

# The Producers

(Comedy) (1968)

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## Major Characters

Max Bialystock.....Zero Mostel

A Broadway producer who was once extremely successful, but whose plays in recent years have all been commercial failures. He struggles to survive by seducing little old ladies into paying for his efforts.

Leo Bloom.....Gene Wilder

A neurotic (very nervous) New York accountant who is assigned to look at Max's finances. He discovers how Max can make lots of money even if his plays are horrible and close down after just one show.

Franz Liebkind.....Kenneth Mars

A crazy German living in New York who is obsessed with the Nazi Party, who has written a play called "Springtime for Hitler."

Roger De Bris.....Christopher Hewett

A colorful New Yorker who is the worst theatre director on Broadway.

Ulla.....Lee Meredith

A sexy young Swedish woman who Max hires to be a receptionist.

Lorenzo St. DuBois ("LSD").....Dick Shawn

A very bad actor and singer who Roger hires to play the role of Hitler.

Carmen Giya.....Andreas Voutsinas

Roger's extremely strange assistant.

## Plot Summary

This film is the story of Max Bialystock, a struggling producer of Broadway plays (Broadway is the street in New York City that is world famous for its theatre). He has not produced a successful play in years, but he continues to survive by charming old ladies, so that they will help pay the costs of his next production. In theory, the ladies will receive a part of the profits, but since there are never any profits, they never get back their money.

One day the accountant Leo Bloom arrives to check over Max's financial records, and soon after he realizes that Max could actually make a fortune by raising as much money as possible from these old women, and then just *making sure* that the play they are investing in is a complete flop (a financial failure). None of

these women would expect to receive any profits from their “investment,” and since no money was made, the Internal Revenue Service (which is the federal government agency that collects taxes), would never bother to investigate where the money went. In law, all of this would probably be called fraud and is highly illegal, but Leo tells Max it is basically a form of “creative accounting” (This may be the first use of that phrase in the history of the movies, and is of particular interest today given the corporate accounting scandals that occurred in the United States starting in 2001).

Max and Leo decide to team up in order to produce the worst play they can possibly imagine. After reading dozens of screenplays, they decide to go with a musical called “Springtime for Hitler,” written by a crazy German who is living in New York. They also find who they consider to be the worst director on Broadway, and soon begin production of the play. All the while, Max gets busy raising as much money as possible from his network of little old ladies, convinced that he will never have to pay back their “profits,” since he is certain that there will not be any. All seems to be going as planned, and when the play opens, Leo and Max are convinced they have made their fortune. However, the one thing they forgot to consider was the unpredictable nature of public taste....

A quick note: The use of [S] after a definition means the words are in a song.

## Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

*The legendary Max Bialystock, failed Broadway producer,  
meets the neurotic Leo Bloom, certified public accountant.*

Ta ta!

A somewhat snobby way of saying goodbye, used mainly in Europe.

You dirty young man!

Note that the usual expression for a man who is sexually interested in women much younger than himself is “dirty *old* man.”

Bye, bye, old buzzard.

A type of bird that eats dead animals,  
and a slang word for a greedy person.

“Finder’s keepers.”

The expression “finder’s keepers, losers weepers” means that a person who finds lost property gets to legally keep it (“To weep” is to cry).

There you are, you little flirt!

A good word for a person who likes to romantically or sexually attract people without being serious about it.

What a sissy!

A very negative slang word for a coward or person without courage.

It's only a flesh wound, lamb chop!

A "flesh wound" is a superficial injury on the skin ("Lamb chop" is a ridiculous way of referring to a lover or wife).

Just say "oops!," and get out.

A common word to express mild apology or surprise, especially after having just done something incorrectly or by mistake.

I can't abide a peeping Tom!

"To abide" someone is to accept them, and a "peeping Tom" is a person who secretly spies on others, often by looking through their windows.

I swear, that man never takes his field glasses off of me.

In this case, "to swear" is to promise to tell the truth. If a person never takes their eyes off of you, they keep staring at you.

Let's fool around!

In this context, to "fool around" means to engage in sexual activity.

I'll be the innocent little milk maid and you'll be the naughty stable boy.

A "milk maid" is a 19<sup>th</sup> century expression for a girl who used to get milk from cows. "Naughty" means badly behaved, though it often has a strong sexual connotation. A "stable boy" takes care of horses in the stables where they live.

The Contessa and the Chauffeur

"Contessa" is an Italian word for a count, which is a person of high social rank in Medieval Europe, and a "chauffeur" is a person who drives a limousine to transport others.

How can I drive when you drive me mad?

"To drive somebody mad" is to make them go crazy.

**Pull over.**

A critical phrasal verb which means to slow down the car and park it on the side of the road.

Until Thursday, then, you bawdy wench!

"Bawdy" is a fun but rare word for a sexually indecent, crude or inappropriate person, and a "wench" is an old word for a sexually loose woman, or possibly even a prostitute.

And then we'll play "The Abduction and the Cruel Rape of Lucretia!"

"Abduction" is another word for kidnapping, or the taking of a person by force. The above sentence refers to a well known play.

I made it out to cash.

Note that if a check is made out to “cash” instead of a real person, any person has the right to cash that check as if it were like real money.

Goodbye, my powder pigeon.

A ridiculous way to refer to a lover (A “pigeon” is an annoying and common type of bird).

He who signs the lease must pay the rent.

A “lease” is a legal contract between a landlord and a renter.

