

# Christopher Nolan Film Vocabulary

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1998

*Following*

**Shadow:** to go everywhere that somebody else goes in order to watch what they are doing, especially secretly

**Coy:** 1. annoyingly reluctant to make a commitment or to divulge something 2. pretending, in a teasing or provocative way, to be reserved or modest 3. shy or reserved in social situations

**Futon:** a firm Japanese-style cotton-covered mattress used as a seat or bed, either on the floor or on a wooden frame

**Trinket:** a small object of little value, e.g. an ornament or piece of jewelry

**Cracker:** a cardboard tube, containing a party favor, and wrapped in colored paper, that opens with an explosive noise when both its ends are pulled

**Saucy:** intended to be amusingly vulgar, especially in sexual innuendo

**On the hop:** unawares or unprepared

**Reckon:** to suppose something to be true

**Fool around:** to participate in casual or illicit sexual relationships

**Pound of flesh:** something that is one's legal right but is an unreasonable demand (especially in the phrase **to have one's pound of flesh**)

**Burgle:** to burglarize

**Waistband:** a band of fabric that circles the waist at the top of a garment such as a skirt or pair of pants

**Dole:** a regular sum of money paid by the government to somebody who is unemployed

**Scrounge:** to acquire something from somebody by begging or borrowing without intending to make repayment or return

**Fence:** to buy or sell stolen goods

**Alcove:** 1. a recess in the wall of a room 2. a recess in an exterior wall, usually with a roof or other covering structure 3. a shady or secluded place in a garden

**Pop in:** to pay a visit in an impromptu manner

**Tea towel:** a dishtowel

**Indifferent:** average or low in quality

**Twat:** a highly offensive term for somebody regarded as unintelligent, in the worthless, or detestable

**Lift:** to steal something or take something away without the owner's permission or knowledge

**Pull in:** to arrest somebody, or take somebody into a police station for questioning

**Peeper:** somebody who looks secretly at somebody or something

**Turn over:** to break into a building or premises and steal anything thought to be valuable

2000

*Memento*

**Pocahontas:** a Native American woman

**Gideon Bible:** a Bible purchased by members of a Christian organization (Gideons) and placed in a hotel room, hospital ward, etc.

**Hippocampus:** a curved ridge of tissue in each cerebral hemisphere of the brain, concerned with basic drives, emotions, and short-term memory and forming part of the limbic system

**Check into:** to investigate something in order to get more information about it or to establish its truth or accuracy

**Anterograde** effective immediately after a traumatic event such as an external shock

**Conditioning:** a method of controlling or influencing the way people or animals behave or think by using a gradual training process

**Quack:** somebody who practices medicine without training or a valid license

**Get the jump on:** to gain an advantage over someone or something, typically by doing something early or ahead of others

**In keeping with:** consistent with or suitable for something

**Chase up:** to look for someone or something in a variety of places

**Jammed up:** in trouble

**Crash:** to sleep, especially somewhere other than usual when exhausted, or stay temporarily somewhere other than at home

**Sap:** a weapon such as a blackjack

**Call someone's bluff:** to challenge someone to give proof of his claims

**Bluff:** to deceive, mislead, or instill fear or doubt in somebody by a false show of strength or confidence

**Snoop:** to pry into other people's business or affairs, especially surreptitiously

**Dump:** an unpleasant or dirty place

**Strung out:** under the influence of a drug, especially a narcotic drug

**Pine:** to long for somebody or something, especially somebody or something unattainable



2002

*Insomnia*

**Halibut:** a large flatfish. Native to: northern Atlantic, Pacific oceans

**Bullpen:** an area containing the desks of many white-collar workers, often separated by movable partitions of limited height

**Blow over:** to no longer excite strong feelings

**Herniate:** to project through a rupture in the wall of a body cavity, or through a normal or potential opening that has become enlarged

**Intracerebral:** existing or taking place inside the main part of the brain or cerebrum

**Dive:** a dirty, shabby, or disreputable bar or club

**Calabrese:** a variety of green broccoli

**Rattle someone's cage:** 1. to demand attention; to nag, nudge, or remind 2. to anger or to annoy

**Cut:** to negotiate an agreement

**Fish:** to seek something indirectly

**Fan out:** to spread out in the shape of an open hand-held fan, or spread something out in this way

**Vastus:** one of the great muscles upon the front of the thigh

**Cranky:** disagreeable and easily irritated

**Patsy:** an easily victimized, cheated, or manipulated person

**Make something stick:** to cause something to be permanent, established, or able to persist

**Carry on:** to have a casual affair with somebody

**Skirting board=baseboard:** a narrow board, attached to the base of an interior wall, that covers the joint between the wall and the floor

