

# Cabaret

(Musical/Drama) ( 1972)

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## Major Characters

Sally Bowles.....Liza Minnelli

A young and aspiring American actress who works as a singer in a Berlin nightclub in pre-Nazi Germany, in 1931.

Brian Roberts.....Michael York

An English literature student who teaches ESL and who meets Sally while looking for a room to rent in Berlin.

Master of Ceremonies.....Joel Grey

The very talented singer and dancer who hosts the Kit Kat Club, which is the Berlin nightclub where Sally works.

Fritz Wendel.....Fritz Wepper

A struggling businessman who is taking English classes from Brian, and who falls in love with Natalia (see below).

Natalia Landauer.....Marisa Berenson

The daughter of a very wealthy Jewish businessman who also want wants to improve her English and thus decides to takes lessons from Brian.

Maximilian von Heune.....Helmut Griem

A very rich and educated German who inherited all his wealth, who becomes friends with Sally and Brian.

## Plot Summary

This is a classic film about life in Berlin Germany during the early 1930s, when the Nazi Party rose to power. It starts out in 1931, and focuses on the life of Sally Bowles, an aspiring American actress who is also a spirited and talented singer, and a very sexually liberated young woman whose behavior can be seen as either shocking or charming, depending on your morals and the times in which you live. In the decadence of pre-Nazi Berlin, Sally seems to fit in well.

One day Sally meets the kind, very educated and soft-spoken Brian Roberts, an English graduate student who arrives in Berlin looking for a room to rent in the boarding house where Sally lives. Brian thinks of himself as homosexual, but over time, he and Sally seem to fall in love (and thus Brian realizes that at a minimum, he's probably bisexual!). Together, Sally and Brian become involved with various interesting Germans, including his ESL student Fritz, a struggling businessman who is trying to hide the fact he is Jewish, and Natalia, the daughter of a rich Jewish businessman who Fritz decides he wants to marry. Later, Sally meets Max, a wealthy playboy who decides to seduce both her and Brian.

While Cabaret captures these characters as they go about their lives, an equally important and disturbing story is played out in the background, as the viewer sees the gradual rise to power of the brutal Nazi party. The contrast between the film's wonderful music and the increasing presence of the Nazis makes this movie a truly excellent musical. Brian is well aware of how horrible the Nazis are, and as Jews, Fritz and Natalia logically fear them, but Max seems to reflect the view of most Germans at the time; He thinks the Nazis are perhaps horrible gangsters, but they are useful because they can help eliminate the Communists, and eventually Germany can eliminate them. Sally, alas, while focused on her hopes for Hollywood stardom, seems not to even notice the growing chaos all around her...

A few notes on the language used in this film:

- i) Sally uses the words "darling" and "divine" (meaning wonderful or fantastic) much more than any native speaker would do today.
- ii) Be aware that both Fritz and Natalia are ESL speakers who make quite a few grammatical mistakes, and in general, German speakers of English will often pronounce the 'w' sound as a 'v.' When useful, many of these mistakes are pointed out in the glossary.
- iii) Finally, note that there is a considerable amount of German and French that is used in this movie. Some of the more important of these words will be briefly explained, especially if they're also occasionally used by English speakers.

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

*Sally meets Brian, and soon has a new best friend in Berlin.*

Master of Ceremonies [written]

A person who hosts an event, from an awards show to a nightclub act.  
Here, the person who is also the main entertainer at the Kit Kat Club.

Willkommen, Bienvenue, Welcome.

The first two are German and French for welcome.

Even the orchestra is beautiful!

A group of musicians who play various instruments together.  
They are often seated in a pit in front of the stage in a theatre.

Each and every one a **virgin!**

The name for a person who has never had sexual intercourse.

Do not take my vord for it!

One way of saying, "you don't have to believe me, you can ask somebody else." Note Germans often mispronounce word as 'vord.'

The perfect women. □The juggler!

A person who is able to keep several balls or other objects in the air at the same time.

The **charming** singer from America, Fraulein Sally Bowles!

"Charming" is an important word for very likeable, pleasing or delightful. "Fraulein" is the German word for Miss, or young lady.

And last but not least...the toy boys.

"Last not but least" is a common way of referring to the last people or things mentioned in a list, but who are still considered important.

And yours truly...

A stylish or literary way of referring to yourself.

Have you a cigarette darling, I am desperate.

A word of gentle affection most often used between couples, but used by Sally to address almost everybody!

You're meant to think I'm an international woman of mystery.

Sally's way of telling Brian that she wants him to think she is fascinating, perhaps because she is involved in adventures all over the world.

I've been working on it like mad.

"To work on something like mad" is to work on it very seriously, or with great determination.

**Divine decadence!**

Two important words in this movie. "Divine" is Sally's way of saying fabulous, wonderful or of the highest quality. "Decadence" refers to the fall of a society, usually because of loose sexual morals, or too much emphasis on food, sex, and other physical pleasures.

It's the most marvelous boarding house! Marvelous lodgers.

"Marvelous" is another of Sally's favorite words; It means wonderful or excellent. A "boarding house" is a large home in which people rent individual rooms (The rent often includes some meals). A "lodger" is a person who rents a room.

Everybody's **broke**, of course, but who isn't these days?

If a person is "broke," they have no money (In the early 1930s, most countries faced horrible economic conditions because of the Depression).

Now there's Fraulein Mayr, who is a masseuse.

The word for a person who gives massages.

There's Fraulein Kaust, who's a terribly sweet street walker.

If a person is sweet, they are very kind, gentle or perhaps child-like. A "street walker" is a dated word for a prostitute.