Oh Lord, hear my plea. Destroy him! He maketh a blight on the land!

“Lord” is a common way of referring to God. A “plea” is an urgent request. “Maketh” is Shakespearean English for make, and a “blight” is any type of disease that leads to rotting and death.

Why are you loitering in my hallway?

“To loiter” is to stand around in an area for no particular reason.

Speak, dummy, speak.

“Dummy” is a widely used way of referring to a stupid person.

**Get a hold of yourself!**

A good way of telling an extremely nervous person to calm down.

I’m from Whitehall and Marx. I was sent here to do your books and I’m terribly sorry I caught you with the old lady.

In this context, a person’s “books” are their financial or business records (Whitehall and Marx is the accounting firm that Leo works for).

Come in, Mr. Tact.

If a person has “tact,” they are diplomatic and behave with sensitivity so as not to offend anyone (Here, saying “Mr. Tact” is a sarcastic way of implying that a person does not have much tact or sensitivity).

You’re an accountant. Then account for yourself!

“To account for” something is to explain it.

Why are you looking up old ladies’ dresses? Bit of a pervert, eh?

A “pervert” is a person who enjoys sexual practices that are bizarre or not considered normal.

How dare you condemn me without knowing all the facts?!

“How dare...” is a powerful way of showing anger at a person for having done something outrageous or shocking. “To condemn” a person is to strongly criticize them for having done something wrong.

Shut up; I’m having a rhetorical conversation.

A conversation, often involving one person speaking to themselves, in which questions are asked just to make a point, but not so that they will actually be answered.

How **humiliating!**

An alternative way of saying totally embarrassing.

Six shows running at once!

If a Broadway show is “running,” it is probably being performed several times a week.

I’m wearing a cardboard belt!

The type of paper material that most boxes are made out of.

This used to have a pearl as big as your eye!

A valuable stone-like piece of jewelry taken from sea shells.

I used to have investors begging, pleading to put their money in an MB production.

“To plead” is to beg with great passion or desperation (An MB Production would be a play produced by Max Bialystock).

Voila! Hundreds of little old ladies stepping off at MB’s office, to grab a last thrill on the way to the cemetery.

“Voila” is a French word, used by many English speakers, which basically means “there it is” or “there you go,” after something has been accomplished or delivered. “To grab” is to forcefully take or seize, and a “thrill” is a sudden feeling of excitement. A cemetery is the place where dead bodies are buried.

You have exactly 10 seconds to change that look of **disgusting pity** to one of enormous respect.

“Disgusting” means awful, grotesque or totally offensive. “Pity” is the act of having sympathy for someone, or feeling sorry for them, and “enormous” means extremely big, huge or significant.

Windows so **filthy** can’t tell whether it’s day or night out there.

A good little adjective meaning extremely dirty. Note the elliptical dropping of the pronoun “I” before “can’t,” which is more common than you’d think!

That’s it, baby! When you got it, **flaunt** it!

“To flaunt” something is to show it off in a very open manner (Rich people often like to flaunt their expensive cars and jewelry).

Am I correct in my assumption, you fish-faced enemy of the people?

A funny line, though “fish-faced” is never really used as an adjective.

In glancing at your books, I noticed that...

“To glance” at something is to take a quick look at it.

Tick tock, tick tock.

The sound that a clock makes when the second hand moves forward!

It’s a minor compulsion. I can deal with it if I want to.

A “compulsion” is a psychological need to behave in a certain way, and especially in a way that is not rational or normal.

I find it very comforting.

If something is “comforting,” it helps to relax you.

*Leo discovers that Max can make a fortune if he can get backers to invest in the world’s worst play.*

This is hardly a time for levity.

“Levity” refers to a lighthearted or joking attitude or atmosphere.

According to the backer’s list, you raised \$60,000, but the play you produced only cost \$58,000.

In the world of Broadway plays, a “backer’s list” is a list of people who give money to help produce the play in order to receive a share of the profits if the play does well.

That’s \$2,000 unaccounted for.

If there is money that is “unaccounted for,” it is not clear what happened to it, even after the financial books have been studied by an accountant.

I went to a Turkish bath. Who cares; The play was a **flop**!

A “Turkish bath” is a public place with steam rooms and baths and often a room to receive a massage. A “flop” is a critical word for this film which refers to a play (or movie) that is a commercial failure.

What difference does it make?

“Why is this important?”

That’s **fraud**! If they found out, you could go to prison.

A legal word that refers to the criminal act of lying or tricking people in order to get them to give up their money or property.

Move a few decimal points around; You can do it, you’re an accountant.

The point found in numbers that are not whole (2.5, 47.6, etc).

You’re in a noble profession; The word count is part of your title.

“Noble” means honorable, or possessing qualities of excellence.  
 A “count” was also a person of high rank or level in medieval European society (In fact, “a noble” was as well).

It’s not cheating; It’s charity.

The act of giving to people or organizations who are in need of the money for some worthy or good cause.

Other men sail through life; Bialystock has struck a reef.

“To strike” something is to hit it with great force, or in this case, to land on it, in a boat. A “reef” is a chain of rocks or area of sand near the edge of the ocean that is often hidden from view.

I’m going under; I’m being sunk by a society that demands success, when all I can offer is failure.

In a very general sense, to “go under” is to drown under the pressures of all of life’s problems.

Bloom, I’m reaching out to you.

In this case, “to reach out to” a person is to ask them for help in a humble and sincere manner.

Thank you; I knew I could con you.

