

Annie Hall

(Romantic Comedy) (1976)
© 2000 by Raymond Weschler

Major Characters

- Alvy Singer**.....**Woody Allen**
A very nervous and intellectual Jewish comedian who lives in New York, hates Los Angeles and has fallen in love with Annie.
- Annie Hall**.....**Diane Keaton**
A charming but insecure young woman who moves to New York from her hometown in Wisconsin, who ideally would like to be a singer.
- Max**.....**Tony Roberts**
Alvy's friend, who is an actor, and thinks that both he and Alvy should move to Los Angeles (LA).
- Tony Lacey**.....**Paul Simon**
A record producer who lives in LA, who meets Annie and wants her to move there so that she will make some music in his recording studio.
- Allison**.....**Carol Kane**
Alvy's very cute and smart first wife, who he meets at a political rally in the 1950s.
- Robin**.....**Janet Margolis**
A reporter for Rolling Stone magazine who Alvy dates after breaking up with Annie.
- Pam**.....**Shelly Duvall**
Alvy's second wife, who is a writer and student.

Plot Summary

Annie Hall is Woody Allen's story of the relationship between Alvy Singer, a very nervous and intellectual Jewish New York comedian, and Annie Hall, a charming and pretty but insecure young woman from the small town of Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, who tries to start a new life for herself in New York. After they meet, Annie moves into Alvy's apartment, and both face the difficulties of living with each other, a challenge which is very big in part because they are such different people, and in part because both are a little neurotic (emotionally nervous). Both spend much of the film going to their psychologists, in hopes of better understanding themselves and each other.

The film tells of the relationship from Alvy's point of view, and thus includes "flash back scenes" to his childhood, as well as scenes from relationships he had with previous wives and girlfriends. Still, the focus is on Annie, as Alvy meets her, falls in love with her, decides to live with her, meets her very non-Jewish middle American family, and finally, follows her out to California as she decides to pursue a career as a singer. Unfortunately, their relationship is filled with tension and craziness, and it's not clear that it will last for the long term....

A Background Note: Woody Allen is considered one of the greatest comic film makers ever, and this is perhaps his best known movie. It won an Academy Award for best film of the year in 1977, and a generation later, it's now considered a true classic.

For ESL students, it is also a particularly good exploration of some of the various subcultures and geographic differences that make up the United States. Alvy Singer is a typical Jewish New Yorker, educated, intellectual and nervous. Annie Hall's Wisconsin family is pure middle American, small-town and very "white" (and in the case of Annie's grandmother, racist against Jews!). And finally, there is the depiction of Los Angeles, a city that Alvy Singer strongly dislikes because (he feels) it is ridiculously superficial and obsessed with good looking people and money.

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

Alvy Singer tells us about his life.

Two elderly women are at the Catskill Mountain resort.

"Elderly" is another word for old. A "resort" is a place where people vacation, often passing the time playing sports and relaxing.

Such small portions.

A "portion" of food is a share, part or amount.

The other joke is usually attributed to Grouch Marx.

"To attribute" a joke to a person is to credit them with creating it (Groucho Marx was a very famous comedian and comic actor).

Freud's "Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious."

Freud is Sigmund Freud, the Jewish "father of modern psychology."

"Wit" is the ability to be funny, and a person's "unconscious" refers to behaviors and emotions they have that they are not even aware of.

I'm paraphrasing...I would never want to belong to a club that would have someone like me as a member.

"To paraphrase" a story or joke is to summarize it, without using the exact words.

I think I'm going to be the balding, virile type, as opposed to the distinguished gray.

A "virile" man is strong and very masculine. A man who is "distinguished gray" has gray hair and appears very educated.

Unless I'm one of those guys with saliva dribbling out of his mouth.

"Saliva" is the liquid everyone has in their mouth, and if it "dribbles," it flows slowly out.

Annie and I broke up.

If two people "break up," they end their romantic relationship.

I'm sifting the pieces of the relationship through my mind.

"To sift through" something is to carefully analyze and study it, part by part, or piece by piece.

I'm trying to figure out where did the screw-up come.

"To figure out" something is to try and understand it. A "screw-up" is something that is very badly done, or perhaps a total failure (Note that the *verb* "to screw-up" is much more common).

I'm not a morose type.

A great word meaning bad tempered, angry or not cheerful.

Brooklyn.

A part of New York City, across a river from the island of Manhattan.

The universe is expanding, and some day it will break apart, and that will be the end of everything.

"To expand" is to grow bigger.

My analyst says I exaggerate my childhood memories...

An "analyst" is another word for a psychologist. "To exaggerate" something is to make it seem bigger, faster, greater, etc. than it really is.

...but I swear I was brought up underneath the roller coaster of the Coney Island section of Brooklyn.

A "roller coaster" is a scary ride that is found at places like Disneyland (Coney Island is a well known part of Brooklyn).

That accounts for my personality....which is a little nervous.

“That accounts for” is another way of saying that explains.

I have a hyperactive imagination.

If your imagination is “hyperactive,” you’re always making yourself scared or upset by thinking of ridiculous things that can’t happen.

The staff at our public school.

“The staff” of an organization are the people who work there, such as the teachers and principal.

Those who can’t teach, teach gym.

“Gym” is another word for physical education, or sports in school.

I always thought my schoolmates were idiots.

An “idiot” is a very common word for a stupid person.

Even then I knew that they were just jerks.

A “jerk” is a stupid, obnoxious or unpleasant person.

For God’s sake, Alvy, even Freud speaks of a latency period.

“For God’s sake” is a common way of expressing frustration.

“A latency period” is a period of non-activity, or in psychology, the idea that people don’t discover their sexuality until later in life.

Why couldn’t you be like Donald? Now there was a model boy.

A “model boy” is a one who behaves perfectly.

I used to be a heroin addict; Now I’m a methadone addict.

