

# Breakfast at Tiffany's

(Romance/Classic) (1961)

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## Major Characters

- Holly Golightly** ("Lulamae Barnes").....**Audrey Hepburn**  
 A young, charming and mysterious woman from Texas who is living in New York City. She spends much of her time going out with rich men who she doesn't like in order to get their money.
- Paul Varjak**.....**George Peppard**  
 An aspiring writer who moves into Holly's building. He can't make a living as a writer, so he works part time as gigolo (male prostitute), satisfying the sexual desires of an older woman.
- 2E ("Mrs. Falerson")**.....**Patricia Neal**  
 Paul's older woman, a rich client who pays for his new apartment and other expenses, in exchange for his sexual services.
- Doc Golightly**.....**Buddy Ebsen**  
 A kind but uneducated old man who arrives in New York, claiming that he was once married to Holly. He wants to take her back to Texas so that she would be with him, his children, and her brother.
- OJ Berman**.....**Martin Balsam**  
 A Hollywood movie agent who had tried to help Holly become an actress, in part by teaching her to lose her small-town Texas accent, so she'll speak and think more like an educated, wealthy New Yorker.
- Jose**.....**Jose Luis de Villalonga**  
 A handsome Brazilian man from a very rich family who may one day become President of his country, who becomes interested in Holly.
- Sally Tomato**.....**Allan Reed**  
 The head of a Mafia family who is spending time in Sing Sing prison, who Holly visits every week. He pays Holly \$100 a visit so that she'll pass information from him on to his lawyer.
- Rusty Trawler**.....**Stanley Adams**  
 According to Holly, the 9<sup>th</sup> richest man in America under 50 years old!
- Mr. Yunioshi**.....**Mickey Rooney**  
 Holly's upstairs neighbor, a ridiculous Japanese man who is always complaining about the noise made in the building.

## Plot Summary

This film is the story of Holly Golightly, a charming and attractive young woman who moves to New York, partly in hopes of becoming one of the rich and beautiful people of the city. She has a very mysterious past, but we eventually learn that she grew up poor in a small Texas town. When she was just 13, Holly ran away from home with her younger brother, and somehow ended up married to a kind but uneducated “animal doctor” who was old enough to be her father. Later, she escaped her past, moved to Hollywood to become an actress, and ended up in a small New York apartment.

In New York, she holds parties for lots of rich guests, although she herself barely survives financially. She does make some money though, by going out on dates with wealthy men, who pay her for the privilege, and by visiting a well known gangster named Sally, who pays her each week for taking a message to his lawyer (The message is in the form of a “whether report”).

One day Holly meets Paul Varjak, a handsome young writer who moves into the apartment upstairs. Paul is working on a novel, but since he can’t make a living as a writer, he works as a gigolo for a wealthy older woman who he calls “E2.” E2 pays him well for his services and even pays for the apartment in Holly’s building. After moving in, Paul gets to know Holly, and soon learns about her strange Texas past, the brother that she adores, and the fact that she seems determined to marry any man, as long as he’s extremely rich. Paul doesn’t have much money, but their friendship grows stronger, and as Holly’s life is shaken by ever greater problems, she learns that there are more important things to look for in people beyond how much they’re worth.

A Quick Note on Mr. Yunioshi: The character of Holly’s Japanese neighbor is played by Mickey Rooney, who was the writer of the book on which this film was based. Although *Tiffany’s* is now considered a classic romance, many critics over the years have noted how ridiculous Rooney’s portrayal is. With his exaggerated accent and rabbit teeth, it’s hard to escape the conclusion that this is an ugly racial stereotype, clearly filmed well before most people expressed disapproval of such silly depictions.

## Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

***Paul moves into the building, and immediately meets Holly and her cat.***

You can’t go on ringing my bell. You **disturb** me.

“To disturb” a person is to bother or annoy them.

You like me, you know you do. ∴ I worship you, Mr. Arbuck.

“To worship” a person is to idealize them, or respect them as if they were a God.

Didn't I pick up the check for five people?

“To pick up the check” at a restaurant is to pay the bill for others.

When you asked for the change for the powder room, what do I give you? A \$50 bill! Now doesn't that give me some rights?!

A “powder room” is a small room in a public place like a restaurant where women go to put on makeup and make themselves pretty.

I'm going to call the vice-squad on you!

A “vice-squad” is a group of police officers that deal with crimes such as prostitution and drugs.

I stuck it in the suitcase so it muffles the sound.

Note that “to stick” often means to put or place. “To muffle” a sound is to make it quieter by placing material such as cloth all around it.

Poor slob without a name.

A “slob” is a very messy or dirty person. Such a person is also called a pig, though here, Holly is describing her cat!

I don't want to own anything until I find a place where me and things go together.

If two things “go together,” this means that they seem to fit well together, or seem to be made for each other.

I'm crazy about Tiffany's.

“To be crazy about” something is to totally love it or be obsessed with it (Tiffany's is a very famous and expensive jewelry store that still exists).

The mean reds? You mean like the blues?

“The blues” are a feeling of great sadness or depression, but for Holly, “the mean reds” are a feeling of total fear or horror. It's never used.

Thursday?! It can't be! It's too gruesome!

A powerful adjective meaning horribly bloody, violent or shocking.