This is a clever slip-of-the-tongue, or mistaken choice of words. “To con” a person is to cheat or fool them, often by taking their money (which is not related to “count on” a person, which is to depend on them).

The Internal Revenue Service isn’t interested in a show that flopped.

This division of the US federal government, usually called the IRS, is responsible for collecting taxes.

Good thinking. You **figure it out**.

“Good thinking” is a creative or intelligent way of looking at a problem, and if you “figure it out,” you usually study the problem and solve it.

**Amazing**...under the right circumstances, a producer could make more money with a **flop** than he could with a **hit**.

“Amazing” is a useful alternative to incredible, and “circumstances” are the general conditions of a situation. In the entertainment business, a “flop” is a commercial failure and a “hit” is a commercial success.

How? :: It’s simply a matter of **creative accounting**.

An important expression that would become common in the news 30 years after this movie was made. It refers to the manipulation of numbers by accountants in order to make a company or person look like they have made more money than they really have.

You simply raise more money than you really need.

“To raise” money is to collect it from various sources, such as individual people, investment banks or non-profit organizations.

You did yourself, only you did it on a very small scale.

To do something “on a small scale” is to do it with little money or resources, even though it could be done using much bigger resources.

**What did it get me?** I’m wearing a cardboard belt!

A popular way of saying “How did this help me?”

If you were really a **bold** criminal, you could have raised a million!

An excellent adjective meaning brave, daring, or fearless before danger.

Once the play’s a hit, you have to pay the backers, and with so many backers, there could never be enough to go around. **Get it?**

In this context, “backers” are those people who invest in the production of a play. “Get it?” is a very common way of asking “Do you understand?”

So in order for this scheme to work, we’d have to find a sure-fire flop.

A “scheme” is a complicated secret plan that is often illegal. A “sure-fire flop” is a play (or movie) that is almost guaranteed to be a commercial failure because it is so bad (And thus “sure-fire” means certain).

I merely proposed a little academic accounting theory. It was just a thought. :: Glorious Bloom.

“Merely” is a common way of saying only or just. An “academic theory” is an idea thought up by professors or scholars that has not really been tested in the real world. “Glorious” means magnificent or wonderful.

You go back to work on the books; A **phony** list of backers for the accounts.

A good adjective meaning false, bogus or not real. Here, “accounts” refers to financial records of people supporting the play.

You can do it Bloom! You’re a wizard.

In this case, a very intelligent or wise man (In children’s literature, a wizard can be a man with magical powers).

This is fate! This is destiny! This is kismet!

Three words that refer to the inevitable future of a person, perhaps caused by Gods or forces that humans cannot see.

Five minutes ago I doctored your books! That is the ultimate extent of my criminal life.

“To doctor” financial records is to secretly change the numbers so that a person or company can cheat others, or perhaps pay less taxes.

“Ultimate” is another word for final or the most extreme of its kind (Leo is saying he will do no greater crime than change Max’s financial records).

You miserable, cowardly, wretched little caterpillar.



“Miserable” is extremely sad or depressed, though here it means pitiful or pathetic. If a person is “cowardly,” they have no courage or bravery, and if a person is “wretched,” they are horribly bad, miserable or despicable.

Don't you want to spread your wings and flap your way to glory?

If a bird “spreads its wings,” it puts them out as if they are about to take off and fly, and if a bird “flaps” its wings, it moves them up and down as if it is flying. “Glory” is a state of great beauty, excellence and honor.

She was his wife and she was unfaithful to him, so she got mad and jumped on him!

If a wife is “unfaithful” to her husband, it probably means that she has slept with another man.

Up and down, up and down, until he squashed her like a bug!

“To squash” a person is to crush or press them into a flat mass.

Will you get a hold of yourself?

If a person needs to “get a hold of themselves,” they need to calm down because they are acting crazily or emotionally out of control.

I'm having hysterics! I'm hysterical!

If a person is “hysterical,” they're emotionally overwhelmed or out of control, often while crying or screaming (“Hysterics” refers to the act of being too emotional, but this word is rarely used).

Go away! You frighten me!

Another way of saying to scare.

I think I'm coming out of it now.

“To come out of” an emotional state like depression or hysteria is to return to a more normal or stable state.

This man should be in a straightjacket.

A jacket or other type of clothing that is made with a strong material that is used in mental hospitals, in order to keep patients arms close to their bodies so they won't hurt themselves or others.

I am a little light-headed. Maybe I should eat something.

If a person is feeling “light-headed,” they feel weak and dizzy, like they need to sit down or they might fall over.

Hysterical attacks have a way of severely depleting one's blood sugar, you know.

“Severely” means with great force or degree, and “to deplete” something is to use it up so that there is little left of it. “Blood sugar” is a key part of blood that is necessary to control normal bodily functions (Those with the disease diabetes need to control their blood sugar).

Why go to a dark stuffy restaurant? Let's dine al fresco.

If a restaurant is "stuffy," the air inside is heavy and difficult to breathe. "To dine" is to eat, usually dinner. "Al fresco" is an Italian expression which means outside, as opposed to inside a building.

Please tender our compliments to the chef.

In this case, "to tender" is a very formal way of saying to offer or give.

I'm not your good man! I happen to own this establishment!

Note that addressing a person as "my good man" is a way of treating them as if they are a waiter or other type of servant. In this context, an "establishment" is a business or restaurant.

Everybody's a big shot.

A "big shot" is a slangy expression for a person with a lot of power, money or fame.

