

# School Ties

(Drama) (1992)

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## Major Characters

David Greene.....Brendan Frasier

A young, handsome and very athletic high school student, who also happens to be Jewish. Thanks to his football skills, he is given the chance to leave his working-class Scranton, Pennsylvania home in order to go to St. Matthew's ("St. Matt's"), one of the best preparatory private high schools in the country, in the state of Massachusetts.

Charlie Dillon.....Matt Damon

A student at St Matthew's who comes from a very wealthy family that has had generations of sons go to the school. He is a spoiled, insecure and racist young man.

Sally Wheeler.....Amy Locane

A sweet but naïve high school student who many people think is Charlie's girlfriend, but who actually is not.

Chris Reece.....Chris O'Donnell

David's roommate, who is struggling with his own attitude towards Jews and racism.

Rip Van Kelt.....Randall Batinkoff

Dillon's roommate, who is another privileged young man from a wealthy family, but who is also a good person at heart.

McGivern.....Andrew Lowery

The class clown or joker of the group.

Richard 'McGoo' Collins.....Anthony Rapp

One of the more socially awkward of the group, who is also one of the most prejudiced.

Headmaster Bartrum.....Peter Donat

The head of St. Matt's preparatory school, who had approved of making David a student at his school in order to improve their chances of having a winning football team.

Clary.....Zeljko Ivarek

A disagreeable and snobby French teacher who most of the students dislike.

Coach McDevitt.....Kevin Tighe  
 The coach of the St. Matt's football team that decides to bring David to his school in order to make him their team's star player.

Professor Gierasche.....Michael Higgins  
 A very old-fashioned and strict history teacher.

## **Plot Summary**

This film is about prejudice and social class in mid 1950s America, at a time when it was still common for even educated people to be shamelessly prejudice (Racism may always be around, but by the 1970s, it was probably no longer acceptable for any educated American to admit that they were a racist). Specifically, it is the story of David Green, a handsome, athletic Jewish kid from Scranton, Pennsylvania, who is given the chance to go to the prestigious St. Matthews Academy in Massachusetts (see Prep School note below).

This is the opportunity of a life-time for David, because those students who attend St. Matt's are often able to go on to Harvard, or one of the other great American universities. And as a kid from a working class neighborhood, this opportunity would normally not have occurred for David. Somehow, though, the football coach at St Matt's discovered that he is a true star athlete, and thus he was able to get David a full scholarship for his last year of high school.

When David arrives at St. Matt's, he discovers a world of amazing wealth, and of students who often don't appreciate how lucky they are to be born into the privileged social class they come from. Still, he is able to do well in classes and lead the school football team to a winning season. He makes some friends and meets Sally, but he also learns that even here, anti-Semitism (racism against Jews) is both accepted and common. Thus, David chooses to keep his Judaism to himself, but when that fact becomes known, he must face the general hostility of some, and the cruelty of Charlie Dillon in particular.....

A Note on Prep Schools and the Ivy League: Preparatory Schools, which are usually called Prep Schools, are private high schools that are considered among the best in the United States. Many of them are in the Northeast, and some of them are still for just boys. They are extremely expensive, and thus most prep school students are children of the country's richest people. The St. Matthew's Academy in this film is fictional, but it closely resembles several real prep schools found throughout Massachusetts.

The primary reason that rich parents send their kids to prep schools is that attendance at such a place greatly increases the chances that a student will be able to go to one of the country's best universities. Among those universities,

the best known are the so-called Ivy league schools of the Northeast, named after the ivy plant that grows on their buildings. These include Harvard (in Boston, Massachusetts), Yale (in New Haven, Connecticut) and Princeton (in Princeton, New Jersey).

### Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

*David get lucky, and soon discovers  
the elite world of St. Matthew's Academy.*

You go up there and become a gentleman; Not like this riff-raff.

In this case, a “gentleman” is a man who is well-behaved. “Riff-raff” is an interesting word for people who cause trouble and are generally uneducated and perhaps even violent.

We ought to be kicking his skinny butt for breaking up the team.

“To kick a person’s butt” is to physically attack them, or beat them up.

#### Look who’s talking!

An expression that is used to suggest that the person who was speaking before is guilty of something they had accused others of.

The night before last, his sister gave me a hand job. It was her idea.

A “hand job” is the act of sexually masturbating a guy.

You know, you got a Jew friend with a real smart mouth.

A person who has a “smart mouth” is often saying things that are rude, sassy or disrespectful.

So it doesn’t bother you that they killed Jesus and everything?

Note that a source of anti-Jewish racism has been the charge by some Christians that Jews were somehow responsible for the death of Jesus.

It still bothers the shit out of me, you sheeny bastard!

If something “bothers the shit out of” you, it makes you very upset. “Sheeny” is a racial slur for a Jewish person, but it’s no longer used today, even by anti-Semitic people. A “bastard” is an insult word for a mean or abusive man.

Give’em hell, kid!

A colloquial way of saying “Go out there and do your best” (Note that “Give them” -----> “give’em” in rapid speech).

Goddamn it; You get an opportunity like this out of the blue and you go pull that shit.

“Goddamn it” is a very common and vulgar way of expressing anger. If something happens “out of the blue,” it is completely unexpected. “To pull” something is a slangy way of saying to do it, and when used with shit, it means to do something very stupid or wrong.

This school is a pipeline for Harvard University.

A pipe that carries water, oil or other liquid. This is a way of saying many students who go to this school later attend Harvard University.

They’re gonna think you’re some kind of hoodlum.

Note that “going to”-----> “gonna” in rapid speech. A “hoodlum” is a good word for a violent person, punk or gangster.

You could fit in if you really want to, or you could hack around with a chip on your shoulder.

“To fit in” with a group of people is to act or become like them, so that you are accepted. To have “a chip on your shoulder” is to always be angry or bitter for some injustice that has happened in the past (“To hack around” means to waste time, but this is no longer used).

