

Paper Moon

(Comedy) (1973)

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Major Characters

Moses Pray.....Ryan O'Neil
A con artist (a person who tricks people into giving them money), who sells "deluxe bibles," who agrees to drive the young daughter of a recently killed female friend to her aunt's house in Missouri.

Addie Loggins.....Tatum O'Neil
An angry and sad but sweet and smart nine year old girl, who is convinced that Moses is her biological father, and who it turns out, seems to be as good a con artist as he is.

Trixie Delight.....Madeline Kahn
A sexy entertainer and dancer who is basically a prostitute, who Moses agrees to give a ride to, in hopes of having sex with her.

Imogene.....P.J. Johnson
Trixie's 15 year old African-American assistant, who agrees to help Addie get Trixie away from Moses.

Deputy Hardin.....John Hillerman
A policeman in a small Kansas town who arrests Moses for illegal possession of alcohol, and whose brother is one of the biggest bootleggers (a seller of illegal alcohol) in all of Kansas.

Plot Summary

This is the charming story of Moses Pray, a travelling con artist from Kansas, and Addie Loggins, an angry but sweet orphan who Moses meets at the funeral of her mother, who had recently been killed by a drunk driver. It takes place in 1936, during the great economic depression, and is wonderfully filmed in black and white, to create the feeling of those very difficult times. Moses agrees to drive Addie to her mom's sister's house in St Joseph, Missouri, but on the way, it becomes clear that Addie does not want to live at her aunt's house. Regardless, Addie is convinced that he is her father, and when it appears that she is as good as he is at fooling other people into giving them their money, he reluctantly agrees to let her travel with him.

Moses and Addie begin to make lots of money, primarily by selling expensive bibles to women whose husbands have just died. They also meet various interesting characters, including Miss Trixie Delight, a sexy and ridiculous dancer and prostitute who makes Addie both annoyed and perhaps jealous.

After Addie gets rid of Trixie, Moses and Addie try to sell a Kansas bootlegger some whisky that they had actually just stolen from him (A bootlegger sells illegal liquor, and in many parts of Kansas in the 1930s, liquor was still illegal). Unfortunately for Moses and Addie, the bootlegger's brother is the county's highest level police officer, and thus they are soon arrested and jailed before they are able to make a miraculous escape to the neighboring state of Missouri. In the end, and although they really didn't like each other, it is clear that Moses and Addie are a great team that probably just belong together.

An interesting note on the actors: Moses Pray is played by Ryan O'Neil, and Addie Loggins is played by Tatum O'Neil, who is Ryan's real life daughter. Tatum was 9 years old when she made this film.

A brief note on the language used in this movie: Much of the dialog has grammatically incorrect English, which is common among poorer or working class Americans. As usual, be aware of, but do not use, double negatives, 'ain't (instead, conjugate the verb to be), (s)he don't, etc. Also note that this is a 1973 film about events in 1936, and thus there is some very dated language, some of which is noted if of interest. More importantly though, and despite the passage of so much time, most of the colloquial language in this film is still very much used and very practical.

A note on the historic and geographic context: The film takes place in 1936, several years into the great economic depression of the 1930s, in which nearly 25% of American workers found themselves unemployed. These hard times were especially difficult for small farming towns, such as the ones that Moses and Addie visit in the middle states of Kansas and Missouri. It's worth nothing that even today, such communities remain very conservative and heavily influenced by traditional and religious values.

Some Words and Expressions that You May not Know

*Addie faces life as an orphan, and Moses
agrees to drive her to her aunt's house.*

It wouldn't be make-believe if you believed in me [Song]

This is an expression for something that is fantasy, or not real.

It's only a canvas sky {Song]

A "canvas" is the board or material on which paintings are made.

It's a honky-tonk parade, it's a melody played in a penny arcade [Song]
 "Honky-tonk" means cheap or dirty, and is associated with small night clubs where country music is played. A "melody" is a tune in music, and a "penny arcade" is a place where people play coin-operated games.

It's a Barnum and Baily World, just as hollow as can be [Song]
 "Barnum and Baily" is the name of a famous circus.
 If something is "hollow," it's empty.

I have trusted in the Lord, therefore I shall not slide.
 The "Lord" is a way that very religious people refer to God. "To slide" means to move smoothly along a surface, though here it means to slide back into sin or bad behavior that God wouldn't approve of.

I have walked in thy truth...
 A very old English word for "your" (Used only in Shakespearean times).

...I have not sat with evil persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.
 A person who "dissembles" manipulates facts and does not tell the truth.

Tell all of thy wondrous words.
 A nice little word that means wonderful, or causing wonder or interest.

Howdy!
 A still very common way of saying hello or hi.