Well, Leo, what say we promenade through the park?

A French word that means to walk (A promenade is used in English for a place like a trail in a park where people are supposed to walk).

Lovely out here, isn't it?

A widely used British word for pretty or attractive.

Thrills, adventure, romance!

In the plural, as here, this refers to great adventures or excitement.

Big black limousines. Gold cigarette cases. Elegant ladies with long legs.

A "limousine" is a long car that is used to transport wealthy people. If a woman is "elegant," she is stylish or graceful and perhaps beautiful.

Leo, he who hesitates is poor.

"To hesitate" is to hold back in indecision, or to delay before acting.

*Max and Leo find the worst play in the world, and the insane German who wrote it, living in New York.*

Max, let's call it a night. It's two in the morning.

A colloquial way of saying "Let's stop because it's getting late."

He woke one morning to discover that he had been transformed into a giant cockroach!

"To transform" something is to fundamentally change it in character or condition. A "cockroach" is a disgusting type of insect.

Max, let's face it! We'll never find it!

A common way of saying “we have to accept the reality of this situation, even if it is painful or unpleasant.”

We’ve struck gold! Not fool’s gold, but real gold!

“To strike gold” is to discover it while digging in the ground.

The mother lode! The mother of them all!

An interesting expression that refers to a huge finding of gold or other valuable treasure.

A flop? That’s putting it mildly.

If a statement is “putting it mildly,” it’s made of words that are much weaker or milder than could have been used.

We found a disaster, a catastrophe, an outrage!

A guaranteed-to-close-in one-night-beauty!

A “catastrophe” is a powerful word that refers to any disaster or tragedy that leads to great suffering or loss of life. An “outrage” is any act that is considered shocking or one that violates accepted standards of behavior. The second sentence is Max’s way of referring to a play that is so bad that it would not last more than one performance.

This is freedom-from-want forever! This is a house in the country!

“Freedom from want” is an expression that refers to the condition of having enough money or resources to avoid hunger and poverty.

“Springtime for Hitler: A Gay Romp with Adolf and Eva at Berchetesgarden.” **Wow!**

Note that up until the 1960s, “gay” meant very happy or joyous, and not necessarily homosexual. A “romp” is a slangy word for a fast-paced walk, or a dramatic or musical work. “Wow” is a very common filler word that expresses emotion such as amazement or great surprise.

I’m the concierge.

A French word, much used in New York City, for a person who works in the lobby of an apartment building and takes care of the mail, laundry and other things for the building’s residents.

We are seeking Franz Liebkind. :: Oh, the kraut.

“To seek” is a person to ask or look for them. A “kraut” is a dated and ridiculous slang word for a German person.

Dirty, disgusting, filthy, lice-ridden birds.

“Disgusting” is a powerful adjective meaning totally offensive, gross or repugnant. “Filthy” means extremely dirty or disgusting. If an animal or person is “lice-ridden,” it is filled or infested with lice, which are horrible little insects that live in the skin and hair.

You used to be able to sit out on the stoop like a person.

A “stoop” is a porch, platform, or entrance to a stairway at the front of a house or apartment building.

You get my drift? :: We get it.

A slangy way of asking “Do you understand what I am telling you?”

Thank you madam. :: I’m not a madam, I’m a concierge.

Note that older women are still addressed as “Madam” (though this a bit old-fashioned), but if a woman is “*a madam*,” she is a woman who runs a house of prostitution.

He’s wearing a German helmet.

A protective head covering that is usually made of metal.

I was never a member of the Nazi party.

The racist party headed by Hitler, that ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945.

I only followed orders! Why do you persecute me?!

Note that war criminals such as nazis always say they are not responsible for their crimes because they were only “following orders” of people higher up in their governments. “To persecute” a person is to harass or annoy in a manner designed to cause injury or suffering.

I love my adopted country.

An immigrant’s “adopted country” is the country they choose to live in.

You mean Springtime for you-know-who?

An interesting noun that refers to a person who is so well known that it is not necessary to say their name, or whose name one would rather avoid.

We think it’s a masterpiece...we wish to produce it on Broadway.

A piece of writing, music or film of such true excellence and importance that is likely to be enjoyed for many generations into the future.

Oh, joy of joys. Dream of dreams.

A very old-fashioned way of referring to great happiness.

Do you hear? We are going to clear the Fuhrer’s name!

“To clear” a person’s name is to show they are not guilty of the crimes or bad acts they’ve been accused of. The “Fuhrer” is a German word for leader, and is widely known as the way Germans referred to Hitler.

Come, we’ll go to my flat.

A British word for apartment.

An occasion like this calls for Schnapps.

An “occasion” is a special event or opportunity (Schnapps is a type of alcoholic drink).

The Fuhrer was a **terrific** dancer.

A useful adjective that means excellent or wonderful.

You were taken in by that.....allied propaganda!

“To be taken in by” a person is to be fooled by them. “Allied” refers to those countries who fought against Germany in World War 2, including the US, England and the Soviet Union. “Propaganda” refers to ideas, facts, or accusations that are spread by governments in order to control or manipulate public opinion.

Churchill, with his cigars, his brandy and his rotten painting! Hitler, there was a painter!

In this case, “rotten” means extremely bad or of inferior quality. When you mention a person’s name and then say “there was a painter,” it is a way of saying he was a truly excellent painter.

He could paint an entire apartment in one afternoon! Two coats!

A “coat” of paint is one layer covering another.