Come on, Pop. You’re sounding like Grandpa. :: You should be so lucky.

“Come on” is the most versatile phrasal verb in English, and here is Dave’s way of saying “Stop being silly.” “Pop” is a colloquial word for dad or father. “You should be so lucky,” when said in the right tone of voice, is a way of saying “You really don’t deserve to be so lucky.”

How’s your dad? :: Fine. He’s pretty worked up about all of this.

To be “worked up” about something means to be angry about it, or in this case, excited about it.

Jesus, this is a high school?

A common way of expressing emotion such as surprise, or in this case, amazement.

Thanks for the lift, coach. :: You bet.

To give a person a “lift” is to give them a ride in a car. “You bet” is a colloquial way of saying you’re welcome.

I can’t eat turnips.

A horrible tasting vegetable that looks like a root.

I better let you get settled.

To get “settled” in a new place is to move into it and try to become comfortable by putting away your clothes and other possessions.

They're a great bunch of kids; Don't get me wrong.

One way of saying "don't misunderstand what I am saying."

They're privileged; They take a lot of things for granted that you and I never would.

If a young person is "privileged," they grew up in a house with lots of money and opportunities. "To take something for granted" is to not appreciate things that other people have to work hard for (like money).

Just play your cards close to the vest; That's my advice.

This is a way of telling a person to be careful and not to reveal too much to other people (A poker player will hold his cards close to his vest or shirt so that others can't see them).

Hey, we're the big men on campus.

This is Dillon's way of saying they are the most important or popular guys at the school.

Scranton, P.A.

The letters "P.A." is how some refer to the state of Pennsylvania.

No shit!

A vulgar but fun way of telling a person that what they just said is obvious.

So you're the first ringer that St Matt's ever hired.

A "ringer" is a slangy word for a great or dominant athlete.

You must be about the best high school quarterback money can buy. :: Hey, Dillon, why don't you lay off?

In American football, a "quarterback" is the leader of the team who throws the ball to others. In this case, to "lay off" means to stop acting so aggressively or disagreeably.

Even in Scranton, a prick's a prick.

A "prick" is a very vulgar word for a jerk, bastard, or sometimes more literally, a penis.

Kind of a going-away fight. :: You mean, like a rumble?

A "rumble" is an old but still used word for a fight between many members of two different groups or gangs.

Over girls, and stuff?

"Stuff" is an overused but critical word, that in this case just means things in general.

There's this place that we all hang out at and the motor cycle guys wanted to come in. :: Bikers?

"To hang out" at a place is to pass time there, often doing nothing in particular. A very common and important phrasal verb. A "biker" is a person who passes lots of his time riding noisy motorcycles.

You didn't want them on your turf, right?

An interesting word for property or land, that is often used when discussing school gangs.

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The shadow knows.

"To lurk" is to secretly wait or stay at a place, often for an evil purpose. The above question is the type of philosophical question that Shakespeare may have asked when discussing human nature.

Football is a game for cretins, bug squatters and criminals.

A "cretin" is an uncivilized or stupid person (The term "bug squatter" is no longer used).

Mac wants to play, but he's too frail. So we let him be student mascot.

"Frail" is another word for weak or fragile. A "student mascot" is a person who usually dresses up in an animal costume in order to represent a team or school.

How did you wind up here?

"To wind up" is another way of saying to end up or finish.

Told you that you qualify for an alumni scholarship.

"Alumni" are former students of a school, and a "scholarship" is an award of money, or perhaps free schooling, housing and food.

St. Luke's has whipped us for three years in a row and the alumni are pissed.

"St Luke's" is the name of the rival preparatory school near St. Matt's. In sports, "to whip" the other team is to beat them badly. If a person is "pissed," they are very angry. A very common and useful slang word.

The guys go to chapel three times a week, but it's not that bad.

A "chapel" is a Christian place for prayer that's smaller than a church.

*David settles in, leads his new football team to victory,  
and quickly discovers that at St. Matt's, being Jewish is different.*

Welcome to the finest preparatory school in the nation.

“The finest” of something is another way of saying the best.

I’m Dr. Bartram, your headmaster. The rest of you may conceivably remember me.

“The headmaster” of a preparatory school is the principle or leader. In this case, “conceivably” is another way of saying “possibly.”

The 193<sup>rd</sup> fall term.

Here, another word for semester.

Some of you may find that academics and discipline at St Matthew’s are very demanding.

“Academics” is an official way of referring to classes. If something is “demanding,” it takes a lot of work.

Let me point out that much of what is policy here, including our cherished honor code...

“To point out” something is to state it clearly. “Policy” refers to the general rules and goals of an organization. If something is “cherished,” it is much loved, and a school’s “honor code” is a set of rules that students promise to follow, including a promise not to ever cheat.

...has been established by your fellow students, to be enforced by your own tribunal of prefects.

“To establish” something is to set it up or create it. A “tribunal of prefects” is a silly and very old term that refers to a group of self-appointed judges who enforce a set of agreed upon laws (In this case, a student group that agrees to enforce the honor code).

We judge ourselves by the highest standards.

A set of rules or guidelines by which excellence can be measured.

You, my boys, are among the elite of the nation, and we strive...to prepare you for the heavy responsibility that comes with favorable position.

The “elite” of a country are its richest and most educated and powerful members. “To strive” to do something is to try and do it as well as possible. Here, “favorable position” refers to the advantages of wealth and education.

This country needs an elite that cares more for honor than for advantage, more for service than for personal gain.

This is Dr. Bartram’s way of saying that he hopes students at St Matt’s will go on to serve the country and not focus only on making money.

To that end, let us beseech the help of God, in whose name we pray.  
 “To beseech” is to sincerely request, implore or beg.