A “heroin addict” is a person who needs to take heroin or they’ll suffer great pain. “Heroin” is a very dangerous and illegal drug taken with needles, and “methadone” is a less dangerous substitute drug.

I’m into leather.

To be “into” something is a slangy way of saying to like it very much.

“Leather” is an expensive material for clothing made of cow skin.

I lost track of my old schoolmates, but I wound up a comedian.

“To lose track” of a person is to lose contact with them, and thus no longer know where they are. “To wind up” doing something is another way of saying to finish or end up doing it.

In the event of war, I’m a hostage.

A “hostage” is a person who is kept by a kidnapper, terrorist or enemy, in order to make demands for that person’s freedom.

You were always out of step with the world.

To be “out of step” with someone (or the world) is to think or do things in a way that is completely different from them.

You’re a total paranoid.

A person who is “paranoid” is always convinced that something very bad is going to happen to them (It’s usually an adjective, not a noun).

I pick up on these kind of things.

In this case, to “pick up on” something is to notice and understand it.

Tom said “No, Jew?” Not “Did you eat?” but “Jew eat?”

A funny line; Alvy is convinced that everyone hates Jewish people.

Max, you see conspiracies in everything.

A “conspiracy” is a secret plot or plan between two or more people, often designed to kill somebody or hurt a particular group.

Wagner.

A famous German composer who was known to be anti-Jewish.

Let’s get the hell out of this crazy city.

“The hell” is added in order to show emotion such as frustration.

We’ll move to sunny LA; All of show business is there.

LA is America’s greatest city, Los Angeles. “Show business” refers to the movie and TV business, and perhaps the theatre business.

I don’t want to live in a city where the only cultural advantage is that you can make a right turn on a red light.

A clever line which shows how much Woody Allen dislikes LA;
A “cultural advantage” usually refers to the large number of restaurants or theatres, and not a particular driving rule!

***Alvy and Annie miss one movie, go to another
and discuss their evolving relationship.***

I’m Robert Redford. :: Come on!

The greatest and most versatile phrasal verb in English, here meaning “Be serious” (Redford is a famous actor).

This guy’s on television! :: **Give me a break!**

A great expression which is a colloquial way of telling a person to stop being ridiculous.

I need a large polo mallet.

A wooden stick used for hitting a ball in the British game of polo.

What is this? A meeting of the teamsters?

A famous labor union that used to be associated with organized crime.

Learn to deal with it. :: I'm dealing with two guys named Cheech.

"To deal" with something is to try and manage or accept it.

Two minutes late. :: We've blown it already.

"To blow" something is to do it very badly, or to completely fail

(In this case, they failed to arrive on time for the movie).

The Sorrow and The Pity.

A famous documentary movie about the nazi killings of the Jews during World War 2 (Sorrow means great sadness).

I've got to see a film from start to finish because I'm anal.

A funny adjective, based on modern psychology, to describe a person who is usually nervous and always needs everything to be in perfect order (Anal literally means related to the rectum or asshole).

It lacks a cohesive structure.

A very intellectual (scholarly) way of saying something doesn't fit or work together well.

Granted, La Strada was a great film.

Another way of saying "Yes, it is true that..."

I'm going to have a stroke.

A very serious and sudden illness in the brain that can cause a person to lose control of their body and can even be deadly.

I found it incredibly indulgent.

An interesting word that describes a person who takes every thing that they desire, even if it is ridiculous or too much.

I missed my therapy. I overslept.

Another word for sessions between a psychologist and their patient.

You know what a hostile gesture that is to me.

In this case, a symbolic act of anger ("Hostile" is aggressive or unfriendly, and a "gesture" is a small sign or action to show one's feelings).

Everybody in line has to know our rate of intercourse?

In this case, the number of times per week that a couple has sex.

I admire the technique, but it doesn't hit me on a gut level.

If a film doesn't "hit you on a gut level," it doesn't effect you emotionally.

You're so egocentric that if I miss my therapy, you can only think of how it effects you.

A person who is "egocentric" is usually only thinking of themselves.

"30ish academic wishes to meet women interested in Mozart, James Joyce, and sodomy."

An "academic" is a professor, though this word is usually an adjective and not a noun. "Sodomy" usually means anal sex (For Alvy, this is what a personal ad to meet a romantic partner would read like).

Marshall McLuhan deals with it as...a hot medium.

McLuhan was a famous philosopher of media like television, which he called a hot medium because it was so powerful.

What I wouldn't give for a large sock with horse manure in it.

"Manure" is animal shit that is mixed with dirt.

Aren't you ashamed to pontificate like that?

"To pontificate" is to speak very confidently about a subject.

I happen to teach a course at Columbia called "TV, Media and Culture."

A famous university in New York City.

I think my insights into Mr. McLuhan have a great deal of validity.

An "insight" is an idea or thought, and "validity" is truth or value.

I ask myself how I'd stand up under torture.

In this case, "to stand up under" torture is to resist or survive it.

The Gestapo would take away you're Bloomingdale's charge card and you'd tell them everything.

"The Gestapo" were the feared German police under Hitler. Bloomingdales is a well known store, and a "charge card" is now more commonly called a credit card.

We're probably listed in the Guinness Book of World Records.

A very famous book that lists all types of world records (Most records sold, longest snake, fastest woman, etc...).

It will pass. I'm going through a phase, that's all.

"It will pass" is one of saying that it will end. "A phase" is a short period of time in which a person's behavior is different than normal.

***Alvy remembers Allison and Robin,
and Annie tells Alvy of her former boyfriends.***

You were very hot for Allison at first.

"To be hot" for a person is to be sexually attracted to them.

How can they laugh? They're laughed out.

A phrasal verb that's really never used, but here which means that they have laughed so much that they no longer have any laughter left.

I'm in the midst of doing my thesis.

To be "in the midst of" doing something is to be in the middle of doing it. A "thesis" is a major research paper that students must do in order to get a college degree.