And you’re hearing this straight from the horse!

This is Franz’ way of “straight from the horse’s *mouth*,” which is a common expression saying that a piece of information was gotten directly from the person who would most likely know it.

Hitler was **better looking** than Churchill....

and he could dance the pants off of Churchill!

If one person is “better looking” than another, they are more physically attractive or pretty (or handsome, if they are men). “To dance the pants off” of a person is a very slangy way of saying to be able to dance much better than them.

Here it is! Springtime for Hitler, signed, sealed and delivered.

If a letter or legal document has been “signed, sealed and delivered,” it has been fully signed or authorized and then sent through the mail.

I’m not wearing this armband. I don’t care how big the deal is.

An “armband” is a band that is usually worn around the upper part of a sleeve. In this case, a “deal” is a contract or business agreement.

I am going to the Blue Gypsy. I have a rendezvous with a lady of some means.

The Blue Gypsy is a restaurant. A “rendezvous” is a widely used French word for a meeting. “A lady of some means” is a dated way of referring to a woman with a lot of money.

Phase one is complete; The play is ours.

A “phase” of a plan is a particular part that can be easily identified or separated from the rest of the bigger plan.

Max Bialystock is launching himself into little old lady land. Adieu. Avanti.

“To launch” is to lift off from the ground, like a rocket. The last words are French and Italian for goodbye, but these are rarely used in English.

You’re incorrigible, Bialey.

If a person is “incorrigible,” they can’t be corrected or improved.

Here’s to the success of your new play!

A common way of beginning a toast, in which a person raises a glass of champagne in honor of something.

Did I wet you? :: Think nothing of it, my dear.

“To wet” a person is to get them wet, but this is almost never used as a verb. Here, “think nothing of it” means “don’t worry about it.”

A mere trifle. Did you get the checkie?

A “mere trifle” is a stylish way of saying a very small amount. Note Max refers to checks as checkies, but this is ridiculous and you shouldn’t!

I made it out, just like you told me, to cash.

“To make out” a check is to write in the amount and to whom it’s made. If it’s made out “to cash,” it is just like money and anyone can cash it.

I swear to you on my life, you don’t look a day over 65.

A poetic way of saying “I promise you....”

I thought it was a burglar.

A criminal who enters homes in order to steal property.

How much of Springtime for Hitler have we sold? :: 25,000 percent.

A great conversation between Max and Leo in which it’s clear that more than 100% of the profits have actually been promised to its backers!

If you only knew what I went through for you.

In this case, to “go through” something is to experience a lot of sadness or trouble in order to get it.

*After finding the worst play, Max hires the world’s worst director.*

She happens to be our new receptionist; She goes with our new surroundings.

A “receptionist” answers phones and greets people in an office. The “surroundings” of an office refers to the physical things in or around it.

I want you to meet my associate and partner, Mr. Leo Bloom.

This is a partner with whom one officially does a lot of business.

Have you gone mad?! A receptionist that can’t speak English?

Note that in this context, if a person is “mad,” they are crazy.

Cream puff, sweetie pie.

Two ridiculous ways of referring to a lover or wife (or husband).

Smart as a whip.

An old expression meaning very intelligent (A whip is a leather lash or rope-like instrument that is used to punish or torture people by striking it against their backs).

You Swedish tease!

A “tease” is woman who flirts or tries to sexually attract men, but has no real intention of actually sleeping with them.

Maybe we should go a little easier on the spending.

One way of saying “we should spend less.”

**Flaunt** it, baby, flaunt it!

“To flaunt” an expensive car or piece of jewelry is to show it off so that everyone can see you own it.

Is he bad? :: He stinks.

If a person “stinks” at their job, they are extremely bad or incompetent.

He’s the only director whose plays close on the first day of rehearsal.

In the theater world, a “rehearsal” is the act of practicing the play, before it is shown in front of a real audience.

Don’t let anything he does upset you. He’s a little **peculiar**.

A good word for odd, strange or bizarre, or perhaps just different.

What pun? :: Shut up, he thinks he’s **witty**.

A “pun” is a play on words, such as using one word with two meanings in a way one would not expect. If a person is “witty,” they have a clever sense of humor and are able to make people laugh with their jokes.

Remarkable! A stunning piece of work!

Two powerful adjectives to describe a work of art. “Remarkable” means extraordinary or noteworthy, and if a play is “stunning,” it is so good or powerful that it is shocking or emotionally overwhelming.

Max, he’s wearing a dress. :: No kidding.

In this context, a way of saying “I know---that’s obvious.” More generally, “to kid” is to joke, or say something in a joking or lighthearted manner.

I never realized that the Third Reich meant Germany.

The period in Germany when Hitler ruled, from 1933-1945.

I mean, it’s drenched with historical goodies like that.

If a play is “drenched” in interesting details, it is filled with them (If you get drenched in the rain, you get completely wet or soaked). A “goodie” is a fun little word for anything small or of value, or that is appreciated.

You’re staring at my dress. I should explain.

“To stare” at something is to keep looking at it without turning away.

I’m going to the choreographer’s ball tonight, . There is a prize for best costume.

A “choreographer” is a person who directs the dancing in a play or ballet.

A “ball” is a formal dance, and in this context, a “costume” is an outfit worn to create the appearance a particular period, person or thing.

I’m supposed to be the Grand Duchess Anastasia,  
but I think I look more like Tugboat Annie.