He wanted 40 bucks, but I jewed him down to 30.

A “buck” is a very common way of saying a dollar. “To jew a person down” is a racist way of saying to negotiate over every penny (anti-Semites like to think Jews are very cheap, but regardless, this expression is rarely if ever used today).

Whose music is that? And I use the term advisedly.

This is Cleary’s snobby way of saying that the rock music the kids are listening to is not really music.

I mean the man who would purchase such swill.

“To purchase” something is to buy it, and “swill” is literally a semi-liquid food for animals, or more generally, anything that is disgusting.

That would be me. :: That would be I.

Note Cleary corrects Rip’s grammar, but it’s certainly not clear that educated native speakers usually say the “more correct version.”

I happen to be the house master.

In this case, the person responsible for managing the dormitory or building in which the students’ living quarters are found.

Surely in your day you had your own music, Sir.

This is one way of saying “when you were a teenager (or young).”

Gentleman, we all have to live here, and we’re not going to bring the jungle into my house.

The “jungle” is a thickly forested area of tropical plants and animals. This is Cleary’s way of saying he will not accept rock music (or perhaps music he associates with black people) to be played in the dormitory.

God, Dave, where did you get the balls?

Here, “balls” refers to testicles, or more generally, courage or bravery.

Gerisch. He’s tough. I got him, too.

If a teacher is “tough,” he has a difficult class for which students must study a lot.

You better hang up. We’re just going to make it before lights out.

“To hang up” a phone is to put it back on its holder. In this context, “lights out” refers to the time when all the students are told that they must be in bed with lights off so everyone will sleep.



Monsieur Bernard is cutting back on his teaching load,  
so I have the pleasure of teaching this section of French 4.

A professor's "teaching load" is the number of classes that they are supposed to teach any given semester. Note that large classes can be divided into sections with only a few students each.

I get the picture; I wasn't the quarterback you're looking for.

"I get the picture" is a colloquial way of saying "I understand."

You are our number one backup. :: But if I want to play, I better play half-back.

A "backup" player is an athlete who is ready to play if the first or starting player cannot play. A "halfback" is a position in football, but it is not as important a position as the quarterback.

It's our weakest spot now.

Here, a "spot" is a position on the football team, such as halfback.

You can run and you can block. You got all the stuff, kid.

In football, "to block" is the act of protecting other players. "Stuff" means things, though in this context, it refers to skills or talents.

Listen up! New face on the varsity this year.

"Listen up" is a way of telling a lot of people to be quiet and listen.

A "varsity" team is the most important team that represents a school.

He led his team to a league championship  
last year and it was a mighty tough league.

A "league" is a group of teams that compete against each other.

"Mighty" is an interesting little adverb that means very.

This year we're gonna concentrate on our passing game.

"To concentrate on" something is to seriously study or practice it.

In football, the "passing game" refers to the act of passing the football, as opposed to running with it.

Let's get out there and warm up. Hit it!

In sports, "to warm up" is to practice before a game.

"Hit it" is a colloquial way of telling people to start.

I'm keeping up. I'm holding my own.

"To keep up" or "hold your own" with others is to do as well as them, or perhaps to do as well as expected.

It's Rosh Hashanah. You haven't forgotten?

An important Jewish holiday that celebrates the Jewish New Year.

It's a very holy day. It goes back a lot longer than any one of us.  
 If something is "holy," it is considered solemn, sacred or related to God. If a holiday "goes back" a long way, it began many years ago.

You show respect and get to temple.  
 A temple is a Jewish place of prayer, like a church.

Touchdown! :: We got a quarterback! We found our quarterback!  
 In American football, a "touchdown" is the scoring of a goal (It is worth six points).

I couldn't get away before now. It's Rosh Hashanah.  
 In this case, "to get away" means to leave without causing problems to others or yourself.

It ends at sunset, as I recall the custom. :: Technically yes, but I didn't think it would go over well if I said I couldn't play.  
 "To recall" is to remember. A "custom" is a cultural tradition, such as the celebration of a religious holiday. If something "goes over well," it is well received, accepted or enjoyed.

My scholarship depends on football.  
 A "scholarship" is a gift of money to pay for school, or perhaps living expenses while going to school.

You seem thoroughly concentrated on the task at hand.  
 "To be thoroughly concentrated" on something is to be completely focused on it. "The task at hand" is a stylish way of saying the goal or project that needs to be completed.

You people are very determined, aren't you?  
 "You people" is a way of referring to a whole group of people, though if said with a certain tone of voice, it can suggest a racist attitude. If a person is "determined," they are focused and spend much energy to accomplish their goals.

I recall a blessing; Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.  
 A "blessing" is the act of wishing something for others, often with a religious feeling. "Blessed" means fortunate, or perhaps looked after by God. "Meek" means weak or fragile, and "to inherit" something is to receive it from a person who has died (The second sentence is a famous biblical expression).

I suggest you sneak back to your room. I shall ignore this evening's infraction.  
 "To sneak" into a place is to enter it secretly, without others noticing.  
 An "infraction" is an official word for a violation of a rule or law.

Was it worth it---Breaking a tradition just to win a football game? :: Your tradition or mine, Sir?

A “tradition” is a social custom that has been around for a long time, perhaps even thousands of years. Note: This is a critical exchange between David and Dr. Bartrum in which both look at the importance of David’s Jewish background in very different ways.

*David learns of the intense pressure to succeed in school, and the high psychological cost for those who can’t.*

The son-of-a-bitch knows that, so he gives it to us in French.

A vulgar and common insult phrase for a mean or abusive person.

Conners, I flunked that test.

“To flunk” a test is to fail it.

Charles the 5<sup>th</sup> is executed, which resulted in the establishment of what? :: A Commonwealth.

If a person is “executed,” they are shot or killed in another way, usually by the government for a crime they have committed. The British “commonwealth” refers to the group of former English colonies.