Be a darling and look under the bed for a pair of alligator shoes.

“Darling” is perhaps the most over-used word in this movie. It means dear or sweetheart, but it used to be very popular among the rich as a way of referring to close friends in general. “Alligator shoes” are made from the skin of alligators, which is a scary animal like a giant green lizard.

A girl can't go to Sing Sing with a green face.

"Sing Sing" is a famous prison near New York city. Here, a "green face" is one that has not been made up or made pretty, but this is never used.

You can always tell a man by the type of earrings he gives you. I must say, the mind reels.

Holly is saying that if a man buys a woman expensive earrings, he must be very rich or generous. If your mind is "reeling," it is spinning around in a confused state, perhaps because you're thinking too hard.

Cross your heart and kiss your elbow.

If a child wants a friend to tell the truth, he will ask them to "cross your heart and hope to die" (if they lie). The above is Holly's version of this.

You can never prove he was in the Mafia, much less head of it.

The "Mafia" refers to organized crime or mobsters, often associated with families that control prostitution or illegal drugs.

There you are, you sneak.

A "sneak" is a person who is often trying to hide, or secretly spy on another without being seen.

Seven months ago, this so-called lawyer, Mr. Shaugnessy, asked me how I'd like to cheer up a lonely old man and pick up \$100 a week at the same time.

A "so-called" lawyer is a person who claims to be a lawyer, but it's not clear if he really is. "To pick up" \$100 a week is to make it, often easily.

Wouldn't it be a good deed to visit him once a week?

"A good deed" is an act of great kindness or generosity.

I must say that I 'm amazed.

To be "amazed" is to be greatly surprised, shocked or fascinated.

It's none of my business, but it sounds like you could get in a lot of trouble.

If something is "none of your business," it is personal and something that you should not try to investigate or get involved with.

Sally tells me to tell things to Mr. Shaugnessy, like there's a hurricane in Cuba.

A powerful and violent storm that can cause great damage.

***Holly discovers how Paul makes a living,  
and perhaps sees in him something about herself.***

Miss Golightly was kind enough to let me in.

She was “kind enough to do” something is a slightly old-fashioned but sweet way of saying that she had behaved in a kind or nice manner.

I’m in a terrible rush! Grand Central Station, and step on it, darling.

Grand Central Station is the huge train and subway station in the middle of New York city. “Step on it” is a slangy way of telling a person to step hard on the gas, or more precisely, to drive quickly.

I know it was wicked of me, but I couldn’t resist. I fixed it up for you.

“Wicked” is an interesting and powerful adjective that means totally evil, bad or immoral, though it’s often used sarcastically, as here.

“To fix up” an apartment is to furnish it or make it look nice.

If you absolutely hate it, you can rip out everything and start from scratch.

“To start something from scratch” is to start it over from the beginning.

Come on, baby, open the door. Aw, be a pal.

“Come on” is the most versatile phrasal verb in English, meaning everything from hurry up to stop lying. Here, it means “be nice.”

A pal is another word for a friend.

Hey, the band’s swinging!

If a band is “swinging,” it’s probably playing loud music that is great for dancing. To swing is to rock back and forth (like a child’s swing).

He works late hours for a decorator.

An “interior decorator” (or designer) helps furnish, decorate and arrange the inside of houses and apartments.

He’s sweet when he isn’t drunk, but when he starts lapping up the vino, oh golly, quel beast.

“To lap up” a drink is to drink it quickly, like a thirsty cat. “Golly” is an innocent and old-fashioned way of expressing emotion such as surprise. Note that Holly loves to use foreign words, especially French; “Vino” means wine in Italian, and “Quel” means “what a…” in French (Thus above, she is saying “what a beast he is when he gets drunk…”).

A “beast” is an ugly creature or monster.

You looked so cozy in here and your decorator friend had gone home.

A nice word for warm and comfortable, especially when it’s cold or rainy outside.

Fire escape.

A narrow outside staircase in tall building for escaping during a fire or earthquake if the main staircase is blocked.

What's the weather report? :: Small craft warnings....whatever that means.  
 A common expression in weather reports that means small boats and planes are warned that there may be some rain or wind of which they should be aware (Here, the "weather report" is the message Holly gets from Sally to give to Mr. O' Shaugnessy).

I suppose you think I'm very brazen or *tres fou* or something. :: You're not any fouer than anybody else.  
 "Brazen" is an excellent word that means too forward, direct or shameless ("tres fou" means very crazy, but only in French!).

It's useful being top banana in the shock department.  
 If a person is "the top banana" at something, they are the very best at it (This is Holly's way of saying she likes shocking people, and is very good at doing it).

I'm a writer, I guess.  
 A common thing to say when you're not sure if what you just said before is really true.

Ringin' affirmative.  
 A poetic way of saying absolutely true.

He's written an awful lot of television stuff, but quel rat.  
 Holly's French way of saying "what a rat!" For Holly, all the men that she goes out with our unpleasant and awful, like rats.

They're not the kind of stories you can really tell. :: Too dirty?  
 If a story or novel is "dirty," it is filled with lots of sex.

They're dirty, but only incidentally. Mainly, they're angry, sensitive, intensely felt, and that dirtiest of all dirty words, promising.  
 "Incidentally" is another way of saying by chance, or perhaps "by the way." If a story (or writer) is "promising," they have a lot of potential to be good or great, but they aren't so great yet.