Mayr tells Kost's fortune every morning.

In this case, a person's "fortune" is their future, as predicted by others who look for signs in people's hands, the playing cards they have, etc.

"You'll meet a strange man," which under the circumstances, is a pretty safe bet.

"Under the circumstances" is one way of saying "given the situation." If something is a "safe bet," it is very likely to happen.

Pupils. I've got to give English lessons to pay the rent.

A "pupil" is another word for a student.

Practically a suite! Come on in!

A very big hotel room that often includes a small kitchen and separate sitting area.

Prairie oysters, darling. It's an egg with Worchester sauce, all sort of whooshed up together.

"Prairie oysters" are bull testicles (yuck!), and "Worchester sauce" is a well known English sauce that is used on meats. If two things are "whooshed up," they are stirred or mixed together.

50 marks with breakfast, even when I'm behind on the rent.

A "mark" was the German equivalent of a dollar (but it has been replaced by the Euro).

Well, I dash all day and work late at the cabaret.

This is no longer used, but to "dash *around*" still means to run around very busily or quickly, trying to get lots of things done at once.

These work instantly, even on the most sinister hangovers.

"Sinister" is a powerful adjective meaning evil or truly horrible, often in a secretive way. A "hangover" is the bad or sick feeling that one has the morning after having drunk too much alcohol.

One should go to the man's room if one can---I mean it doesn't look so much as if I expected it, does it?

This is Sally's way of explaining why she prefers to have sex with men at their house instead of in her own room.

I see you've acquired a lot of worldly wisdom.

"To acquire" is to receive, hold or come into possession of. "Worldly wisdom" is useful or practical knowledge that has been gotten by experiences in everyday life.

I have ancient instincts.

If something is “ancient,” it is extremely old, usually dating back thousands of years. A person’s “instincts” are their inherent capacities, or those feelings or abilities to react to events that they are born with, as opposed to those they learn.

I have this strange, mystical... feeling about you.

If a feeling is “mystical,” it is spiritual or based on a sense of communication with God or a higher being.

**Cheers!**

The word one says when you lift your champagne glass and make a toast.

Mien Herr [German Song]

German words for ‘my man’ or ‘my Sir.’

It was a fine affair, but now it's over□[Song]

A secret sexual relationship between two people, often who are married, but not to each other.

You're better off without me, Mien Herr□[Song]

If a person is “better off without” someone, they would be happier if they could eliminate them from their lives.

Don't dab your eyes□[Song]

“To dab” your eye is to wipe it gently, perhaps to dry your tears.

I've always said I was a rover.□[Song]

A person who “roves” is one who travels from place to place without settling down to live in one place.

You mustn't knit your brow, you should have known by now [Song]

“To knit” is to link together by a type of sewing, and a person’s “brow” refers to the eyebrows above their eyes.

I know, isn't it **fabulous**?

A good alternative word for wonderful, excellent or fantastic.

He's a divine playboy, hurtling from party to party.

A “playboy” is a man who likes to sleep with lots of women. “To hurtle” is to move forcefully or quickly.

Seducing everyone in all directions.

“To seduce” a person is to try and sexually or romantically attract them.

Fritz is crazy to improve his English so he can dazzle fat American divorcees.

“To dazzle” a person is to greatly impress them with exceptional skill. A “divorcee” is a woman who is divorced from her husband.

And I said you might deign to give him lessons.

“To deign” to do something is to agree to do it, even though it is for a person who is considered of a lower social class.

They're absolutely devastating.

In this case, Sally uses this word to mean of exceptionally high quality (though it literally means causing great destruction).

They're filled with opium or some such thing. They make me feel wildly sensual.

“Opium” is the plant that is used to make the illegal and dangerous drug heroin. “Some such thing” is a stylish way of saying “something like that.” If a person is feeling “sensual,” they are very aware of how they’re using they’re sense of taste, touch, smell, sight and sound.

*Brian begins tutoring ESL, Sally tries unsuccessfully to seduce him, and Fritz and Natalia meet during class.*

She's hot stuff, yes?

A very slangy way of saying a person is very sexy.

Oh, you're not mistaking me? We do not sleep on each other.

The power of prepositions! If you are having sex with a person, you are sleeping *with* them, not *on* them!

Oh yes, dear chap.

A very British way of saying good friend.

I think with her, I'm entering the high diplomatic circles.

A reference to powerful diplomats and the people they associate with.

Strict rules will be obeyed.

If a rule is “strict,” it will always be enforced, without exceptions.

It's Cambridge, actually, and I'm still working for my doctor of philosophy.

A “doctor of philosophy “ is the official term for a Ph.D. degree.

Business is terrible. The inflation, the communists, the Nazis. Soon I am with a tin cup, too.

During the Depression of the 1930s, poor people stood on the streets begging for change with a small tin cup in their hands.

That at least is sensible.

If a plan is “sensible,” it is rational or logical or makes sense.

I am a most strange and extraordinary person.

A powerful adjective meaning exceptional, or well beyond what is usual.

There's nothing very dramatic to tell.

If something is "dramatic," it filled with excitement.

Lya de Putti. Absolutely my favorite screen siren.

A "screen siren" is a famous movie star (The "screen" is the movie screen in a theatre, and a "siren" is a Greek word for a female singer who often seduces men and leads them to their destruction).

I'm gonna be a great film star. That is if sex and booze don't get me first.

Note that "going to" -----> "gonna" in rapid speech.

"Booze" is a common slang word for liquor or alcohol.

Timbuktu, Outer Mongolia. He dashes all over the globe on momentous affairs of state.