**Hold the fort:** to take charge of something in the absence of the person usually responsible

**Pack rat:** a hoarder of objects

**Strung out:** tired, tense, or overwrought

**Clip:** a container for bullets, slotted directly into an automatic firearm

2005

*Batman Begins*

**Set:** to put a broken bone back in its normal position so it can heal properly

**Ninjitsu:** a Japanese martial art that emphasizes stealth in movement and camouflage

**Manor:** 1. a house and the land surrounding it, owned by a medieval noble  
2. the residence of the lord or lady of a manor

**Presume:** to behave so inconsiderately, disrespectfully, or overconfidently as to do something without being entitled or qualified to do it

**Bask:** to derive great satisfaction or pleasure from something

**Elemental:** relating to or caused by powerful natural forces

**Monofilament:** an untwisted continuous single strand of natural or artificial fiber. Use: fishing lines.

**Spelunking:** the sport or pastime of exploring caves

**Cavern:** a large underground cave or a large chamber in a series of caves

**Cowl:** the hood on a monk's cloak, or a monk's hooded cloak

**Moonlight:** to have a second job in addition to a main job

**Enforcer:** a member of a criminal gang who uses physical violence to intimidate and enforce compliance

**Falafel:** a deep-fried ball of ground chickpeas seasoned with onions and spices, originating in Southwest Asia

**The worse for wear:** 1. in a poor condition because of much use 2. looking or feeling unwell, especially because of being tired

**Decadence:** a process of decline or decay in a society, especially in its morals 2. the condition of a civilization in decline 3. a state of uninhibited immoral self-indulgence

*Prestige, The*

**Predicament:** a difficult, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation from which there is no clear or easy way out

**Turn out:** to take out the contents of a pocket or bag, usually to check or reorganize what is there

**Drop:** a trapdoor under a gallows on which somebody who is to be hanged stands

**Workhouse:** formerly, a publicly run institution in Britain and Ireland in which people living in poverty were given food and accommodations in return for unpaid work

**Mount:** to organize something such as an exhibition or a production of a play

**Sightline:** a line of vision between a person and an object, especially between a member of an audience and the stage in a theater

**Booking:** a contract or arrangement for an entertainer to perform somewhere

**Enterprising:** showing initiative and a willingness to undertake new, often risky, projects

**Wadding:** material used to hold powder or shot in a gun or cartridge

**Ramrod:** a rod for loading a charge into a muzzle-loading musket, cannon, or other gun

**Slipknot:** 1. a knot that slips easily along the rope or cord around which it is tied 2. a knot that can be unfastened by pulling

**Up-and-coming:** successful or improving, and showing signs of continuing to do so

**Cheap thrill:** something providing only short-lived enjoyment or satisfaction

**Engagement:** a job that lasts for a short period of time, especially one for an entertainer in a club or theater

**Fickle:** likely to change, especially in affections, intentions, loyalties, or preferences

**Bide:** to stay, remain, or wait

**Effuse:** to spread out or radiate from something

**Temperamental:** unpredictable and erratic in behavior

**Rock the boat:** to cause a disturbance in the existing situation

**Stagehand:** a manual worker in a theater, e.g. somebody who sets up and removes stage sets

**Iron out:** to settle a dispute or resolve a problem by removing difficulties

**Vice:** 1. an immoral or wicked habit or characteristic 2. immoral conduct 3. criminal activity connected with prostitution and other sexual offenses, gambling, and illegal drugs 4. a mild failing or flaw in somebody's behavior or character

**Unheeded:** not listened to or given serious attention

**Kink:** a slight difficulty or holdup in the progress of something

**Provenance:** 1. the place of origin of something 2. the source and ownership history of a work of art or literature or of an archaeological find

2008

*Dark Knight, The*

**Tootsie=toots:** an affectionate or patronizing way of addressing somebody, especially a woman

**Oblige:** to do something necessary or helpful

**Step up:** to come forward, e.g. to stand for an office or position or to take responsibility for something

**Fall guy:** 1. somebody who takes the blame for somebody else's mistake or wrongdoing 2. somebody who is easily tricked or deceived

**Right cross:** a cross (hook thrown over the opponent's punch) made with the right hand

**Floodlight:** 1. a large powerful lamp that produces a strong broad beam of light and is used to illuminate the outside of public buildings or sports events at night 2. a broad powerful beam of intense bright light produced artificially

