

# Taxi Driver

(Drama) ( 1976)

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## Major Characters

**Travis Bickle**.....**Robert de Niro**

A young, very lonely and disturbed New York City taxi driver, who desperately tries to make social connections with the various women he meets.

**Betsy**.....**Cybill Shepard**

A young and beautiful woman who Travis becomes attracted to, who works for Senator Palantine's Presidential campaign.

**Tom**.....**Albert Brooks**

A director at Palantine headquarters who works with Betsy.

**Senator Palantine**.....**Leonard Harris**

A liberal Democratic Senator who is running for President, who is in many ways, a typical politician.

**Iris**.....**Jodie Foster**

A 12 year old prostitute who Travis decides he wants to save.

**Sport (Matthew)**.....**Harvey Keitel**

Iris' business manager (A pimp).

**Wizard**.....**Peter Boyle**

A taxi driver where Travis works, who has been doing the same job for almost 20 years.

## Plot Summary

This film is the story of Travis Bickle, a very lonely and disturbed 26 year old man who takes a job as a taxi driver in New York City. Travis is happy to work long hours at night because he has trouble sleeping anyway, and unlike many of the other taxi drivers, he does not mind driving in the most dangerous neighborhoods. For Travis, work is both a source of money and an escape from the sad and isolated life he has been living.

One day Travis gets up the courage to ask out Betsy, a beautiful young woman who is working for Senator Charles Palantine's campaign for President. Unfortunately, Travis is socially awkward and inexperienced, and he soon

ends up offending her. After Betsy rejects Travis, his anger and frustration grow, and thus he decides he will have to do something very important to change his life. Travis, who had spent time in the military, decides to buy a complete collection of guns.

As Travis is preparing to act, he also decides that he wants to save the life of Iris, a 12 year old prostitute who he is convinced is being exploited and destroyed by the pimp who manages her and the other men who use her. Once again, Travis desperately reaches out in order to make some kind of social connection, but all the while, his anger and insanity start to spin out of control. As the story reaches its violent conclusion, it seems that the only question is who will be the victims of Travis' frustration and loneliness.

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

*Travis takes a job as a taxi driver in order to pass the long and lonely hours.*

There's porno theatres for that.

Movie theatres that show adult or pornographic movies.

I ride around nights. Subways. Busses.

"To ride around" is to travel with no particular destination.

I figure if I'm gonna do that, I might as well get paid for it.

"To figure" is a common way of saying to think or believe.

"Might as well" is another way of saying should.

Uptown? South Bronx? Harlem?

Three areas of New York city. South Bronx and Harlem are poor African-American areas.

Chauffeur's license.

In this case, a license to drive a taxi. A "chauffeur" is usually a driver of cars for wealthy people.

How's your driving record? :: It's real clean, like my conscience.

If a person's driving record is "clean," they haven't had any accidents or driving tickets. A person's "conscience" is their ability to see what is right and wrong, and if it is clean, they have no guilty feelings.

Military Record? :: Honorable discharge, May 1973.

An "honorable discharge" is an official statement by the military that a person is leaving them in good standing, or with excellence or dignity.

Were you in the army? Marines.

A branch of the military that is best known for fighting on beaches.

Are you moonlighting?

“To moonlight” is to work an extra job at night, in addition to a regular day job.

Fill out these forms and check back tomorrow when the shift breaks.

A “shift” refers to the specific hours that a group of people normally work (The “night shift” might be from 12 midnight to 8am). The time when the shift breaks is the time one group takes over for another.

It’s a long hustle, but it keeps me real busy.

This is now a rare noun, but the verb “to hustle” means to work hard and often very quickly.

I can take in 350 a week, sometimes more when I do it off the meter.

If a taxi driver earns money “off the meter,” he doesn’t report it to the taxi company but keeps it for himself. The meter is the machine in the taxi that tells passengers how much they owe.

All the animals come out at night. Whores ....queers, fairies, dopers, junkies.

This is from a longer list of generally crude names, but these words are at least worth recognizing: A “whore” is a prostitute, a “queer” and a “fairy” are negative words for a homosexual, a “doper” is a person who uses lots of illegal drugs, and a “junkie” is a drug addict.

Sick, venal.

“Venal” is an educated word for a person who will do anything for money, or a person without any honor or integrity.

Someday a real rain will come wash all of this scum off the streets.

“Scum” is the filth that is found in between the tiles of a dirty shower, but it is often used to refer to disgusting, immoral or horrible people.

Some won’t even take spooks. Don’t make no difference to me.

A dated racist word that refers to black people.

Each night when I return the cab, I have to clean the cum off the back seat.