You're like New York, Jewish, left-wing liberal intellectual,
Central Park West, Brandeis University, socialist summer camp.

A funny description! Central park West is a neighborhood in New York and Brandeis University is a famous university in New York. A "summer camp" is usually for camping or sports, not socialism!

And really strike-oriented.

In this case, a person who is "strike-oriented" favors the act of workers going on strike (refusing to work) to fight for worker rights.

Stop me before I make a complete imbecile of myself. ::

I love being reduced to a cultural stereotype.

An "imbecile" is a great word for a complete idiot or fool. A "stereotype" is the popular image (often negative) of what a person must be like, often based on an ethnic or religious background.

I'm a bigot, but for the left.

A "bigot" is a racist or prejudiced person. Here, "the left" is the political left, which refers to people who are generally more liberal than conservative.

I don't know why they'd have me at this kind of rally.

A "rally" is a large public meeting, often for a political candidate.

It was ironic, because I was trying to do to her what Eisenhower has been doing to the country for the last eight years.

“Irony” is the opposite result of what is expected, and “ironic” is the adjective. Here, Alvy is talking about President Eisenhower, and is making a joke about the word “to screw,” which means both to treat badly, and to have sex!

He drove past the book depository and the police said conclusively that it was an exit wound.

Alvy is now talking about the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963. A “book depository” is a warehouse for books, and “conclusively” means definitely. An “exit wound” is an injury, in this case caused by a bullet entering and then leaving a person’s body.

How is it possible for Oswald to have fired from two angles at once?

Lee Harvey Oswald was accused of having killed Kennedy, but he himself was shot to death a couple days after being captured. Alvy is saying he thinks Kennedy was shot by two people at the same time.

He was not marksman enough to hit a moving target at that range, but if there was a second assassin!...

A “marksman” can shoot a gun or rifle accurately, and a “target” is the thing that person is trying to shoot at. In this case, “range” means distance, and an “assassin” is a person who kills a leader or politician.

Everybody on the Warren Commission is in on this conspiracy?

A famous group of judges, politicians and lawyers that officially looked into the shooting of Kennedy and concluded Oswald acted alone.

Lyndon Johnson is a politician; You know the ethics those guys have.

Johnson became President after Kennedy was killed.

“Ethics” is another word for morals, or moral principles.

It’s a notch below child molester.

A “notch” is another word for degree, or a very small distance.

A “child molester” is a person who sexually abuses children.

The FBI, the CIA, J. Edgar Hoover, the Pentagon and the men’s room attendant at the White House.

The American Government!: The FBI investigated federal crimes, the CIA spies on other countries, Hoover was the head of the FBI for 50 years, and the Pentagon is where the US military is based (A “men’s room attendant” cleans bathrooms).

You're using this conspiracy theory as an excuse to avoid having sex with me!
 A "conspiracy theory" is the belief that a secret group of people is behind a particular crime, in this case the killing of President Kennedy.

Dial 911; It's the lobster squad.

911 is the phone number for emergencies in the US. A "squad" is usually a group of police or other law enforcement officials.

Maybe if I put a little dish of butter sauce with a nutcracker, it will run out the other side.

A tool for cracking open nuts, and to crack the shells of lobsters.

It's disgusting

A powerful adjective meaning repulsive, horrible or very unpleasant.

Acting is like an exploration of the soul...

like a kind of liberating consciousness.

A "soul" is a the non-physical part of a person that lives on after they die. "Consciousness" is the state of being aware, or of thinking.

Is he kidding with that crap?

"To kid" is to joke around, or not be serious. "Crap" is a slightly vulgar but excellent word for nonsense, lies, or specifically, bullshit.

I may throw up.

"To throw up" is a very common way of saying to vomit.

He was creepy.

A great little word that means unpleasant in a scary or strange way.

You're pretty lucky I came along. :: Really, well la-de-dah.

An expression made famous by this movie, but it doesn't really have any meaning (Though it does seem to express some kind of emotion, or the belief that the person you're speaking to is being too confident).

He has a chair in philosophy at Cornell.

In this context, a "chair" is position as a professor at a university. Cornell is a famous university in New York state.

I'm so tired of spending every evening making fake insights with people who work for dysentery. :: Commentary.

"Fake insights" are ideas that are not original are of any value.

"Dysentery" is a serious disease, and "Commentary" is a well-known conservative political journal.

What is so fascinating about a group of pituitary cases trying to stuff a ball through a hoop?

A “pituitary case” is a funny way of referring to a very tall person (the pituitary gland controls human growth). “To stuff” a ball through a basketball hoop, which is the circular metal goal that is used in basketball, is to try and force the ball through with great energy.

Intellectuals...have proved that you can be absolutely brilliant, and still have no idea what is going on.

An “intellectual” is a smart person who thinks about important topics in philosophy and politics very seriously. If a person is “brilliant,” they are very intelligent.

All those Ph.Ds in there discussing modes of alienation, and we’ll be in here quietly humping.

A Ph.D. is the highest degree you can get from a university (and here it refers to people who actually earned them). “Modes of alienation” is an intellectual way of referring to ways that people feel isolated or lonely. “To hump” is a rarely used slang word that means to have sex.

You’re using sex to express hostility. ∴ Why do you always reduce my animal urges to psychoanalytic categories?

“Hostility” is anger or aggression. An “urge” is a strong or fundamental desire, and “psychoanalytic categories” refers to divisions that psychologists make in behavior, such as conscious and unconscious.

Damn siren! Damn it, I was so close.

A “siren” is the loud noise a police car makes when it is chasing another car.

I’m too tense. I need a valium.

A popular drug in the 1970s that helped people relax.

The country makes me nervous; They’re crickets... and those screens with dead moths behind them.

“Crickets” are loud flying insects, and moths are a type of flying insects related to butterflies.

You got the Manson family.

A famous group of young murderers back in the early 1970s.

My head is throbbing.