1687. :: Close; you’re only a century off.

Thus is Professor Gierasch’s sarcastic way of telling McGivern that his guess was 100 years too late.

That was the reign of bloody Mary Tudor.

A queen’s “reign” is the period of time in which they ruled or controlled their country.

Persecution of the Protestants? Catholicism was restored?

“Persecution” is another word for repression. “Protestants” and “Catholics” are the two biggest divisions of the Christian religion. “To restore” something is to bring it back to life or back into power.

How come, Mr. Conners?

A very common way of asking “Why?”

She married what’s his name---Phillip. :: Well, more or less.

“What’s his name” is a very useful way of referring to a man whose name you can’t remember. In this case, “more or less” means generally true, though not exactly.

1611. The publication of the King James Bible.

This is the most well known version of the bible published in English.

I remind you, Mr. Dillon, this course has no shallow end. Sink or swim.

If a class has “no shallow end,” all of it is difficult (The shallow end of a pool is the part that isn’t deep, that a person can walk in). “Sink or swim” is an interesting way of referring to any goal or project that is difficult and requires the person to work hard from the beginning, often without help.

If I don’t get total tit tonight, I’ll be using this razor to cut my throat.

A “tit” is a vulgar word for a female breast.

I see sex as my only reason for living. ::

Then be careful you don’t cut your hand.

A clever exchange of words in which Dillon is implying that the only sex McGoo ever gets is masturbation (by using his own hand).

When the guy from Princeton says they might be willing to accept a C in French and you’re flunking French, life is pretty much over.

Princeton is one of the three best universities on the East Coast, along with Harvard and Yale. “To flunk” a class is to fail it.

Princeton isn’t the only school in the Ivy league.

A group of about 10 East Coast universities that are considered among the very best in the United States.

If I don’t get in, it means the blood has gone thin. It means the others all had cocks and I just have a weenie.

A “cock” is a vulgar but masculine word for a penis, while a “weenie” is a silly word for perhaps a small or weak penis. This is Jack’s way of saying if he can’t get into Princeton, he will have sadly broken a tradition of many generation in his family.

Excuse me if I have trouble sympathizing;

Harvard wants monthly reports on me.

“To sympathize” with a person is to feel sorry for them.

It’s touch and go. I’m getting a C in French. C+ maybe.

If a situation is “touch and go,” it is very difficult and it is not clear if you will eventually succeed.

Don’t sweat it; Dillon’s graduating this year.

“Don’t sweat it” is a way of telling a person not to be too stressed or worried about a particular situation.

I wouldn't go to Harvard if you paid me; All those Jews and Communists! :: Yeah, and that's just the faculty.

The "faculty" of a school are the professors who teach there.

You two are both so full of shit. :: Jew lover!

If a person is "full of shit," they say or believe a lot of nonsense. Vulgar, but very useful.

That's not the point! :: That is the point! You don't have to be with them if you don't want to.

In this context, "the point" is the precise or most important thing that the speaker wants to communicate.

You don't have to room with them.

"To room" with a person is an interesting verb meaning to literally live in the same dorm room with them.

How would you not know? It's kind of hard to miss a hebe.

A ridiculous and dated racial slur for a Jewish person.

Girls, eat your hearts out.

If you tell a person to "eat your heart out," you are suggesting that they should be jealous or envious of you because of something that has just happened.

Oh no, never mess with my hair!

"To mess with" a person's hair is touch it or handle in such a way that it becomes messy or unkempt.

Don't forget to make room for the holy ghost.

"The holy ghost" is one way that Christians refer to Jesus or God.

Is she? :: I guess so. That's the word.

A way of saying "this is what people are saying."

The guy must be half-nigger. He can really dance!

A horribly racist word for black people.

You move as well on the floor as you do on the field.

This is Dillon's way of saying that David can dance as well as he plays football.

Is that what you do in your spare time---worry about Dillon?

"Spare" is a useful adjective that means extra, not being used, or beyond what is needed (Beggars on the street ask "any spare change?").

Are you two going steady? :: No, we've known each other since we were five, so everyone thinks we go steady, but everyone thinks wrong.

"To go steady" is a sweet but old-fashioned way of saying two teenagers have decided to date each other or become romantically involved.

You must think I'm a spoiled brat.

If a person is "spoiled," they have been given too many things without having to work for them. A "brat" is an ill-mannered or disagreeable kid. This is a good expression for a person who has grown up with a lot of money and does not appreciate what they have.

Try the punch!

A drink made of different fruit juices that is popular at parties.

I think I'm gonna puke. My stomach hurts.

An unpleasant but common verb meaning to vomit.

I wonder who he'll call on first.

If a teacher "calls on" a student during class, that student is expected to answer questions in front of everyone else in the class.

Poor bastard.

An interesting way of referring to a person who you feel sorry for (Of course, by itself, a "bastard" is just a mean or abusive male).

Where are you? I'm at school, at the dorm.

A short word for "dormitory," which is the building in which students sleep, usually found on campus.

It's almost lights out; Where the hell can he be?

A common filler expression for WH question which add emotions such as anger or frustration.

It's in town. It's a hang-out.

A rare noun for a club or bar where people pass lots of time ("To hang out," which means to pass time, is a common verb).

He hasn't shown up.

"To show up" at a place is to arrive or appear.

Hold on a sec. I'll get the lights.

In this case, "to hold on" is to wait, and a "sec" is short for a second. Note that when a person is about to turn on or off something like the lights, the only verb tense used is the contracted form of "I + will."

He should have said something. :: **Cut it out!**

An excellent colloquial expression which means “stop it”  
(In this case, “stop saying those horrible things about him”).

You did this! :: I'll get you, Cleary!

A short way of saying “I will punish you  
for the bad thing you have done to me.”