A slang word for a man’s semen or sperm.

What’s your name? :: Give me a break!

An excellent expression which often means “Stop being ridiculous,” although here it’s used to mean “Stop harassing me and leave me alone.” It’s widely used when one person says something that is considered unbelievable.

Damn! The days go on and on.

A common way of expressing anger or frustration.

I don't believe that one should devote his life to morbid self-attention.

"Morbid" is a powerful adjective that refers to an unhealthy interest in death and other unpleasant subjects. This is Travis' way of saying people should not be so concerned with themselves.

***Travis finds the courage to ask Betsy out.***

I saw her at...Palantine campaign headquarters.

A political campaign is the act of running for public office, and "campaign headquarters" are the offices where it is organized.

She appeared like an angel...Out of this filthy mass, she is alone.

"Filthy" is a powerful adjective which means extremely dirty. In this case, "mass" is probably a reference to the masses, which is a general term for the millions of common people.

Our slogan is "We are the People," and "are" is underlined.

A short phrase that is used to advertise a product or express a political or social viewpoint.

This canvas report is ready to go. If Andy OKs it, send copies to headquarters.

A "canvas report" discusses the results of canvassing, which is the act of going door to door looking for money or support. "To OK" something is to approve it.

We have to emphasize the mandatory welfare program.

"To emphasize" something is to treat it as if it were particularly important. If something is "mandatory," it is required, or must be done.

First push the man, then the issue.

This is Betsy's way of saying that the Palantine campaign should emphasize or more frequently discuss the man himself before talking about his political beliefs on the various issues or topics.

Senator Palantine is a dynamic man.

If a person is "dynamic," they have a lot of energy and drive, and they often have a lot of powerful or forceful ideas.

You sound like you're selling mouthwash.

A favorite consumer product to deal with bad breath.

Are we authorized to do that?

"To authorize" a person to do something is to give them permission or approval to do it.

We can get in trouble selling pharmaceuticals in a campaign office.

A fancy word for prescription drugs.

Does he annoy you?

A good alternative to bother or irritate.

You really mean "yes" and you're being sarcastic. :: You're really quick.

If a person is "sarcastic," they speak in a tone of voice that clearly implies they mean the exact opposite of what they are actually saying. It is a way of joking around. Note that in the right context, "quick" can mean intelligent.

I'll play the male in this relationship.

This is Tom's way of saying that he will do the male or masculine things (such as fight and offer protection), while Betsy should stick to playing the more feminine role.

Eye shadow, mascara, lipstick, rouge. Not rouge, "blush-on" they call it.

These are all types of cosmetics or make up. "Mascara" and "rouge" are used to color the cheeks. "Blush-on" is rarely if ever used anymore, though you should know that "to blush" means to get embarrassed so that your cheeks turn red.

Ah, Travis, he's a lady's man.

A ridiculous but still used expression for a playboy or man that is able to charm or seduce lots of women.

Whatever the fuck it is, she uses a lot of it.

A vulgar but not uncommon way of adding emotion such as anger or frustration to a statement. Note the definitive article makes "fuck" a noun(!), and be aware this type of filler is more common in questions.

Perfume, the spray kind.

"Spray" is tiny drops of liquid that are blown in a certain direction.

**Get this!** In the middle of the Triborough Bridge... she changes her pantyhose.

"Get this" is a common way of telling someone else that you are about to say something incredible or very interesting. "Pantyhose" are the nylon coverings that women wear on their legs.

I jump in the back seat and I whip it out, and I said “You know what this is?”  
 In this context, “to whip it out” is the Wizard’s way of saying  
 that he quickly took his penis out from inside his pants.

I went and fucked her brains out. She goes wild.

“To fuck a person’s brains out” is a vulgar way of saying to have very  
 passionate (or at least animated) sex with them. In this context, if a  
 person “goes wild,” they yell and scream and have a grand old time.

We call him Doughboy because he’ll do anything for a buck.

“Dough” is a somewhat dated slang word for money,  
 and “buck” is still a very common way of saying dollar.

So, how’s it hangin’?

This is slangy and no longer used. “How’s it going?” is still current.

I heard on the radio some fleet driver  
 from Bell just got all cut up. :: Stick-up?

A “fleet” of cars is a group of cars that are all associated with the same  
 business, such as a taxi company. In this case, to be “cut up” is to be  
 injured after being attacked with knives. A “stick-up” is a robbery that  
 is almost always done with the use of a gun.

He got cut up by some crazy fucker.

Note the use of “some” which often functions as the indefinite article  
 (“a”). “Fucker” is a very vulgar insult noun to describe a bad person.

You run all over town, don’t you?