“To throb” is to beat or shake strongly and quickly (and thus if you have a throbbing head, you have a bad headache).

Alvy remembers the day he met Annie.

The failure of the country to get behind New York city is anti-Semitism.

In this case, to “get behind” a city is to support it. “Anti-Semitism” is another word for racism against Jewish (and Arab!) people. In the 1970s, New York City asked the federal government to help it financially because it was so deeply in debt.

The city is terribly run. :: But I’m not discussing politics or economics. This is foreskin.

The flap of skin on a penis that all Jews and most Americans have removed as a baby. Alvy’s way of referring to anti-Jewish racism.

That’s a very convenient out. Every time some group disagrees with you, it’s because of anti-Semitism.

“A convenient out” is another way of saying a bad excuse.

Everything our parents said is good is bad; Sun, milk, red meat, college.

A very funny but still accurate line! (Except for the joke about college).

Egad, here he comes!

A funny word that expresses surprise, enthusiasm or other emotion.

You want a lift?

Another way of saying a ride (in a car).

I was going to take a cab.

Another word for a taxi.

What the hell. It would be nice having company.

A common way of saying “It isn’t perfect, but it’s good enough.”

You’re driving a tad rapidly.

“A tad” is a fun way of saying “just a little,” and “rapidly” is another way of saying quickly.

That’s OK, we can walk to the curb from here.

The “curb” is the edge of a sidewalk that borders the street.

You want your tennis stuff? You want your gear?

Note that in most cases, “stuff” is a general way of saying “things,” and “gear” is another word for equipment (Or in this case, tennis rackets).

Your “granny?” What did you do, grow up in a Norman Rockwell painting?
 “Granny” is a very old-fashioned word for grandmother. Rockwell is a very famous painter who painted happy and healthy American families, often from small towns.

Sylvia Plath, whose tragic suicide was misinterpreted as romantic by the college-girl mentality.

Plath was a famous poet who became extremely popular among students after her 1962 suicide. “To misinterpret” something is to misunderstand it, and a “mentality” is a way of thinking.

I don’t know; Some of her poems seem neat.

“Neat” is an overused word that means good, appealing or more colloquially, cool, but it can be silly when an educated person uses it.

Narcolepsy.

A condition in which people suddenly and uncontrollably fall asleep, even while in the middle of talking to somebody else.

The union always gave George this free turkey at Christmas because he was shell-shocked in the first world war.

In this case, the “union” is a labor union. If a person is “shell shocked,” they are deeply upset or disturbed emotionally due to war or violence.

It’s pretty awful. :: It’s a great story; It really made my day.

“It made my day” is a way of saying that it made you very happy.

I think I should get out of here cause I think I’m imposing.

“To impose” on a person is to interfere in their lives, or perhaps to trouble them or get in their way.

I don’t like to show my body to a man of my gender.

This is a ridiculous but funny line, since a person’s “gender” is their sex (male or female).

She hates Jews; She thinks they just make money, but she’s the one. Is she ever, I’m telling you.

Annie’s way of saying her grandmother dislikes Jews because she thinks they make so much money, but in fact she herself makes a lot.

I sort of dabble around, you know.

“To dabble” in the arts, such as photography or painting, is to try doing it, but not really seriously (“To dabble around” is rare).

He probably thinks I'm a yo-yo [written]

A “yo-yo” is a small children’s toy, but here Annie uses it as a word to mean a silly person or fool.

A set of aesthetic criteria have not emerged yet.

“Aesthetic” means related to beauty or the senses, and “criteria” are established principles or standards.

I'm not smart enough for him. Hang in there! [written]

A common way of saying “Don’t give up.”

She senses I'm shallow.

A person who is “shallow” does not think seriously or deeply about important issues.

To me, it's all instinctive.

An important word that refers to the natural feelings or behaviors that people are basically born with, rather than learn.

I hope he doesn't turn out to be a schmuck like all the others.

An excellent Jewish word for a jerk, creep or other unpleasant person.

Christ, I sound like FM radio. Relax.

Radio stations are divided into AM and FM radio waves.

I've got to get there and begin whining soon.

“To whine” is to complain in a high and annoying voice.

Do you have plague? :: I meet a lot of jerks.

The “plague” is a famous and very contagious disease that killed millions of people in the 1300s in Europe. A “jerk” is an excellent word for a stupid, obnoxious or very unpleasant person.

Oh, shoot. Saturday night I am going to sing.

An interesting word that is used to express frustration.

I'm auditioning at this club.

“To audition” is to perform in front of a person who may want to hire you later, usually as a singer or actor.

Alvy and Annie fall in love, and Annie move into the apartment.

So the audience was a tad restless.

A good adjective meaning impatient or perhaps nervous or uneasy.

We never kissed before, and I'll never know when to make the right move.
 "To make a move" is a colloquial way of saying to try and become romantic or sexual, such as when a guy decides to try and kiss his date.

We'll kiss now and get it over with. We'll digest our food better.
 "To get it over with" is to finish or complete it. "To digest" food is to change it chemically in the stomach so that the body can use it.

I'll have pastrami on white bread with mayonnaise, tomato and lettuce.
 This is a funny scene for people who love Jewish food, since pastrami is a typical type of meat in Jewish cuisine, but it is usually served on Rye bread, not white bread, and usually not with mayonnaise.

Were you depressed? :: Nothing a few mega-vitamins couldn't cure.
 "Mega" is a prefix which means very big or huge and "to cure" something is to make it more healthy, or to heal it.

I don't use any major hallucinogenics.
 A type of drug which causes hallucinations, which are fantasies in which people believe they're seeing or experiencing things that in fact do not exist.

I took a puff at a party and I tried to take my pants off over my head.
 A "puff" on a cigarette is the act of inhaling or breathing in.

That's pretty serious stuff. :: I'm obsessed with death.
 To be "obsessed with" something is to always be thinking about it.