Or so said the Times Book Review, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1956.  
 A reference to the book review section of the New York Times.

This is kind of a ratty question, but what have you written lately?  
 In this case, "ratty" means rude or shabby, but this is rarely used today.

You must do very well.  
 In this context, to "do well" means to make a lot of money.

Everybody thought he was dotty, the way he gorged himself on peanut butter.  
 “Dotty” means foolish or crazy, but this is rare today. “To gorge yourself” on food is to eat a lot of it very quickly, like a pig.

He wasn’t dotty. Just sweet and vague and terribly slow.  
 “Vague” means unclear, and is rarely used to describe a person, the way Holly does here (A plan or memory is often vague). In this context, if a person is “terribly slow,” they are probably a little stupid.

If we’re going to be friends, let’s get one thing straight right now! I hate snoops!  
 “To get something straight” is to make it very clear or obvious, so that there is no misunderstanding. A “snoop” is a person who tries to secretly spy on others to see what they are doing or thinking.

I may even take a wild boyish fling at writing.  
 A “fling” is usually a brief but often intense period of satisfying one’s own desires. This is Paul’s way of saying he’s going to try and write.

*Holly has a party, and Paul meets all her rich and beautiful friends.*

Get yourself stuffed, ha, Polly, baby? Serves you right, big mouth.  
 “Polly” is the typical name of a parrot, the bird which loves to imitate people (Dead animals are often “stuffed” for decoration, but “go stuff yourself” is not really used). “Serves you right” is a common way of telling someone they deserved whatever bad thing happened to them.

Don’t get yourself all tense and sore.  
 Note that if you’re “sore,” your muscles can hurt, or you could be upset.

Lot of characters come around unexpected.  
 A good word for people in a movie, or just people in general, often who are so interesting or dangerous that they should be in a movie.

Bourbon, on the rocks.  
 A common way of saying with ice (Bourbon is a type of liquor).

It’s unbelievable. What a dump.  
 A widely used word for a house or building that is ugly, unpleasant or in very poor condition.

OJ’s a great agent. He knows a terrific lot of phone numbers.  
 In this case, a film agent, who helps actors get roles in the movies.

Come on, lay off.

A slangy way of telling a person to stop doing whatever it is they're doing.

Stop blushing Fred. You didn't say you're a genius, I did.

If a person "blushes," their cheeks turn red because they are embarrassed.

Quit stalling, O.J. Tell Fred what you're going to do to make him rich and famous.

"To stall" is to delay, or refuse to move forward (A car will stall if the engine is not working).

Let me and Fred settle that. :: Remember, I'm the agent. He's already got a decorator.

In this case, to "settle" a problem is to come to an agreement.

Is she or isn't she what? :: A phony.

A "phony" is a person who behaves in a fake or false manner, or who does not really believe in what they say.

I sincerely like the kid, I do.

Another word for honestly, or truly.

It's a streak of the poet. You know what I mean?

This is OJ's way of saying that he is a sensitive guy, since poet's are considered sensitive people (A "streak" is a thin line or band, or in this case, a mark that identifies).

I discovered her a couple years ago. She had a lot of class, but when she opened her mouth, you didn't know whether she was a hillbilly or an Okie.

"Class" is a good word for elegance, sophistication or grace in manners.

A "hillbilly" is an uneducated person who usually lives in an isolated and rural area, and an "Okie" is a negative word for a person from the state of Oklahoma (many of whom fled to California during the 1930s).

You know how long it took me to smooth out that accent?

In this case, "to smooth out" an accent is to weaken or eliminate it.

We figured once she could imitate French, she could imitate English.

"To figure" is a colloquial way of saying to think or guess.

We arranged for a little screen test.

This is a test that hopeful actors take in which they perform a small role in front of a movie director to see how well they can act.

Paul, baby, don't tell me she isn't a phony.

Although this is now old fashioned, "cool" Hollywood types used to love addressing people as baby (just as women used the word darling).

The answering service doesn't answer. ::

That's the trouble with answering services.

A clever line. Before answering machines, wealthy people paid a small company to pick up their phone calls.

This is some party. Who are these people, anyway?

Note the use of "some" before certain nouns functions as a way of saying amazing, truly interesting or in some cases, disappointing!

Who knows? The word gets out.

A way of saying that some information spreads quickly between people.

Reinforcements.

An interesting word that usually refers to added military power in the form of extra soldiers, though here Holly is referring to extra drinks.

She's a model...and a thumping bore, but just look at the goodies she brought with her!

"A thumping bore" is a Holly's way of referring to a boring person (though thumping, which is a muffled pounding sound, is not used). "Goodies" usually refers to little gifts, especially sweets like chocolate, though here Holly is referring to rich men.

He's all right I suppose, if you like dark, handsome, rich looking men with passionate natures and too many teeth.

If a person has a "passionate nature," they are intensely interested in life, and perhaps very sexual. Paul is describing what some women may think of as the perfect man.

That is a remarkable piece of information to have at your finger tips!

"Remarkable" is a useful adjective which means amazing, very interesting or worth noting. If you have information "at your fingertips," it is easily accessible or easily retrieved from memory.