“To run all over town” is to go to many  
 different places, in this case as a taxi driver.

You handle some pretty rough customers, don’t you?

“To handle” something is to take care of it, and in this case, if the  
 customers are “rough,” they are perhaps tough or potentially violent.

You carry a piece?

A rarely used slang word for a gun.

I know a fellow who can get you a real nice deal.

A “fellow” is another word for guy (more commonly used in England).

A “nice deal” (or good deal) is a common way of saying a good price.

It’s a good thing to have just as a threat.

A “threat” is a warning to hurt or punish.

Dig the symbols

“To dig” something is a very slangy and somewhat dated way of saying to look at it or appreciate it.

I got this at his estate, The Pines.

In this case, an “estate” is the large house or mansion that is left behind by a person who has just died (Here, by Errol Flynn, a famous actor who was popular in the 1930s).

I’m going to get in my cab and boogie.

Another dated but occasionally still used slang word which can mean to dance, but often, as here, just means to go.

The mob does that. If a thief screws up on the job, they’ll blow his finger off.

“The mob” is a way of referring to the Mafia or organized crime. “To screw up” something is to do it very badly, or to fail at it. “To blow a person’s fingers off” is to either shoot them directly or perhaps cut them off a person’s hands. Either way, they are destroyed.

If they kill a stool pigeon, they leave a canary on the body. It’s symbolic.

A “stool pigeon” is slangy word for a person who tells the police if somebody else has done something illegal. A “canary” is a type of bird. If something is “symbolic,” it is expressing a certain statement or point of view, without actually using specific words (Burning a flag in protest is a form of symbolic speech).

I would rather volunteer to her, if you don’t mind.

Note that in reality, you can volunteer *for* a person (Senator Palantine), but not *to* a person (In this case, Betsy). But Travis does just that, in his desperate attempt to get to talk to Betsy instead of Tom.

I don’t know exactly what his policies are,  
but I’m sure he’ll make a good President.

In a political context, “policies” are the programs and ideas that a government or administration carries out on the various issues, from health care to taxes to military spending.

How do you feel about the Senator’s stand on welfare?

A political “stand” is a person’s opinion on an issue.

I see all these phones and all this stuff on your desk,  
and that means nothing. I think you’re a lonely person.

Note that “stuff” is a over used word for things in general, in this case the various papers and supplies on Betsy’s desktop.

I saw in the way that you carried yourself that you're not a happy person.  
 "To carry oneself" means to behave, often in a certain way that shows the general attitude of a person.

What do you say?

An interesting way of asking "what do you think of what I just said?"

I'm there to protect you. Come on, just take a little break.

"Come on" is the most versatile phrasal verb in English. Here, it simply means please, or "I'm begging you." If a person takes "a break," they stop working for a short time in order to relax.

***After meeting Senator Palantine and seeing Iris for the first time, things go very badly with Betsy.***

15,000 volunteers in New York alone is not bad, but Christ, the organizational problems.

A common way of expressing frustration, anger or other emotion. Note this is widely used, and not just by religious people!

I got to get organized. Little things, like my apartment, possessions.

"Possessions" are the physical objects that a person owns, from books and records to cars and houses.

He does have a few problems. ∴ I would say he's got quite a few problems.

Note that the addition of "quite" makes the statement much stronger (i.e....he has a lot of problems).

His energy seems to be in the wrong places.

This is Travis' way of saying Tom is a strange person (Betsy may be thinking a classic phrase: "It takes one to know one").

I could just tell by the way you two were relating that there was no connection whatsoever.

"To relate" to another person is to communicate with them, or try to understand them (People often have trouble relating). This is Travis' way of saying that he thinks Betsy and Tom had a bad relationship and they just didn't understand each other.

I felt that when I walked in, there was something between us, there was an impulse we were both following.

An "impulse" is a sudden burst of energy, in this case emotional energy. Here, Travis is trying to convince Betsy that they *do* have a connection.

With him, I felt there was nothing and I could sense it.

“To sense” something is to feel, detect or understand it.

Where are you from? :: Upstate.

Any part of New York state that is North or East or New York City.

“He’s a prophet and a pusher. Partly true, partly fiction. A walking contradiction.”

A “prophet” is a great religious leader or a person who thinks they are connected to God. A “pusher” is a colloquial word for a person who sells illegal drugs, especially to young people. A “contradiction” is a statement or fact that appears to be logically impossible (Such as “he’s both talkative and shy”). These are words in a song that Betsy likes.

That’s my day off. At first she hesitated.

A worker’s “day off” is the day that they don’t have to go to work. “To hesitate” doing something is to be reluctant to do it, or to wait or pause before agreeing to do it.