I feel that life is divided up into the horrible and the miserable.
 "Miserable" is usually used to describe very unhappy people, but in this case, Alvy also uses "horrible" in the same way, which is rare.

Terminal cases, blind people, and cripples. I don't know how they get through life. It's amazing to me.
 "Terminal cases" are people in such bad physical shape that they could die at any time. "Cripple" is a dated word for a person with a physical disability (It's better to say handicapped). "To get through" life is to survive it. If something is "amazing," its incredible or remarkable.

He just cam back from the gin rummy finals. He placed third.
 "Gin rummy" is a card game popular among older people,
 "He placed third" is another way of saying he came in third place.

He's the Mafia. Linen supply business or cement and contracting.

A "linen supply business" provides sheets, pillows and similar items.
 "Cement" is a gray powder material used for making buildings.

There's the winner of the Truman Capote look-alike contest.

A "look-alike contest" is competition between people to see who most looks like somebody else (often a famous person like Capote, who is a well known writer).

You're polymorphously perverse.

A silly and rare way of saying very experimental in sexual matters.

You're exceptional in bed.

If a person is "exceptional in bed," they are a very good lover
 (Exceptional means very unusual, usually in a very positive sense).

You're not going to give up your apartment?

In this case, to "give up" something is to decide to no longer keep it.

I got a tiny apartment. It's got bad plumbing and bugs.

A useful word meaning very small.

Entomology is a rapidly growing field.

Entomology is the study of bugs and insects. In this case,
 a "field" is an area of serious academic study.

I guess you think I talked you into something.

"To talk a person into doing something" is to convince or persuade them to do it, even if they think it's not a good idea.

My accountant will write it off as a tax deduction.

"To write off a tax deduction" is to claim that you owe less taxes,
 because you have made less money since you had to pay for an
 expense such as a business meal, a plane ticket, or here, an apartment.

Adult education is a wonderful thing; It's stimulating.

If something is intellectually stimulating, it excites or fascinates.

Grass, right. The illusion that it makes a
 white women more like Billie Holliday.

"Grass" is a dated slang word for marijuana ("Pot" is a more current slang word). An "illusion" is something that is seen which does not really exist, or something believed that is not true. Billie Holliday was a great African-American singer in the 1930s.

Have you ever made love high?

To be “high” is to have the sensation or feelings of extreme happiness or relaxation that people associate with drugs such as marijuana.

I’ll give you a shot of sodium penethol; You can sleep through it.

A drug used to put people to sleep during surgery.

Look who’s talking! You’ve been seeing a psychiatrist for 15 years!

A great expression to use when you feel that the person you’re speaking to is guilty of what they are criticizing others about.

I got a little erotic artifact. Create a little old New Orleans essence.

Something that is “erotic” is sexually stimulating, and an “artifact” is any useful object that is made by humans (New Orleans is a city in Louisiana that used to be known for having lots of prostitutes).

Was it my imagination, or are you just going through the motions?

“To go through the motions” is to do something out of habit, without actually feeling excited or passionate about doing it.

If I get a laugh from a person who is high, it doesn’t count, because they’re always laughing.

A logical explanation for why a comedian would not want to perform in front of an audience where people have been smoking marijuana.

You can tell right off the bat that I don’t look like a funny guy.

A curious expression that means “immediately.”

Material has got to be sensational; I’m kind of classy, you know what I mean?

In this case, “material” refers to written material, or more specifically, jokes. A person who is “classy” is stylish, elegant or perhaps graceful.

Jesus, this guy is pathetic.

“Jesus” is a common way of expressing emotion such as frustration, or in this case, disgust. “Pathetic” is a powerful and funny adjective that means hopelessly bad.

If only I had the nerve to do my own jokes.

A person with “the nerve” to do something has the courage to do it.

Where am I? I have to reorient myself.

“To reorient yourself” is to become familiar again with a place that you had known well before.

I was thrown out of New York University my freshman year for cheating on my metaphysics exam; I looked within the soul of the boy sitting next to me.

“Freshman year” is the first year of college. “Metaphysics” is the study of the non-physical universal, such as emotion or religion. A person’s “soul” is the non-physical part of their body that lives on after death.

My mother, an emotionally high-strung woman, locked herself in the bathroom and took an overdose of mah-jongg tiles.

If a person is “emotionally high-strung,” they are very tense or nervous. An “overdose” of a drug is a quantity that’s so large that it is dangerous. “Mah-jongg tiles” are square wall coverings, such as those in bathrooms, that are part of a Chinese game.

I was in analysis with a strict Freudian, and if you kill yourself, they’ll make you pay for the sessions you missed.

A “strict Freudian” is a psychologist who follows the practices of Sigmund Freud. A “session,” in this case, refers to the meetings that a psychologist spends with his patient.

I think I’m starting to get more of the references, too.

In this case, a “reference” is a social or historical facts that a person refers to in a speech, play or other artistic work.

Alvy meets Annie’s family, and soon they face their first real crisis as Annie and her professor become more than just friends.

It’s a dynamite ham.

“Dynamite” is a well-known and powerful explosive, though here it used as an adjective to mean excellent or great.

We went over to the swap meet, got some nice picture frames.

A “swap meet” is a large open market in which people sell their goods from food to furniture, often in an empty parking lot.

Pretty soon, when I lie down on his couch,

I won’t have to wear the lobster bib.

A small piece of cloth or plastic worn on a person’s chest to cover their clothes while they’re eating messy food.

Nothing like my family; The two are like oil and water.

A way of saying two people are very different from each other.

Diabetes.

A disease in which people don’t have the right amount of blood sugar.

He had a coronary.

Another word for a heart attack.

We fast. No food, to atone for our sins.

“To fast” is to intentionally not eat food, often for a day or longer.

“To atone for your sins” is to ask forgiveness for the bad or immoral things that you have done (A sin is an act that would upset God).

I see two headlights coming toward me, and I have this sudden impulse to turn the wheel head on into the on-coming car.

