially registered, but here Norman decided it wasn't worth it since there were so few guests.

I shouldn't even bother cleaning the sheets, but old habits die hard.

A good expression meaning that people don't like to change what they are used to doing. A "habit" is a behavior, such as smoking or chewing one's fingernails, that a person continues to do over and over again.

Marie, Marion, Samuals. Her boyfriend's name is Sam.

Arbogast realized that "Marie Samuals" was an alias for Marion, since Marion's boyfriend is Sam (as in "Samuals"!).

Was she in disguise by any chance?

If a person is "in disguise," they are wearing clothes, makeup or something else that hides their true identity. "By any chance" is a alternative way of saying a possibility.

I'm making a mental picture in my mind.

An image in one's head, often made by remembering a past experience.

To tell you the truth, I do mind. You see, if it doesn't jell, it isn't aspic, and this ain't jelling.

If you do "mind" something, this means it bothers you. "To jell" is to take shape or become firm or strong, and is used when referring to plans or ideas in general. "Aspic" is a food inside a jelly dish mold, but this word is rarely used, and never in this way.

If I wanted to check the cabins, all 12 of them, I would need a warrant, wouldn't I?

A "warrant" is an official legal order signed by a judge which gives the police the right to search a person's house or other property.

Oh, that must be my mother. She's an invalid.

An "invalid" is a very weak or sick person who mostly stays in bed.

Let's just say for the sake of argument she wanted you to gallantly protect her.

To say something "for the sake of argument" is to say it in order to make a point, even if what is said is actually not true. "Gallantly" is a dramatic adverb meaning courageously, or perhaps with great spirit.

You wouldn't be made a fool of. :: I'm not a fool.

A "fool" is a silly person that can be easily tricked or manipulated. "To make a fool of oneself" is a very common expression.

This is not a slur on your manhood.

A "slur" is an unfair or hostile remark. "Manhood" is the condition

of being a man, but it strongly implies courage, strength, etc.

Can I talk to your mother? :: No, as I told you, she's confined.
If a person is "confined," they are unable to move.

There might be some hint that you missed out on.
A "hint" is a fact or small piece of evidence that can help to solve a crime or other mystery. "To miss out on something" is to miss it, or in this case, to fail to notice it.

Sick old women are usually pretty sharp.
A person who is "sharp" is mentally alert or quite smart.

I won't disturb her.
"To disturb" a person is to bother or trouble them.

You sure would save me a lot of leg work if you'd let me talk to her.
"To save" a person a lot of work is to make it so that they don't have to do it. "Leg work" is the act of going to many different places in order to finish the job you are working on.

This young fella who runs the place said she just spent the night.
A "fellow" is a guy; "fellow" ----> "fella" in rapid speech. "To run" a business like a hotel is to be the person who is in charge of it.

I'm sure I got all there was to get; I just have to pick up the pieces from here.
This is Arbogast's way of saying he thinks he has all the necessary information, and now he has to try and understand what it all means.

Sam and Lila grow impatient waiting for Arbogast, and turn to Sheriff Chambers for answers to the mystery of Norman Bates.

Let's sit still and hang on, OK?
In this case, two ways of saying to wait and be patient.

Bust in on Arbogast and the old lady? Maybe shake them up?
"To bust in on" a person is to dramatically surprise them, perhaps by quickly forcing a door open to get to them. "To shake up" a person is to scare or startle them.

That wouldn't be a wise thing to do. :: Patience doesn't run in my family.
"Wise" can be an alternative to smart, or in this case, prudent or reasonable. If a personality trait like patience does not "run in the family," this means parents and more distant ancestors never had it.

One of us should be here in case he's on the way.

If a person is "on the way," they are in the process of travelling to their destination.

No Arbogast, no Bates. Only the old lady at the house.

A colloquial way to say that neither Arbogast or Bates is there.

Maybe he doesn't have a definite lead :: Sam, he had called when he had nothing but a dissatisfied feeling.

A "definite lead" in a crime is an important fact or other evidence that will help solve it. "Dissatisfied" is unsatisfied, or perhaps unhappy.

Let's go see Al Chambers, our sheriff around here.

A "sheriff" is the head of a police department.

There's this private detective helping; We got a call from this detective and he had traced her...

A "private detective" is another term for an investigator, who helps people solve crimes or find people. They can be called a "Private I."

She left Phoenix a week ago without a trace.

A footprint or other marking that shows where a person has been.

I'm sorry if I seem anxious.

An important word meaning worried, nervous or troubled.

I think what's wrong is your private detective. I think he got himself a hot lead as to where your sister was going.

An important fact or piece of evidence.

He called you to keep still while he took off after her and the money.

"To take off after" a person is to go out and try and find them.

He was out there when you were there; He just wasn't answering the door in the dead of night like some people do.

A poetic way of saying in the middle of the night.

This fellow lives like a hermit.

A "hermit" is a person who lives alone and rarely talks to other people.

Norman Bates' mother has been dead and buried in Greenlawn cemetery for the last 10 years.