Timbuktu is a famous city in the African country of Mali, and Outer Mongolia is a part of Northern China. "To dash over the globe" is to travel quickly all over the world. "Momentous" means extremely important or significant, and "affairs of state" refers to business involving diplomatic or governmental officials.

He can't bear us being apart. He's always swooping down and carrying me off for divine vacations.

If a person "can't bear" doing something, they hate doing it because it's so unpleasant. "To swoop down" is to fly low toward the ground like an aggressive bird that is going to attack a small animal.

Have you ever slept with a dwarf?

A person who is abnormally small, often less than four feet tall.

Oh darling, come on. I could act her right off the screen.

This is Sally's slangy way of saying that she can be a much better actress than the actress she's talking about, Lya de Putti.

One of these days, Max Rhinehart is gonna drift into the club.

If a person "drifts into" a club, they come in slowly without determination, as if the wind was gently blowing them in.

A man who is the head of casting for VFA asked me to sit at the table.

"Casting" is the job of hiring actors and actresses for movies and plays.

Does my company upset you that much?

"To upset" a person is to make them angry, worried or emotionally disturbed.

You'll feel terrific afterwards.

An excellent adjective meaning fantastic, wonderful or of top quality.

He lives in the room off the kitchen and he's a marvelous publisher.

Note that if a room is "off" the kitchen, it is right next to it. If a person is "marvelous," they are wonderful or delightful, and a "publisher" is a person who produces printed media such as books and magazines.

50 marks. Fabulous, it's all settled.

If a business deal is "settled," the details are agreed to by both sides.

It will be an honor for me to associate with so talented a man of letters.

"To associate" with a person is to work or deal with them. A "man of letters" is a person who studies literature and other related arts.

The subject matter is, I feel, universal.

The "subject matter" of a book is its topic, and if it is "universal," it is known or appreciated all over the world.

It's a deal. :: Herr Ludwig, I'm afraid that that

Sally's rather overestimated my powers of...

A business "deal" is an official agreement between two or more people.

"To overestimate" a person's talents or powers is to think they are greater than they really are.

It's pure pornography. :: All of Herr Ludwig's books are dirty books.

"Pornography" is the depiction of sexual activity in order to sexually excite the viewer or reader. In this context, "dirty books" refer to books that are considered pornographic.

"Cleo, the whip lady."

A "whip" is a lash or type of leather rope, attached to a handle, that is used to inflict punishment on slaves and others. It is also, curiously, a commonly seen instrument in pornographic books and movies.

Brain, don't be literal. :: Hug me, tighter.

If a person is being "literal," they are following the common and precise meaning of a word, rather than the colloquial meaning that a speaker may have meant.

Doesn't my body drive you wild with desire?

Sally's favorite question; If a person's body drives you "wild with desire," you want to have sex with them.

If you only like boys...I wouldn't dream of pestering you.

If a person "wouldn't dream of" doing something, they would never consider doing it. "To pester" a person is to bother or annoy them.

Let me be absolutely accurate. I've gone through the motions of sleeping with girls exactly three times. All of them disastrous.

To "go through the motions of" something is to physically do it, but without any feeling or enjoyment.

The word for my sex life now is nil, or as you Americans would say, "plenty of nuttin."

"Nil" is indeed another word for nothing, or zero.

Besides, sex always **screws up** a friendship anyway, if you let it.

"To screw up" something is to damage or destroy it.

A very common and useful colloquial phrasal verb.

Pluperfect tense.

This tense is now more commonly referred to as the *present perfect*, as in "I have been."

If you did a little bit of homework instead of gadding about all over town.

This means to travel around with no specific aim or purpose, although this is very rarely used in American English.

I will now try to pull a deal.

"To pull off" a deal is to get the other party to agree to a business agreement, but note that here, Fritz mistakenly drops the "off."

Either, or, I go as a gigolo.

A nice little word for a male prostitute.

Who is the new pupil? □: Natalie Landauer.

Another word for a student.

Landauers are enormously rich Jews. :: Stinking rich, it seems.

As an adverb, "enormously" means incredibly. Note that some people will use the adverb "stinking" with rich to refer to people who are both extremely rich, and probably not liked because of their wealth.

I shall make a pass after her. :: What if she's fat and hideous?

"To make a pass at" a person is to say or do something that could be considered romantically or sexually suggestive (Note that Fritz gets the phrasal verb wrong). "Hideous" is an excellent word meaning extremely ugly or disgusting.

If I marry her, a partnership perhaps. I'm not prejudiced.

A person who is "prejudiced" often looks down on people from other ethnic backgrounds.

I must have **a drink** at this instant...oh god, only gin.

In many contexts, "a drink" means a drink of some type of alcohol

"At this instant" means immediately, and "gin" is a type of hard liquor.

She's young and very strictly brought up.

If a person has been "strictly brought up," they were raised by conservative parents who forced them to follow very rigid rules.

I may have my tiny faults, but I'm really not planning to white slave her to Latin America.

A person's "faults" are their little weaknesses, defects or failings. "White slave" often refers to poor white woman who are forced into prostitution and become essentially slaves the way blacks were 200 years ago (Note that Sally uses the term as a verb, which is generally never done).

Whose room is this anyhow? □: Sally, in all fairness you said....

"In all fairness" is a way of asking a person to be reasonable or understanding of your point of view.

No, I'm **delighted** to stay Brian.

A common and useful way of saying very happy or pleased.

Good, this is splendid for the practicing.

"Splendid" is a fun but somewhat dated adjective that means excellent, brilliant or showing great talent, skill or class (Note that there should be no definite article before the word practicing).