A “sudden impulse” is an uncontrollable or strong desire to do something, especially that which could be dangerous or foolish.

I can anticipate the explosion, the sound of shattering glass.

“To anticipate” something is to look forward to it, or expect it.

If glass “shatters,” it breaks into thousands of very small pieces.

Following is different; I was spying.

A very clever line!; Strictly speaking, to “follow” a person is simply to walk behind them, while to “spy” on them is to watch them secretly.

That is the worst kind of paranoid.

A person who is “paranoid” is always convinced people are trying to do bad things to them (though note it’s usually an adjective, not noun).

You wanted to keep the relationship flexible. Remember, it’s your phrase.

If a romantic relationship is “flexible,” this probably means that it’s OK for both partners to go out and even have sex with others.

Existential Motifs in Russian Literature. :: What’s the difference?; it’s all mental masturbation.

“Existential” is a word from philosophy that deals with the idea that life has no point or meaning, and a “motif” is a theme or subject.

“Mental masturbation” is a clever phrase that refers to the act of just thinking nice thoughts because it feels good (“To masturbate” is to give yourself sexual pleasure).

Don’t knock masturbation; At least it’s sex with someone I love.

Another great line! “To knock” something is to criticize it.

Next he’ll find you keen and peachy.

Two very old fashioned words that mean attractive or admirable.

For Alvy, they are similar to the word “neat,” which he hates.

It was really weird, but she's a really nice woman.
An excellent word that means strange or odd.

Then she mentioned penis envy; Do you know about that?
A concept in Freudian psychology in which it is believed that women envy (are jealous of) men because they don't have a penis. Today, most people probably think this is silly, or more colloquially, bullshit.

In my dream, Frank Sinatra is strangling me.
"To strangle" a person is to try and prevent them from breathing, usually by holding their necks tightly. Sinatra was a famous singer.

You try to suffocate yourself. It makes perfect sense.
"To suffocate" a person is to also try and prevent them from breathing, but this time by forcing a pillow over their mouths.

When he sings, it's in this real high pitch voice.
A "high pitch" voice" is one that sounds very shrill, like a young child that is screaming or crying.

Why do you always bring that up?
"To bring up" a subject in a conversation is to mention it.

Adult education is just junk. The professors are so phony.
If something is "junk," it is worthless, like trash. A "phony" is a fake, or a person who doesn't really believe what they claim they do.

We should call this relationship quits.
"To call it quits" is to finish something, in this case the relationship.

That's how people are. Love fades.
If something "fades," it grows weaker and more distant.

We use a large vibrating egg. :: Well. I ask a psychopath, and I get that kind of answer.
"To vibrate" is to gently shake very quickly (like a vibrator).
A "psychopath" is a very emotionally disturbed or unbalanced person.

How do you account for it?
"How do you explain it?"

Everyone fell in love with Snow White,
and I immediately fell for the wicked Queen.
"Snow White" is a well known children's cartoon character. "Wicked" is a very strong adjective that means extremely bad or immoral.

Alvy goes out with Pam, but is soon back together with Annie.

Rolling Stone.

A well known magazine that covers rock'n'roll music.

There's more people here to see the maharishi then there were to see the Dylan concert.

The "maharishi" is a spiritual leader from India, and Dylan refers to Bob Dylan, who is a very famous rock singer.

I covered the Dylan concert, which gave me chills.

If something "gives you chills," it effects you very strongly in an emotional sense.

"She aches like a woman, but she breaks like a little girl."

"To "ache" is to feel great pain, and in this case, "to break" is to break down emotionally. These are words from a famous Dylan song.

Up to that, the most charismatic event I covered was Mick's birthday, when the Stones played Madison Square Garden.

"Charisma" is great personal charm or appeal. This is a reference to Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, and a concert in New York.

Did you catch Dylan? :: No, my raccoon had hepatitis.

"To catch" a performer in concert is to see them. A "raccoon" is a cute but dangerous animal (and not a pet!), and "hepatitis" is a liver disease.

He has millions of followers who would crawl all the way around the world just to touch the hem of his garment.

A "follower" of a religious leader believes they are like a God.

"To crawl" is to move on hands and knees like a baby. The "hem" of a piece of cloth is its edge, and a "garment" is a piece of clothing.

I can't get with any religion that advertises in Popular Mechanics.

"To get with" a religion is a very slangy way of saying to follow or appreciate it (Popular Mechanics is a well known magazine).

I was at an Alice Cooper thing where six people were rushed to the hospital with bad vibes.

"Vibes" are feelings or emotions that are communicated to people without speaking. This was a very popular word in the 1960s, but it's less used today. Alice Cooper was a popular group in the 1970s.

Sex with you is really a Kafkaesque experience.

Kafka was an Austrian philosopher who was well known for novels that dealt with the emotional pain of people who have been imprisoned or suffered great injustice from impersonal governments. Thus, the line above is interesting but ridiculous.

I think there is too much burden placed on the orgasm to make up for empty areas in life.

A “burden” is a great responsibility that is difficult to carry or accept.

Don't you have a can of Raid in the house?

A well known brand of insect poison.

Did you go to a rock concert? Was it heavy?

Did you achieve total heavyiosity?

“Heavy” was a very slangy way of saying intellectually profound or deep, but it's not used today (And ‘heavyiosity’ never was!)

Since when do you read the National Review?

A politically conservative magazine, edited by William Buckley.

You're a little hostile. You know that.

A useful word meaning angry or aggressive.

Are you going with a right-wing rock'n'roll star?

Politically, a “right-wing” person is usually very conservative, and a “left wing” person is usually very liberal.

Don't squish it! And after it's dead, flush it down the toilet.

“To squish” a bug is to crush it, often between your fingers.

It's a major spider. You got a broom or a snow shovel?

In this case, Alvy uses “major” to mean very big.

A broom is the tool used to sweep floors.

There's a spider in your bathroom the size of a Buick.