**Diligence:** the care or attention expected by the law in doing something such as fulfilling the terms of a contract

**Prima ballerina:** the principal woman dancer in a ballet company

**Mantle:** 1. a loose sleeveless cloak 2. a role or position, especially one that can be passed from one person to another

**Abscond:** 1. to run away secretly, especially in order to avoid arrest or prosecution 2. to escape from a place of detention

**Droll:** amusing in a wry or odd way

**Squeeze:** an offensive term for a sexual or romantic partner

**Tangerine:** a citrus fruit with easily peeled orange skin and sweet flesh

**Mince:** to speak, or say something, in an affectedly dainty way

**Port arms:** to carry one's personal firearm diagonally in front of the body

**Rack up:** to accumulate something such as points

**Leper:** 1. somebody affected with leprosy 2. somebody who is shunned by the rest of society

**When the chips are down:** at a time of crisis or when vital matters are at stake

**Null:** amounting to nothing in terms of context or character

**Rappel:** to descend a steep slope or vertical face using a rope that is secured at the top and passed through a series of coils or a harness around the body

**Padded cell:** in former times, a room in a psychiatric hospital with its walls and floor covered with padding to prevent a patient from doing himself or herself physical harm



2010

*Inception*

**Possessed:** having or owning something

**Partial:** having a liking for something

**Versatile:** subject to rapid or unpredictable change

**Stick in the mud:** 1. a person unwilling to participate in activities; a curmudgeon or party pooper 2. more generally, one who is slow, old-fashioned, or unprogressive; an old fogey

**Gravity:** the seriousness of something considered in terms of its unfavorable consequences

**Power of attorney:** the legal authority to act for another person in legal and business matters

**Authority:** a source of reliable information on a subject

**Rise to:** to behave well in response to a challenge or difficulty

**Sod it:** a strong exclamation of annoyance

**Antechamber:** a small room leading into a larger room and often used as a waiting area

**Strongroom:** a reinforced room designed to withstand fire or theft and used for the storage of valuables

**Defibrillator:** a machine that administers a controlled electric shock to the chest or heart to correct a critically irregular heartbeat that cannot drive the circulation

**Start in:** 1. to begin to do something 2. to begin to scold or criticize somebody

2012

*Dark Knight Rises, The*

**Chow:** food

**Mason jar:** a wide-mouthed glass jar with a lid that screws or clips on and forms a vacuum seal, used for preserving food, especially fruits and vegetables

**Fence:** somebody who buys stolen goods from thieves and then sells the goods

**Stiff:** a person, especially somebody of a particular type

**Age out:** to be too old to remain in an age-based classification or receive age-based services

**Heli-skiing:** skiing in which skiers are transported by helicopter to remote slopes

**Hag:** an offensive term that deliberately insults a woman's appearance, temperament, and age

**Lay on:** to provide or arrange something, often in an elaborate or extravagant manner

**Practiced:** expert in doing something because of long experience

**Walk-up:** 1. a building of several stories without an elevator 2. an apartment in a building of several stories without an elevator

**Collate:** 1. to assemble pages in the correct order 2. to bring together pieces of information and compare them in detail

**Get into the swing of things:** to get into the established rhythm or routine

**As I live and breathe:** wow! An expression of surprise or amazement.

**Cryo-:** freezing, cold

**Shutter:** to close or protect something by means of shutters

**Excommunicate:** to exclude a baptized Christian from taking part in Communion because of doctrine or moral behavior that is adjudged to offend against God or the Christian community

**Rookie:** 1. somebody who is new to an activity or job 2. a player, especially a professional athlete, who is in the first year of participation in a sport

**Scalp:** to resell something quickly or at an inflated price in order to make a quick profit

**(Well) what do you know:** a phrase used to indicate one's surprise

**Sideshow:** an action or behavior that is outrageous or bizarre

**Take/plead the fifth (amendment):** 1. to refuse to testify against oneself in court, in accordance with the right guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution, part of the Bill of Rights 2. by extension, to refuse to answer a question or provide information, especially if doing so may incriminate or embarrass oneself

**Reckoning:** punishment or vengeance for wrongs committed

**Uninitiated:** having no experience or knowledge of something

**Clamber:** to climb quickly but awkwardly, using hands and feet

**Smoke out:** to drive a person or animal from a hiding place by using smoke

**Rampart:** a defensive fortification made of an earthen embankment, often topped by a low protective wall

**Spangle:** 1. a small shiny piece of metal or plastic used for decoration on clothing 2. a small sparkling spot or object