You ain't related, are ya? We're looking for the child's kin.
 Note that "you" ----> "ya" in rapid speech. A person's "kin" are their relatives, from parents to cousins. This is an interesting but dated word.

I thought I saw some resemblance.
 The word to use when describing people that look similar to each other (The verb is to resemble).

No, mam, just a friend of her mama's.
 A very old-fashioned word for mother.

I bless thy Lord, amen.
 "To bless" is a religious word which means to ask for God's care, or in this case, to accept God's power. "Amen" is the word that is used to express approval after a prayer is made.

I just wanted to pay my respects to your mama.
 "To pay respects" to a person who has just died is to go to their funeral or do something else to show that you respected them.

I sell the good book, mam.
 An old-fashioned way of referring to the Christian Bible.

You're driving your chariot to Missouri, Sir.
You could deliver this child to her kin folk.

A "chariot" is a vehicle that is pulled by horses, and is never really used to refer to a car. "To deliver" a person is to drive them, and "kin folk" is an old-fashioned way of referring to relatives like parents or cousins.

I wouldn't exactly call it a chariot, Reverend.
A religious official in some Christian churches.

Hold it, hold it. I have to think upon this.
One way of saying "wait a minute."

I expect I have a choice, do I? Hallelujah.
A religious word that is used to express great joy or happiness.

The Lord works in mysterious ways.
A common expression among religious people who are saying they do not understand why certain things happen.

It's sad...with your brother getting drunk and driving her into that tree like that.
Moses is explaining how the person who was responsible for Addie's mom's death was a drunk driver who forced her car into a tree.

What are you trying to pull?! Get out of here!
In this context, "to pull" is a slangy way of saying to do.
"Get out of here" is a forceful way of telling a person to leave.

There's going to be a lawsuit against him, and everything is just gonna be tied up in knots, just sitting there.
A "lawsuit" is a legal proceeding in which one person tries to legally force another person to pay them money for something that they have done. If a situation is "tied up in knots," nothing is able to move forward, or more generally, things are stuck (A "knot" is a rope tied together in a lump).

Everything he owns, including half the plants. Now don't think that poor child ain't entitled, because she is.
In this context, a "plant" is a factory, and if a person is "entitled" to something, they legally or morally deserve to have it.

We'll have you to St Jo in no time.
Short for St. Joseph, the small Missouri town where Addie's aunt lives, which is just over the state border from Kansas.

I want you to send this telegram.
A written communication that was sent over wire to people far away

Love, affection and \$20 cash.
A nice word for positive or warm feelings for a person.

You want a Nehi and a Coney island?

A Nehi is a type of grape soda, and a Coney island is a hot dog (These are old-fashioned foods that are still served in New York).

You met my mama in a bar room?

A dated word for a bar or possibly small nightclub.

She said you was my pa. :: Don't the world have a wild imagination!

The second sentence is Moses' way of saying some people will say anything to get attention, no matter how ridiculous or unbelievable.

I'll get you some relish.

A type of finely cut pickle that is put on hot dogs.

I ain't your pa, so get that out of your head!

A way of telling a person to stop thinking about something.

Eat that damn thing, you hear?! :: We got the same jaw.

"Damn" is a filler word that is used to express anger or frustration. A person's "jaw" is the lower part of their face, under their mouths.

The same jaw don't mean the same blood.

Note if a person is related by birth, they're said to have the same blood.

I know a woman who looks like a bullfrog, but that don't mean she's the damn thing's mother!

A "bullfrog" is a large type of frog. This is Moses' way of saying that just because Addie's looks like him, he is not her father.

For God's sake, child. You think everybody who meets in a bar room gets a baby?

"For God's sake" is a still used way of expressing anger or frustration.

Will you quiet down?

One way of telling a person to shut up.

We got a Nehi and a Coney Island and I threw in \$20 extra, not to mention 85 cents for the telegram.

An interesting way of saying "in addition to..."

We're both better off. Fair is fair!

If a person is "better off," they are doing better than they were before. "Fair is fair" is a widely used way of saying that even if something is difficult, it is a fair or just solution to a difficult problem.

Her name ain't 'Precious.'

As an adjective "precious" means very rare and of great value, and when describing a child, extremely cute. It is not used as a proper name!

*Moses and Addie become a con artist team,
and with bibles selling quickly, the money comes in fast.*

Folks don't take to children when they're doing business.

"To take to" someone is to start to like them a lot.

"Survived by his beloved wife, Pearl." [Written]

An old but still used word for greatly loved.

My name is Moses Pray, Kansas Bible Company.

It's worth noting here that while Moses was a major character in the bible, and "to pray" is to try and speak to God, the verb "to *prey*" on people means to hunt them down or take advantage of them!