I keep track of these things.

"To keep track of" something is to watch it move or develop over time.

My wires got crossed somewhere.

People speak of the brain as having lots of wires, and thus if "your wires get crossed," you become confused or disoriented.

You're not vexed at me for bringing him? :: Of course not.

To be "vexed" at a person is to be angry or annoyed at them.

Mr. Berman, we haven't been formally introduced, but I'm Mag Wildwood, from Wildwood, Arkansas. That's hill country.

One way of referring to hilly land that is very rural and isolated.

To think I'd find a beau of mine mousing after a piece of cheap Hollywood trash.

A "beau" is a never used word for boyfriend (It is a French word for handsome). "To mouse after" a person means to try and seduce or charm them, but this isn't used. "Cheap Hollywood trash" is Mag's way of referring to a disgusting actor trying to make a career in film.

I'm going to march you over to the zoo and feed you to the yak!

An animal that is like an Ox, or a big funny looking cow.

Timber!

The word to yell when a person (or tree) is about to fall over.

"Timber" is also the wood that is produced after a tree is cut down.

***Doc returns to take Holly home, but she is no longer the person that he wants her to be.***

Sally helps me with my accounts. I have no head for figures at all.

Holly's way of saying she is not very good at basic math (adding and subtracting), and therefore she can't balance her checking account.

He feels that for me it's better to operate on a cash basis, tax wise.

"To operate on a cash basis" is to both receive payments and pay for purchases in cash, as opposed to with checks. "Tax wise" is a way of saying "in terms of how it relates to taxes." Of course it's easier to cheat on one's taxes if everything is done in cash!

Isn't that just the weirdest? I bet they haven't had snow in New Orleans for a million years. I don't know how he thinks them up.

"Weird" is an excellent and common adjective meaning very strange.

"I bet" is a common way of saying "I think" or "I'm sure that..."

"To think up" something is to make up or imagine it.

Two drifters, off to see the world. There's such a lot of world to see. [Song]

A "drifter" is a person who travels or wonders from place to place, without ever staying to settle down.

I didn't want to sound **neurotic**...

A person who is "neurotic" is convinced that someone or something is going to hurt or harm them, even when there is no reason to think so.

What crossed my mind...suppose Bill is having us watched.

If something "crosses your mind," it occurs to you and you think about it. "Suppose" is another way of saying "what if..."

**Take it easy!** I just want to find out what this is all about!

A very common way of telling a person to calm down.

Her name ain't Holly. Her name was

Lula Mae Barnes; It was till she married me.

Note that "ain't" is widely used among uneducated people for "isn't."

I'm a horse doctor, animal man. I do some farming, near Tulip, Texas.

Note that Doc calls himself a horse doctor and not a veterinarian, probably because he never really went to veterinary school.

I didn't claim they were her natural-born children.

The "natural-born" children of a woman are those she actually gave birth to, as opposed to the children of a man that she has married.

Their own precious mother passed away, July 4<sup>th</sup>,

Independence day, 1955, the year of the drought.

In this case, "precious" means much loved or cherished. "To pass away" is the most common and gentle way of saying to die.

A "drought" is a long period of time without rain.

When I married Lula Mae, she was going on 14.

One way of saying she was 13!

You take Lula Mae. She was an **exceptional** person.

In this case, "take" means to look at, as an example. "Exceptional" means very unusual or unique, but almost always in a good sense.

She just plumb broke our hearts when she run off like she done.

Here, "plumb" means completely, but this is never used.

"To run off" is a gentle way of saying to run away from home, but note correct English would be "when she *ran* off like she *did*."

A couple of wild young ones, they was. I caught them outside the house stealing milk and turkey eggs.

One way of referring to children who are a little out of control.

She had good cause to run off from that house; Never had nothing to leave mine.

In this case, “good cause” is a good reason. This is Doc’s way of saying it’s understandable that Holly ran away from her parent’s home, but there was no good reason why she ran away from his house.

Crackerjacks.

A well known snack made of sweet popcorn, that is famous for the fact that every box sold contains a little toy prize for kids.

The night I proposed, I cried like a baby.

In this context, “to propose” means to ask a person to get married.

I laughed and hugged and squeezed her.

“To squeeze” a person is to hug or hold them tightly.

Gosh, Lula Mae, Kingdom come!

A rarely used and very religious way of showing surprise or shock.

He’s your husband. :: No, he’s not. It was annulled ages ago, but he just won’t accept it.

“To annul” a marriage is to legally cancel it, as if it had never taken place (Some marriages are annulled because one of the partners is considered to have been too young to have agreed to get married).

I’ll tell him you’re coming to see us off.

“To see off” a person at a train station or airport is to come along in order to say goodbye before they leave.

It’s a mistake you always made, doc, trying to love a wild thing.

Holly’s way of telling Doc that she was like a wild animal, and could not settle down with a single man.

You were always lugging home wild things, but the more you do, the stronger they get.

“To lug” something is to carry it with great effort or difficulty.

I’m going to have to write Fred and tell him that unless he wants to look out for himself, he’ll have to sign up for another hitch.

A “hitch” in the military is an agreement to serve for a year or two. Doc is telling Holly that if she doesn’t come home, her brother Fred will have to stay in the army since he (Doc) can’t take care of him.

