

Take the Money and Run

(Comedy/Documentary) (1969)

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Major Characters

Virgil Stockwell.....Woody Allen
A poor and unlucky young man who decides that the only way he can survive is to make a living as a criminal.

Louise.....Janet Margolin
A sweet and innocent young woman who eventually becomes Virgil's wife after they meet in a park.

Mr. Starkwell.....Henry Leff
Virgil's father, who thinks his son is a horrible person.

Mrs. Starkwell.....Ethel Sokolow
Virgil's mom, who thinks his son is basically a good person but has had trouble because of his difficult childhood.

The Narrator.....Jackson Beck
The person who officially tells Virgil's troubled story to the audience.

Plot Summary

This film is the first movie starring and directed by Woody Allen, who would go on to become one of the most famous comic actors in the history of American cinema. It is done in the form of a documentary, and tells the life story of Virgil Stockwell, a poor and desperate young man who turns to a life of crime because he can't seem to make a living doing anything else. The narrator tells of Virgil's life from his unhappy childhood to his ridiculous life as a bank robber, often through the use of interviews with people who have known him. Those people include everyone from his decent but ashamed parents (so ashamed of Virgil, in fact, that they wear disguises while they are interviewed), to his psychologists and fellow inmates in prison.

For Virgil, the best thing that happens in his life is when he meets Louise, a sweet and pretty young woman who works in a laundry. Virgil had played cello as a boy, and when he meets Louise, he tells her that he is a professional classical musician in the city philharmonic. Eventually, of course, Louise finds out that Virgil is simply a common criminal and bank robber, but she stays loyal to him, even after an endless series of failed bank robberies in which Virgil always ends up back in prison, forever trying just one more time to escape...

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

Virgil Starkwell survives a difficult childhood and grows up to become a common criminal.

The wife of a New Jersey handyman.

A “handyman” is a person who is skilled at fixing many different types of things, from electrical and plumbing problems to windows and roofs.

He is an exceptionally cute baby with a sweet disposition.

“Cute” is an important word for attractive, in a child-like way. A person’s “disposition” is their mood or attitude, as a part of their personality.

Assault, armed robbery and illegal possession of a wart.

“Assault” is a legal term for threatening to physically attack a person.

“Armed robbery” is the act of robbing or stealing something, with the use of a weapon such as a gun. “Possession” is the act of physically having something, and a “wart” is a small, raised surface on a person’s skin.

Growing up in a slum neighborhood where the crime rate is amongst the highest in the nation is not easy.

A “slum” is a very poor area of a city, often where poor minorities live and crime is common.

Particularly for Virgil, who is small and frail compared to the other children.

“Frail” is another word for weak or fragile.

He scores well on an IQ test, although his behavior disturbs the teachers.

An “IQ test” is an exam that is supposed to measure a person’s intelligence. “To disturb” a person is to bother or annoy them.

Virgil takes to crime at an early age.

“To take to” something is to begin to participate in it.

With both parents working to make ends meet, he becomes close to his grandfather.

“To make ends meet” is an interesting way of saying to make enough money to pay for all your expenses.

Virgil’s grandfather is struck in the head by a ball. The blow causes permanent injury to his mind and he becomes convinced he is Kaiser Wilhelm.

A “blow” is a word for a physical hit or strike. A person’s “mind” is the part of them which thinks and feels, though it is sometimes used as another word for brain. The “Kaiser” was the leader of Germany before World War 1.

Here are some rare photos of him with other patients on the sanitarium grounds.

A “sanitarium” is an old word for a place where old people live who can’t take care of themselves (A “home” is more common today).

The “grounds” of a building are its surrounding yards and gardens.

When he is 15 years old, amidst the violence and poverty of the slums, Virgil receives a cello as a gift.

“Amidst” means ‘in the middle of.’ A “cello” is a large musical instrument.

He had no idea about tone production.

An important word in music for the quality of a sound.

He would just saw it back and forth, just scratch the instrument to such a point that it would drive everyone who listened to it absolutely insane.

“To saw something back and forth” is to move an object over it in one direction and then the opposite direction, the way one uses a saw to cut down a tree. “To drive a person insane” is to drive or make them crazy.

He had no conception of the instrument.

In this case, another word for understanding.

He would not apply himself one iota.

“To apply yourself” is to try hard at doing something, like mastering a musical instrument. An “iota” is a very small or tiny unit of measurement, and thus the above sentence is saying he would not try at all.

A **jungle**, however, is no place for a cellist.

A “jungle” is both the wet and wooded area where snakes and alligators live as well as any area of a big city that is considered very dangerous.

Unable to concentrate in school, he has long since dropped out.

“To drop out” of school is to leave it, before finishing or graduating.

He wants nothing more than to belong, if only to a street gang.

In this case, “to belong” is a word from modern psychology which means to feel part of a group that cares about you. A “street gang” is usually a gang of young people who are involved in violence and illegal activity.

It is here he thinks he will prove his manhood.

If a man wants to “prove his manhood,” he is trying to show others how strong, courageous, or appropriately enough, manly, he really is.

“I’m going to be a pool hustler,” he tells his friends.

A “pool hustler” makes their living by gambling on games of pool, usually against people they know they can beat (Pool is the table top game where players try to push large balls into side pockets).