The Grand Duchess Anastasia was a member of Russia’s Royal Family before the Russian Revolution, and Tugboat Annie is a fictional character who was in charge of a small tugboat (which pulls other boats).

Be brutal, because heaven knows, they will.

If a person is “brutal,” they are extremely cruel or violent. Here, “heaven knows” is a way of saying “everyone knows” or “it’s quite obvious.”

It’s gorgeous!

A good alternative to beautiful or perhaps magnificent.

It brings out your eyes! Let’s face it; That dress is you.

If a dress “brings out your eyes,” it makes your eyes look very pretty.

“That dress is you” is a colloquial way of saying “it looks like that dress was made just for you.”

We can’t tell a thing without your wig.

Note that in the right context, “to tell” means to know.

A “wig” is fake hair that people wear on their head.

Didn’t I meet you on a summer cruise?

Here, a “cruise” is a vacation taken on a large luxury ship.

I see we’re getting acquainted. :: How would  
you like to go back to teasing hair, big mouth?

If two people are getting “acquainted,” they are getting to

know each other. “To tease hair” is to comb it in a certain way.

Temper, Roger.

If a person has a short “temper,” they easily become angry.

I think this would be a marvelous opportunity for you.

Another word for wonderful or fabulous.

Dopey showgirls with gooey gowns.



“Dopey” means stupid in a silly way, and a “showgirl” is a female who dances on stage. “Gooney” refers to any kind of sticky liquid.

It’s enough to make you puke.

A crude but widely used slang word meaning to vomit or throw up.

That whole third act has got to go.

In a play, an “act” is a specific part or section.

A line of beautiful girls dressed as storm troopers.

Soldiers in Hitler’s army who goose stepped in line  
(To goose step is to march aggressively, like a goose).

...black leather patent boots. S&M.

“Patent boots” are expensive leather boots that usually go up very high on the leg and are designed to be very sexy. “S&M” stands for sado-masochism, which refers to the act of getting sexual pleasure by hurting others (sadism) or yourself (masochism).

You’re the only man in the world who can do justice to “Springtime for Hitler.”

If a director “does justice to” a play, he does an excellent job of taking advantage of all the play has to offer.

Send out a casting call! Call every agent in town!

A “casting call” is the opportunity for actors to try out for certain roles in a play, or to be a part of the cast, which is the actors who appear in it. In this context, an “agent” is an actor’s business representative.

*“Springtime for Hitler” opens on Broadway, but the audience reaction is not what was expected...*

This is bedlam! We must have some order.

“Bedlam” is an excellent word for social chaos or great confusion.

Will the dancing Hitlers please wait in the wings?

In this context, to “wait in the wings” is to wait to the side of the stage, where the audience can’t see.

I was the lead tenor of the Albuquerque Opera Company for the last two seasons.

A “tenor” is a male singer who sings in a very high voice. Note that like various sports, an opera company also has “seasons,” that refer to certain months of the year when it is performing.

Well Jason, what have you been up to lately! :: For

the last 16 years, I've been touring with the USO.

"What have you been up to?" is a common way of asking "What have you been doing?" The USO is the United Service Organization, which is well known for presenting shows to the US military while overseas.

Hey man...is this where they're auditioning "Boomerang Baby?"

Note that for some people, "man" is a very common filler word that serves no function at all! When an actor "auditions" a part in a film, they perform it in front of the producer or director in hopes of getting hired for the part. A "boomerang" is an odd device that is designed to return to the person who throws it.

I'm afraid you wandered into the wrong theatre.

"To wander" is to walk around aimlessly, without a specific direction.

Let's hear it; What have we got to lose?

A common question in situations where there is little or no risk in taking a certain action.

Lorenzo St DuBois, but my friends call me LSD.

A popular drug in the 1960s that makes people hallucinate or see things that don't really exist. All things considered, not recommended.

And what have you done, LSD? :: Man, about six months, but I'm on probation, but I'm cool, man. I'm straight now.

Note that when Lorenzo says "about six months," he is interpreting the previous question to mean "How much time have you spent in prison?" (i.e....I've done six months for a drug crime). "Probation" is the act of getting out of jail early, and being able to stay out as long as certain conditions are met. In this context, both "cool" and "straight" probably mean no longer committing crimes, or staying out of trouble.

That's why they put me away, baby.

In this case, "to put away" a person is to put them in jail or prison.

Psychedelically speaking, I am talking about "the power."

In the 1960s, "psychedelic" was a popular word to describe drugs that caused hallucinations, such as LSD. It was also used to describe music, posters or other things that were loud or featured wild, bright colors. Here, when Lorenzo refers to "the power," he is talking about the rich people who control society.

And I'll give a flower to the big fat cop, and he takes his club and he beats me up. [S]

A "cop" is a common slang word for a policeman, and a "club" is a wooden stick that is used as a weapon. "To beat up" a person is to physically attack them, usually causing them harm or injury.

He stuffs my girl in the garbage can and I give

it to the landlord when the rent comes round. [S]

These are ridiculously stupid song lyrics, but it's worth knowing that "to stuff" something into a can is to force it in, even if it is too big to really fit.

He throws it in the toilet and he flushes it down. [S]

"To flush" a toilet is to force water down its pipes  
(Note that it's the only verb to use with a toilet!)

It goes into the sewer with the yuck running through her. [S]

This noun does not exist, but "yucky" is a common  
and fun word that means gross or disgusting.

Your highness....

A way of addressing a queen or princess.

There's the Times' drama critic. Watch closely as  
Max Bialystock puts the last nail into the coffin.