Mr. Morgan has passed on.

A gentle way of saying to die, though to "pass *away*" is more common.

He ordered this hear deluxe edition, with the lady's name in the corner.

A "deluxe edition" of a book is a special printing made of the highest quality paper or cover, often with special things that make it more expensive than a normal edition.

Under the circumstances, I'll just give back Mr. Morgan's dollar deposit, and there won't be no further obligation.

"Under the circumstances" is one way of saying "given the situation."

A "deposit" is a small amount of money that is given to sales person in order to reserve the purchase of something later, when the rest of the money owed will be paid. An "obligation" is a legal or moral necessity.

I don't know how to put into words the sense of sorrow I feel.

"Sorrow" is a powerful word for great sadness.

The deluxe edition with the lady's name printed in child-in-the-manger gold letters, brings a balance due of eight dollars.

In this context, "the manger" is the open box in which Jesus slept the first few days of his life (It is usually used for animals). The "balance due" is how much money is still owed on a bill.

What have you been doing with yourself?

A good way of asking a person you haven't seen in a while how they have been passing their time.

We're pretty good friends. ∴ Well, I'm glad to hear it.

Another word for happy or content.

Frank D. Roosevelt said we're all felling a lot better.

Note that President Roosevelt's first name was *Franklin*, not Frank.

Well, I may be a little **mixed up** on the dates.

If a person is mixed up about something,
they are confused or not sure about it.

The Kansas Bible Company, out of Wichita.

The biggest city in Kansas.

Daddy was just fixin' to leave.

A dated and never used way of saying "preparing to..."

My mama has gone to the Lord.

A very religious way of saying that a person has died.

We have to have a little goodness in our hearts, considering the circumstances.

In this case, "goodness" is another word for kindness, and
"circumstances" refers to the facts of a situation.

Now he's going to say he's got to straighten the closet out!

"To straighten out" a space is to clean it or make it organized.

You're looking at me like I'm out to cheat you or something.

If a person is "out to cheat" somebody else, they most
likely want to trick them into giving up their money.

I'm offering you a business proposition!

A "proposition" is a proposed deal or agreement.

Take it or leave it.

A very common way of saying that you are offering only one choice, and
if they don't want it, there will be no agreement or further negotiations.

Maybe you don't know French, but there's
something in this world called "fine-esse."

Moses mispronounces "finesse," which is a French word used in English
to describe the skillful or graceful handling of a difficult situation.

I got my mom's kimono in the suitcase.

A type of dress commonly worn in Japan.

Chinamen with umbrellas. :: That ain't quite what I had in mind.

"That *isn't* what I had in mind" is a common way of saying
you were expecting something completely different.

You look real nice in that ribbon.

A decorative strip of colored material,
often used as a reward for winning a contest.

First off, I didn't know if she was a boy or a girl.

A common expression used when the speaker is about to name a list of things.

We'll take a ribbon in each color; How much is that going to set me back?

In this context, "to set back" a person \$20 is to cost them that much money.

Break a five? :: Well, you can believe it, alright.

"To break" a five dollar bill is to be able to give change back for it.

This old wallet of mine is gonna bust its sides.

In this case, "to bust" its side is to break or split them open.

This is Moses' way of saying he is carrying around a lot of money.

Come on, you're pulling my leg.

A fun expression which means to fool somebody, or to say something that isn't really serious, just to get an excited reaction from them.

I don't mean to be handing you no line, but it's pretty hard to believe you got a 51 year old child.

In this case, "a line" is something a person says just to get the other person to like them, often in a sexual or romantic way.

Ya'll come back.

Note that even today in some Southern States, "ya'all" is a common way of saying "you all" when speaking to two or more people.

Mr. Huff passed away, young man, a week ago.

"To pass away" is to die.

I'm going to give her 24 dollars and an extra five dollars just for coming to my door. Praise the Lord.

A common expression among religious people ("To praise" a person, or in this case, God, is to speak very highly of them, or with great respect).

Frank D Roosevelt says we got to look out for each other.

If people "look out for each other," they try to make sure the other is protected or doing ok.

You don't think he eats off of silver trays.

It is said that only the rich "eat off of silver trays," which are large plates for serving food, in this case made of the expensive metal silver.

I'm running this, so don't make up no rules about what we're gonna give away.

"To run" an organization is to control it. "To make up" something is to talk about something that doesn't exist, as if it were real. A "rule" is a law or required way of acting. Note "going to"---> "gonna" in rapid speech.

Find out where the nearest depot is.

A “depot” is a place where a bus or train stops to pick up passengers.

You can take me to Lincoln! :: You bet I will!

Lincoln is the capital of Nebraska, and “you bet I will” is a way of saying “I certainly will do that!”