This is making me nervous. I think we should have waited for the limo.

Short for a “limousine,” which is a very large car in which a professional driver takes people who sit in the back seats.

I was going to put one of your stickers in my taxi, but the company said it’s against their policy. But they don’t know anything. They’re a bunch of jerks.

A “sticker” is a small piece of paper with a message on it that is stuck in a place where it can be easily seen, such as the bumper of a car. A “jerk” is a classic insult for a person who is stupid, arrogant, abusive, etc.

What is the one thing about this country that bugs you the most?

If something “bugs” you, it really annoys or bothers you.

He should clean up this city, because this city is like an open sewer.

It’s full of filth and scum. Sometimes I can hardly take it.

An “open sewer” is a large pipe where trash and human waste (shit) is thrown. “Filth” is horrible dirtiness, and “scum” is the filth in a dirty shower. If a person “can’t take it,” they can no longer accept or deal with it because it’s too disagreeable or painful.

I think the President should clean up this whole mess here. Just flush it right down the fucking toilet.

This is Travis’ way of saying the next President should eliminate all the prostitutes, drug users and others like them on the city streets.

We're going to have to make some radical changes. :: Damn straight.  
 "Radical" is a political adjective that means complete or fundamental.  
 As a noun, a radical is on the extreme wing of a political philosophy.  
 "Damn straight" is a silly way of saying "I completely agree."

Come on baby, this is a real drag. Don't make no scene.  
 If something is "a drag," it is considered an unfortunate or unpleasant situation. This is a useful colloquial expression. "To make a scene" is to behave in such a way, such as screaming or crying, that everyone around takes notice.

You wanna get busted?! Bitch, be cool.  
 Note that "want to" ---> "wanna" in rapid speech. If a person is "busted," they are arrested or get into trouble for having done something wrong or illegal (such as selling drugs). "Bitch" is a very crude insult word for a mean woman. "Be cool" is a slangy way of telling someone to cooperate, or perhaps not make a scene.

You got to be kidding!  
 If a person is "kidding," they are joking around or not being serious.

This is a dirty movie. :: No, all kinds of couples go here.  
 One way of referring to a pornographic or porno movie.

My parents were very strict.  
 If parents are "strict" with their kids, they force them to follow many rules that limit their freedom, such as a requirement that they be in bed by a certain time each night.

Taking me to a place like this is about as exciting as saying "Let's fuck."  
 This is Betsy's very blunt (direct) way of telling Travis that she is offended that he took her to a porno movie.

Jesus Christ! I got a taxi.  
 A common way of expressing anger, frustration or other emotion.

Maybe you had a virus or something. 24 hour virus.  
 A type of tiny germ or organism that causes infections and diseases.

Please leave! :: Get your hands off of me!  
 One very direct way of telling a person to stop touching you.

I'm calling the cop! Officer!  
 A "cop" is a widely used slang word for a policeman.  
 "Officer" is one more way of addressing a cop.

I realized how she's just like the others. Cold and distant.  
 A person who is "cold and distant" generally  
 talks very little and is hard to get to know.

***Frustrated and angry, Travis decides to arm himself.***

Pull over to the curb.

To "pull over" a car is to stop it by the side of the road. The "curb" is  
 the side of the street by the sidewalk, where people often throw trash.

Cabby, you see that light up there? The one  
 that's closest to the edge of the building?

A slangy way of referring to a taxi driver (A cab is a taxi).

That's not my apartment. You know who lives there?

A nigger lives there! How do you like that?

"Nigger" is a horribly racist word to refer to a black person.

I'm going to kill her with a 44 magnum pistol.

A well known type of very powerful gun.

You ever see what a 44 magnum does to a woman's face?

It will fucking destroy it. Just blow it right apart.

"To blow apart" something is to destroy  
 it by exploding it into tiny pieces.

Did you ever see what it can do to a woman's  
pussy? Now that you should see.

A vulgar word to refer to women's sexual organs.

You might think I'm pretty sick.

Here, "sick" does not mean physically ill, but morally shameful.

I picked up this midget. Very good looking. Italian suits.

Very well dressed. Had a beautiful tall blonde.

A "midget" is a person who is very small, perhaps half the height of a  
 normal adult. A "good looking" person is physically attractive.

Then I pick up these two fags. They start arguing and yelling. The other  
 one says "you bitch" and then starts beating him on the head.

"Fag" is a very insulting word for a gay man. "To yell" is to scream or  
 shout. "Bitch" is a very negative insult word for a mean or abusive  
 woman. Here, "to beat" a person is to physically attack them.