The "Times" often refers to The New York Times. A "drama critic" reviews plays for a newspaper, and if you "put the last nail into a coffin," you are doing the last thing necessary to make sure a plan is successful or that a person is truly killed or eliminated (A nail is a sharp metal fastener that is hammered into wood, and a coffin is a wooden rectangular box that is used to bury dead bodies).

Always delighted to greet the gentlemen of the press.

If a person is "delighted," they are very happy or pleased  
(Note the elliptical dropping of "I" at the beginning of the sentence).  
"The press" reporters of the news media.

Two on the aisle, compliments of the management.

An "aisle" is a narrow passage way, like in a plane, either side of which has seats. If tickets are "compliments of" somebody, they are paid for by that person. Here, "management" refers to the owners of the theatre.

I'm bribing you. Just play ball and there's a lot more where that came from.

"To bribe" a person is to offer them money in exchange for them doing something illegal or immoral. In this context, "to play ball" is to accept the bribe and do what is asked for.

So much for Nazi failure.

An interesting way of saying "Well, I guess we we're wrong about..."

Max, come, the overture's started.

A piece of dramatic classical music.

Deuchland is happy and gay! [S]

"Deuchland" is the German word for Germany (It's not used in English) Until the 1960s, "gay" usually meant happy or joyous.

We're marching to a faster pace; Look out, here comes the master race! [S]  
 "Pace" is another word for speed or rate of movement. In Nazi Germany, "the master race" referred to the Germanic or Aryan people, who were considered a superior race.

Goose steps, the new step today!  
 The aggressive way in which German soldiers marched in parades.

We don't want to be caught here during intermission; They'll stone us to death.  
 "Intermission" is the rest break in the middle of a play or movie, when the audience can go to the bathroom or get a snack. "To stone" a person is to punish them by throwing

I lieb you. Now lieb me alone.  
 "Lieben" means to love in German, and this is a fun play on words, but the word itself is never used in English.

Don't you forget, baby, I took an oath.  
 An "oath" is a solemn or very serious promise to tell the truth or to do something, such as obey the law.

Cool it, while I map out my campaign.  
 "Cool it" is a slangy way of telling a person to stop it, or to calm down. "To map out" a plan is to put it on paper, and possibly to literally plan something with the use of maps. In this case, a "campaign" is a major military plan.

Gonna crush Poland, and then I'm gonna take over France.  
 Note that "going to"----> "gonna" in rapid speech. "To crush" a country is to flatten or destroy it, or in this case, to militarily defeat it. "To take over" a country is to invade it and then take control of it.

Innkeeper! Another round of drinks.  
 An "innkeeper" is someone who manages a small hotel. A "round of" drinks is another glass or bottle of liquor after having had one before.

Yesterday I was a meaningless little accountant,  
 and today, I'm the producer of a Broadway flop!  
 A sad word that means without importance or significance.

You are the audience, I am the author; I outrank you!  
 If you "outrank" a person, you are of a higher level of power or authority than they are.

Don't forget our **good-natured** inebriate over here.  
 If a person is "good-natured," they are friendly and cheerful.  
 An "inebriate" is a rarely used word for a person who is drunk.

Eternally grateful. A toast...to toast.

To be “eternally grateful” is to be appreciative forever. A “toast” is the act of raising a glass of champagne in honor of someone or something.

It’s intermission. Quick, hide your face or they’ll tear us to pieces.

“To tear someone to pieces” is to violently attack them, although it usually does not mean to literally tear a person’s body apart.

I never laughed so much in my life! Absolutely **hysterical!**

In this context, if something is “hysterical,” it is extremely funny.

I thought I’d split my sides!

If a person “splits their sides,” they laugh so hard that it feels as if their stomach is being torn apart.

If the second act is anything like the first, this will run for five years.

If a play “runs” for years, it is performed regularly for that long.

No way out...

A way of saying that there is no way to escape.

We only heard from a small portion of the audience.

A “portion” is a part or section.

You must be quiet! Swine! Send for Gobbles!

A great insulting word for a pig, referring to both the animal and a dirty or disgusting person (Gobbles was a well known Nazi).

I just laid the morning propaganda programs on the people! :: You’re **putting me on!** What did they say?

“To lay propaganda on” the people is a very slangy way of saying to cover them in it, or expose them to a lot of it. “Are you putting me on?” is a good way of asking “Are you lying to me?,” or “Are you kidding?”

How did we come out?

“To come out” is to end up, or the condition in which one finished.

You will please be unconscious! This is an outrage!

If a person is “unconscious,” they are not aware of anything, perhaps because they are sleeping, or in a coma because of an injury. If something is an “outrage,” it is an act of great violence or brutality, or something that violates accepted standards of behavior.

You are the victims of a **hoax!**

An excellent word for a plan to trick or cheat people out of their money.

Have you seen the lines at the box office?!

The office at the front of a theatre where people buy tickets, and more generally, a reference to how much money a play or movie has made.

It's a torrent! It's an avalanche! It's the biggest hit on Broadway!

A "torrent" of rain is a large and forceful amount, and an "avalanche" is a large mass of snow or rock that is falling violently down a mountain side. Here, though, both words refer to the fact that there is a huge demand for tickets to the play. If a play is a hit, it is a commercial success.

You lousy fruit! You ruined me.

"Lousy" is a useful adjective meaning bad or of poor quality. If you call a person a "fruit," you are saying they are odd or strange. "To ruin" someone is to severely damage or destroy them.