You can't go after a teacher like that here.

In this case, “to go after” a teacher is to try and harm them  
because they did something harmful or disrespectful to you.

Good grade. The right college. The right  
connections. These are the keys to the kingdom.

In this context, “connections” are powerful or influential people that  
can help you find things like a good job or other favors. A very  
important word and concept. “The keys to the kingdom” is Dillon’s  
way of referring to the things, like connections, that allow a person to  
become rich and powerful themselves (A “kingdom” is a nation  
headed by a king).

None of us ever goes off and lives by his wits.

“To go off” someplace is to travel there. If you “live by your wits,”  
you survive by your own intelligence and skills, without the  
help of others, and in theory without a lot of money.

I've heard of nervous breakdowns before, but I  
always thought it happened to women at 40 years old.

A “nervous breakdown” is a psychological term used to describe a  
condition in which a person becomes so overwhelmed by life that they  
are no longer able to function normally.

When I was a sophomore, there was a senior,  
William Whitman....he hung himself in the gym.

In universities, the four years of collage are called freshman,  
sophomore, junior and senior, in that order. If a person “hangs  
himself,” he kills himself by putting a rope around his neck and  
jumping from a chair, thus breaking his neck.

I envy you.

“To envy” a person is to want something that they  
have, such as a lot of money or perhaps a great skill.

If you get what you want, you'll deserve it, and if you don't, you'll manage.

In this case, “to manage” means to survive or get by.

You don't have to live up to anyone else's expectations.

"To live up to another person's expectations" is to accomplish something that they believe or expect that you can do.

That's really what draws people to you;

It's not that you're the cool quarterback.

If a person "draws" others to them, they attract or seduce others.

"Cool" is a key adjective for young people meaning good or excellent.

If my name weren't Dillon, that would be different.

Note the use of the subjunctive tense! Yes, it is still used today!

*David and Sally grow closer, and Dillon just grows angrier.*

You don't smoke? :: I tried it, but it didn't take.

In this case, "to take" means to become attractive or pleasurable. An interesting but fairly rare usage of this verb.

On garbage day, we had to haul our own trash to the dump.

"To haul" something is to pull it with great effort, usually because it is big or heavy. A "dump" is where trash is placed after it is collected from different houses and businesses.

**Don't knock it!**

An interesting little expression which means "Don't criticize it" ("To knock" something is to literally hit or strike it).

His buddy has the other end of the rope and he's lowering him into the pit.

A "buddy" is a colloquial word for a friend. "To lower" something is to let it gently drop downward. A "pit" is a hole in the ground.

What for? :: They were scavenging for tin cans.

"What for?" is another way of asking "Why?" "To scavenge" is to look for things that have been thrown away, often in piles of trash or on dirty city streets. "Tin" is a type of metal.

Who would want to do that? That's what I said to my old man.

A slangy way of referring to a person's father.

He gave me a long, hard look and he said, "Davey, it's an honest living."

"An honest living" is an affectionate way of describing a job that may not pay a lot, but is legal and still contributes to society.



Can I call you? :: You better!

Note that in this case, the modal verb version of better means have to (as opposed to should).

I'll drink to that.

"To drink to" something is to celebrate it, usually by raising a glass in front of people and drinking in its honor.

History has proven that you can't beat St Luke's. ::

This year is going to be different. We have a secret weapon.

A "secret weapon" can be a real weapon such as a bomb or jet fighter, or in this case, a person who is a great athlete.

Are we going to punish St. Luke's for their arrogance? :: Severely, Sir.

If a person is "arrogant," they are too confident or look down on other people (Note the difference between the adjective and noun). To punish a person "severely" is to do so without mercy.

You at the end of your winning streak?

If a team has a "winning streak," it has won several games in a row without losing.

He's really cute.

A key adjective meaning attractive or pretty, especially in a delicate or child-like way.

Really, who found the boy? :: He applied just like anybody else.

"To apply" to go to a school is to officially fill out all the necessary papers in order to be accepted as a student there.

This year's inductee's to the Hall of Fame are....

Class of 1951....Quarterback Grayson Dillon the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

An "inductee" is a person who is officially accepted in to a club or group. A "Hall of Fame" is a group of the best people in a particular group or field, in this case students who went to St. Matt's.

St Matt's ball. Second and 12 from their own 10.

This is language from American Football; St. Matt controls the football, and on the second play they need to move it forward 12 yards from the 10 yard line on the field.

Dave, they're looking for a pass. Give it to me on the right and I can get the first down.

In football, a "first down" is the act of moving the ball so many yards forward down the field that the team with the ball gets to keep the ball for four more plays.

Come on, let me make up for that fumble.

“To make up for” something is to do something good that will compensate for something bad that you did in the past. In football, a “fumble” is the act of accidentally dropping the ball.

Dillon, you better block your ass for me.

In a football context, a slangy way of saying “protect me from the opposite team with all the energy you have.”

Let’s see the dessert cart since dinner is on Mr. Wheeler.

In this case, a “cart” is a table with food on it, which is rolled through a restaurant. If a meal is “on” a person, they are going to pay for it.

I consider it a moral victory; It could have gone either way.

A “moral victory” is a poetic way of referring to a defeat, but one in which the defeated team learned a valuable lesson or gained something else of great value despite their loss. A great expression.

The club is three guys who chipped in to buy an old Buick.

“To chip in” to buy something is to contribute some money with other people in order to be able to buy it as a group (A Buick is a type of American car).

See the game? :: Wouldn’t have missed it for the world.

One way of saying “I saw it, and I wanted to see it so badly that there was no way I would not have seen it.”

That new quarterback is the great white hope, isn’t he?

A curious expression for a person who people hope will become a hero, in this case for St. Matt’s football team.

This is Mr. Keating, one of our trustees.