**Keep an eye on her**, will you, son?

“To keep an eye on” somebody is to watch over them, in this case as a way of making sure that they are safe or protected.

***Paul and Holly grow closer as she searches for a rich husband, and soon both are on their way to Tiffany's, Holly's favorite store on earth.***

The terrible thing is I am still Lula Mae. 14 years old,  
stealing turkey eggs and running through a brier patch.  
An area of wild bushes, often found on farms.

Will you buy me a drink? But don't take me home  
until I'm very drunk, very drunk indeed.

Note that a classic line for a man to ask a woman in a bar is "Can I buy you a drink?" In this case, "indeed" is used for emphasis.

Do you think she's deeply and importantly talented?

:: No. Amusingly and superficially talented, yes.

If a person is "superficially talented" (as opposed to "deeply talented"), they probably have a skill that is fun to watch, such as stripping or playing a sport, but not one that involves great intelligence (If something is superficial, it is on the surface, like physical beauty).

Gracious! Do you think she's handsomely paid? :: Indeed.

If a person is "handsomely" paid, they're well paid, though this adverb is old-fashioned.

Every Tom, Dick and Harry, uh, Sid, thinks he takes a girl to dinner,  
she'll just curl up like a kitten in a little furry ball at his feet, right?

"Every Tom, Dick and Harry" is a way of saying every typical guy.  
"To curl up" is to roll oneself up in a ball, like a sleeping cat, and if something is "furry," it is covered with fur or animal hair.

I just buzzed Yunioshi.

"To buzz" a person is to call them on a phone or, as here, to press on a button outside a building to let a person inside know you're there.

In spite of the fact that most of these rats fork up \$50 for the powder room,  
like little dolls, I have \$9 less in the old bank account than six months ago.

"To fork up" is a dated but interesting way of saying to agree to pay.

No longer will I play the field. The field stinks  
both economically and socially, and I'm giving it up.

"To play the field" is a colloquial way of saying to date, or go out with lots of different people, often in hopes of finding a romantic partner.  
"To give up" doing something is to stop doing it.

This time I'm calling the police department and the New York State Housing Commission and if necessary, the Board of Health.

Many state governments have both a housing commission and board of health to enforce laws that are related to housing and public health.

Miss Golightly further announces her intention to use her not inconsiderable talents for the immediate capture, for the purpose of matrimony, of Rusty.

If a person has "not inconsiderable talents," this is a poetic way of saying they are in fact quite talented. "Matrimony" is the official act of getting married.

I detect a look of disapproval in your eyes?

"To detect" something is to notice, or find out after carefully looking.

Tough beans, buddy, cause that's the way it's gonna be.

"Tough beans" is a fun expression which means "too bad."

"Buddy" is another word for friend. Note that "going to"

-----> "gonna" in rapid speech.

My brother gets out of the army in February and then it's all up to me. I need money and I'll do whatever I have to do to get it.

If a problem is "all up to you," this means that you will be the person responsible for solving or taking care of it.

I do not accept drinks from disapproving gentlemen, especially disapproving gentlemen who are kept by other ladies.

A "kept man" is supposed to be loyal to one particular woman, and not go out with others. An old-fashioned but interesting expression.

If I were you, I'd be more careful with my money;

Rusty Trawler is too hard a way of earning it.

Note the use of the subjunctive "were" (!), which is still widely used.

This is Paul's way of telling Holly that marrying Rusty is a ridiculous way of trying to get a lot of money.

Earplugs.

A little device you put in your ear to keep out noise.

I can't go through the whole thing again. It's sufficient to say that I've come to make up, and as an added inducement, I have all kinds of news.

"To go through" a story again is to tell it one more time. "Sufficient" is one way of saying adequate or acceptable. "To make up" with a person is to apologize and try to get along with them better after having had a bad argument. An "inducement" is a small gift which encourages you to do something.

Would you mind turning around for a second?

Oh, never mind, it's such a corny line anyway.

"Corny" is a great adjective which means overly dramatic, sentimental or just too old-fashioned. A "line," in this case, is simply a sentence that could be commonly found in any movie or play.

I certainly had him pegged wrong, didn't I?

"To peg" a person is to think of them as being a certain way, often when in fact they are not ("I had her pegged as socially awkward, but in fact she is quite charming").

Not a farthing. His family has money, but he personally is broke.

A "farthing" is an old British coin worth almost nothing. "Broke" is a great slang word to describe a person who has no money.

It turns out he owes \$700,000. Anyway, that's why he decided to marry the queen of the pig people.

A common phrasal verb which means to happen to be, in the end.

I sold a story. I just got word this morning. :: That's marvelous.

An alternative to excellent or wonderful, and a word that is quite popular among the rich.

I've had champagne with breakfast, but never before, before.

A cute play on words; Paul had champagne with breakfast before, but never had he had it before breakfast (so early in the morning).

I've walked up 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue at 6:00, but as far as I'm concerned, that's still night.

A complicated but common way of saying "I think..."

Do you think it counts? :: Sure it counts, now we're even.

If something "counts" in a contest or game, it is accepted as valid or true. "We're even" means we both have the same amount of points.

It isn't that I give a hoot about jewelry, except diamonds of course.