We can veer down to Lucas and veer over to Wilson.

“To veer” a car is to turn it suddenly in another direction (Lucas and Wilson are small towns in Kansas).

You got diamonds and rubies in there?

A ruby is an expensive type of red stone.

Woof, woof. :: Oh, Fido!

“Woof” is the sound a dog makes (at least in English), and Fido is a typical but old-fashioned name for a dog.

Much obliged. :: Thank you, Sir.

An interesting but dated way of saying thank you.

No reason to get that sore!

In this context, to get “sore” at a person means to get angry at them.

You’re as beautiful as your mama, and she put all the flowers of the world to shame.

This is Moses’ way of saying Addie’s mom was much more beautiful than the prettiest flowers.

They wouldn’t even let her come to Holland for fear she’d droop the tulips, and you got all the good looks she ever had.

“To droop” is to bend toward the ground, and a “tulip” is a type of flower. A person’s “good looks” refers to their physical beauty.

Maybe it wouldn’t be a bad idea if we get you fixed up a little bit.

In this case, “to fix up” a girl is to make her look prettier.

A fancy new hat or something. Come to think of it, it wouldn’t exactly hurt business either.

“Fancy” is a widely used word for elegant or of high quality. “Come to think of it” is a common expression that is used after a person has thought again about a topic, and has something new to say about it.

May I have a bottle of purple toilet water, please?

A dated expression for perfume.

What’s all the turmoil? What’s going on here?

An interesting word for great confusion, chaos or possibly even violence.

Get your cotton candy!

A type of candy made of pure sugar that is sold at circuses.

Six unusual little ladies unveiling the secrets of passion,
and featuring the luscious Miss Trixie Delight!

“To unveil” something is to reveal it or show it off publicly. In this context, “passion” refers to sexual desire, and “luscious” is an interesting word for delicious, seductive or sexy.

I can't help that, understand?!

“I can't help it” is a common way of saying there is nothing I can do to stop what I'm doing.

Why don't you go play bingo or something?

A popular gambling game where numbers are chosen by chance.

Stop standing around here, checking on me.

“To check on” a person is to watch them to make sure they are ok, or that they are not getting into trouble.

I ain't about to leave some poor little child stranded in the **middle of nowhere!**

If a person is “stranded,” they are stuck in a place with no way to leave. “The middle of nowhere” is a wonderful expression to describe any place where there is nothing going on or nothing to do.

I got scruples, too, you know! You know what scruples are? :: No, I don't know what it is, but if you got'em, you can sure bet they belong to somebody else!

This is one of the great exchanges of the movie. A person's “scruples” are their sense of morality or ethics, which prevent them from doing things that they consider too immoral.

*Moses takes a liking to Miss Trixie Delight, and
Addie decides that this relationship must end.*

A lady and her maid; I'm giving them a ride to Topeka.

To give a person “a ride” is to offer to drive them in your car.

She comes from a good family and I'm just giving her a ride. That's all!

If a person comes from a “good family,” this generally means their family is educated and at least middle class.

I got a scrap book telling stories from towns all over.

This is a little booklet often filled with personal photos and newspaper articles about the that person.

Tell him about that one time that man tired to crack your head open with a bottle, Miss Trixie.

“To crack open” a person’s head is to violently break it open.

He was just horsing around.

Another way of saying to fool around or not act seriously.

This little baby has to winky tinky all the time.

Trixie’s ridiculous way of saying to go to the bathroom and urinate (Today, more commonly referred to as taking a leak or pissing).

All she does is wag her hips and shake her old behind a little.

“To wag” is to move back and forth, though this verb is really only used with hips. A person’s “behind” is their ass, butt, etc.

The boss man tried to make her put out for his friends.

And she doesn’t believe in putting out for free.

In the context of a sexually active woman, to “put out” is a slangy way of saying to agree to have sex.

Does she put out much? :: Just like a gum machine.

A machine that gives out bubble gum for a nickel or dime.

I heard him mumbling something, but he didn’t want to talk about it.

“To mumble” is to walk quietly, without opening your mouth.

And what if I do get home? They got hard times as it is.

“Hard times” is a general term for economic difficulties, or more specifically, not having enough money.

She don’t pay me nothing except an occasional nickel or dime.

American coins that are worth five cents and ten cents.

You know the little white speck on top of chicken dodo?

A “speck” is a tiny little point or spot, and “dodo” is a still used word for shit.

It is absolutely the proper thing for my particular kind of appearance.

If something is “proper,” it is correct or appropriate, and a person’s appearance is how they look physically.

You got the right kind of bone structure.

When speaking of a person’s appearance, this refers to the way their bones look on their face or body.