A “trustee” is a person responsible for the financial management of a person’s inherited money, or in this case, for the finances of the school.

Son, on behalf of the old guard, many thanks.

To do something “on behalf of” another person is to do it for them. In this case, “the old guard” refers to the old students of the school.

Don’t sell yourself short; That was a key block.

“To sell yourself short” is to not give yourself the credit you deserve for having accomplished something important.

I threw a good block and he got into the Hall of Fame.

In football, “to throw a good block” is to effectively protect another player from being hit by members of the other team.

You have different natural abilities. :: In other words, I should accept my mediocrity.

“Mediocrity” is the state of being just average, or of low quality, and not excellent or outstanding (the adjective is *mediocre*).

If you mention Charlie Dillon once more, I will sit down in a huff.

“To mention” a person is to bring them up in conversation. To do something “in a huff” is to do it while clearly angry or upset.

Sorry, it just kind of happened. :: Screw you, friend.

A vulgar way to express anger, though not as strong as “fuck you.”

He needs some time to cool off. I’ll speak to him later.

In this context, “to cool off” is to calm down after becoming angry.

*Dillon learns of David’s great “secret,” and thus their classmates and Sally are forced to show their true character.*

St Luke’s class of ‘35. That’s why he looks so down in the mouth.

The “class of ‘35” refers to those students who graduated from the school in 1935. If a person looks “down in the mouth,” they look sad or depressed, though this is a rare and dated expression.

Green? They wouldn’t have enrolled a Jew. Not even for championship.

“To enroll” a student in a school is to officially accept them (If the student enrolls, they officially register and sign up to be in the school).

A Jew? Holy shit.

A vulgar and interesting way to express shock or disbelief (If something is “holy,” it is sacred or associated with God).

I can’t believe I dropped that pass in the end zone.

The end of the football field where teams score goals.

Mission accomplished; The old boy’s network got together and bought us a victory.

“The old boy’s network” refers to the people in power who run an organization (They are often white males, and frequently the children of people who had power themselves).

But the joke's on us.

If a “joke's on” a person, they are the one who is being made fun of, or fooled, even though they were not aware of this at first.

Last week there was a religious revival at Madison Square Garden.

In this context, a “religious revival” is a large meeting of people who come to see a religious leader talk about God.

Bishop Fulton Sheen gave such a stirring address that afterwards, 10,000 people converted to Catholicism.

A “stirring address” is a very emotional speech. If a person “converts to Catholicism,” they decide to become a Catholic.

Then Billy Graham got up and after an hour of inspired preaching, 10,000 people converted to Protestantism.

Billy Graham was a very well known religious leader. If a speech is “inspired,” it is emotional, heart-felt and often effective. “To preach” is to speak with great emotion, often about religion. “Protestantism” is a large branch of the Christian religion.

Pat Boone sang “There's a Gold Mine in the Sky” and 20,000 Jews joined the Air Force.

The “Air Force” is the part of the military that is responsible for control of the skies through the use of fighter jets and other aircraft. This is another racist line that implies that Jews are obsessed with money.

It turns out that our Golden boy here is a lying back-stabbing kike.

If a person is “back-stabbing,” they will try to even hurt a friend when they are not prepared (“To stab” a person is to push a knife into them). A “kike” is a dated and racist word for a Jewish person.

You gonna keep your focus in the books for the rest of the year?

A Person's focus is what they are concentrating on or thinking about.

What do you expect me to say? :: That it's no big deal?

If something is “no big deal,” it is not considered important.

You're Methodist. And all the time I didn't know it.

One of the branches of Protestant Christianity (as is Lutheranism).

OK, let's get it out. :: You think all Jews are dirt, right?

In this context, to “get it out” is to say exactly what you are thinking about a particular subject.

Say it! Jews are dirty, money grubbing!... :: **Come off it!** Come on!

If a person is “money-grubbing,” they are always thinking of ways to make money (“To grub” is to dig in the ground, though this verb alone is very rare). “Come off it” is an excellent way of telling a person to stop saying nonsense or bullshit.

I was thinking I would get into Harvard. And it’s not all that easy when you come from a podunk public high school.

A fun little adjective that means small and unimportant, or more specifically, from a small and unimportant place.

I didn’t want anything to mess it up.

“To mess up” is to do something in such a way that it turns out badly.

I knew the first night I got here, when I heard how McGivern got his hi-fi---“He jewed him down.”

“Hi-fi” is a old-fashioned word for a stereo or music system (It stood for “high-fidelity”).

Your translation was a quantum leap over your previous year’s efforts.

In this case, a “quantum leap” is a huge improvement (It is a term in physics that refers to a great change).

Grow up, for Christ’s sake.

If you tell a person to “grow up,” you are telling them to stop acting so childishly. “For Christ’s sake” is an interesting way of expressing anger or frustration, but it has no real religious meaning.

It’s so hard to find decent help nowadays.

In this case, “decent” means good or adequate. This is a sentence that rich or snobby people say when they want to complain that it’s hard to find trustworthy people to be their maids, cooks, babysitters, etc.

If you care to step outside, I’ll show you how fast I can move.

This is David’s way of saying he will fight, but only outside the building, where a fight won’t effect so many others.

Listen man, you need this job as much as I do.

A common filler word used to express emotion such as excitement.

Come on, Green, don’t blow it!

“To blow it” is an excellent colloquial expression meaning to do something in a stupid, bad or destructive way.

Cowards!

A “coward” is a person who has no bravery or courage.

You have no idea what you've put me through.

In this context, "to put a person through" a situation is to make them suffer or experience great stress or anxiety.

She's going on and on, saying how my grandmother would turn over in her grave.

If a person "goes on and on" about a subject, she continues to talk about it for a long time. When you say a person "would turn over in her grave," you're saying that even though she is dead and buried, she would be so upset by some news, she would still become upset if she found out. A curious expression, in this case implying that Sally's grandmother was very anti-Semitic.