If a person doesn't "give a hoot" about something, they don't care about it. It's more common to not give a damn (or crudely, not give a shit).

Personally, I think it would be tacky to wear diamonds before I'm 40.

"Tacky" is a useful adjective which means without style or good taste.

The lady feels diamonds are tacky for her. :: Oh, I think they're divine on older women, but they're not right for me.

"Divine" means magnificent, perfect or heavenly (A "divinity" is a God). A dated word, but some rich people still like to use it.

In all fairness, I ought to explain that there's a secondary problem.

"In all fairness" is a stylish way of saying to be fair. "Secondary" means second in importance, compared to something else.

We can only afford to spend a limited amount.

To be able to "afford" to do something is to have the money to do it.

\$10? :: That was the outside figure, yes.

An "outside figure" is the absolute highest number possible.

Frankly, within that price range, the variety of merchandise is rather limited.

A person's "price range" is the amount between the highest and lowest that they are willing to spend. "Merchandise" is another word for goods or products, from food to furniture.

As a novelty, you understand. For the lady and gentleman who has everything, a sterling silver telephone dialer.

A "novelty item" is a product that is intentionally seen as joke, or something silly. "Sterling" is a type of silver metal. Note that in the days before push-button phones, you had to "dial" a number.

We could have something engraved, couldn't we?

"To engrave" a piece of jewelry is to have a special letter or name cut into it, in order to make it more personal.

This, I take it, was not purchased at Tiffany's.

In this case, "I take it" is another way of saying "I presume."  
"To purchase" something is to buy it.

Actually, it was purchased concurrent ...actually, it came inside a box of crackerjacks.

An interesting word that means "at the same time of..."

It gives one a feeling of solidarity, of continuity with the past, that sort of thing.

"Solidarity" refers to an emotional or practical closeness among a group of people. If something shows "continuity with the past," it acts to show consistency or stability between the past and present.

They wouldn't feel it's beneath them, or anything like that?

If a person feels "it's beneath them" to do something, they feel they have too much dignity to do it (Snobby people won't wash the dishes or other types of manual labor because they think it's beneath them).

I think you'd find Tiffany's is very understanding.

In this context, another way of saying sensitive or cooperative.

If you tell me what initials you'd like, we could have something for you ready in the morning.

Your "initials" are the first letters of your first and last name.

Didn't I tell you this was a lovely place?

A British word for pretty or very pleasant, and still popular among some Americans.

***Paul ends his relationship with 2E as Holly prepares to marry Jose.***

Each one of these little drawers is stuffed with little cards.

If a drawer is "stuffed" with something, it is completely filled, so that there is no room left inside.

He's Varjak, Paul, in person.

To meet somebody "in person" is to see them directly, as opposed to seeing them on TV or in the newspapers. Holly is noting that author's cards are arranged by last name (and thus, "Varjak, Paul").

Don't be so stuck up! Autograph it!

If a person is "stuck up," they are snobby or arrogant, and thus look down on others. Famous people "autograph" their books, which simply means to sign it.

What should I say? :: Something sentimental, I think.

"Sentimental" means emotional, or perhaps overly romantic.

Stop that! You're defacing public property!

"To deface" something is to destroy it by writing on it, and here the public property is the book Paul wrote, which is owned by the library.

Did you ever steal something from a 5 & 10 when you were a kid? :: No, I'm the sensitive, bookish type.

5&10 was the name of a popular store that went out of business in the 1970s. A "bookish" person likes to pass time reading books.

I still do, now and then, to keep my hand in. Come on, don't be chicken!

If you "keep your hand in" an activity, such as playing poker, you do it occasionally so that you don't forget how to do it. If a person is "chicken," they are scared to do something.

**Boo!**

The word to use when you want to sneak up and scare somebody.

Hi, cat. Lady of the house at home?

The “lady of the house” is the woman who runs the house (It’s usually the mother of the family, just as a dad is usually the man of the house).

Trick or treat! :: You’re crazy, you know that, don’t you.

The words that children say when they go door to door asking for candy on Halloween (A treat is an unexpected gift, such as candy).

2E, you’re a very stylish girl. Can’t we end this stylishly?

A person who is “stylish” is fashionable in clothes and behavior, or perhaps elegant and graceful.

Curiously enough, she’s a girl who can’t help anyone, not even herself.

One way of saying strangely.

Don’t look so bewildered. Surely, you’ve noticed me writing checks before.

A person who is “bewildered” is confused, often by conflicting information, or a disorienting situation.

Pay to the order of Paul Varjak. \$1,000.

The exact words found on every check.

You’re entitled to a vacation with pay. It’s simply a matter of fair labor practices, darling.

To be “entitled” to something is to deserve it, often in a legal sense. “Fair labor practices” refers to the way that employers are legally expected to deal with their workers (such as paying a minimum wage).

If you were really smart, you’d organize a union. That way you’d get all the fringe benefits. Hospitalization, a pension plan.

“Fringe benefits” are things that an employer gives their workers beyond a salary, such as health insurance (which used to be referred to as hospitalization, as above). A “pension plan” is pay that is set aside for a worker’s retirement.

Let’s get something straight. My name is Paul Varjak.

“Let’s make this very clear, so there is no misunderstanding.”

What’s all this jazz about South America?

One way of referring to excited talk or interest in a topic.