**Prime:** 1. to make something ready for use, or become ready for use 2. to make a firearm ready for use by putting a charge in it 3. to make an explosive ready for use by inserting a fuse

**Decadent:** 1. undergoing a process of decline or decay, especially in morals 2. showing uninhibitedly or immorally self-indulgent behavior

**Dial back:** to lessen something, especially in intensity

**Vise=vice:** a tool with two jaws that can be closed by a lever or screw, used to hold an object immobile so that it can be worked on

2014

*Interstellar*

**Blight:** a plant disease, caused by bacteria, fungi, or viruses, in which symptoms range from brownish blotches on the foliage to withering of the entire plant without rotting

**Shake a leg:** to hurry up: usually used in the imperative

**Get a move on:** 1. to get started 2. to hurry up

**Herbicide:** a chemical preparation designed to kill plants, especially weeds, or to inhibit their growth

**Okra:** 1. a green finger-length seed pod, cooked and eaten as a vegetable or used to thicken soups and stews 2. a tall tropical plant that produces okra pods. Native to: Asia.

**Pull one's weight:** to do one's fair or proper share of a task

**Inseam:** the measurement of a pant leg's inner seam

**Haywire:** 1. functioning erratically, or not functioning at all 2. behaving unpredictably or extravagantly

**Doozy:** a remarkable or excellent thing

**Grunt:** a worker who does menial tasks

**Fly-by-wire:** an aircraft flight control system that has electronic rather than mechanical controls

**Trip:** a blunder, error, or mistake

**Pod:** a specialized detachable compartment on a spacecraft, usually for carrying personnel or instruments

**Dramamine:** a trademark for a motion-sickness medication

**Rave:** 1. to give praise in a very enthusiastic way 2. to speak or say something in a loud, irrational, or incoherent way 3. to storm and rage with intensity

**Forked/chain/jagged lightning:** lightning that appears as a jagged line of light splitting into two or more branches near the ground

**Discretion:** 1. the good judgment and sensitivity needed to avoid embarrassing or upsetting others 2. the freedom or authority to judge something or make a decision about it 3. the ability to keep sensitive information secret

**Say it, don't spray it:** don't release saliva when you're talking

**Gargantuan:** tremendously large in amount, number, or size

**Cusp:** either of the pointed ends of a crescent moon or of any astronomical object appearing with the same curved shape

**Egghead:** an intellectual or bookish person

**Iteration:** a process of achieving a desired result by repeating a sequence of steps and successively getting closer to that result

**Rivet:** a fastener with a head attached to a metal shaft that is passed through a hole in a material and flattened on the other side

**Recursive:** 1. repeating itself, either indefinitely or until a specific point is reached 2. involving the repeated application of a function to its own values

**Granted:** used to acknowledge, often reluctantly, the truth of something

**Soufflé:** a baked or chilled dish that has been made light by adding whisked egg whites. Hot soufflés are usually based on a thick milk sauce and are baked, while cold soufflés are made with gelatin and set by chilling.

**Fritter:** a cake formed by frying a small amount of a soft batter and often containing chopped fruit, vegetables, or meat

**Alkali:** a water-soluble chemical that reacts with acids to form salts, has a pH above 7, and turns red litmus paper blue

**Dissipate:** to fade or disappear, or make something do this

**Mount:** to put into operation a course of action such as a campaign, rescue, or attack

**Scrubber:** a device for removing impurities or pollutants from a gas

**Squall:** a sudden strong wind, often with heavy rain or snow

**Blow over:** to become less violent

**Lockout:** an occasion when workers are prevented from entering their workplace, a tactic sometimes used by management in an industrial dispute

**Scratch:** to make a barely adequate living

**Tesseract:** the four-dimensional extension of a cube

2017

*Dunkirk*

**Deliverance:** rescue from captivity, hardship, or domination by evil

**Grenadier:** formerly, a soldier armed with grenades

**Mole:** a massive wall, usually made of stone, that extends into the sea and encloses or protects a harbor

**Bowline:** a knot used to form a loop that will not slip at the end of a piece of rope

**Keep one's eyes peeled:** to watch carefully (for)

**Gangplank:** a movable walkway such as a bridge or plank, used when boarding or disembarking from a ship

**Pick off:** to shoot somebody or something selected as a target and deliberately aimed at, usually from a distance, or shoot a number of targets one by one