This is an American free country. We've got a pursuit of happiness thing.  
 "The pursuit of happiness" is a famous expression from the American Declaration of Independence (written by Thomas Jefferson in 1776).  
 "To pursue" something is to try and obtain it. Note the use of "thing" after a noun or expression. Common, but slangy and silly.

You're consenting. You're adult. But in my fucking cab, don't go busting heads.  
 "Consenting adult" is a legal expression that refers to a person who is agreeing to a certain behavior (such as sex), and is legally old enough to make that decision. To "bust heads" is a very slangy way of saying to physically hurt or attack people.

In California, when two fags split up, one's got to pay the other alimony.  
 If two people "split up," they end an official relationship. Note that married couples split up, as do rock'n'roll groups! "Alimony" is the money that a man is sometimes told that he must pay his wife each month after they divorce, in order to give her a chance to become financially stable.

I saw a cop chasing this guy. He was on crutches.  
 Two long sticks with a section that fits under one's arm. They help people who have difficulty walking, perhaps because they broke a leg.

The cop? No, the dude he was chasing.  
 A slangy and overused word for guy or fellow.

Got that five you owe me? The man is loaded.  
 In this context, if a person is "loaded," he has lots of money.

How's the action around here? :: Pretty slow.  
 A very general word that in this case refers to business conditions, or more specifically here, the number of passengers who want taxis.

I figure you've been around a lot. :: Shoot, that's why they call me the Wizard.  
 "To figure" means to think or believe. If a person has "been around a lot," they have had a lot of useful or interesting experiences. In this case, "shoot" is a way of expressing emotion such as happiness or pride. A "wizard" is a very intelligent man with magical powers.

Things got you down? It happens to the best of us.  
 "Things got you down?" is a way of asking if a person is depressed or sad because of things that have happened in their lives.

I envy you, your youth.  
 "To envy" a person is to wish you had something that they do.

Go on, get laid. Get drunk, do anything.

“To get laid” is a slangy, common and crude way of saying to have sex, although it is never used when referring to sex with a steady partner.

You got no choice. I mean we’re all fucked, more or less, ya know.

If a person is “fucked,” they are in a very bad or horrible situation.

Crude but not uncommon. Note that “you” ----> “ya” in rapid speech.

That’s the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard. :: It’s not

Bertrand Russell, but what do you want? I’m a cabby.

“Dumb” is another word for stupid. Bertrand Russell is a famous English philosopher and mathematician.

I don’t even know what the fuck you are talking about.

Note that “the fuck” is added to statements (and more commonly, questions) to express emotions such as frustration or anger.

What do you think of your opponent Goodwin’s chances in the primary?

An “opponent” is a person or team that you face in a sport, or in this case, an election. The “primary” election is one in which individual political parties choose the people who will represent them in the general election, which is held several weeks or months later.

I think it’s academic because he’s not going to win the primary. I am.

If an argument is “academic,” it is not important in the real world, but only in theory. In this case, Palantine is saying it’s already obvious he will win the election against Goodwin.

How do you feel your campaign is going?

A political “campaign” is a series of political, business or military actions all related to a single big goal (In this case, to win an election).

The people are rising to the demands that I have made of them.

Note that all American politicians love to refer to “the people,” even though people in general have widely varying ideas and viewpoints.

The people are beginning to rule. I feel it as the crowds swell.

“To swell” is to increase or grow rapidly. This is another one of Palantine’s silly campaign lines in which he implies the people in general have all decided to support him.

It will rise to an unprecedented swell in November.

If something is “unprecedented,” nothing like it has ever happened before (In this case, the desire of the people has never been so strong).

Note that November is the month US Presidential elections are held.

June 8<sup>th</sup>. My life has taken another turn again.

If life “takes a turn,” something dramatic happens.

One day indistinguishable from the next.

If two things are “indistinguishable,” they are so similar that one cannot tell them apart.

Hey Travis, this here is Easy Andy. He’s a travelling salesman.

A “travelling salesman” is a person who travels from house to house, business to business, or perhaps city to city, selling various goods.

44 magnum. It will stop a car at 100 yards and put a round right through the engine block.

100 yards is the length of an American football field. In this case, a “round” is a bullet. Easy Andy is saying that the 44 magnum is such a powerful gun that its bullet will penetrate through a car engine even if it is fired from 100 yards away.

It’s a premium high resale weapon.

“Premium” means of the highest quality, and if a gun is a “high resale weapon,” it sells for a high price used because it is such good quality.

I could sell this gun to some jungle bunny in Harlem for \$500, but I just deal high quality goods to the right people.