Virgil tries to join the navy but is psychologically unfit.
If a person is “psychologically unfit,” they are considered emotionally disturbed or unstable

That looks to me like elephants making love to a men’s glee club.
A “glee club” is a group of people who sing, often short songs.

Mr. T. M. Foster, Virgil’s first probation officer, remembers him vividly.
A “probation officer” is a government official that meets with prisoners after they have been released into society to make sure that they are not getting into trouble and deserve to stay out of prison To remember something “vividly” is to remember it well, in great detail.

He was a trustworthy kind of person. I mean you had to remember certain idiosyncrasies that he had.
If a person is “trustworthy,” they can be trusted. If a person has “idiosyncrasies,” they have behaviors that most other people would think are odd or strange.

Sometimes, he exaggerated the truth.
“To exaggerate” is to overstate or overemphasize, such as when you say a person is the tallest in the state even though they are just very tall.

Unable to fit in with any aspect of his environment, Virgil strikes out on his own.
“To fit in” with a group is to become a natural part of it. “Aspect” is a particular part or appearance of a greater whole. “To strike out on one’s own” is to try and accomplish something big without the help of others.

In an effort to shed some light on this period of his life, we spoke with his father and mother.
“To shed some light” on a situation is to explore it in detail so one can understand it better.

Oh, come on. He was a good boy?!
The most common and versatile phrasal verb in English, hear meaning “be serious.”

He’s rotten. He’s a gangster.
If a person is “rotten,” they are completely bad, disgusting or immoral.

He was so bright and so talented.
“Bright” is another word for very smart.

He was an atheist! I tried to beat God into him but it was too tough.
An “atheist” is an important word for a person who does not believe in God, and “to beat God into them” is a violent way of saying to try and convince them to believe in God. “Tough” means strong and able to resist great pain or punishment.

I mean, you're a very dominating person.

If a person is "dominating," they usually have great power in their relationships, and often are louder or more aggressive than others.

Vowing that he will never serve his full term, Virgil plans an elaborate escape using a bar of soap and some shoe polish.

"To vow" is to promise to do something, and in this case, a prisoner's "full term" is the number of years they've been sentenced to prison. If a plan is "elaborate," it is complicated with many details.

You got to take me to the infirmary.

An "infirmary" is a place where sick or weak people are taken to be treated or cared for.

Virgil's attempted escape is dealt with harshly;
His sentence is extended an additional two years.

"To deal harshly" with a person is to treat them cruelly. A prisoner's "sentence" is the amount of time they are required to serve in prison for the crime they committed. "To extend" a sentence is to increase it.

1956 is a happy-go-lucky year for most people.

An old but interesting expression for fun or cheerful.

The doctors want someone to be inoculated with a new vaccine.

"To inoculate" a person is to give them a medicine, usually with a needle, that will protect them from a disease. A "vaccine" is a type of medicine that contains the weak form of a disease to allow the body to develop a natural defense against the normal stronger version of the disease.

We don't know what the side effects may be.

The "side effects" of a medicine are its unintended results (for example, a flu shot may prevent the flu but also cause people to grow weak).

With parole as inducement, Virgil submits to the vaccine test.

"Parole" is the act of letting a prisoner out of prison before his sentence is over because he has behaved well in prison. An "inducement" is a promised reward for doing something, and "to submit" to something is to agree to do it.

For several hours, he is turned into a rabbi.

A "rabbi" is a religious leader in the Jewish religion.

The reason we celebrate the Passover holidays by eating Matzo is to commemorate the time Moses led the children of Israel from Egypt.

"Passover" is one of the best known Jewish holidays, "matzo" is a type of Jewish bread, and "to commemorate" something important that happened in the past is to officially remember or recognize it.

He has so many good qualities.

A person's "qualities" are the various features or aspects of their character, such as kindness or honesty.

A no-good atheist was what he was.

An interesting adjective that's used to mean very bad or awful.

Virgil leaves jail and soon falls in love with Louise.

Virgil leaves prison apprehensive, but with some hope he can begin a new life.

If a person is "apprehensive," they are very nervous about something that is going to happen.

He finds a world difficult to cope with.

"To cope with" a situation is to try and deal with it, even though it is hard.

Desperate and **broke**, Virgil tries to support himself with small crimes.

"Broke" is a useful slang word that means to have no money.

I was strolling down here just now and I noticed you were drawing something.

"To stroll" is to walk in a slow and casual manner.

Are you an artist? :: I'm a laundress. I wash clothes, primarily.

"Laundress" is an interesting but never used word for a person who makes a living washing clothes. "Primarily" means most importantly.

Yes, I'm a cellist.

A person who plays the cello.

Are you with the philharmonic?

Another word for a city orchestra, which primarily plays classical music.

First of all, I was very nauseous.

A person who is "nauseous" is sick to their stomach and feels like they may throw up or vomit.

I guess I'm sensitive...because real beauty makes me want to gag.

"To gag" means to choke on something such that breathing or swallowing becomes very difficult.

I'm nervous around women. I have a tendency to dribble.

If a person has a "tendency to" do something, they usually do it quite a lot over time. "To dribble" is to let spit or saliva run out of your mouth and down your face. Try not to do that!

She was not an **attractive** girl. I used to make obscene phone calls to her collect. She used to accept the charges all the time, but nothing ever happened.