I am so charmed, dearest Miss.

If a person is "charmed" by someone else, they are attracted to that person or delighted to be in their presence.

A cold from the nose is most **aggravating**.

If something is "aggravating," it is extremely annoying or bothersome.

This was a cold of the bosom, not of the nose.

A formal word for a woman's breasts.

All the phlegm was here, that comes in the tubes.

"Phlegm" is the sticky mucus found in the nose and respiratory passages. A "tube" is a narrow passage that carries air or liquids.

It's most **amazing**.

A good word for incredible or astounding.

How thoughtful of you, Freulein Schneider.

If a person is "thoughtful," they are very considerate and concerned about the well being of others.

I saw a film the other day about syphilis. It was too **awful**.

"Syphilis" is a well known disease that is spread through sexual contact.

"Awful" is a powerful adjective meaning very disagreeable or offensive.

Your King Henry the 8th caught it from letting Cardinal Woolsey whisper in his ear.

A "Cardinal" is a high official of the Catholic Church.

From kissing, most decidedly....: And of course, screwing.

"Most decidedly" is a way of saying "absolutely, yes," and "to screw" is a very common and slangy way of saying to have sex.

Fornication; Brian, what is the German word?

A legal word that refers to sex between two people who are not married to each other.

*Brian and Sally and Fritz and Natalia slowly become two hesitant couples.*

I've spent the entire afternoon...with some ghastly old professor who promised to give me a contract.

"Ghastly" is powerful adjective that means extremely unpleasant, scary, or perhaps even resembling a ghost.

Fritz is overdoing it a bit, isn't he?

If a person is "overdoing it," they're exaggerating or using ridiculous points to make their argument.

Natalia is very rich. Fritz is very **broke**.

A key colloquial word; If a person is "broke," they have no money.

That old heel-clicking, hand-kissing routine of his isn't going to get him anywhere with her.

"Heel clicking" is the act of hitting together your two heels on the bottom of your feet. A "routine" is a set pattern of behavior that is used for a specific purpose, in this case to impress a person. If it isn't going "get him anywhere with her," this means that it will not impress or charm her.

The only thing to do with virgins is make a ferocious pounce.

A "virgin" is a person who has never had sex. "Ferocious" means extremely violent, dramatic or wild, and a "pounce" is the sudden act of jumping forward or attacking, the way a lion will attack an animal they want to eat. Note that this observation may not be seen as funny today as it was viewed in 1931, or for that matter, 1972.

Ever since I was so high, men have found me irresistible.

"So high" is a way of saying "this high" (It is usually said while gesturing with your hands to show physical height). If a person is "irresistible," they are considered very attractive or charming, and thus impossible to resist.

Here's the craziness; I like it, goddamn it.

A common filler used to express emotion such as anger or frustration.

You assure me the English reader will find this arousing, stimulating?

If a book is "arousing," it is sexually exciting. "Stimulating" also means exciting, but it can be in both a sexual and intellectual sense.

Positively a nun's hands, aren't they?☐: You look **lovely**, Sally.

A “nun” is a female who is devoted to the Catholic Church.  
“Lovely” is a very British way of saying pretty or charming.

I'm off to the Adlon...to see my sexy, marvelous, devastating father.

If a person is “off to” a place, they are in the process of going there.  
“Marvelous” is another word for wonderful, and for Sally, “devastating” means fantastic or excellent, though it usually means very destructive.

Thank you so much for a delightful evening.

In this case, a good word for very enjoyable or pleasing.

It really has been...sublime.

An interesting word meaning of exceptionally high beauty, quality or spiritual value, but in this case, misused by Fritz.

I was too discreet to look back.

If a person is “discreet,” they show good judgement in conduct or speech.  
Here, it more specifically refers to a person who tries not to become involved in the personal lives of others.

I tell you a simple fact, and I'm not boasting. They go wild for my kisses.

“To boast” is to brag or to speak with too much pride.

I'm a crazy love-sick fool.

A “love-sick fool” is probably a person who is madly in love with somebody who does not have any feelings for that person in return.

Sally says you ought to pounce on her.

Remember that “ought to” is the only verb in the English language that is a combination of a regular and modal verb (Incredible, but true!)  
“To pounce on” a person is to secretly approach them and then attack them like a lion, though here it is used in a sexual or romantic way.

Sally is **knowledgeable** in these areas.☐ You do what

Sally says and you end up in a prison cell.

If a person is “knowledgeable” about something, they know a lot about it.  
A “prison cell” is the small space behind iron bars where prisoners live.

Sorry, schedule revised at last minute.

“To revise” a schedule or plan is to change or modify it.

If I had leprosy, there'd be a cable.

“Leprosy” was a feared and awful contagious disease that attacks the muscles and causes physical deformities. A “cable” was a way of referring to a wired message (They've been replaced by phone, email, etc.)

Gee kid, tough. Sincerely hope nose doesn't fall off.

“Gee” is a gentle filler word at the beginning of a sentence that expresses sadness or other emotion. In this case, “tough” means unfortunate. Note that the second sentence is elliptical (the “I” is dropped), and “sincerely” means with true or genuine emotion or feeling. In some cases of leprosy, a victim’s nose or other body parts can literally waste away or fall off.

The bastard! I'll show him!

“Bastard” is a widely used and crude insult word for a mean or strongly disliked man. Note that the second sentence is Sally’s way of saying she’ll prove that he was wrong about her.

Tell him you're lover is a gangster from Chicago.

A “gangster” is a member of an organized crime family, such as those in the Mafia (In the 1920s, Chicago was famous for its Mafia families).