“To deal” means to sell. This is Easy Andy’s ridiculous and racist way of saying that while he could sell guns to black people (jungle bunnies), he only sells to white people that he thinks he can trust.

That 38, that’s a fine gun.

A good adjective meaning good or excellent.

That 38, you go hammer with it all day, you come back, and it will cut dead center on target every time.

A slangy way of saying that the gun will fire exactly where you aim it (A target is the precise thing at which a person fires a gun).

It’s got a really nice action to it and a heck of a wallop.

A “heck of a wallop” is a slangy way of saying that it has a lot of power.

It’s a Colt 25 automatic. It holds six shots in the clip and one shot in the chamber.

A “25 automatic” is another type of well known gun, and in this case, a “shot” is another way of referring to the bullets. The “clip” and the “chamber” are two different parts of a gun.

Only a jackass would carry that cannon in the streets like that.

A “jackass” is a very stupid animal, and an insulting word for a jerk or stupid person. A “cannon” is a very big type of weapon that fires explosive balls across a battle field, although here, Easy Andy is just talking about a gun.

Here’s a beautiful hand made holster I had made in Mexico.

A “holster” is a leather holder that carries a gun, that people wear like a belt.

How about dope? Grass, hash, coke, mescaline, downers...

“Dope” is a general term for illegal drugs. “Grass” and “hash” refer to marijuana, “coke” is short for cocaine, and “mescaline” and “downers” are types of illegal pills. They are all slangy words for illegal drugs.

How about uppers, amphetamines. :: I’m not interested in that stuff.

Two more colloquial words for illegal pills.

I can get you a brand new Cadillac with the pink slip for two grand.

A Cadillac is a well known and expensive American car.

The “pink slip” is the piece of paper that proves you own a car.

A “grand” is a colloquial way of saying \$1,000 dollars.

I got to get in shape now. Too much sitting has ruined my body.

“To get in shape” is to exercise so that your body becomes strong and healthy. “To ruin” something is to destroy it.

50 push-ups. 50 pull-ups.

Two types of exercises. With “push-ups,” you use your hands to push your body up and down while on the ground. With “pull-ups,” you use your hands and arms to pull your chin above a bar.

It’s getting harder and harder. It’s throbbing now.

If something starts to “throb,” it beats strongly and quickly (If your head throbs, it will lead to a bad headache).

All the king’s men cannot put it back together again.

A famous line from a novel, that says that even a man as powerful as a king cannot control all events.

***Travis prepares to act as his world turns ever more violent.***

You're a Secret Service agent, aren't you?

The secretive branch of the federal government that is best known for protecting the President and other well known political leaders.

I saw some suspicious looking people over there.

If a person is "suspicious looking," they look like they may be dangerous or possibly about to do something that is illegal.

I was curious because I think I 'd be good at it.

If a person is "curious" *about* something, they are interested in it. If something *is* curious, it is odd or strange.

I'm very observant. I was in the Marine Corps.

If a person is "observant," they notice what is going on around them, or little details that others may not see. The "Marine Corps" is the branch of the US military that is best known for landing on beaches.

I noticed a pin. It's a signal, isn't it?

A small piece of metal that is used to fasten cloth together. A "signal" is a message that is sent, usually without the use of words.

154 Hippo Avenue. Like a rabbit. Hip, hop.

"Hip hop" is the expression used to describe how a rabbit jumps or runs from one place to another.

Is there a zip code with that?

The five digit code that helps the mail service deliver the mail.

That's six digits.

A "digit" is any of the numbers from 0-9.

I'm standing here; You make the move.

One way of telling a person to take the first action (In this case, the first violent action, such as reaching for a gun).

Don't try it, you fuck.

A very aggressive and vulgar insult with very strange grammar (The 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronoun "You" followed directly by "fuck" as a noun).

You talking to me?...Well, I'm the only one here.

This is one of the most famous lines in the history of the movies, and the words that made Robert Di Nero a huge Hollywood star. Note that it is a typical elliptical sentence, with the "Are" missing from the beginning of the question.

You fuckers, you screwheads. Here is a man who would not take it anymore.

A “screwhead” is Travis’ way of referring to a crazy person, but this is never used (A screw is a tiny metal part for fastening things together, and if a person “has a few screws loose,” he is considered crazy). If a person refuses “to take it,” he refuses to accept a particular situation.

A man who stood up against the scum, the cunts, the dogs, the filth, the shit.

“To stand up against” someone is to fight or resist them. “Scum” are the most disgusting or dirtiest or worst people who exist. “Cunt,” is an extremely vulgar word for a woman’s sexual organs.

Ok, shut your fucking mouth and give me the cash out of your drawer.

In this case, a “drawer” is the narrow container that contains the money in a cash register machine.