“Attractive” is a general word for pretty or pleasant to be around. An “obscene phone call” is one in which the caller says sexually inappropriate or dirty things to the listener, and to call “collect” is to call an operator first in order to get the person who is being called to pay for the phone call (with the popularity of cell phones, collect calls are less common than before). “To accept the charges” is to agree to pay for a collect call.

Here I am lying through my teeth.

If a person is “lying through their teeth,” they are saying complete lies that are not true in any way.

A lot of people hold those things against you.

“To hold something against” a person is to continue to blame them or be angry at them for something bad they did in the past.

I was so **touched by** her, after 15 minutes, I wanted to marry her, and after a half hour, I completely gave up on the idea of snatching her purse.

“To be touched” by a person is to be strongly effected by them in an emotional or sentimental way. “To give up on” an idea is to decide to no longer do it, and “to snatch” a purse is to quickly steal or grab it.

She asked me some questions about Mozart.

She got suspicious because I couldn’t place the name.

“To place” a name is to remember who that person is.

He asked if I thought sex was dirty and I said it is if you’re doing it right.

A very clever and typical Woody Allen line. Note that “dirty” can mean both the opposite of clean and in a more general sense, very sexual in a way that might be offensive or unacceptable to many people.

My heart was really pounding and I felt a funny tingling all over.

If a heart is “pounding,” it is beating strongly with great force. “Tingling” is the feeling of lots of tiny needles gently pushing against your skin.

I was either in love or I had smallpox.

A contagious disease that was largely eliminated through vaccines.

There’s millions of them in one of those bins.

A “bin” is a large container.

I asked her for a lock of her hair. We didn’t have a scissors so I tried to pull it out.

A “lock” of hair is a small piece or curl of hair that is cut off.

She was **a good sport**.

A good and useful expression for a person who accepts defeat or disappointment with calm maturity, grace or a good attitude.

When she got excited, she stuttered.

If a person “stutters,” they have trouble saying words without repeating the same sound over and over.

They turn red, they’re always gasping for breath.

“To gasp” for breath is to desperately try to breath in after having a lot of difficulty doing so.

I offered to let her do my shorts, and she was very moved by that.

If a person is “moved” by something, they are emotionally touched by it.

Continuing his deception, Virgil sees Louise more frequently.

“Deception” is the act of trying to fool a person into believing something that is not true (Here, Virgil wants Louise to think he’s a musician).

In order to understand Louise, let us examine her background briefly.

In this context, a person’s “background” is their past life, including their experiences, knowledge and education until the present.

Adopted at age two from a cruel and impoverished orphanage, raised by a career military man and his wife....

If a person or organization is “impoverished,” it is very poor. An “orphanage” is a home where children without parents are raised.

....she was subject to an upbringing of extreme discipline, which left her shy and withdrawn.

If a person is “subject to” hard conditions, they are forced to accept them. A person’s “upbringing” is how they were raised by their parents or care-givers, and “discipline” is an important word for the act of controlling children and others to make sure they follow an acceptable type of behavior. If a person is “withdrawn,” they are shy and quiet.

Her father pursued a brilliant military career, which after 30 years catapulted him to the rank of corporeal.

“To pursue” a career is to follow it with great energy and determination. “To catapult” is to fly through the air with great speed. “Rank” is an official word for level, and “corporeal” is a middle rank in the US army.

She turns to religion for comfort and quickly becomes a fanatic.

A person who is a “fanatic” is devoted to a religion or other cause, often so much so that they believe that all others who are not devoted to that same religion or cause are lost or will not be saved by (their) God.

She responds to Louise’s need for love by beating the child, and claims to have conversations with God in which they discuss salvation and interior decorating.

“To beat” a person is to cruelly hit or strike them, again and again. “Salvation” is a religious word that refers to the act of being saved by God for life after death, and “interior decorating” is the art of arranging the inside of a house with remodeling, furniture, paintings, etc.

*Virgil fails at bank robbery and prison escape,
but after he gets out, he fathers a baby with Louise.*

Destitute and in love, Virgil attempts to change his life with one bold stroke.

If a person is “destitute,” they are desperately poor. A “bold stroke” is a dramatic plan or action that can change everything in a person’s life.

I am pointing a gun at you.

“To point” a gun at somebody is to aim it or direct it at them.

Oh, I see. This is a hold-up.

A “hold-up” is the act of robbing a bank or person (The victim is told to hold up their arms).

You’ll have to have this note initialed by one of our Vice-Presidents before I can give you any money.

If you “initial” a note, you sign the first letter of your first and last name on it.

I’m in a rush. ∴ I’m sorry, but that’s our policy.

A bank’s “policy” is the rules it decides it must follow to reach its goals.

Louise, I can’t make our date today.

Here, a “date” is the act of two people going out to a restaurant, movie or other place, often in the hopes of creating romantic possibilities.

Virgil Stockwell is apprehended in the act of bank robbery. He is given 10 years in the State’s strictest maximum security prison.

If a person is “apprehended” while committing a crime, they are caught. If a prison is “strict,” it is run with great discipline, and a “maximum security prison” is generally the toughest type of prison for the most dangerous criminals (the opposite of a minimum security prison).

It is here that he mingles with hardened criminals for the first time.

“To mingle” with people is to talk to them casually, often while at a social event. If a criminal is “hardened,” they’re generally dangerous or cruel.