“Buick” is the name of a popular car.

It's for my complexion. :: Are you joining a minstrel show?

A person's “complexion” is the color and appearance of their skin, and a “minstrel show” was a type of stage show popular before the 1930s in which white performers painted their faces to make them look black.

What did you want me to do? Capture and rehabilitate them?

“To rehabilitate” criminals is to teach them to obey the law and become better people.

What's the matter? Are you expecting termites?

A type of bug that is known for damaging houses by eating wood.

We can show you the old neighborhood.

An expression that refers to a neighborhood where a person grew up.

They gave him a football once and he tried to dribble it.

"To dribble" a ball is to bounce it up and down on the ground (You can dribble a basketball, but not a football!).

She was stealing! :: She was colored!

Until the 1940s, black people were often called "colored."

They're persecuted enough! We can afford it.

If a person is "persecuted," they are attacked and mistreated, often just for their ethnicity, religion or political beliefs.

What an asshole.

A key insult word for a person who is rude, abusive or just a jerk.

She was the life of the ghetto, no doubt.

"The life of the party" is the person at a party who is most popular and appreciated. The "ghetto" is a poor part of a city where people of the same background live (In this case, Jewish).

I was very charming. I was a lively dancer.

"Charming" is a very positive word which means very pleasing and attractive. A "lively dancer" is a person who dances with great energy.

"It's still a thrill to have my arm around you." [Song]

A "thrill" is a sudden felling of great excitement or joy.

Are you recording? Are you with a label?

In this case, a reference to a "record label," which is a company that makes records, such as Sony or Capital Records.

It's not a big deal. We could just sit and talk, just relax and be very mellow.

"It's not a big deal" is a common way of saying something isn't that important. "Mellow" was a very slangy and popular word in the 1970s that means very relaxed or quiet, but this sounds a little silly today.

If I get too mellow, I ripen and then I rot.

Note that a fruit can "ripen," which means to age to the point that it is ready to eat, and then "rot," which means to begin to decay or grow bad after it gets too old. While fruit does this, people usually don't!

I've been moody and dissatisfied.

If a person is “moody,” they are in a bad mood, angry or easily upset.

I think you would have been happy, because I really asserted myself.

“To assert yourself” is to speak up and say what you really think, even if you think other people might not approve of what you're saying.

I'm paying for her analysis, she's making progress, and I'm getting screwed.

In this context, if you are getting “screwed,” you are being poorly treated by either a person, or as here, by a situation in general.

You guys have never snorted coke?

“To snort” is to breath in through your nose, and “coke” is a very common way of referring to the drug cocaine.

I don't want to put a wad of white powder in my nose.

A “wad” is thick piece of cloth, or more colloquially, a large amount.

I'm sure it's lot of fun because the Incas did it and they were a million laughs.

The “Incas” were a large native American people who lived in Peru. If a person is “a million laughs,” they are very funny.

On my agent's advice, I sold out and I'm going to do an appearance on a TV show.

Many actors, comics and other entertainers have “agents,” who help manage their careers. “To sell out” means to agree to do something that is good for your career even if you think it is not good artistically.

While you're in California, could you score some coke for me?

This is a very slangy way of saying to obtain or get.

That's about \$2,000 dollars an ounce.

An ounce is 1/16th of a pound.

Alvy and Annie fly out to California. Alvy hates it, Annie likes it, and soon each realizes that the relationship is in trouble.

I live right next to Hugh Hefner's house.

Hefner is the publisher of Playboy magazine, and his LA house is famous for having lots of beautiful women always around.

I can't get over that this is really Beverly Hills.

In this case, to not be able to "get over" something is to not believe it. Beverly Hills is a very well known and rich part of Los Angeles.

Santa Claus will have sun stroke.

A serious condition in which a person becomes very sick because of too much exposure to the sun.

There's no crime, there's no mugging.

"To mug" a person is to suddenly attack them, usually while they are walking on the street, in order to steal their money.

There's no economic crime, but there's ritual religious cult murders.

A "ritual" is a type of religious ceremony, such as singing around a fire, that has been performed for generations. A "religious cult" is a small religious group with a leader that often claims to be sent from God ("Cult" has a very negative connotation).

There's wheat-germ killers out here.

A type of health food that was very popular in California in the 1970s.

Give me a medium size chuckle here.

A "chuckle" is a laugh or giggle.

Is there booing on that?

"To boo" is to shout screams of disapproval.

My stomach felt queasy all morning.

If you feel "queasy," you feel sick to your stomach.

I can't eat this. I'm nauseous.

Another good word for queasy, or sick to your stomach.

My feet haven't touched pavement since I reached Los Angeles.

This is the hard surface of a street (usually made of cement).

I'll take a meeting with you if you take a meeting with Freddie.

"To take a meeting" is no longer used, and maybe never was, but it shows how silly Californians were in the minds of some New Yorkers.

Right now it's only a notion, but I think I can turn it into a concept, and then turn it into an idea.

Another ridiculous view of how some Californians spoke in the entertainment industry. A "notion" is a general idea, and a "concept" is also a general idea or way of looking at things.

He has a little thing for Annie.

“To have a thing for” somebody is a slangy way of saying to like them.

VPL---Visible panty line.

“Panties” are women’s underwear. “VPL” is silly and never used.

You’re used to the one’s walking through Central Park with the surgical masks on, muttering.

Central Park is a huge and much loved park in New York city.

“Surgical masks” are the protective covering that surgeons wear on their faces while performing an operation. “To mutter” is to talk quietly and in a nonsensical manner that no one can understand.

They look like they just came back from Masters and Johnson. :: Yeah, intensive care ward.

“Masters and Johnson” are well known sex therapists (A therapist is usually a type of psychologist). The “intensive care ward” of a hospital is where people stay who are dangerously sick or injured.

I think she’s giving me the eye. : If she comes out here, my brain will turn to guacamole.