Let me have it. Give me the bread.

A very slangy and somewhat dated way to refer to money.

I ain’t got a permit for this thing.

A paper document that shows official approval to do something (In this case to own a gun).

That’s the 5<sup>th</sup> motherfucker this year.

Another extremely vulgar insult noun.

We, the people, still suffer from unemployment, inflation, crime and corruption.

“We, the People” are the words that start the US Constitution, and words that Senator Palantine likes to use in his speeches. “Corruption” is illegal or immoral behavior, especially on the part of government officials who accept money in exchange for doing favors.

I can’t send you my address...the sensitive nature of my work for the government demands utmost secrecy.

“Utmost” means the highest level. This is Travis’ way of telling his parents why he can never see them.

I have been going with a girl for several months and

I know you’d be proud if you could see her.

“To go with a girl” is a casual way of saying to go out with her in a romantic way, perhaps by going out on lots of dates.

No more will we the people bear the burden of the suffering for the few.

“To bear a burden” is to accept the pain or trouble that goes with a certain responsibility or situation. This is Palantine’s way of suggesting he is with the masses of people against the rich or powerful.

***Travis decides to save Iris, whether she wants to be saved or not.***

You looking for some action?

A typical way for a prostitute to ask a man on the street if he is interested in their services.

Officer, I swear I'm clean. You gonna bust me for nothing?

In this context, to be "clean" means to have taken no illegal drugs in the recent past nor to be in possession of them. "To bust" a person is to arrest them for having done something illegal.

You're a real cowboy.

The well-known men who took care of cattle (cows) in the old American West, who went from place to place on horseback.

You can cum on her, fuck her in the mouth, fuck her in the ass. She'll get your cock so hard she'll make it explode.

To "cum" (same pronunciation as "come") is to have an orgasm. A "cock" is a common slang word for a penis.

But no rough stuff.

A way of referring to activity that is painful or violent.

Catch you later, copper.

"Catch you later" is a very slangy way of saying "see you later."

"Copper" is a ridiculous way of saying cop, or police officer.

I'm no cop. :: Well if you are, it's entrapment already!

"Entrapment" is a legal word that refers to the action of the police or government officials to convince a person to commit a crime that they normally would not have done. If a person can prove that they were in fact entrapped (seduced!), they cannot be found guilty of the crime.

I'm hip. :: Buddy, you don't look hip.

"Hip" is a very slangy way of saying young and modern and fashionable, or more colloquially, cool. "Buddy" is another word for friend, though it is often used sarcastically when the speaker doesn't even know the person they are speaking to.

Looks aren't everything.

"Looks" refers to general physical appearance. This is a sad little comment that one would say to a person who is upset because they know they are not good-looking.

I'm timing you, too.

"To time" a person is to see how long they take to do something  
(In this case, to make sure Travis has paid enough for Iris).

Remember you got into this Checker Taxi, and that guy  
Matthew came by and said he wanted to take you away.

Note that the most common way to enter a car is to "get into" it.

We better make it or Sport will get mad. So how do you want to make it?

In the right context, to "make it" simply means to have sex.

You're the one who wanted to get out  
of here. :: Well I must have been stoned.

If a person is "stoned," they are usually under the  
influence of a drug like marijuana.

What do you mean? They drug you? :: **Come off it**, man!

"To drug" a person is to give them a drug that will make them stoned  
or high or confused, often without them knowing that they are taking  
the drug. "Come off it" is an excellent colloquial way of telling a person  
to stop saying something that is ridiculous or can't be taken seriously.

Shit, man! What the hell is the matter with you?!

"Shit, man" are simply stupid filler words to express anger or  
frustration, but this kind of language is very common with certain  
people. "The hell" is added to Wh questions to show similar emotion.

They hate me. Why do you think I split in the first place?

In this case, "to split" is a very slangy way of saying to leave.

A girl should live at home. :: Didn't you ever hear of Women's lib?

This is short for "women's liberation," the social movement  
that began in the 1960s to give women equal rights with men.

You should be going to school. :: God, are you square.

"God" is often used to show emotion. "Square" is a silly and dated way  
to refer to a person who is socially conservative, or more precisely, the  
opposite of cool. Note the noun and pronoun are inverted (are you) as  
a stylistic way of showing emphasis (You are *so* square).

I'm not square. You're the one who's square. You're full of shit, man.

A vulgar insult. If you tell a person that they are "full of shit,"  
you are telling them that they are saying nonsense or lies.

You walk out with those fucking creeps and lowlifes and degenerates out on the street, and you sell your little pussy for nothing, man.