Who the hell is Jose?

A common addition to Wh questions in order to show emotion such as anger or frustration.

He's not only handsome and wildly rich, he's absolutely cookoo for me.  
To be "cookoo" about a person is to be infatuated with them,  
or like them very much. It's also a slangy word for crazy.

The place is such a mess, I couldn't bear to face it alone.  
In this case, to be able "to bear" something is to  
support or accept it without too much suffering.

The telegram, and now this. Crashing everything...it's appalling.  
A "telegram" is a written message sent over long distance by wire.  
If something is "appalling," it is shockingly bad or horrible.

I can't have a public scandal. It's too delicate.  
A "scandal" is a situation in which a well known person is caught  
doing something illegal or immoral. If something is "delicate," it is  
fragile. This is Jose's way of saying he can't be seen with Holly.

There's no law against busting up your own apartment.  
"To bust up" something is to destroy it, or break it into pieces.

"Received notice. Young Fred killed in jeep accident. Your  
husband and children join in the sorrow of our mutual loss."  
A "jeep" is a type of small car that is used widely in the army.  
"Sorrow" is great grief or emotional suffering caused by a tragedy.

You got a ranch or something in Brazil, don't you?  
A "ranch" is a type of large farm, often with lots of horses and cows.

***Holly finds herself in trouble because of her connections  
with Sally, but Paul and OJ work to rescue her from jail.***

I'm fat as a pig, and haven't had my hair  
done in months, but I'm happy, really happy.  
"To have one's hair done" is a common way of  
saying to have it cut or styled in a certain way.

The New Yorker.  
A popular magazine that is known for being very well written.

I've taken up knitting. :: So I see.  
"To take up" a hobby is to start doing it. "Knitting" is a type of sewing  
done with yarn and a large needle (people love to knit sweaters).

Jose brought up the blueprints for a new ranch house he's building.  
 The "blueprints" of a building are the architectural plans or design that are put on paper, often in blue ink.

His family is very important down there,  
 so he has to worry about things like that.

This is Holly's way of explaining that why she will fly down to Brazil on a separate plane from Jose's, in order to avoid a scandal since they're not yet married.

I thought I'd show off and cook dinner for us.

"To show off" something is to try and impress people with it.

Did I tell you how divinely and utterly happy I am?

An interesting adverb which means completely.

He hasn't really asked me. Not in so many words.

Holly's way of nervously admitting that Jose has not yet asked her to marry him (In this context, "not in so many words" means not really).

I'm not much for chicken with sauce, anyway.

A gentle way of saying "I don't really like..."

Let me buy you a farewell dinner.

Another word for goodbye.

Me and my nine Brazilian brats.

A good word to know for a disagreeable or misbehaved child.

Why are you leaving? What's in it for you, anyway?

"What do you hope to get?...."

I've always thrown out such a jazzy line, but except for Doc and You, Jose is my first non-rat romance.

Holly's way of saying that despite all of her talking about nice men, all have them have been terrible (rats), except for Paul and Doc.

He's too prim and cautious to be my absolute ideal.

If a person is "prim," they are socially very conservative and thus easily shocked. An "ideal" is a perfect example, in this case of a person.

Albert Schweitzer, Leonard Bernstein.

Schweitzer was a well known humanitarian and Bernstein was a famous conductor and composer who was rich and handsome.

I am mad about Jose; I honestly think I'd give up smoking if he asked.  
 To be "mad about" a person is to love them wildly, or at least be infatuated with them. "To give up" doing something is to stop doing it.

A farewell gesture.

A small act to show one's feeling, such as buying a small gift.

Somebody must have tripped the lock.

"To trip a lock" is to secretly manipulate it in order to get it unlocked.

Ah, crafty devil, that Yunioshi.

A slangy way of referring to a person who is dangerous, manipulative and smart (Crafty means cleverly dishonest).

Narcotics squad.

A division within the police department that deals with illegal drugs.

Get lost, will ya?

A very direct and assertive way of telling a person to leave.  
 Note that "you"-----> "ya" in rapid speech.

**Knock it off!**

A wonderful expression that simply means "Stop it!"

Is it true that you carry messages from Tomato in code?

If a message is "in code," it's hidden in a series of secret letters, words or numbers that only people who know what they mean can understand.

You must have known that Tomato was part of the narcotics syndicate.

Organized crime families that sell illegal drugs, such as heroin.

He never mentioned narcotics. These wretched people keep persecuting him.

"Wretched" is a powerful adjective that means extremely poor, pitiful and often just useless. "To persecute" a person is to treat them very cruelly, often because of their religious or political beliefs.

"Tomato's Tomato pinched by Cops" [Headline]

In this case, a "tomato" is a woman (Holly), and to be pinched by the cops means to be caught by the police (To pinch a person is to hold their skin tightly between your thumb and finger, and cops is a very common slang term for the police). A ridiculous headline!

I spoke to my lawyer in New York. I told him to take care of everything, bill me and keep my name "anominous."

OJ meant to say "anonymous," which is an important word which means that the identity of a person is unknown.

They only got her on \$10,000 bail. My lawyer can get her out at 10 in the morning.

“Bail” is the money required to get a person out of jail after they have been charged with a crime, but before the actual trial.