Wouldn’t you look handsome sitting behind the wheel of a thing like that?

Note that a “wheel” refers not just to tires, but to the steering wheel of a car.

What the heck is up with you?

A way of asking "What is wrong with you?" Note that "the heck," which is gentler than "the hell," is added to WH questions to show frustration or anger.

We're sitting in front because we're two grown-ups.

A word for people who are no longer children or even teenagers.

She has a high school diploma.

An educational degree which officially states that a person has completed a certain level of education.

She always has to go to the bathroom. She must have a bladder the size of a peanut.

The organ in the body which holds urine (or more colloquially, piss).

What's up kiddo? Daddy says you're wearing a sad face.

"What's up" is a very common way of asking what's new.

"Kiddo" is a colloquial term of affection for a younger person.

You like Mickey the mouse? Oh, son-of-a-bitch!

Disney's famous character is "Mickey Mouse," *not* Mickey *the* mouse!

"Son of a bitch" is a vulgar but common way of expressing anger.

Come on down to the car with Mademoiselle.

A French word for Mrs.

When I was your age, I was skinnier than a pole.

If a person is "skinny," they are too thin or need to gain weight. A "pole" is a long, thin and circular object, often used to hold up parts of a building.

Want me to show you how to use cosmetics?

Another word for make-up, such as lipstick and eye liner.

I'll see to it you get a little bra or something.

The article of clothing women use to hold up their breasts.

But right now you're gonna pick up your little ass and you're gonna cut the crap, you understand?

Note that "going to"----> "gonna" in rapid speech. "Cut the crap" is a very direct but useful way of telling a person to stop saying nonsense or to stop acting foolishly.

You're going to ruin it, ain't you?

"To ruin" something is to destroy it.

I don't want to wipe you out.

“To wipe out” a person is to exhaust or greatly tire them.

I’m going to level with you, OK?

“To level” with a person is to be totally honest or direct with them, even if what is being said is uncomfortable.

I just don’t manage to hold on a real long, so if you wait it out a little while, it’ll be over, you know?

“To manage to” do something is to be able to do it.

“To wait out” a situation is to stay patient until it is over.

Even if I want a fella, somehow or another I manage to get it screwed up.

A “fella” is a somewhat dated but still used word for a guy, or man.

“To screw up” a project is to do a bad job of it or fail at it.

If you fool around on the hill up here, you don’t see nothing.

“To fool around” is to pass time playing, or more generally, doing things that are not considered serious.

So how about it? Just for a little while.

Let old Trixie sit up front with her big tits.

“How about it?” is a way of asking nicely if a person will agree to what has just been said or proposed. “Tits” is a crude word for female breasts (It’s safer to say *boobs*).

If you don’t find me some gas station soon, this little old snowflake is going to wet her pantaloons.

“Gas stations” in small towns are well known as places where people get gas and go to the bathroom. In this context, “to wet” your pants is to accidentally piss in them (Pantaloons is a never used word for pants).

This girl is sitting on the trolley and she reaches in her bag and she takes out this magazine.

A “trolley” is a type of bus that runs on electric wires.

She turns the stockings wrong side out and she puts them back on.

“Stockings” are nylon coverings that women wear over their legs.

I saw you indulge in a strange proceeding, mam.

“To indulge in” something is to take part in it, even though it may be very expensive, or to take part in unrestrained or free pleasure, often of a sexual nature. A “proceeding” is an official or legal action or ceremony.

I found it to be such hot stuff that I felt compelled to turn the hose on myself.

In this context, writing or pictures that are “hot stuff” are extremely sexually suggestive or exciting. If a person is “compelled” to do something, they are forced to do it.

They wouldn’t have a room with a canopy bed, would they?

A type of expensive bed with a metal frame and often curtains hung around the top of it.

It ain't no canopy bed, but it sure do open up a whole new can of peas, don't it?
 "To open up a can of peas" is to suddenly find oneself in a very difficult situation or with lots of potential problems.

It's the first flight up.

A "flight" of stairs refers to the individual steps between two floors.

There's a rip in the seam of that dress. You get it sewed up good, you hear.
 A "rip" is a tear, and a "seam" is a line or edge, where two parts of a fabric are sewn together on a piece of clothes.

You've been making that water awfully hot, Ingenue.

A useful and common adverb meaning very or extremely.

What do you suppose Miss Trixie would do if somebody offered her 25 dollars to put out?

"To suppose" is to think, and "to put out" is to agree to have sex.

For that much money, that woman would drop her pants down in the middle of the road. :: That's what I figured.

"To figure" is to think or believe.

What do you got in mind?

"To have something in mind" is to have an idea or plan in one's head.

Well, that little two-bit bum! The nerve of that guy!