I just told him I had the teeniest touch of syphilis.

“Teeny” means extremely small. “Syphilis” is a well known sexually transmitted disease (These diseases are now referred to as STDs).

Wait tell he gets a load of what little old Elke's got.

“To get a load of” something is to suddenly see it or be made aware of it. An interesting expression that is often used in the imperative (“Get a load of that weird animal over there!”).

Don't be silly; I'm all agog.

If a person is “agog,” they are filled with intense interest or excitement.

Our acquaintance is not long, but I'm choosing you because I know no other young woman who is giving her body so freely to men.

An “acquaintance” is a person you know who is not really a friend, though here Natalia uses it to mean relationship, which is perhaps correct but rare. Note Natalia is trying to diplomatically tell Sally she trusts her sexual advice because she (Sally) is such a sexually loose woman.

Am I rending you an embarrassment?☐: No, I'm fascinated.

The first sentence is French or German grammar transformed into English! The correct sentence would be “Am I embarrassing you?”

He is so...formal.

A person who is “formal” is generally very conservative, usually following strict rules of dress and behavior.

We are seated hear upon my father's library sofa, and suddenly he throws aside the formalities. There is fire, there is passion.

A “sofa” is another word for a couch. “To throw aside” something is to throw it away or get rid of it. In this context, “formalities” are forms of proper or formal behavior for a social date, and “passion” is great emotional or sexual energy.

I am fighting, I'm calling out harsh words.

Words that are "harsh" are very rough, unpleasant or crude.

May we not be frank?

If a person is "frank," they are very honest or direct with their words.

Is this love, or mere infatuation of the body?

"Infatuation" is intense emotional or sexual attraction to a person that is not based in logic or experience. Generally, it is said that one is infatuated with a person, not their body.

Say to my father that I am marrying a man who is perhaps a fortune hunter? And a Christian, too.

A "fortune hunter" is a person who is out to find great fortunes or wealth, in this case by marrying a rich person. However, the more common term for that today is a "gold digger."

How shall so grave a problem resolve itself?

If a problem is "grave," it is very serious. "To resolve" a problem is to find a solution to it so it can be fixed or eliminated.

I don't suppose you'd ever see him on the sly every now and then?

To see a person "on the sly" is to see them secretly, so that nobody else knows. Romantic couples whose parents don't approve of their relationship will often see each other on the sly.

My God, it's enough to drive a girl into a convent.

A quiet and secluded building where Catholic nuns live.

The Kit Kat Club. Divine decadence.

Sally's favorite way of describing the free and wild enjoyment of drugs, sex, music, etc.

*Sally meets Max who soon seems out to charm both her and Brian, and all the while, the growing power of the Nazis becomes ever more obvious.*

May I drop you somewhere? I have my car outside.

Note the correct verb that means to leave somebody someplace after driving them by car is to "drop them off."

A mark, a yen, a buck or a pound.... [Song]

The currencies of Germany, Japan, the US and England. Note that a "buck" is a very common way of referring to a dollar.

That clinking, clanking sound... [Song]

Adjectives that describe the sound metals make when they hit each other.

If you happen to be rich, you can pay for a gay escapade. [Song]

Note that until the 1960s, “gay” generally meant very happy or joyous, and not homosexual. An “escapade” is a trip or adventure, and often one that is disapproved of by others.

You can take it on the chin, call a cab, and begin to recover on your 14 carat yacht. □[Song]

“To take it on the chin” is to be hurt badly by something (the way a boxer will hit the chin or face of an opponent). A “cab” is a taxi. “14-carat” is a high quality of gold jewelry, and a “yacht” is a boat for rich people.

And you curse to the wind at your fate. □[Song]

“To curse” is to use vulgar words like fuck or shit.

A person’s “fate” is their destiny or pre-determined future.

Well, mes enfants, you are like me, adrift in Berlin.

“Mes enfants” is French for “my children.” If you are “adrift,” you are floating aimlessly, with no particular direction.

I think it's my duty to corrupt you, agreed?

“To corrupt” a person is to seduce, attract or bribe them with money, sex or other desired things.

Darling, he's a baron. He never even told me! Class!

A “baron” is a member of a very rich European social class that inherited their money from land, given to their families by kings hundreds of years ago. If a person has “class,” they have a certain elegant or dignified way of behaving.

I betcha a man like that could get me into films faster than you could say Eric Von Stroheim :: In exchange for a little infidelity?

Note that “bet you”-----> “betcha” in rapid speech. It is a way of saying “I am sure that...” “Infidelity” is the act of not being faithful, and more specifically refers to the act of sexually cheating on your partner.

Don't worry; I can handle him.

In this case, “to handle” a person is to be able to control them or keep them from doing any damage.

I had a momentous time last night.

This means very important or significant, but is rarely used this way.

Oh darling, we had the most glamorous time.

If something’s “glamorous,” it’s filled with glamour, romance or elegance.

Not only did I get the glorious pelt, I got perfume, I got silk stockings.

“Glorious” is filled with beauty or magnificence. A “pelt” is the fur of an animal, and “silk stockings” are nylons that women wear on their legs.

What on earth makes you think I'd accept that?!

A fascinating filler added to WH questions that expresses amazement, surprise or other emotion ("Why on earth did you do that?")

Brian, you're a man of strong convictions.

A person "of strong convictions" has very strong beliefs, opinions or principles.

The Nazis are just a gang of stupid hooligans, but they serve a purpose.

A "hooligan" is a young trouble-maker or thug who physically attacks people and often destroys property for no reason.

Let them get rid of the communists, later we'll be able to control them.