A prison has not been built that can hold me, Virgil tells a fellow inmate.

In this context, “fellow” means a comrade or person of equal level or rank, and an “inmate” is a prisoner or other type of held person.

Let’s face it; It was our fault.

A common way of saying “We need to accept the difficult truth.”

Whose genes did he have? And chromosomes?

Two key words from biology that deal with a person’s or animal’s DNA, which is the tiny material in cells passed from one generation to the next.

Don't talk fancy in front of the man, because, you know, you'll make an impression.

"Talk fancy" is Virgil's dad's silly way of saying to use educated words (In this case, relating to biology and genetics). More generally, "fancy" means of high quality.

Time passes slowly for Virgil, who works hard and tries to adjust to prison life.

"To adjust to" something is to get used to it over time.

He becomes a model prisoner and is put to work in the laundry.

A "model prisoner" is one who causes no problems for the prison.

I called up your landlady. She told me you were here.

The woman who owns your apartment building or the house you live in.

You're allergic to cake.

If a person is "allergic to" a type of food, they get sick if they eat it.

I need a dozen chocolate chip cookies with a bullet in each.

The deadly metal projectiles that you shoot with a gun.

I estimate in the neighborhood of 10 years.

A complicated way of saying 'about.'

With Louise to inspire him, Virgil works hard and becomes more optimistic.

If somebody "inspires" you, they move you to feel more optimistic, motivated or excited about something.

Louise's impact on Virgil is discussed by Dr. Julius Epstein, one of the prison psychiatrists who recalls Virgil.

In this case, "impact" is another word for influence or effect.

A "psychiatrist" is a psychologist who is also a medical doctor (MD), and "to recall" is to remember.

His love for her was the healthiest thing in his life. It was **genuine** and clean.

A good word for authentic, real and true.

I become eligible for parole in a year and a half.

To be "eligible for" something is to qualify for it or be able to receive it.

In this context, "parole" is the act of letting a prisoner out of prison earlier than his completed sentence, because of their good behavior.

We got this proposition we need to talk over with you.

A "proposition" is a proposal or idea for a plan.

You guys gotta be kidding.

"You can't be serious!" Note that "have got to" ----->"gotta" in rapid speech.

First, no broad is gonna wait around for years for you.

“Broad” is a stupid and dated slang word for a woman.

Note that “going to”-----> “gonna” in rapid speech.

I think the conflict in this personality disorder started in his formative years. I think it gave evidence in his choice of the cello, for instance.

“Conflict” is a struggle between two sides. A “personality disorder” is a term from modern psychology that means an emotional problem.

A person’s “formative years” are when their personality is formed, generally when they are young children. “Evidence” is a legal word that refers to anything that is used to prove the truth of a statement.

It’s generally assumed that the cello is a phallic symbol.

A “cello” is a large musical instrument, and a “phallic symbol” is anything that is thought to represent or symbolize a penis.

I mean with the grasp, but...the lower structural form is celebrating the feminine.

A “grasp” is the act of holding tightly to something. This is all nonsensical talk about how the shape of a cello represents both male and female.

The utilization of the bow, I would imagine, is the sublimation of stroking a torso.

“Utilization” is a complicated word for ‘use.’ A “bow” is a wooden stick that is used to play a stringed musical instrument. “Sublimation” is the act of directing or channeling an emotion, often such as frustration, into a specific activity. “To stroke” something is to rub it back and forth, and a person’s “torso” is their body (not including their head).

So between the grasping of the phallic and the stroking of the torso, it would create, I would imagine, great conflict even at the age of six.

This is the psychiatrist’s ridiculous way of saying that the very act of playing a cello could cause great sexual tension in a child.

His every move becomes tense and strained.

If a person’s actions are “strained,” they are made with great difficulty, often because of tension, lack of energy or other problems.

We already got some uniforms stashed in the dark room.

A “uniform” refers to the official clothes that people in a specific organization wear. “To stash” something is to hide it away in a secret location, for future use.

Sir, we can’t find our underwear. I think something’s up.

A common way of saying that something strange or unexpected is happening, but it is not clear what that is.

The warden knows something's up. Better call off the break.

A "warden" is the leader of a prison. "To call off" something is to cancel it, and in this case, "the break" is a way of referring to the prison escape plan (To break *out* of prison is to escape from it).

Mike Sullivan, an ex-convict and one of the leaders, describes that fateful day.

A "convict" is a person who has been sent to prison (They have been *convicted* of a crime). A "fateful day" is usually a day in which very important and dramatic things take place.

There's a break in the North cell block! Notify the warden immediately!

A "cell block" is a group of prison cells or housing units for prisoners, usually located in a particular part of a building. "To notify" a person is to inform them.

Could somebody possibly sneak downstairs and let me back in?

"To sneak" downstairs is to go downstairs very quietly or secretly, in such a way that nobody will notice.

Alright, I got your daughter! Please hold your fire, men!

If you "hold your fire," you stop (or don't start) shooting the gun that you have.

Is Kowolski a midget?

An abnormally small or tiny person.

It is a simple ceremony, followed by what he later describes as a deeply moving blood test.

A "ceremony" is a traditional or formal event, such as a wedding. If something is "moving," it is emotional or sentimental.

He turned out to be a punk.

