



# REAL ENGLISH

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Aomori Prefecture English Education Society

### Famous Movie Quotes: Recognized and Explained

I was chatting with a friend - he is about my age and also grew up in the USA. Somehow, we stumbled onto the topic of '**famous movie quotes**.' These are the lines from movies that are so well-known and iconic that they become part of the language - and every native speaker of that era knows them. The thing is ... they can be quite *mysterious* if you don't know the movie ... and quite *confusing* if you don't know the full and proper English that is behind them. So ... this month ... let's unwrap some **Famous Movie Quotes**.

#### **You had me at "hello."**

From Jerry Maguire (1996). Jerry, a sports agent who represents athletes when they negotiate with sports teams, decides to start his own company. Along the way, a woman joins him - at first just as an assistant, but with time, as a romantic partner. At one point, Jerry asks the woman how she fell in love with him. She answers: **You had me at "hello."** Her answer says that she fell in love (*you had me*) from the first moment they met (*when you first said "hello"*).

#### **One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas.**

**How he got in my pajamas, I don't know.**

This is from the movie Animal Crackers (1930). The line is given by Groucho Marx, one of the four Marx Brothers, who were a popular slap-stick comedy act at the time. Of course, the phrase is a *play on words*:

#### **One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas ...**

*I shot an elephant while I was in my pajamas.*      versus

#### **One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas ...**

*I shot an elephant that was wearing my pajamas.*

Obviously, the elephant was not wearing Groucho Marx's pajamas.

#### **I'm walking here! I'm walking here!**

This is a line from the 1969 movie Midnight Cowboy, starring Dustin Hoffman and Jon Voight. It is a bit of a sad and depressing movie about two drifters who have no jobs and no friends in New York City. This line comes as they are walking down the street and someone bumps into them, as if they are invisible to the people of New York society. The

use of the present progressive with the word 'here' is very interesting. 'Here' is usually an adverb that indicates a specific location relative to the speaker: '*it is right here.*' But in this case, it is also a noun referring to *this place* and an interjection used to *call attention* to something. "*Hey, keep the noise down ... I'm working here.*"

**My mama always said life was like a box of chocolates.**

**You never know what you're gonna get.**

This comes from Forrest Gump (1994), from the scene where Forrest is sitting on a park bench telling the story of his life. The reference is to a box of chocolates - which used to come without a '*cheat sheet*' telling you what was inside each of the chocolates. I remember this from when I was a child: when you picked out a single chocolate from the selection in the box, you had no idea what was going to be inside. It was sort of a chance as to whether you would get something you liked or something that you didn't. Forrest is saying that is what life is like: *when you choose to do something, you often don't know what it will be like and how it will turn out.*

**Houston, we have a problem.**

From the 1995 movie Apollo 13. This is the Hollywood version of the ill-fated Apollo 13 NASA space-moon landing mission of 1970. During the early part of the mission - and as shown in the movie - there is a devastating incident on the rocket ship, with important parts of the ship being destroyed. The irony of the statement is that, in spite of the seriousness of the situation - when most people would panic and scream "*the ship is falling apart and we are going to die in space,*" the astronauts stay calm and make the simple statement to the Houston control center on earth that '**Houston, we have a problem.**'

For the last three, I will take lines from the 1939 movie The Wizard of Oz. At the beginning of the movie, when Dorothy's house is taken up into the tornado and dropped in the fantasy land of Oz and Dorothy realizes this dramatic event, she says to her faithful dog, Toto, "**Toto, I have a feeling we are not in Kansas anymore.**" Obviously, as she looks around at the colorful and magical Oz, this is more than '*a feeling*.' Later on, when she encounters the Wicked Witch of the West, who wants the magic ruby slippers that Dorothy is wearing, the witch snarls in her witch voice, "**I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!**" Here, '*I'll get you*' is very ominous, along with the ironical '*my pretty*' in reference to young Dorothy. Finally, the magic words used both to get Dorothy back to her home from Oz and to emphasize her realization of the importance of home, is the phrase, repeated over and over: '**There's no place like home. There's no place like home.**' And hopefully, everyone will be able to enjoy the comfort of home as the fall comes and the weather gets cooler ... and then colder.

Movies are always a good way to learn and experience English ... choose carefully and work your way through the movie slowly – scene by scene. And if you find any '**movie quotes**' that you think are especially interesting ... or confusing ... send them to [telesaomori@gmail.com](mailto:telesaomori@gmail.com). We can share them with everyone.

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