You bust into that dump she lives in, collect all the junk, go down to jail, get her out and take her to a hotel under a phony name.

“To bust into” an apartment is to break into it, often in a manner that is very quick in order to steal something. A “phony name” is a fake or false name that is used to hide one’s true identity.

Not that I owe her anything, if you want to get right down to it.

“To get right down to it” is a common way of saying “when you really look closely at the situation.”

***Jose decides he can't be married to Holly, but Paul and the cat soon teach her that there are more important things in life than just a rich husband.***

I did a little housebreaking why you were away.

A rarely used word meaning to enter a house in order to steal something.

Did you find that plane ticket? :: We can cash it in.

“To cash in” a ticket is to sell it in order to get the cash value.

Cash it in, are you kidding?

If a person is “kidding,” they are joking around or not being serious.

You don't understand. You're under indictment!

If a person is “under indictment” they have been officially charged with a crime, and will have to face a trial.

If you jump bail, they'll throw away the key.

“To jump bail” means to flee or escape, often to another state or country, after having paid the bail money. If a person jumps bail and is later caught, they can be sentenced to prison for that alone, even if they're found innocent of the originally charged crime.

The day after tomorrow, I'll be married to the future President of Brazil and that will give me diplomatic immunity, or something. :: I wouldn't bet on it.

“Diplomatic immunity” is a legal term that prevents diplomats and other state officials from being charged with a crime in a foreign country. “I wouldn't bet on it” means “I wouldn't count on it.”

Did he bring it in person, or was it just there, shoved under the door?

If something is “shoved” under a door, it is forcefully pushed underneath, even when there is little space for it to fit in.

“Conceive of my despair upon discovering in a such a brutal and public style how different you are.....

“To conceive” is to understand or imagine, “despair” is great sadness, and “brutal” is violent, severe or harsh.

.....from the woman a man of my position could hope to make his wife.”

This is Jose referring to the fact that he is from a rich family and may one day be the President of his country (Brazil). In this case, a person’s “position” in society is simply his social class and family background.

I grieve for the disgrace of your present circumstances and I do not find it in my heart to add my condemn.

“To grieve” is to suffer from great sadness, “disgrace” is great public shame or embarrassment, and “circumstances” are the general facts or conditions of a situation. Note that Jose means to say “condemnation,” which is criticism (“condemn” is a verb, but not a noun).

I have my family to protect and name, and I am a coward when these institutions enter.

A “coward” is a person with little courage or bravery. An “institution” is any well-established organization, from the family to government.

Touching? That square-ball jazz!

If something is “touching,” it is sweet, and generally causes a tender or emotional reaction. The second sentence is Holly’s way of saying Jose has said conservative nonsense, but such words are never used.

So much for South America; I didn’t really think you were cut out to be queen of the Pampas, anyway.

“So much for” is a way of saying “That’s too bad about...” If a person is “cut out to be” something, they are considered very well qualified to fill that role. The “Pampas” are a rural part of Argentina (and not Brazil!).

I’m not hot-footing it out to Jose; Why should I waste a perfectly good plane ticket?

Holly’s way of saying to travel quickly and directly, but this isn’t used.

All they want from me is my services as a state’s witness against Sally; Nobody has any intention of prosecuting me.

A “state’s witness” is a person who testifies against an accused criminal in a trial. “To prosecute” a person to try them in court for a crime.

This town's finished for me; There are certain shades of limelight that can wreck a girl's complexion.

A "shade" of a color is different degrees of lightness or darkness.

The be "in the limelight" is to be heavily covered by the press, or in the news. "To wreck" something is to destroy it, and a person's "complexion" is the color and quality of the skin on their face.

They'll have a rope up in every saloon in town.

A "saloon" is an old word for a bar. This is Holly's way of saying people won't want to see her anywhere in New York.

We're a couple of no-name slobs. We don't belong to nobody and nobody belongs to us. We don't even belong to each other.

A great word for a very messy or dirty person. Sally's way of describing herself and her cat, since she thinks neither can be truly loved.

This ought to be the right place for a tough guy like you.

Garbage cans, rats galore! Scram! I said take off! **Beat it!**

A "tough" person (or cat) is strong or not easily scared or intimidated.

"Rats galore" means lots of rats! "Scram, take off" and "beat it" are all slangy and useful ways to tell a person that you want them to leave.

You're chicken! You got no guts.

If a person has "no guts," they are scared and have no courage (Guts are literally stomach intestines).

You call yourself a free spirit! A wild thing.

"A free spirit" is a person who travels or wanders from place to place, independent and not in need of any one person to make them happy.

You're already in that cage, and in it's not bounded in the West by Tulip, Texas, or in the East by Somaliland.

"Bounded" is another word for bordered, or touched. This is Paul's way of saying that Holly's real problems are in her own head, and not related to where she happens to be on earth.

# **Breakfast at Tiffany's**

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

- 1) Are Holly and Paul a good couple? Could they live happily ever after?
- 2) Why do you think Holly was so secretive about her past?
- 3) Is Holly an attractive person? What is good about her, and what is bad?
- 4) How were Holly and Paul similar when they met each other?
- 5) What does OJ mean when he says Holly is a phony? Is he right?
- 6) Can people marry just for money and still be happy?
- 7) What did you like and not like about this movie?