“To give a person the eye” is to look at them in a very romantic or sexually suggestive way. “Guacamole” is a sauce or dip made of avocados (This is Max’s way of saying he’ll be too nervous to talk).

No, I was never into EST.

EST was a self-help movement that seemed to some like a religious cult, which was popular in the 1970s, especially in California.

I came out here to get some shock therapy, but there was an energy crisis.

A type of psychological therapy in which electric shocks are applied to the brain.

You two are wearing white; It must be in the stars.

A romantic way of saying “This was pre-determined to happen.”

Not only is he a great agent, but he really gives good leading.

“To give *head*” is a common and slangy way of saying to give oral sex, but there are now many variations on this. “To give good leading” is a silly way of saying an agent can get his client good leading acting parts.

This is a nice screening room.

A room for screening or playing movies.

She's great looking. A little on the androgynous side.

"Androgynous" was a popular adjective in the 1970s which refers to men who look a little like women, and women who looked like men.

I forgot my mantra.

A word that followers of religions like Buddhism say over and over to themselves while meditating or relaxing.

I don't think California is bad at all. **It's a drag** coming home.

"It's a drag" is a very common colloquial way of saying something is bad or unpleasant.

It was fun to flirt.

"To flirt" is to socialize with people of the opposite sex in a way that attracts their attention and may be slightly romantic or suggestive.

Let's face it; I don't think our relationship is working.

One way of saying "Let's honestly examine the facts of a situation."

A relationship is like a shark; It has to constantly move forward or it dies.

The large and extremely dangerous fish that eat everything they can.

We've given this more than a fair shot.

To give something "a fair shot" is to honestly or sincerely try and make it work (in this case, to make the relationship work).

Why should I put you through all my moods and hang-ups anyway.

To "put somebody through" something is to force them to experience it, even if its unpleasant. A "hang-up" is a strong emotional hostility or disliking of something.

Impeach Eisenhower. Impeach Nixon.

A political word that means to legally charge a person with a crime in order to remove them from elected office.

If she's living with him, then the hell with her.

A way of showing great anger, but not as vulgar as "she can go fuck herself."

Harvard makes mistakes, too. Kissinger taught there.

Harvard is considered the best university in the US, and Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State for President Ford.

What are you making such a big deal about? They're only lobsters.

"To make a big deal" about something is to treat it like it's very important.

I saw that lunatic we used to see with.....the rolling skates.

A “lunatic” is a funny word for a completely crazy or insane person.
“Rolling skates” are shoes with wheels (*Roller* skates is preferred).

I’m getting my chronic Los Angeles nausea again.

If a medical condition is “chronic,” it lasts for a very long time.
“Nausea” is a general felling of sickness, especially stomach-related.

I’ll have the alfalfa sprouts and a plate of mashed yeast.

“Alfalfa sprouts” are tiny edible plants with no taste. “Mashed” means crushed flat or into tiny pieces, and “yeast” is also a tiny tasteless plant.
This is a healthy but ridiculous meal, typical in 1970s Los Angeles.

It’s like living in Munckinland.

“Munchkins” are tiny mythical people from the film “Wizard of Oz.”

If one guy is starving, it puts a crimp in my evening.

“To put a crimp” in a person’s plan is to disturb them or prevent them from doing what they want (A crimp is a fold in a piece of clothes).

You’re the reason...I was able to get more in touch with my feelings and all of that crap.

“To get in touch with your feeling” is a colloquial way of saying to better understand yourself. In this case, “crap” is nonsense or bullshit.

It’s a hectic time for Tony. The Grammys are tonight.

“Hectic” means full of excitement, hurried movement and stress.
The “Grammy awards” are given each year for best music.

I’ve had a rough day....and I have a terrific problem with authority.

In this case, “rough” means difficult or bad. If a person has “a problem with authority,” they get nervous in front of the police.

So long fellows; Keep in touch.

“So long” is a very common way of saying goodbye.
“Keep in touch” is a way of asking a person to keep in contact.

I heard high pitched squealing.

The sound an animal like a pig makes when it is scared.

I did Shakespeare in the Park; Two guys with leather jackets stole my leotard.

“Shakespeare in the Park” is a popular festival of Shakespearean plays performed in city parks throughout the US. A “leotard” is a tight-fitting outfit worn by ballet dancers and actors.

Are we driving through plutonium? :: It keeps out the alpha rays.
 “Plutonium” is a very dangerous material, and
 alpha rays are the rays of the sun that cause sunburn.

Alvy and Annie learn to move on with their lives and still be friends.

She was living in SOHO with some guy.
 A well known neighborhood in Manhattan (South of Houston street).

She was dragging him in to see “The Sorrow and The Pity.”
 “To drag” a person is to pull them on the ground, though here it just
 means to force them to do something they don’t really want to do.

I counted that as a personal triumph.
 Another word for victory.

We had lunch and just kicked around old times.
 A sweet way of saying to talk about and fondly remember the past.

A guy goes up to a psychiatrist and he says
 “Doc, my brother’s crazy. He thinks he’s a chicken.”
 “Doc” is short for doctor. Note that jokes are
 usually told in the historical present verb tense.

The doctor says “Why don’t you turn him in?”
 “To turn a person in” is to tell the police about them, or in this case, to
 get them to go and live in a home for emotionally unstable people.

That’s how I feel about relationships; They’re
 totally crazy, irrational and absurd.
 A strong adjective meaning completely ridiculous.

Annie Hall

Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion

- 1) How would you describe the differences between New York City, Los Angeles and Chippewa Falls Wisconsin?

- 2) Was the relationship that Alvy and Annie had particularly unstable, or are most relationships like that?

- 3) What did Alvy mean at the end when he was talking about relationships and he said “we do it for the eggs”?

- 4) Alvy preferred psychology, Annie at first preferred marijuana. Do either, or both, help people become happier people?

- 5) What did you like or not like about this movie? Was it funny?