"To get rid of" people is to physically eliminate or kill them.

"Communists" were the political followers of Karl Marx who ruled the Soviet Union after 1918, and who in Germany were the most violent enemies of the Nazis in the early 1930s.

I think I could do with a drink, too. □: Good, we'll make a night of it. Or why not a weekend?

"To make a night of it" is to decide to spend the entire night together continuing the meal or party that started earlier.

Berlin makes strange bedfellows these days.

A term for people who agree on some things even though they have very different ideas about most things (A common expression is "*politics makes strange bedfellows*").

He's asking about his asthma.

A treatable disease that makes it difficult to breath.

In Cologne, for the culture. She lends her support to the arts.

Cologne is a big and quite beautiful German city. If a rich person "lends their support to the arts," they probably give money to museums.

We have quite a special understanding. :: That must be useful at times.

In this context, this is most likely an agreement between a husband and wife that they can romantically or sexually be involved with others.

Dear Stephanie, I would never desert you.

"To desert" a person is to abandon or leave them.

We have the most marvelous relationship. Instant he can tear himself away, he dashes to wherever I am.

Note that "*The instant...*" means immediately. "To tear yourself away" from something is to force yourself to go elsewhere or do something else, even though you may want or need to stay where you are.

Oh, I find him tres amusant.

French for “very enjoyable” (never used in English).

That's not Clair Bow. □It's early Clara Bow!

Note that the films of actors and actresses are sometimes classified as to whether it is in the early, middle or later part of their career.

He must be insane.

The most common alternative to crazy.

Mombassa's quite wonderful really, the way ports are all over the world. ∴ Sounds absolutely exotic.

Mombassa is a famous coastal city in Kenya. A “port” is a harbor or city with a big harbor. If a place is “exotic,” it is fascinating or exciting because it is so culturally or physically different from what you are used to.

Every now and then the train stops in the middle of nowhere...

A very common and useful way of describing a place that is isolated and not near anything of interest.

... and right there is a family of giraffes, nibbling the trees, or a herd of zebra galloping off in a cloud of dust.

A “giraffe” is a African animal with a very long neck, and to “nibble” is to chew a little bit at a time. A “herd” is a group of animals, and a “zebra” is a type of African horse covered by stripes. “To gallop” is to run fast and with great force, like a horse in a race.

And later the flamingos are...turning the whole sky pink.

A type of colorful African bird.

Sally is an endearing child, but I must admit that I find it peaceful when she's taking a nap.

If a person is “endearing,” they are very loveable, like a small child.

The sun on the meadow is summary warm. □[Song]

A “meadow” is a large area of low-lying grass. This is the beginning of what is perhaps the most simultaneously beautiful and disturbing song in the history of the movies....

The stag in the forest runs free. [Song]

A male deer.

But gather together to greet the storm, tomorrow belongs to me [Song]

If people “gather together,” they usually form groups to talk.

The Rhine gives its gold to the sea □[Song]

This is the biggest river in Germany.

The babe in his cradle closes his eyes, but soon says  
a whisper, arise, arise, tomorrow belongs to me.

“Babe” is an alternative to baby. A “cradle” is a small enclosed bed for a baby. “To arise” is to rise up, and often has a political connotation, as in people rising up to fight those that have oppressed them.

Fatherland, fatherland, show us the sign  
you're children have wanted to see...[Song]

A term associated with extreme nationalism, and in particular the Nazis.

*Brian and Sally fight over Max, and in his frustration,  
Brian decides to fight the Nazis himself.*

Fritz, you frighten me.

“To frighten” a person is to scare or disturb them.

Natalia, I beg of you, marry me!

A very old-fashioned and poetic way to ask somebody for something.

Just drive on, idiot. [German, with written subtitle]

A very common insult word for a stupid or ridiculous person.

She knows she can't get 50 marks a month from  
anyone else for these pitiful little rooms.

If something is “pitiful,” it is so poor, ridiculous or pathetic that it is only seen with pity or sympathy, or sometimes contempt and scorn.

Have some champagne darling, compliments of Max.

If something is “compliments of” a person, it is paid for by them.

You know, Bri, it occurred to me, I know I've handled Max brilliantly.

If something “occurs” to you, you suddenly think of it. Here, “to handle” Max is to treat him in such a way that she’s able to influence what he does. To do something “brilliantly” is to do it with great intelligence or skill.

It would be funny if he asked me to become the  
next Baroness Von Heune Und Lesenberg.

A female baron.

I wish you could hear yourself! Christ!

A common way to express emotion, from anger to surprise.

Aren't you ever going to stop deluding yourself?!

A person who “deludes themselves” convinces themselves that something is true or realistic when it is not in reality.

Behaving like some **ludicrous**, little under age femme fatale.

“Ludicrous” is a powerful adjective meaning completely ridiculous or laughable because it’s so silly. A woman who is “under age” is under the legal adult age, which is usually 18. A “femme fatale” is a French expression, used in English, for a dangerous or even deadly woman.

You're about as “fatale” as an after dinner mint!

“Fatale” in French literally means fatal or deadly. A “mint” is small candy made from a plant, and often covered with chocolate.

We all know your vast experiences with les femmes, fatales or otherwise.

“Vast” means extremely big or enormous. Remember that “les femmes” is French for “the women,” and thus this is Sally’s way of saying that Brian has little experience with any kind of women, dangerous or not.

Why don't you just come out with it?!

“To come out with” something is to scream out or admit what you are really thinking, even if it will not be liked.

You **can't stand** Maximilian because he's everything you're not!

If you “can’t stand” a person, you strongly dislike or hate them.