I was so careful; I picked the wrong play, the wrong director, the wrong cast; Where did I go right?

Note that when things turn out badly after serious study or effort, some people will ask themselves "Where did I go *wrong*?"

I'm turning myself in; It's the only way.

If a person "turns themselves in," it usually means they agree to surrender to the police after having done something illegal.

They'll reduce my sentence. Time off for good behavior, and maybe I'll get a job in the prison library.

In this context, a person's "sentence" is their punishment for a crime, including the amount of time they will have to spend in prison. If a prisoner gets "time off" for good behavior, they get to leave prison earlier than the end of their sentence.

You're overwrought! You don't know what you're doing.

An interesting but fairly rare word for emotionally overwhelmed.

Give me those books, you fat walrus!

A large African animal that is similar to a hippo. This is never used as an insult word, despite its use as such in this film.

*Max, Leo and Franz decide to destroy their own success...*

You have broken the sacred oath! You must die!

If something is "sacred," it is deserving of great respect, perhaps because of its connection to a religious figure or God. An oath is a solemn promise to do something, or to tell the truth.

Boo, I see you!

The word that children scream to scare their friends after they secretly sneak up to them while they are not looking.

Miserable clinging cowards, clinging to life!

If a person is “miserable,” they are extremely unhappy or poor and pitiful. If a person is “clinging,” they’re desperately trying to hold on to something. A “coward” is a person with no courage whose often scared.

Wasted a whole day playing hide’n’sseek with a crazy kraut.

“Hide’n’sseek” is a popular children’s game in which players try to hide from each other (“To seek” something is to look for it). “Kraut” is a dated and silly slang word for a German person.

There, there.

Words that are spoken gently to offer comfort and assurance.

You crazy **lunatic**, what are you shooting at us for?!

A “lunatic” is a very deranged or crazy person. “To shoot at” a person is to try and hit or injure them with a gun.

Franz, have I ever steered you wrong?

“To steer a person wrong” is to lead them in the wrong direction, so that they end up with troubles or problems (“To steer” a car is to turn it).

Every night, people are laughing at your beloved Fuhrer!

A serious word for much loved, admired or cherished.

I must destroy the actors. :: This is **insanity**; Have you lost your mind?

“Insanity” is a good word for a deranged or crazy state of mind, or general craziness or disorder. If a person has “lost their mind,” they have become insane or are no longer thinking reasonably.

Dynamite. Fuse. And now for the master connection.

“Dynamite” is a very powerful explosive, and a “fuse” is the wire that is lit with a match to set off a bomb or other explosive. Here, the “master connection” is the physical contact that leads to exploding the dynamite.

If you shoot it, it will get mad at us and blow us all up.

“To blow up” something is to explode it or destroy it with a bomb.

We have a technical problem.

In this context, “technical” refers to a physical or mechanical problem.

This is **critical**.

An important word for extremely important.

Has the jury reached a verdict?

A “jury” is usually a group of 12 citizens who are asked to observe a trial in order to decide whether a person is guilty of a crime. A “verdict” is the legal decision of guilt or innocence.

Do the defendants have anything to say in their

behalf, before the court pronounces sentence?

A “defendant” is a person accused of a crime, and if a person says something “on their own behalf,” they say it in their own defense, or to help themselves. “The court” is the judge, and if a court “pronounces sentence,” they declare what the guilty defendant’s punishment will be.

Proceed.

A very formal way of saying “go ahead.”

Your honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury....

The way you must address a judge in a court room.

Not only is he a liar and a cheat and a scoundrel and a crook, but he’s also talked people into doing things...

A “scoundrel” is a great word for a disreputable person who is likely involved in crime or cheating people. A “crook” is a thief or criminal.

....that they never in a million years would’ve dreamed of doing.

A poetic or stylish way of emphasizing “never.”

The law was created to protect people from being wronged.

If a person has been “wronged,” they have been treated unfairly.

Even in kindergarten, they used to call me Bloom.

Pre-school for three and four year olds. A German word used in English.

Max Bialystock, who made them feel young and attractive and wanted again.

A useful word for pretty, pleasant or charming.

That’s all I have to say. :: Order, order!

The words one uses when trying to bring a socially chaotic, loud or confused situation under control.

Come on, guys, let’s put a little life into it!

The most versatile phrasal verb in all of English, here meaning try harder. In fact, it often takes on the meaning of the words that follow it, and here, to “put a little life into it” means to try harder, or with more energy.

The warden would like to make a little investment in your production.

A “warden” is the person that runs a prison. An “investment” is the giving of money in hopes of making profits later.

From the top, Franz, once more.

To do something “from the top” is to practice it from the beginning.

We open in Leavenworth Saturday night!

When a play “opens,” it appears before an audience for the first time. (Leavenworth is the name of a well known prison in the state of Kansas).



# The Producers

## Some Possible ESL Questions for Class Discussion

1. Is Max a good man or a bad man?
2. When this film came out, it was criticized for being in very bad taste? Do you think it is? Why or why not?
3. How common is “creative accounting?”
4. In what ways does this movie exaggerate stereotypes? Which characters seem particularly ridiculous?
5. Would you have enjoyed “Springtime for Hitler?” Have you seen the play that was based on this movie?
6. Have you seen any Broadway plays? Which ones? What about elsewhere; What are the best plays you’ve seen?
7. Did you think this movie was funny?
8. What did you like and dislike about it?