If a person "turns out" a certain way, it is unexpectedly discovered that they are that way, or they end up that way. A "punk" is a violent or unpleasant trouble-maker.

They take up residence in another state and live on Louise's small savings. They move into a cheaply furnished flat.

"To take up residence" in a building is to move into it. A "flat" is a British English word for an apartment.

I got a cramp in the arch of my foot!

A "cramp" is a sharp pain in one's muscles. The "arch" of your foot is the bottom curved or bent part.

He secures a little work selling encyclopedias door to door, but the job proves too much for him.

"To secure" a job is to get it. If it "proves too much" for you, you don't have the skills or energy to do it.

He is forced to take to the streets, and for a while he earns a meager living selling meagers.

To earn a "meager living" is to earn just enough to survive, but no more. This is a funny sentence, but "meagers" as a noun does not exist!

We're going to have a baby. :: **Get out of here!**

An excellent colloquial expression which basically means "That's ridiculous; I don't believe you" (It can be reduced to "Get out!").

In the Spring, Virgil and Louise are blessed with a son.

If a person is "blessed with" something, they are fortunate to be given it.

His back against the wall, he attempts to lie his way into the job.

If a person's "back is against the wall," they're in a very difficult situation.

Name, please. :: John Q. Public.

The name that is used to describe the typical man.

What kind of office was it? :: Rectangular.

If an office "rectangular," it is shaped like a rectangle (A square with two sides longer than the other two). Note though this is not answering the intended question!

Have you ever had any experience in running a high speed electronic digital computer?

Note that in 1969, few people had experience with these. Today, of course, they're just called *computers*.

What does your aunt do? :: I can't recall.

"To recall" is to remember.

Did you deal in products or services?

To "deal in" something is to be involved in selling it.

Is this something found in the home? :: No, it's not. One down and nine to go.

These are the words one would use when a contestant is answering questions on a television game show ("You have nine questions left to get the right answer").

Is this product **edible**?

A good word for anything that can be eaten ("*Eatable*" is not a word!)

Our time has run out, and I'm sorry to say that you haven't guessed my occupation, and so I'm going to flip all the cards and tell you what I used to do.

A person's "occupation" is their profession or what they do for a living. "To flip" a card is to turn it over.

I used to manufacture escalator shoes for people who were nauseous in elevator shoes.

A truly ridiculous thing to say! “To manufacture” something is to build or make it, and if a person is “nauseous,” they are sick to their stomach. An “escalator” is a moving staircase between floors, and an “elevator” is a platform for bringing people up and down between floors. “Elevator shoes” are used to make people look taller, but this term is dated.

Better luck next time. You’re a good sport.

If a person is “a good sport,” they have a positive attitude and are not easily upset if they are disappointed or lose in a sporting event.

Virgil becomes the victim of a blackmail plot.

Virgil does well at his first **decent** job, the mail room.

If a job is “decent,” it is reasonably good or not bad.

His past catches up with him, however, as a fellow employee learns of his criminal record.

If a person’s “past catches up with them,” something bad that they did in the past begins to negatively effect them in the present. A “criminal record” is an official record of a person’s past crimes that are kept by the police or other government agency.

Virgil Starkwell becomes the victim of a blackmail plot.

“Blackmail” is the act of threatening to harm a person, sometimes just by telling one of their secrets to others if they do not agree to do something that is being demanded, such as paying money. A “plot” is a plan that is usually illegal and often involves two or more people.

Miss Blair, confident of her power to expose him, begins making small demands for money.

In this context, “to expose” a person is to tell their dark secrets or past actions to other people.

Everything that he holds dear is **in jeopardy**.

“To hold something dear” is to value it greatly. If something is “in jeopardy,” it is in great danger of being hurt or destroyed.

His life and family hang on the whim of an unstable woman.

“A whim” is a sudden desire or idea that has not been well thought out.

He is driven to desperation and with the responsibility of a wife and child to protect, Virgil Starkwell contemplates murder.

If a person is “driven to desperation,” they find themselves in a situation where they are willing to do anything to escape.

“To contemplate” something is to think seriously about it.

Did you hurt your hand? **Clumsy!**

If a person is “clumsy,” they’re physically awkward and tend to drop things a lot.

Disguising two sticks of dynamite as candles,
he sends Miss Blair an anonymous gift.

“To disguise” something is to make it appear as something different than it really is. “Dynamite” is a very powerful explosive that’s often used as a weapon during war. If a gift is “anonymous,” it is given by a person who does not identify themselves or reveal who they really are.

Determined to rid himself of the blackmailer,
he rents a car and attempts to run her over.

If you try to “rid yourself” of a person, you try to eliminate them or drive them from your life. “To run over” a person in a car is to literally drive the car over their body.

You can do the carving.

“To carve” a turkey is to cut it into nice slices for a dinner.

I’m creating the proper atmosphere, dear. :: I’m a sucker for atmosphere.

In this context, “proper atmosphere” is the right combination of things like lighting, good food and nice music, which create a positive or romantic ambiance or environment. If a person is a “sucker for” something, they are easily impressed or made happy by it.

With law enforcement agencies on his trail,
Virgil takes his family and heads South.

“Law enforcement agencies” refers to governmental organizations like the FBI (The Federal Bureau of Investigation) as well as the local police. If a person is “on your trail,” they are trying to find you by looking for physical evidence of where you have recently been.