“Creeps, lowlifes” and “degenerates” are all very unpleasant, immoral or disgusting people who you would prefer to avoid (For Travis, the pimps who manage prostitutes are the biggest lowlifes).

I don't go screw and fuck with a bunch of killers and junkies the way you do.

“To screw” is to have sex (but much less vulgar than to fuck).

A “junkie” is a drug addict, especially one addicted to heroin.

You call that being hip? What world are you from?

A clever question to ask a person who has said something that is completely ridiculous.

I'm a Libra, too. That's why we get along so well.

A “Libra” is one of the 12 astrological signs (those signs based on a person's birthday and the stars). If two people “get along well,” they enjoy being with each other.

He's also a dope shooter. :: So what makes you so high and mighty? Will you tell me that?

A “dope shooter” is a dated way of referring to a heroin addict. If a person feels “high and mighty,” they consider themselves important or perhaps morally better than others.

What are you guys going to do about Sport and that old bastard?

A common insult word for a mean or abusive man.

Sport didn't beat me up once.

To “beat up” a person is to physically attack or hurt them.

He's the lowest kind of person in the world...He's the scum of the earth. He's the worst sucking scum that I've ever seen.

“The scum of the earth” is an expression to describe the most disgusting, immoral or horrible people that exist.

I'm gonna go up to one of those communes in Vermont.

A “commune” is a place where a large group of people live together and share all of their possessions, even though they are not part of the same biological family. Vermont is small state North of New York.

You're a Scorpion. I can tell every time.

“Scorpion” is another astrological sign like Libra.

Note that “to tell” can also mean to know or notice.

I'm doing something for the government. The cab thing is just part-time. :: Are you a narc?!  
 A "part-time" job is one in which the person works much less than 40 hours a week. A "narc" is a police officer who tries to stop the sale of illegal drugs (narcotics).

God, I don't know who is weirder. You or me.

"Weird" is an excellent word which means very strange or bizarre.

***Travis explodes.***

Baby, if you ever liked what you we're doing, you wouldn't be my woman.  
 A ridiculous thing for a pimp to say to a 12 year old prostitute.

It's only you who keeps me together.

"To keep a person together" is to help them to stay emotionally stable.

My whole life has been pointed in one direction.

This is Travis' way of saying it has been his destiny or fate to do one particular thing that will be extremely important or significant.

We are here today at a crossroads; Columbus Circle.

A "crossroads" can be where three or more streets meet at one place, or more generally, a time in history where there are several possible directions by which a country can move ahead into the future.

It is appropriate that we meet here today,  
 because we meet at a crossroads in history.

A useful word meaning correct, acceptable or suitable.

Today, we have reached the turning point.

A "turning point" is a point in time or history when people must make a big decision to move in a fundamentally different direction.

Go back to your fucking tribe before you get hurt.

A "tribe" is a group of North American Indians, such as the Mohawks.

Get the fuck out of here. :: Suck on this.

A vulgar but grammatically interesting way of simply saying "leave."  
 "Suck on this" is also a vulgar insult, but in this context has no particular meaning.

You crazy son of a bitch. I'll kill you.

A "son of a bitch" is an insult noun for a mean or abusive person.

I can't say how happy we are to hear that you are well and recuperating.

If a person is "recuperating," they are recovering or getting better after being sick.

We tried to visit you, but you were still in a coma.

A "coma" is the physical state in which a person is alive and breathing, but completely unconscious for many days, weeks or longer.

Needless to say, you are something of a hero around this household.

"Needless to say" is a short way of saying "It is not necessary to say this because it is so obvious, but..." A "household" is a home where one or more people live.

We have taken steps to see that she has never cause to run away again.

When kids "run away from home," they leave at a young age in order to live elsewhere on their own. Obviously, their parents are usually very upset when they do this.

I want to swap tires...

"To swap" two things is to trade or exchange them. This verb is also used in the expression "to swap wives," when couples decide to sleep with each other's spouses.

I hear Palantine got the nomination.

"The nomination" of a political party is the person who is named to represent them in a general election against candidates from other political parties.

It was nothing really. I got over that.

In this case, to "get over" something is to forget about it and move on to other things.

The papers always blow these things up.

If the news media "blows up" a story, they make it appear more important than it really is.

Just a little stiffness. That's all.

If a person has "stiffness" in their muscles, they are usually a little sore or they hurt a little, perhaps because they exercised too much.

# **Taxi Driver**

## **Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion**

1. Why is Travis so angry?
2. Have you ever known anybody like him?
3. How would you describe Senator Palantine? Why?
4. Did Travis really save Iris? Did the means justify the ends?
5. What did you like and not like about this movie?