"Two-bit" is a very negative adjective meaning unimportant. A "bum" is either a very poor homeless person or a more general term for an ass, jerk or immoral man. The second sentence is a general way of expressing anger at a person's outrageous or shocking behavior.

Where would he get 25 bucks?

The most common slang word for a dollar.

She say you're better looking than Dick Powell.

If a person is "good looking," they are sexy or physically attractive.

She says you're real cute. :: Says you and who else?

An important adjective meaning pretty or attractive in a child-like way.

Give them here to the lady with Floyd's compliments.

If you give a gift "with your compliments," you are congratulating them for something they have done or accomplished.

Maybe you should ask her for a date; That would sure tickle her.

A “date” is generally a social get-together with a person you may be romantically attracted to, though in the right context (with a prostitute), it could refer the very act of getting together just to have sex. In this context, “to tickle” a person is to please them.

Some girls say I’m a pretty smooth dancer myself; How about trying me out sometime?

“Smooth” is an excellent adjective meaning skilled or talented.

“To try out” a person is to test them, to see if they are acceptable.

We’re sure going to give it a try.

“To give something a try” is to try it briefly, to see if it works for the future.

Throw this in the drawer, and keep your fingers crossed.

“To cross your fingers” is a way of wishing for good luck.

He won’t be back until supper time.

An old-fashioned word for dinner.

Howdy. What you eating? :: Waffles.

A popular breakfast food that is similar to pancakes.

I think I’ll go upstairs and polish my shoes.

“To polish” your shoes is to clean them by rubbing them with a fine wax.

Well, hello, Cupid.

In Greek mythology, Cupid was considered the angel of romance.

I can’t get off right now.

“To get off” of work means stop working or leave a job.

You won’t be sorry!

A popular way of telling a person that they should do something, because they will not regret having done it.

You’re not one of those who go on babbling?

“To babble” is to talk in a nonsensical or meaningless manner, often repeating the same things over and over.

Now, do I look like that kind of fellow?

A dated but sweet word for a guy or person.

Let me just slip it off.

“To slip off” some clothes is to take them off.

Your daddy is going to kill that man, I reckon.

A very old-fashioned but interesting word which means to think.

I expect he cut her up pretty bad.

In this case, "to cut up" a person is to hurt them, perhaps physically with a knife.

He just walked around to the wood pile and got his double blade ax and will go inside and chop them up in little pieces.

An "ax" is a very sharp knife that is made for cutting trees down.

"To chop" is to cut, often while using great force while using a knife.

Folks say he cut them up like kindling wood.

"Kindling wood" is small pieces of wood that is used to make a fire for cooking or heating.

I reckon....she's been carrying on a long time.

"To carry on" is to act in a loud, angry or unacceptable way, often for a long or extended period of time.

Well, god damblanit, why didn't you tell me?

"God damn it" is a vulgar and still common way of expressing anger. The word that Moses uses above is no longer used.

*Moses and Addie decide to rob a liquor bootlegger,
and soon find themselves in very serious trouble.*

When you're grown up...don't be the kind of women who goes around deceiving men.

"To deceive" a person is to fool them, tell them lies or act in a way that is not true.

What's peculiar about him? :: He's got a roll of money that would choke us both to death.

"Peculiar" is an excellent word for strange or odd. "To choke" a person is to grab them around the neck and cut off their air supply.

I'm not up to anything right now.

If a person is not "up to" something, they don't feel like doing it.

Bootlegger. No question about it.

A "bootlegger" is a person who sells illegal liquor or alcohol. Note that in 1936, alcohol was legal in most of the United States, but not in certain states such as Kansas.

Better ways of doing business with bootleggers. Heaps of ways.

A "heap" is a pile, or in this case, means lots.

He's got a lot of bottles he keeps in some kind of bin out back.

A “bin” is a box or other type of container for storing things.

There was a little shack out there, too, but he didn’t go in it.

A “shack” is a small structure or room, also often used for storage.

He’s a bootlegger alright. Wholesales pretty near everybody in the county.

“Wholesale” is the selling of goods at cheap prices to stores and others resellers. A “county” is an administrative area that is bigger than a city (There are many counties in every state).

His brother is some sort of **big shot**, too, but the girl couldn’t tell me about him.

A “big shot” is a slangy expression for a person who is very important in some area, such as business or politics, or at least considers themselves very important.

Some Romeo walked up and I had to **beat it**.

A “Romeo” is often a person who is considered very successful with attracting women. “To beat it” is to leave, often in a hurry.

Folks in the country never lock anything!

An old-fashioned but still used word for people (And parents).

Jack said I ought to look you up.

“To look up” a person is try and find them or make contact with them (and more specifically, often by finding their names in a phone book).