They manage to secure cheap lodging temporarily.

“To manage to” do something is to be able to do it. “Lodging” is another word for housing.

I tried mugging old ladies, but I got hit in the groin with a crutch.

“To mug” is a violent verb meaning to physically attack somebody, usually in order to steal their money. A man’s groin is the area of their body between their legs and under their belly, and a “crutch” is a support that people with broken legs place under their armpits to help them walk.

I tired counterfeiting for a while. I got the plates
all fouled up. Lincoln was smoking a cigarette,

“To counterfeit” is to produce fake money. In this case, “plates” are printing plates used to print money, and “to foul up” something is to do a poor job of it (Note that President Lincoln is on the \$5 bill).

I robbed a butcher shop. I got away with 116 veal cutlets, and then I had to go out and steal a tremendous amount of breadding.

“To rob” a store is to steal from it. A “butcher shop” is where meat is sold, and “veal cutlets” are pieces of meat from very young cows.

“Tremendous” means huge or very big, and “breadding” refers to bread crumbs that are put on certain pieces of meat.

With food scarce, the Starkwells live like hunted animals.

If something is “scarce,” it is hard to find or in very limited supply.

It was tough, but my family was starving and I had already filed for bankruptcy.

Here, “tough” means very difficult, and “to file for bankruptcy” is a legal term in which a person officially declares that they are not capable of paying off their debts, or the money that they owe others.

What prompted you to go on?

“To prompt” a person to do something is to make them decide to do it.

In this case, “to go on” means simply to continue doing what you were doing before.

They must have looked up to you. :: Well, you know, these guys are mugs.

“To look up” to a person is to admire or think highly of them. A “mug” is a dated word for a fool or a person who is easily tricked or deceived.

*Virgil's greatest bank robbery plan
fails and soon he faces life on a chain gang.*

I think it's our only way out of this mess;

There's a little dinky bank in Ross County.

Here, a “mess” is a very difficult problem or situation. “Dinky” means very small or tiny, and a “county” is an administrative area of a state that is bigger than a city (There are several counties in each state).

First he selects an appropriate bank. Next he cases the bank

by clearly concealing a camera in an unsuspected place.

“Appropriate” is key word meaning suitable, fitting or reasonable for the situation. “To case” a bank is to study it carefully, with the later intent to rob it. “To conceal” a camera is to hide it from public view.

Among the ones chosen are some of the most sinister names in the underworld.

“Sinister” is an excellent word meaning truly evil or horrible.

“Underworld” is a colloquial word for organized crime or the Mafia.

Wanted for assault with a deadly weapon,
murder and getting naked in front of his in-laws.

More typical silliness from Woody Allen; “Assault” is the legal term for threatening to physically attack a person, and a person's “in-laws” are the parents of their husband or wife.

To destroy the evidence, we're gonna eat the film. It will be buffet style and you can just help yourselves. Take plates.

If a dinner is served "buffet style," diners come to a long buffet or table and serve themselves to the different foods that they want.

I put out little trays of pretzels and bullets.

A "tray" is a serving dish for food, with a flat bottom and low rim.

The idea is that we pull up in front of the bank and we look like we're making a movie.

"To pull up" a car in front of a bank is to park right in front of it.

I got the perfect guy. An ex-con I did some time with by the name of Fritz.

A common term for a person who was former convict, which is a person who spent time in jail.

Ruth and Gherig were baseball players. :: I was also a bat boy for the Yankees.

A "bat boy" is a young boy who gives the bats to the players in professional baseball (Babe Ruth and Lou Gherig were the most famous players for the New York Yankees in the 1920s).

You will enter the bank and say "Up with your hands!, This is a stick-up," thereby announcing our theme; Man's greed.

A "stick-up" is slang expression for the act of pointing a gun at a person and demanding their money. A "theme" is the general subject or topic of a work of art, such as a movie or play.

Everybody, take five.

In the entertainment business, a way of telling people to relax, or literally, to take a five minute break.

Oh Jesus, every day I have trouble getting in the bathroom. For crying out loud.

"Jesus" is a common way of expressing emotion such as anger or frustration, and "for crying out loud" is a strange but still used expression which is also used to show frustration or anger.

I happened to have ironed your beige shirt. :: It's light! I'll be an easy target.

"To iron" a shirt is to remove the wrinkles from it with a heated iron, which is a hot metal object that is used for that purpose. "Beige" is a light brown color, and if a person is an "easy target," they can be easily seen and shot at.

Virgil and his accomplices depart from his hideout and proceed toward their destination.

A criminal's "accomplices" are those people who help him commit a crime. "To depart" is to leave, and a "hideout" is a place where criminals and others who are trying to hide try to avoid being captured. "To proceed" is to move forward.

We're holding up the bank! :: No, we were hear first.
 "To hold-up" a bank is to rob it. Note it is also a noun.

We've been planning this for months! We're not going to have it **ruined** by a jackass.
 "To ruin" something is to completely destroy it. A "jackass" is an interesting insult word for a jerk, idiot, moron, etc.

Now **beat it!**
 A forceful and colloquial way of telling someone to leave.

Virgil gets 10. He is taken not to prison this time, but to a road gang, where his criminal behavior will cost him dearly.
 A "road gang" is a group of prisoners who are chained to each other at the arms or ankles, who are forced to work outside the prison.
 If something will "cost you dearly," you will have to pay a high price in either money, or in this case, in punishment.