A place where dead bodies are buried.

It's the only case of murder and suicide on Fairvale ledgers.

An accounting or other type of book that has official records.

Mrs. Bates poisoned this guy she was involved with when she found out he was married, and then she took a helping of the same stuff herself.

In this case, to be “involved with” a person is to be romantically involved. A “helping” of something is a small amount, and “stuff” is material of any kind, from food to chemicals.

Strychnine. An ugly way to die.

A very powerful type of poison.

I called and pounded, but she just ignored me.

“To pound” on a door is to bang or hit with great force.

I’m sorry boy, but you do manage to look ludicrous when you give me orders.

“To manage to do” something is to be able to do it. “Ludicrous” is a useful adjective meaning completely ridiculous or foolish.

No, I will not hide in the fruit cellar. You think I’m fruity, huh?

A “cellar” is the bottom or underground level of a building, in this case used to house fruit. “Fruity” is a dated slang word for strange or odd.

This is my room and no one will drag me out of it...least of all, my big, bold son.

“To drag” something is to pull it on the ground. “Least of all” is one way of saying especially not. “Bold” means brave and adventurous.

Just for a few days!? In that dark, dank fruit cellar!?

“Dank” is a good little word meaning wet and cold.

Wonderful sermon today.

A speech or talk given as part of a service in a church.

Just what he told your detective----She used a fake name.

A “fake” name is a false one that is used to hide a true identity.

You must have seen an illusion, Sam. I know you’re not the-seeing-illusions -type, but no woman was there and I don’t believe in ghosts.

An “illusion” is something that is seen that in fact does not really exist (like an oasis in the desert, seen by those dying of thirst). Note the use of the long adjectival phrase before the word type.

You want to come by my office and report a missing person and a theft, that’s what you want to do.

A “theft” is an act of stealing.

The sooner you drop this in the lap of the law, that’s the sooner you stand a chance of your sister being picked up.

“The lap of the law” is a poetic way of saying the police (A “lap” is the part of the leg from the knee upward, when a person is sitting). In this case, to “pick up” a person is to find and catch them.

Sam and Lila arrive at the Bates Motel to see what Norman knows about Marion, Arbogast and the missing money.

We're going to register as man and wife and we're going to get shown a cabin and then we're going to search every inch of the place, inside and out.

An "Inch" is a unit of measurement, about the length of a thumb.

To search a place "inside and out" is to look everywhere possible.

I wonder where Norman Bates does that hermiting.

Though a "hermit" is a well-known word for a person who never socializes with other people, this verb is never used.

We better sign in.

One way of saying to register.

He wants practically notarized receipts.

A paper that is "notarized" is officially approved as accurate and truthful by a person called a "notary public."

I've never seen it happen; Check in any other place in this country without bags and you have to pay in advance.

A common way of saying suitcases or luggage.

There must be some proof that exists now, that proves that he got the money away from Marion somehow.

"Proof" is usually physical evidence that shows that something is true.

"To prove" is the related verb, meaning to show the truth of a statement or belief.

If he sees us, were just taking the air.

A never used way of saying to get some fresh air.

That proves Marion was here; It would be too wild a coincidence.

A "coincidence" is a key word referring to two or more events that happen by chance, but in a way that it appears as if they were planned.

That old woman, whoever she is, told Arbogast something.

An interesting way of showing that you are not at all sure of something, in this case the identity of the woman in the house.

One of us can keep him occupied while the other gets to the old woman.

One way of saying busy, or more precisely in this case, distracted.

I don't like you going into that house alone. ∴ I can handle a sick old woman.

In this case, to "handle" a person is to be able to defend yourself

against them, though it often means to take care of them.

If you get anything out of the mother, can you find your way back to town?
Here, to get something “out of” another person is to convince them to speak or say what they know.

You are alone here, aren't you? It would **drive me crazy**.
If something “drives a person crazy,” they become insane.
A very common and useful expression.

I'd do just about anything to get away, wouldn't you?
“To get away” is to leave or escape.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't be contented
here, I'm just doubting that you are.
An interesting but rare way of saying satisfied or happy.

I think if you had a chance to get out from under, you'd unload this place.
“To unload” a property is to sell it very cheap just to be able to leave it.

You look frightened; Have I been saying something frightening?
“To frighten” a person is to scare them, and frightening is scary.

Where will you get the money to do that Bates,
or do you already have it socked away?
To “sock away” money is to hide it in a secret place.

***A psychiatrist explains the deeply confused and crazy world in
Norman's head, and Norman himself shows us he's right...***

If anyone gets any answers, it will be the psychiatrist.
A psychologist or a person who helps people deal with their
emotional problems, who is also a medical doctor.

Look, if you're trying to lay some psychiatric groundwork for
some sort of plea this fellow would like to cop...
In this case, “psychiatric groundwork” is the various psychological
theories that a lawyer can use to try and excuse Norman's actions.
“To cop a plea” is a legal expression which refers to the negotiations
in which an accused criminal will agree to plead guilty to lesser
crimes in order to avoid being tried for more serious ones.