My friends, they just keep pestering me and all they can say is "What's it like to kiss a Jew?"

"To pester" a person is to continue to bother and annoy them, like a bee that won't go away.

"Does his nose get in the way?" :: Nice friends.

If something "gets in the way," it prevents you from moving forward or getting what you want. Note that anti-Semitic people love to claim that all Jews have big noses.

You're not the first Jewish boy I ever met.

You're just the first one who ever denied it.

"To deny" something is to claim it isn't true (Of course, David never denied his Judaism---he just never spoke about it).

*Dillon throws both David and his class into crisis.*

Please sign your reaffirmation of your honor code in the place provided.

A "reaffirmation" is a second or follow-up promise to act in a certain way. "To provide" something means to give it, or to supply it.

This test will comprise 30% of your final grade.

"To comprise" means to be made up of, or to include.

My, my, Mr. Connors, you usually don't have this much to communicate.

:: You were bound to ask the right questions sooner or later, Sir.

"My, my" is a gentle way of expressing emotion such as surprise or disbelief. If a person is "bound to" do something, it is extremely likely that they will do it.

Dismissed, gentleman.

One way a teacher tells students that the class is over and they are free to go (“To dismiss” literally means to allow to leave, or to remove).

What’s with Rip? :: He must have gone down in flames.

If a person asks “What’s with…” a particular person, they are asking what’s wrong with them, or why they are acting so strangely. “To go down in flames” is a slangy way of saying to completely fail, or to do something very badly.

Sure, and guess who aced it, right?

“To ace” a test is to get an A on it.

Conners, you jerk!

An excellent word for an idiot, ass, bastard, etc. (The connotation can be either stupid or obnoxious and abusive).

Be seated, gentleman. I regret to announce that someone in this class cheated on yesterday’s exam.

“To regret” something is to feel badly about it.

Everyone signed the honor code. Therefore, we have a rather bleak situation confronting us.

“Bleak” is a sad little adjective meaning cold, gray and not hopeful.

“To confront” a situation is to face it or deal with it directly.

If the cheater does not come forward, or is not identified by then, I will be forced to fail the entire section.

Here, “to come forward” means to announce publicly who they are.

We have all been dishonored by this person and I will not tolerate it.

If a person is “dishonored,” they have been made to look as if they have done something shameful or embarrassing. “To tolerate”

something is to accept it, even if you don’t like it.

I prefer to keep the evidence to myself for the time being.

“Evidence” is anything that can be used to prove who committed a crime (In this case, the piece of paper that was used to cheat on the test).

I worked my ass off for four years and now for one lying bastard, my life is ruined?

“To work one’s ass off” is a very slangy way of saying to work extremely hard. A “bastard” is a vulgar word for a mean or abusive man. “To ruin” something is to completely destroy it.

I wish I could get it out of my mind, but I got this appalling feeling....I have a good idea who did it.

An “appalling” feeling is one of shock or disgust.

Maybe Conners can enlighten us. You’ve been slacking off all term.

“To enlighten” a person is to educate them, or to give them wisdom.

“To slack off” is an interesting phrasal verb meaning to become lazy.

In this case, a “term” is a school semester or quarter.

Hell, Cleary all but accused you of cheating in French.

A stylistic way of saying Clearly strongly implied (that Conners cheated) without actually saying so directly.

Cleary’s full of shit and so are you, you four-eyed runt!

If you accuse a person of being “full of shit,” you’re saying that they are saying lies or nonsense. Vulgar, but common and useful. “Four-eyed” is an insulting and silly adjective for a person who wears glasses, and a “runt” is any small and weak animal or person. Not a nice thing to say.

I’m in more trouble than all of you guys put together.

Another way of saying “all your troubles combined.”

You bastards aren’t going to pin this on me.

“To pin” a crime on a particular person is to accuse them of having done it.

I’m sorry he’s offended, but this could ruin the lives of everybody in this room.

If a person is “offended,” they’re feelings have been hurt, or they have been angered or upset by what has been said or shown.

You guys got to handle this.

In this case, “to handle” something means to effectively take care of it.

Let’s sleep on it and we’ll meet tomorrow morning after chapel in the founder’s room.

“To sleep on” something is to think about it for a while, and then usually to talk about it the next day. A “chapel” is a small church for religious services, and the “founder’s room” probably is named after the founders or creators of the school.

I know it was you; I can describe the crip sheet.

A sheet of paper that contains notes (Although teachers will sometimes allow them, they’re usually not permitted during tests).



If I did cheat and you did see me and didn't report it, you'd be in violation, too.

Here, to be "in violation" means to have broken a law or rule, in this case the honor code.

I know, but I can't let the whole class fail.

:: He's bluffing; He won't fail anybody.

"To bluff" is to claim to be ready to do something that you in fact will probably not do (It is a term for poker, where players pretend that they have stronger cards than they really do).

You met my family; They expect me to measure up to something that's impossible.

"To measure up to" something is to do as well as people expect.

You got to get it straight, Dillon.

David's way of saying Dillon has to admit his mistake.

Look, I'm sorry. I was a prick. A prejudiced prick.

If a person is "prejudiced," they are racist or biased. A "prick" is a vulgar word for a jerk, ass, or in the right context, a penis.

This doesn't have anything to do with that. Just confess.

"To confess" is to admit that you have done something wrong or perhaps illegal or immoral.

How many guys think I could have done it here?

You screwed up a couple of assignments.

"To screw up" something is to do it badly. In school, an "assignment" is homework, such as a paper.

All right, lay off. It wasn't Conners.

If you tell a person to "lay off," you're telling them to stop being so insistent or aggressive.

What a squirmer. Just admit it!

"To squirm" is to move or twist your body around, often in a way that looks like you are desperately trying to escape.