He's **suave**, and he's divinely sexy.

“Suave” is a good word for sophisticated, sexy and stylish in behavior.

He really appreciates a woman. :: **Screw** Maximilian!

A gentler but still crude way of saying “Fuck,” when the goal is to insult or show contempt for the person in question.

You two bastards! :: Shouldn't that be three?

A common insult word for a mean or abusive man.

I think your paper and your party are pure crap, Sir!

Note that a party can refer to a political party (in this case, the Nazis). “Crap” is a strong word for shit or bullshit, or in this case, nonsense.

I heard you took on the entire Nazi party, single handed.

“To take on” a person is to agree to fight or struggle against them, and if you do it “single handed,” you do it alone, without the help of others.

Feel up to a little surprise?

If you feel “up to” something, you feel that you’re strong enough to take part in it, or that you would actually like to take part in it.

Family affairs make it imperative for me to leave for Argentina immediately.

“Family affairs’ are issues that have to do with family members, and if something is “imperative,” it is absolutely required or urgent.

Argentina, my ass!

A somewhat crude but fun way to express disgust or contempt for what has just been said.

On an hour to hour basis, that puts me on a par with Fraulien Kost.

In this case, an "hour to hour basis" refers to how much a person can charge for their time each hour. To be "on a par" with a person is to be more or less equal to them.

Some gold diggers, aren't we?

A common term for a person who tries to get money out of a rich person, often by marrying them!

He has to bribe somebody for some kind of certificate or something.

"To bribe" a person is to pay them money in order so that they'll do something which is usually illegal or immoral. A "certificate" is an official legal document, in this case that allows a doctor to perform an abortion.

Well, there goes my fur coat.

"There goes..." is a way of expressing acceptance of the fact that something you value is about to be eliminated or perhaps destroyed.

A touch of toothpaste, a lot of gin, all whooshed up together.

A "touch of" something is just a small amount of it. If two things are "whooshed up," they are mixed together.

With this spiked prairie oyster, I thee wed.

If a food or drink is "spiked," alcohol is secretly added to it, and "prairie oysters" are bull testicles. "I thee wed" is old Shakespearean English which means "I agree to marry you."

With any luck, I'll get a fellowship at King's.

A "fellowship" is a paid position teaching at a university, and King's College is a well known university in London.

Good lord, Fritz, you're on time.

A curious way of expressing surprise or other emotion.

Perhaps I cut myself at the throat. :: Prepositions, Fritz, prepositions!

Note if you accidentally hurt yourself, you cut yourself "*in* the throat."

I assure you they're all in it together.

If a group of people are "all in it together," the individuals in that group are all working toward the same goal, and often are doing so secretly.

If all the Jews are bankers, then how could they be communist, too? :: Subtle.

"Subtle" is a difficult but important word that means difficult to understand or observe, or perhaps far from obvious. Here, Fraulien Kost is asking how people can think Jews can be so many things at once.

That ridiculous Nazi tripe! □: It's an established fact that there exists a well organized international conspiracy of Jewish bankers and communists.

“Tripe” is literally stomach intestines, but it more commonly refers to offensive nonsense, or more colloquially, bullshit. A “conspiracy” is a secret plot or plan by various people to commit a crime or immoral act.

The international conspiracy of horse's asses!

“Horse's ass” is a rare but fun way of referring to a jerk, idiot, or moron.

I wish the Kaiser was back. In those days, we had order.

The “Kaiser” was the political leader of Germany before World War I. In this case, “order” refers to law and order, or more specifically, the absence of violence and social chaos.

I expect Schneider will raise my rent after that little exhibition.

Here, an “exhibition” refers to a public display of passion or intense emotion (More generally, it is a public showing in a museum or school).

*Fritz admits he's Jewish and marries Natalia soon after, and as Sally decides to end her pregnancy, Brian must decide whether to move on...*

Oh well, what the hell. Let's get on with these prepositions.

“What the hell” is a way of expressing acceptance despite disapproval. “To get on with” something is to continue doing it.

How did you manage that? :: Where it says on my papers religion, I'm writing protestant.

In this case, “to manage” means to be able to do, or to achieve. “Protestant” refers to the biggest division of the Christian Church.

Surely, that solves your problem.

One way of saying clearly or obviously.

A man of integrity who will never lie to me.

An important word for the quality of being honest and of high morals.

She'd kick me out in the streets.

“To kick a person out” of a house is to physically force them outside.

What have you got to lose?

A common question that is asked of people whose situation is already so bad that they won't be any worse off even if they take a big risk and lose.

And then comes a big Nazi with a club, bangs me on the head.

A “club” is a wooden stick that is used to hit people, and to “bang” a person is to forcefully strike or hit them.

What a **coward** am I.

A “coward” is a person with no courage who is always scared  
(Note that Fritz gets the subject-verb order mistakenly mixed up).

What good’s a first impression? [Song]

A “first impression” is the type of person people  
think you are after meeting you just one time.

If you knew her like I do, it would change your point of view. [Song]

A person’s “point of view” is their opinion  
or perspective on a particular subject.

If you could see her through my eyes,  
I guarantee you would fall like I did. [Song]

In this case, “to fall” is short for falling in love.

When we’re in public together, I hear society moan. [Song]

“To moan” is to make a low, prolonged sound of pain or grief.

How can I speak of her virtues? [Song]

A person’s “virtues” are the good qualities  
they have, such as honesty and kindness.

When we’re walking together, they sneer if I’m holding her hand. [Song]

“To sneer” is to make a sound or facial expression of contempt or disgust.