A psychiatrist doesn't lay the groundwork. He merely tries to explain it.
“To lay the groundwork” is to make preparations for a project, and
in this case to gather the documents and evidence that will be needed.
“Merely” is an important little adverb that means only or just.

If you drag that swamp somewhere in the vicinity of the hotel, you'll...

A "swamp" is a soft, wet and muddy piece of land, and to "drag" it is to search for things such as bodies that may be found under the mud or water. "In the vicinity" means to be near.

Have you any unsolved missing person's cases on your books? :: Yes, two young girls.

If a crime is "on the books," the police have kept an official record of it. In this case, of two missing girls who were never found.

He was already dangerously disturbed...had been ever since his father died.

If a person is "disturbed" in a psychological sense, this means that they are emotionally unstable, or mentally sick.

His mother was a clinging, demanding woman, and for years the two of them lived as if there was no one else in the world.

A "clinging" person is one who sticks very close to another person, usually because they are emotionally dependent. A "demanding" person is one who always wants things done for them.

It seemed to Norman that she threw him over for this man.

In this case, "to throw over" one person for another is to transfer one's love or emotional focus from the first person to the second.

That pushed him over the line...

If a person is "pushed over the line," they often have an emotional breakdown or other type of personal crisis.

Matricide is probably the most unbearable crime of all, most unbearable to the son who commits it.

"Matricide" is the killing of one's mother. If something is "unbearable," it is impossible to accept or deal with. Note that to "commit" a crime is the most common way of saying to do it.

He had to erase the crime, at least in his own mind.

"To erase" is to remove or rub out (especially chalk on a chalkboard).

He stole her corpse, a weighted coffin was buried, and he hid the body in the fruit cellar, and even treated it to keep it as well as it would keep.

A "corpse" is the body of a dead person. If something is "weighted" it is stuffed with material to make it weigh more. A "coffin" is the wooden container used to bury corpses, and to "treat" a body is to use chemicals or other means to prevent it from decaying or falling apart.

And because he was pathologically jealous of her, he assumed that he was as jealous as him.

“Pathologically” is a powerful adverb which means to the point of being a disease. To be “jealous” of a person is to feel possessive toward a person, in an angry or insecure way.

Therefore, if he felt a strong attraction to any other woman, the mother side of him would go wild.

“To feel an attraction” to someone is to like them, often in a romantic way. “To go wild” is to become crazy, or out of control.

When he met your sister, he was touched by her, aroused by her.

“To be aroused” is to be sexually excited.

That set off the jealous mother, and mother killed the girl.

“To set off” something is to cause it to happen.

After the murder, like a dutiful son, he covered up all the traces of the crime he was convinced his mother had committed.

A “dutiful son” is one who will do anything to make his mom happy.

He’s a transvestite. :: Uh, not exactly.

A man who wears women’s clothing for sexual pleasure.

When danger or desire threatened that illusion, he dressed up, even with a cheap wig he bought.

“To dress up” is to wear nice clothes, or as here, ones that allow you to pretend to be someone else. A “wig” is fake hair, usually called a “toupee” for men.

When the mind houses two personalities, there’s always a conflict, a battle.

A “conflict” is a disagreement, or “battle,” which is itself a violent and usually short fight within a much bigger war.

These were crimes of passion, not profit.

A “crime of passion” is a crime committed because of extreme emotional anger or instability, and not just for money.

He feels a little chill; Can I bring him this blanket?.

To get or feel “a chill” is to feel cold. If its “chilly” outside, it’s cold.

It’s sad when a mother has to speak the words that condemn her own son, but I couldn’t allow them to believe that I would commit murder.

“To condemn” a person is to express strong disapproval or to officially sentence a person as punishment for a crime.

They’ll put him away now, as I should have years ago.

In this context, to put a person in prison, or perhaps a home or other institution for the insane.

As if I could do anything but sit and stare like one of his stuffed birds.

“To stare” at something is to look at it continuously for a long time.

I’ll just sit here and be quiet, just in case they do suspect me.

“To suspect” a person of having done something wrong or illegal is to believe that they did it, without having strong evidence that they did.

I’m not even gonna swat that fly! They’ll say “She couldn’t even harm a fly!”

“To swat” a fly is to hit it quickly, often with an object like a magazine.

Psycho

Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion

1. Were you scared? If so, why is this movie so scary? What are the types of things that people may be scared of that are explored here?
2. If you had been in Marion's situation, would you have been tempted to steal the money? Is it realistic that she did?
3. Do you know any people like Norman Bates, or who could be similar in terms of his perception of reality?
4. Did you ever feel sorry for Norman? When the car began to sink in the swamp, did you actually want it to sink?
5. If Norman were charged with murder, and it could be proven that the psychiatrist was right about what was in Norman's head, should he be found not guilty? If this actually happened, would this make you angry? In your country, is there a way for criminals to be found "not guilty by reason of insanity?" Should there be?
6. What did you like or not like about this movie?