Maybe you ought to get acquainted. He’s running one of the biggest wholesale businesses in the state.

“To get acquainted” with a person is to get to know them.

I only deal in bonded goods.

If a product is “bonded,” it is guaranteed to be legal or of good quality. In the business world, a “good” is anything that can be sold.

I can get you a **deal** on some three feathers.

A “deal” is an important word for a good price on a product or service

You take 20 cases, and I’ll let them go for 20 dollars per.

A “case” of liquor is often 24 or 36 bottles (Here, per is short for per *case*).

It ain’t legal here! :: That’s all the more reason you’re getting a **bargain**.

A “bargain” is another word, like a deal, which means a good price.

Moze, we better get.

“To get *going*” is to leave. “Get” is no longer used alone in this way.

Make sure nothing spills off. :: You better go slow. And hurry!

If a liquid “spills off” a surface, it falls over its edge.

Ain't he going to miss his whisky?

A very powerful (and disgusting!) type of liquor.

By the time he's figured it out, we'll be in Missouri.

"To figure out" something is to discover or realize the solution or answer.

Scoot over.

An interesting way to say move over to someone who is sitting next to you on a flat surface, such as a bench or table.

Nothing but pitch black. :: I thought I seen something flicker.

"Pitch black" is the color black with absolutely no light or other color in it (If it's pitch black outside, it is completely dark). If light "flickers," it goes on and off quickly, as if trying desperately to stay on.

Christ!

A widely used way to express anger or frustration, even for those who aren't religious.

Where are you heading? :: Me and my little girl are heading to St. Jo.

"To head" to a place is to go in that direction.

What's your business? :: Livestock, mostly. Mules and horses. Some cattle.

"Livestock" refers to farm animals such as cows and pigs. A "mule" is a type of horse and "cattle" is another word for cows.

The way I hear it, you just had a transaction by the old barn.

A "transaction" is a business exchange, such as a bottle of beer for one dollar. A "barn" is a large building on a farm for housing animals.

I reckon you'll just have to explain a little more thoroughly.

"Thoroughly" means completely, or in this case, in great detail.

I said hold out your hands.

"To hold out" your hands is to stick them out away from your body, so they can be easily seen.

Mighty clean hands for livestock. Those hands don't look like they do much except play a little casino now and then.

"Mighty" is a somewhat old-fashioned but still used adverb for very or extremely. A "casino" is a building where people gamble on games such as poker (Today, you play *in* a casino).

To make a case against you, the law says all I need is one little old drop.

In law, "to make a case" against a person is to collect enough evidence to charge them with a crime. A "drop" is a tiny amount of liquid.

The law says you use a vehicle to transport alcoholic beverages

and said vehicle is confiscated to be sold at public auction.

A “vehicle” is a car or truck, and in this context, “said” is a way of saying “this.” If the government “confiscates” a car, it officially takes possession or control of it. A “public auction” is a sale held by the government that gives property to the person who offers the most money.

You can kiss that little old car of yours goodbye.

In this context, “to kiss something goodbye” is to accept that you are likely to never see it again.

Hold on! That seems pretty rough.

“Hold on” means “wait a minute!” If a punishment is “rough,” it is cruel or severe

Better face it; You’re gonna be up in these parts for quite a while, working on the country roads.

“To face it” is to accept the reality of a bad situation. “These parts” is an old-fashioned way of referring to the local area.

Six more months for influencing a child, maybe you get six years for that.

This is the deputy policeman’s way of telling Moses he could spend six months or even six years in jail for committing a crime in front of Addie, who is legally a child.

Maybe we could work something out.

“To work out” a solution to a problem is to try and make a deal to which both sides agree.

I sure don’t like to send a man to the road gang.

An old term for a group of prisoners who are forced to work hard on fixing and improving public roads, in order to help society.

I can’t overlook the fact that you’ve been paid \$625 and you aren’t telling me where it is.

“To overlook” a fact is to ignore it or decide to not care about it.

Let’s cut this ring-around-the-rosy; Where’s the money?

In this context, “to cut” something is to stop it. “Ring-around-the-rosy” are nonsense words from a children’s song.

You think I’m fooling around?

In this case, “to fool around” is to talk in a way that isn’t being serious.

Maybe you’ll come around in time, when you get a little thirsty, hungry. Time sure does have a way with criminals.

“To come around” is to change one’s way of thinking or behaving.

If time “has a way” with people, it influences or effects their behavior.

Somebody ought to be stirring over at the café.

In this context, “to stir” means to be moving around.

Daddy, I need to go to the shithouse.

A very crude and old-fashioned word for a bathroom.

They’re going to have me up for murder. I could’ve killed him!