Can one ever choose where the heart leads us? [Song]

A way of saying people can’t control who they will fall in love with.

Why can’t the world...live and let live?

A well known expression that says people should be allowed  
to live their own lives as long as they’re not hurting others.

I understand your objection, I grant you the problem’s not small. [Song]

In this case, an “objection” is a feeling of opposition or disapproval, and  
“to grant” is to admit (though it usually means to officially give over).

Will you still love me when I’m blown up like a balloon?

If a pregnant woman is “blown up like a balloon,” her stomach  
is very big and round because of the baby inside her.

Your life and my life solved in one fell swoop and all by the baby.

If something is done in “one fell swoop,” it is done very quickly and  
effectively (“To swoop” is to fly quickly toward the ground, like a bird  
that wants to grab a small animal in its mouth before flying off to eat it).

I guess it’s just about the most **significant** baby the world has ever known...

A good word that means important, or having great influence.

It will be a most strange and extraordinary baby, won't it?  
 A powerful adjective meaning exceptional,  
 unique or well beyond what is regular or usual.

Would you mind seeing if there's any brandy left?  
 Put an egg in it and we'll call it breakfast.  
 A type of strong liquor.

I suppose you wonder what on earth happened to me.  
 A filler added to WH questions that expresses  
 amazement, surprise and other emotion

In God's name, why? :: The abortion?  
 A dramatic way of expressing anger before asking a question. An  
 "abortion" is the controversial act of killing an embryo in the mother's  
 womb before it becomes a baby.

One of my whims?  
 A "whim" is a sudden idea or desire that has not been thought out.

I suppose Max Reinhardt did show up at the club, or was it a friend of a friend  
 of an assistant director who said he'd try to squeeze you in the chorus line.  
 "To show up" is a widely used way of saying to arrive. "To squeeze a  
 person in" to something is to try and make space or room for them even  
 if they don't really fit. A "chorus line" is a line of dancers and singers on a  
 theatre stage.

That is of course, if you went to bed with her.  
 Generally speaking, to "go to bed with" a person  
 is a gentle way of saying to have sex with them.

Then it's just as well for you.  
 If something is "just as well," it is as good one way as it is the other.

I'm self-centered, inconsiderate, and I have this infantile  
 fantasy that one day I'll amount to something as an actress.  
 If a person is "self-centered," they are egocentric and think only of  
 themselves. An "inconsiderate" person is impolite and does not take the  
 time to think how their actions may badly effect others. If an idea is  
 "infantile," it is childish or immature, as if made by a baby. If a person  
 "amounts to something," they work hard to accomplish something that is  
 important or worthwhile.

A dinky little cottage in Cambridge, a playpen  
 in the bedroom, diapers on the towel rack...  
 "Dinky" means very small or tiny, a "playpen" is a small enclosed place  
 for young kids to play in and "diapers" are the underwear that babies  
 wear. A "towel rack" is a holder for towels or wash rags.

How soon would it be before I started dashing  
out and disgracing myself at some nearest pub?

“To disgrace oneself” is to act in a way that people will later find shameful or disgraceful. A “pub” is type of bar that also serves food.

I’d love to come down on the platform with you and wave  
a tiny white handkerchief, etceteras, but there’s that interview.

A “platform” at a train station is long raised floor for people to stand next to the train. A “handkerchief” is a cloth that people use to blow their noses. “Etceteras” is an important way of referring to unspecified additional persons or things (note that it’s usually spelled “etc.”).

It may not amount to anything, but you never know.

If a plan doesn’t “amounts to anything,” it turns out to have no value.

Life is a cabaret, old chum, come to the cabaret. [Song]

“Chum” is a dated but fun word for a close friend or pal.

What good’s permitting some prophet of doom to wipe every smile away? [Song]

A “prophet of doom” is a person who claims they can predict the future, and that only bad or horrible things will come (A “prophet” is a person who knows the future, and “doom” is a very unhappy destiny, or death).

I used to have this girlfriend named Elise, with  
whom I shared four sordid rooms in Chelsea. [Song]

If a room is “sordid,” it is very dirty or filthy. Chelsea is a well known neighborhood in London (and New York).

She wasn’t what you’d call a blushing flower....  
as a matter of fact, she rented by the hour [Song]

A “blushing flower” is a very shy or modest girl (“To blush” is to turn red in the cheeks from being embarrassed). The fact that she rented by the hour is away of saying she was a prostitute.

The day she died the neighbors came to snicker. [Song]

“To snicker” is to laugh in a secret or quiet manner, often with an attitude of scorn.

When I saw her laid out like a queen, she was  
the happiest corpse I think I’d ever seen. [Song]

If a person’s body is “laid out,” their arms and legs are stretched straight out on a table or other surface. A “corpse” is a dead body.

Start by admitting from cradle to tomb, it isn’t that long a stay. [Song]

A “cradle” is a small enclosed bed for a baby, and a “tomb” is a place where dead bodies are buried.

# Cabaret

## Possible Topics for ESL Class Discussion

1. Why was the singing of "Tomorrow Belongs to Me" so disturbing?
2. What does it mean to say that this is a movie about decadence?
3. Would people today be more or less tolerant of Sally's attitude toward sexuality? Do attitudes about this change over the years?
4. Are Sally and Brian a good couple? What about Fritz and Natalia?
5. Who had the most realistic attitude toward the Nazis?
6. What songs did you like the most?
7. Did you like Master of Ceremonies, or does he just make you uncomfortable?
8. Was it possible to live in Berlin in 1931 and not see the horrible things that were coming? Did Sally seem to not notice?
9. What did you like and not like about this movie?