You men come here because you committed crimes rendering you unfit to live in decent society.
 Note in English, a person "*commits*" a crime (the only verb to use).
 "To render" a person is to leave them in a particular state or condition.
 If a person is "unfit" for something, they are not qualified for it, or they are unsuitable or not appropriate for it. "Decent" is an important adjective meaning good, not bad, or in this case, civilized.

Our job is to get some civilization in you so that when you leave here, you're going to think twice about performing anti-social acts.
 "To think twice" about something is think about it very carefully before deciding to do it. "Anti-social acts" are any actions that cause society harm, including obviously, any criminal or violent actions.

Do you think a girl should pet on the first date, if both parties involved are mature and liberal?
 In this case, "to pet" is a dated word for the act of giving and receiving sexual pleasure by gentle stroking or rubbing.

Do you think you have good enough aim to knock these bracelets off of me?
 A person's "aim" is their ability to shoot or point a weapon at a target with great accuracy. A "bracelet" is a metal piece of jewelry that is worn around a wrist, or in this case, ankles.

Food on a chain gang is scarce and not very nourishing.
 The men get just one hot meal a day; A bowl of steam.
 "Scarce" means hard to obtain or of limited supply, and if food is "nourishing," it is good for your health because it contains the various things your body needs (like vitamins, protein, etc). "Steam" is the vapor that water turns into when it is heated to a very hot temperature.

Just whet the hell do you think you're doing?

A common expression added to Wh questions to show frustration, anger and other emotion.

Don't beat the shadow, you damn fool!

"Damn" is another filler word that is used to show anger or frustration. A "fool" is a good word for a stupid person or idiot who is easily deceived.

The time drags by in an endless grind of back-breaking labor.

If time "drags by," it moves very slowly (To drag something is to pull it on the ground). A "grind" is a very tiring job or routine that goes on and on. "Labor" is another word for physical work.

Brutal discipline is common under the hot sun. The men are not even permitted to faint without written permission.

"Brutal" is a powerful adjective meaning very cruel or merciless.

"Discipline" is the act of making people follow rules. "To faint" is to lose consciousness and fall down, perhaps because of being so tired.

Virgil complains, and he is severely tortured. For several days he is locked in a sweat box with an insurance salesman.

"Severely" is another word for very strict, harsh or perhaps even brutal.

A "sweat box" is a very hot and small container where prisoners are taken as punishment. The second sentence is, of course, ridiculous.

I think the best thing to do is to get straight life with a little term. And how about dental and medical? It's a good deal.

"Straight life" and "term" are different types of life insurance.

If something you buy is a "good deal," it's inexpensive or a good value.

We could take them by surprise if we all suddenly made a break for it.

If prisoners "make a break for it," they suddenly try to escape.

You're crazy. :: That's right, I'm a paranoid schizophrenic, but I say we try it.

A term from modern psychology to describe a troubled person who has difficulty understanding what is real, and what is irrational fear.

My car broke down; Can I use your phone?

If a car or machine "breaks down," it stops working or running.

Patrolman Lynch; Can I come in?

A "patrolman" is a police officer who drives in a car, especially one who works for a state highway patrol, which guards the state highways.

I'm checking the area for anything suspicious.

If something is "suspicious," it makes one think that there is something not right with a situation, or that something wrong or dangerous is happening, but it's not clear what it is.

OK boys, the game is up. :: The old lady must have told.

A slangy way of telling people who are planning to do something illegal or wrong that “we know what you’re about to do, so don’t even try it.”

Virgil, if you only had listened to me and gone straight.

If a criminal “goes straight,” they give up on crime and try to get a job and live a normal life in society.

If she were my wife, I’d belt her one. :: Do you mind keeping out of this please?

“To belt” a person is to hit them forcefully. “To keep out of” a conversation is to keep quiet and not join in.

These guys are with me for good now!

If a situation is “for good,” it will last forever.

You used to make love to me and you used to recite poetry.

“To recite” poetry is to read it out loud.

Will you stop your giggling?

“To giggle” is to laugh gently, with repeated short catchers of breath.

Oh, Christ!

Like “Jesus,” a common way to express anger, frustration and other similar emotions.

Once more, the family takes flight.

“To take flight” is to fly away, or more generally, to leave quickly, often in order to escape being caught by somebody.

Feeling guilty about their son’s education, Louise tries tutoring him.

“To tutor” is to individually teach a person, often in a single subject.

You know, he never made the “10 Most Wanted list.” If he had been a successful criminal, he would have felt better.

“The 10 Most Wanted List” refers to a list the FBI puts up in post offices across the United States, which describes those 10 suspected criminals that are considered the most dangerous.

Virgil Starkwell embarks on a series of crimes that make him a wanted desperado.

“To embark” on a trip is to begin it. A “desperado” is a Spanish word that refers to any type of extremely desperate person, including a criminal who is desperately trying to avoid being caught.

He attempts to rob the vault of a bank but finds a family of gypsies are living there.

In a bank, a “vault” is a large and heavily guarded room for storing money, jewelry and other valuable things.

Virgil is caught, one last time.

The FBI regards Virgil as a menace.

A “menace” is any person or animal that is considered dangerous or that could cause great harm.