What situation? I just turned him in and now he's denying it.

"To turn a person in" is to report them to others after you have caught them cheating or breaking the law.

It's one guy's word against another.

This describes a situation in which it must be decided who is telling the truth between two people saying opposite things.

Let's just do it; What's the big deal?

Asking this question is a way of saying that it's not so important.

I submit Dillon didn't cheat....because he didn't have to cheat.

In this case, "to submit" is to officially state as an opinion.

As I see it, there's an objective fact. One of them has lied in the past and one of them hasn't.

An "objective fact" is a fact that no one can say is not true.

Gierasch says the crib sheet was block printed and there's no way to tell who wrote it.

If writing is "block printed," it is written with clean, straight lines that do not have the individual features of handwriting.

The reputation of the school and the future of the honor code is on our shoulders.

If the future of something is "on your shoulders," you are responsible for taking care of it and making sure it does well.

My life is screwed if I don't get into Yale. I didn't even apply anywhere else.

Here, "screwed" is used as an adjective meaning badly hurt or destroyed, and once again, it is less vulgar than fucked. "To apply" to a school is to officially asked to be admitted as a student there.

Look, we busted our butts for four solid year and now one person is killing us.

"To bust your butt" is to work extremely hard. Slangy, but used.

From the first minute, he was madly trying to ingratiate himself into our crowd.

If a person tries to "ingratiate themselves" with others, they do whatever they can to be liked by them, even if what they are doing isn't honest or isn't acting like what they are really like.

That's bullshit, McGoo. :: No, he wanted to get to the top without hazing or any of the work.

"Bullshit" is a crude but excellent word meaning lies, half-truths or nonsense. "Hazing" is the tradition of college fraternities (male clubs) to force new students to do ridiculous things before being allowed to join, such as accepting to be paddled on the ass, or perhaps to drink so much alcohol that they have to vomit.

Will you shut up, McGoo? You're a bigot. :: I resent that.

A "bigot" is another word for a racist. "To resent" something that has been said about you is to be angry about it.

Say it all you want, asshole. You were the first one who started needling him.  
An “asshole” is a bastard, jerk, creep. etc. A vulgar insult word.

I confess, I am an anti-Semite.  
An anti-Semite is a person who does not like Jewish people.

I crack Jew jokes and think they’re greedy and pushy.  
“To crack” a joke is to tell it. If a person is  
“pushy,” they are too aggressive or assertive.

David Green’s the first one I’ve met up close.  
To meet a person “up close” is to see them  
face to face, or perhaps to talk with them.

I can’t believe this. You want to dump Dillon for a dirty Jew?  
In this case, “to dump” means to vote against,  
though it more generally means to throw away.

It’s now 1AM and ticking; Are we going to decide this or not?  
The “ticking” of a clock is the tapping sound it makes as seconds pass.

Not unless we can be fair and impartial.  
“Impartial” means without prejudice or bias, but fair and honest.

I only have to know one. The guy who waltzed in here  
uninvited and pushed himself into Dillon’s place on the team.  
“To waltz in uninvited” is to enter into a place in an aggressive  
manner when those already inside don’t want you there.

And he sneaks off with Dillon’s girl. :: Stabbed him in the back!  
“To sneak off” somewhere is to go off secretly, without anybody  
seeing. “To stab” a person is to push a knife into them.

You guys would have nailed Green. He knew the way you really feel.  
In this context, “to nail” a person is to attack  
or blame them or get them into deep trouble.

Let’s get it over with.  
This is to finish it, usually as quickly as possible.

Hand or secret ballots? :: If we’re going to  
do it, we’re going to do it out in the open.  
When voting, “secret ballots” are pieces of paper that are marked  
in secret, while a “hand ballot” is a vote in which people raise their  
hands in front of everybody else in the room.

As head prefect, I've been asked...

Here, the leader of the student council or jury.

It's the finding of the majority of the class that the guilt lies with David Green.

A fancy way of saying "the majority think David is guilty."

I'll honor your traditions. I'll go to the headmaster and I'll lie.

"To honor a tradition" is to agree to follow its rules.

*The truth about Dillon comes out, David prepares for Harvard, and St. Matt's returns to normal.*

Thank you, Mr. Van Kelt. You're excused.

A teacher's way of saying "You can now leave."

The honor code is a living thing. It cannot exist in a vacuum.

This is a way of saying that the code exists within society, and is part of that society (A "vacuum" is an empty space where nothing exists).

We absolve you both on that account. Mr. Dillon, however, is expelled.

"To absolve" a person of a crime is to find that they are not guilty of having done it. In this case, "on that account" refers to the specific crime of cheating. "To expel" a person is to officially remove them from an organization, in this case the school.

Good, then it's settled. I'd like to forget this ever happened.

If a difficult situation is "settled," a solution has been found that is usually satisfactory to most involved.

You used me for football. I'll use you to get into Harvard.

In this case, "to use" a person is to take advantage of what they have to offer in order to benefit yourself. It has a negative connotation, though it is not as bad as to abuse or exploit.

# **School Ties**

## **Some Potential Questions for ESL Class Discussion**

1. Is racism still a major problem in the US? Against which groups?
2. Is racism still a major problem in your country? Against which groups?
3. Why are the Jews different from other religious or ethnic groups?
4. Should David have said he was Jewish as soon as he arrived at St. Matt's?
5. What was Dillon's fundamental problem?
6. What was the problem with Professor Gierasch's solution to the cheating situation?
7. Do you know spoiled kids like those at St. Matt's?
8. David's last words to Dillon were "And in 10 years, you'll still be a prick": Can you think of a line that would have been more appropriate or interesting?
9. Show your knowledge of history: How would St. Matt's likely be different a decade or more later, in the late 1960s?
10. What did you like and not like about this movie?