**Stuff:** an offensive term meaning to have sex with a woman

**Dive bomber:** a military aircraft designed to release its bombs on a target during a steep dive

**U-boat:** a German submarine, especially one used during World Wars I and II

**Minesweeper:** a ship fitted with equipment for detecting and clearing underwater explosive mines

**Bail out:** to escape from a plane that is in danger of crashing by making a parachute jump

**Get up:** to become stronger or more turbulent (refers to winds or the sea)

**Spook:** to feel frightened or uneasy

**Scarper:** to leave a place quickly

**Sod:** used, often humorously or affectionately, to refer to a person

**Grouping:** 1. a set of people or things gathered into a group 2. the act or process of forming a group or arranging people or things in groups

**Jerry:** an offensive term for a German person, especially a German soldier in World War II

**Sauerkraut:** a German dish of shredded cabbage fermented in its own juice with salt

**Frog:** an offensive term for a French person

**Trawler:** a boat that is used in trawling for fish

**Tiller:** the means by which a small boat is steered, consisting of a handle attached to the rudder

**See through:** to provide somebody with help, advice, and support, especially in times of trouble

**Subjugate:** to bring somebody, especially a people or nation, under the control of another, e.g. by military conquest

2020

*Tenet*

**Detritus:** debris or discarded material

**Box up:** to pack individual items into boxes

**Top dollar:** a very high price

**Out of one's depth:** unable to understand or do something because it is outside the range of your knowledge or skills

**Halide:** a chemical compound of a halogen with another element or group of atoms

**Blimey:** used to express amazement or shock

**Turnstile:** a mechanical barrier designed to let people pass through a narrow opening one at a time between revolving bars

**About:** on or to the opposite tack

**Jibe:** 1. to make a fore-and-aft-sail swing across from one side of the boat to the other when sailing with the wind behind, or to swing across in this way 2. to make a fore-and-aft rigged boat change direction by turning the stern across a following wind, or change direction by turning in this way

**Singe:** to burn something slightly so that only the surface, edge, or tip is affected, or be burned in this way

**Pincer movement:** a military maneuver that attempts to surround an enemy by simultaneous attack from the front and two side columns that curve around the enemy and back toward each other

**Handoff:** in football, a handing of the ball to a teammate during play

**Dead drop:** a location used to secretly pass items between two people, without requiring them to meet

**Keep one's end up:** do one's part

**Ordnance:** military weapons, including supplies for their use and equipment for their maintenance

**Cavern:** a large underground cave or a large chamber in a series of caves

2023

*Oppenheimer*

**Coat:** to cover a surface with a thin layer of something

**Beaker:** a flat-bottomed glass container used in laboratories

**Potion:** a liquid to be drunk that is medicinal, supposedly magical, or poisonous

**Yank=Yankee:** somebody who is from the United States

**Mesa:** a relatively flat elevated area with steep sides that is less extensive than a plateau

**Mudbank:** an area of mud, possibly submerged, near the edge of a body of water

**Take on trust:** to accept something without seeing evidence supporting it, by trust or confidence

**Cyclotron:** a circular particle accelerator in which charged particles are confined by a vertical magnetic field and accelerated by an alternating high-frequency applied voltage. It is used to study the way particles interact.

**Deuterium:** an isotope of hydrogen that has double the mass of ordinary hydrogen because it contains a neutron in its nucleus. Use: tracer in experiments. Symbol D.

**Cock-and-bull story:** a ridiculous and scarcely credible story that somebody tries to convince people is true

**Draw someone out:** to encourage a shy, hostile, or reserved person to talk at length or in detail, or to become more forthcoming in a social or legal situation

**Bandy:** to toss words back and forth casually, often without caring whether they are true or what effect they may have

**Scupper:** to wreck, defeat, or ruin something

**Dud:** a munition that fails to fire or explode

**Gallows humor:** macabre humor that finds irony or comedy in serious matters such as death

**Build up:** to increase or develop gradually, or make something do this

**Candor:** honesty or directness, whether refreshing or distasteful

**Evidentiary=evidential:** relating to, consisting of, or based on evidence

**Upstanding:** honest and socially responsible

**Colitis:** inflammation of the colon, characterized by lower-bowel spasms and upper abdominal cramps

**Animus:** 1. a feeling or display of animosity 2. an attitude or feeling that motivates somebody's actions

**Kangaroo court:** an unofficial or mock court set up spontaneously for the purpose of delivering a judgment arrived at in advance, usually one in which a disloyal associate's fate is decided

**Scruple:** a moral or ethical consideration that tends to restrain action or behavior

**Holdout:** a person or group that refuses to submit to or comply with a situation, trend, or order

**Tar and feather:** to smear tar over somebody and cover the tar with feathers as a form of punishment