He does win “Gangster of the Year” award and is asked to speak at many lunches and universities.

A “gangster” is a criminal involved in organized crime or the Mafia.

The author of the book, *Mother was a Red*.

Until the 1980s, “red” was a ridiculous colloquial way of referring to communists or members of any communist party.

Mr. Hoover was quite upset by Mr. Starkwell and his activities. In fact, he confided to me on occasion...

Mr. Hoover is a reference to J. Edgar Hoover, who was the horrible director of the FBI from about 1930 to 1970. “To confide *in*” somebody is to tell them something very personal or secret, with the understanding that they will not tell anybody else. “On occasion” means once in a while.

...he thought this criminal, as he put it, might well be part of a subversive plot.

In this context, “as he put it” means ‘as he said it or expressed it.’

A “subversive plot” is a plan by dangerous people who may be trying to harm or even overthrow the government.

Obviously an atheist and a pinko, and they in general try to **disturb** our society.

An “atheist” is a person who does not believe in God, and a “pinko” was a silly slang word for a communist. “To disturb” a person is to emotionally upset or greatly bother them.

We finally traced him to a cheap neighborhood in the lower East Side of New York, where he was living in a very sleazy run down tenement house.

“To trace” a person is to find them or track them down by exploring where they had been before. The “Lower East Side” is a part or neighborhood of New York City. If a building is “sleazy,” it is dirty and unpleasant, and if it is “run down,” it is old and in poor condition. A “tenement” is an old, poor building in a run down neighborhood.

One day he told me he was a gynecologist. He couldn’t speak any foreign languages; Who is he **kidding**?

A “gynecologist” is a doctor who specializes in women’s sexual and reproductive health. In this context, “to kid” is to try and fool or deceive, or more generally, to joke around.

Now I think he’s **brilliant**.

A powerful adjective meaning extremely smart.

He was just the best cover-up job I've ever seen in my life.

In this context, a "cover-up job" is the act of pretending that you are somebody different than who you really are (To cover-up something is to try and hide it from the public).

I actually believed he was an **idiot**.

An excellent word for a stupid person, fool, jerk, etc.

I can't believe there was a mind working in there that could rob banks! It's a phenomenon.

A "phenomenon" is an exceptional, unusual, or very interesting person, thing, or occurrence.

We finally captured Virgil under a sort of very odd circumstances.

"Odd" is strange or bizarre and "circumstances" are the facts, details or conditions of a particular situation or occurrence.

An amateur photographer happened to be there at the time and took the only known film of his capture.

If a photographer is "amateur," they are not professional, but rather just learning photography on their own, or taking pictures for their own pleasure. If somebody "happens to be" in a particular place, they are there just by chance, but not because they had planned to be. The "capture" of a person is the act of that person being caught after trying to escape.

This is the spot where it happened.

In this case, another word for place or exact location.

Can you **get to the point**?

"To get to the point" is to say exactly what you want to communicate, rather than talking about only somewhat related and unimportant things.

I was trombone. First trombone!

A type of musical instrument in which the player blows air inside.

They were **hilarious**!

A good alternative to extremely funny.

We painted the car yellow. Right on Halloween!

The holiday on the night of October 31st, in which children go door to door asking for candy.

It was yellow stripes, like a barber pole!

A "stripe" is a line or long section that is a different color from the surrounding area. A "barber pole" is a well known object that spins around, which is often found outside barber shops (where hair is cut).

You fumbled the last play!

In sports, “to fumble” a ball is to accidentally drop it.

I thought they were cheering.

If an audience cheers a performer or player,
it screams or yells in support and excitement.

You can't beat the good old days.

A colloquial way of saying “Life was much better many years ago.”

I just realized; I'm a cop. It's a great job. I get a pension.

A “cop” is a common slang word for a policeman, and a “pension” is a savings account for a worker's old age, which is created by their employer to pay for them when they retire.

Virgil Starkwell is tried on 52 counts of robbery
and is sentenced to 800 years in federal prison.

In this context, a “count” is an individual charge of having committed a crime. If a person is “sentenced” to 10 years, a judge gives them that many years as a punishment.

With good behavior, he tells his lawyer he can cut the time in half.

Note that if a prisoner behaves well, they can be released early on parole, before their official sentence is completed.

I think crime definitely pays.

“Crime *doesn't* pay” is a common expression that is used to try and convince people that a life of crime is dangerous and not worth it.

What about your cohorts? What ever happened to them?

Your “cohort” is a companion or friend who is involved in the same crime or other activities as you are.

I've been doing a lot of stuff in shop lately, and I'm very skilled with my hands.

In high school and prison, “shop” refers to practical classes like wood shop and electrical shop, where students learn how to be carpenters and electricians. If a person is “skilled,” they are talented.

Take the Money and Run

Some Potential Questions for ESL Class Discussion

1. What are the different types of humor that can be seen in this film? Are all types of humor funny to all types of cultures? Is Woody Allen considered funny in your country?
2. At the end of the film, Virgil is sentenced to 800 years in prison, but he tells his lawyer that with good behavior, he can cut his sentence in half; Is that funny, or just sad?
3. Can there be nice and decent people who are professional criminals?
4. Are there any areas of life that should not be treated with humor?
5. For you, was Virgil funny or just annoying?
6. What did you like and not like about this movie?