If a person is “up for” a crime, they are being officially charged with it.

Every two-bit lawman in Kansas will be looking for this car!; We got to get across the river to Missouri!

“Two-bit” means unimportant, or of lower rank or level. A “lawman” is a dated word for a policeman. Note that with some crimes, a person who escapes to another state cannot be charged with that crime in that state.

Holy smoke!

An old but fun way of expressing great shock or surprise (If something is ‘holy,’ it considered blessed by or close to God).

Blow your horn!

A car’s ‘horn’ is the loud buzzer that is used with others on the road, and note that to use it, the correct verb is ‘to blow.’

He can’t pull off the road!

If a driver “pulls off” of the road, he stops and parks the car on the side.

You’re likely to give me heart failure.

If a person has “heart failure,” their heart stops and they usually die.

I need to get rid of my car.

“To get rid of” something is to eliminate it or throw it away, or in this case, to leave it behind.

Sheriff wants to take away my little girl and put her in an orphanage.

A “sheriff” is the highest level policeman in a city or county, and an “orphanage” is where children who have no parents live.

You know anybody who might want to swap?

“To swap” two cars is to exchange or trade them for each other.

We’ll just let him chew on it for a while.

“To chew on” a problem or decision is to think about it over a period of time.

All I’m looking for is a swap and three days head start before you take it out on the highway.

A “head start” is the chance to get going before another person starts.

Just have to fill out that form on the back and you own it.

“To fill out” something is to write in all the information that is requested, and a “form” is an official document for collecting information.

You can’t haul nothing in it.

“To haul” things is to transport or move them.

Wrestle you for it. If I win, we swap, and if you win, you can keep the car and truck both.

If two people “wrestle,” they try to physically throw and trap the other person against the ground (Note that here it is pronounced “wrassle,” though this is not the way it is said by educated people).

Look out for that rake, Leroy!

A long metal tool for sweeping leaves or other types of work in a garden.

It don’t work! :: Oh well, **it figures**.

“It figures” is a common way of saying “I’m not surprised” while expressing frustration or a similar emotion.

He’s in the market for making a killing, just like we are.

Here, the “market” refers to the economic marketplace in general, in which everything is bought and sold. “To make a killing” is to make a lot of money quickly.

Maybe he don’t even have a silver mine. ::

I had him checked out real thoroughly.

A “silver mine” is a place where the metal silver is removed from the ground. In this context, “to check out” a person is to look at or study them very carefully, often to make sure what they are saying is true.

OK, do you got it straight?; Corner of East Walling and Burlington. **Show up** there with tears in your eyes.

“To get it straight” is to understand what has just been said.

“To show up” is a very common way of saying to arrive.

My brother is real sore at you. It seems you sold him some of his own whisky.

To be “sore at” a person is to be very angry at them.

You can’t **arrest** me now; We’re in Missouri.

If the police “arrest” a person, they physically hold them, take them to jail, and officially charge them with a crime.

Addie must choose between her life with Moses or a typical small town childhood with her auntie Helen.

Oh Moze, you’re all **beat up**.

If a person has been “beat up,” they have been physically attacked and injured, perhaps with many bloody cuts and bruises.

What the hell do we do with 10 dollars? :: We can buy some bibles. Do a little widow business.

“The hell” is added to WH questions to express anger, frustration and other emotion. A “widow” is a woman whose husband has died.

That’s where we set out for, ain’t it?

“To set out for” a place is to start going in that direction.

It looks real fine.

A still much loved adjective meaning very good, or of excellent quality.

Here’s your skates, radio.

Shoes with wheels that allow a person to roll forward.

Tell’em a family friend brung you and you had a little trouble on the way with your car and finances.

Note that “tell them” ----> “tell-em” in rapid speech. A person’s “finances” refers to the amount of money that have, or more generally, their financial situation (Also note: The past tense of bring is *brought* , and only the past participle is brung).

You’re just the spitting image of your mother, pretty as a picture.

If a child is the “spitting image” of their mother, they look exactly like her.

You’re going to sleep in your own little bed, alongside your cousin Edna.

A nice alternative word for next to.

I just never give up on you, child.

“To not give up” on a person is to continue to have hope that they will improve their lives, or in this context, that they will be found if missing.

Paper Moon

Some Potential Questions for ESL Class Discussion

1. Is Moses a bad man? Is Addie a bad girl? Or, are they in fact good people who are just trying to survive?
2. How would you describe Addie? What do you think will happen to her when she grows up? Is she more likely to be a criminal or a scientist?
3. Do you think living in a small town in Kansas in the 1930s had to be depressing? Was that why the movie was made in black and white?
4. How would you describe Trixie? Do you know any women like her?
5. What did you like and not like about this movie?