

Film and firearms vocabulary

Look at the bolded words in the sentences below. Match the following words with the definitions, keeping context in mind.

1. Sometimes a bullet gets stuck in the **barrel** of the gun, which can cause an explosion.
 2. In the film industry, **blanks** are used in prop guns to create light and sound effects when a weapon is fired.
 3. Police discovered that several rounds of ammunition had been **discharged** from the machine gun.
 4. She worked as an **armourer** before becoming a cinematographer.
 5. They used **dummy cartridges** during filming, and added special effects later to make it look like real bullets were being fired.
 6. One particularly dangerous **stunt** resulted in several minor injuries, and filming was suspended.
 7. In medieval times, **projectile** weapons such as longbows were used in warfare.
 8. They met on the **set** of the new *Avengers* movie, and got engaged last month.
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- a. ammunition for a gun that contains no explosives; used to check weapon function or for crew training
 - b. an action in a film that is dangerous and is usually performed by someone skilled
 - c. an object that is thrown or shot forwards with force
 - d. a person who is responsible for maintaining weapons on a **film set**
 - e. a place where a film or TV series is recorded, or where a play is performed
 - f. containers filled with explosive powder that do not contain a bullet
 - g. the long part of a gun that is shaped like a tube
 - h. to fire a gun

Prop guns in the film world

An accident waiting to happen?

1. The fatal shooting of Halyna Hutchins has sent ripples through the film industry and beyond. The incident, which Alec Baldwin described as a "tragic accident", has resulted in an investigation that could have broader implications for safety within the entertainment world. Already, there have been suggestions that shortcuts were taken during the production of the movie *Rust*, of which Hutchins was Director of Photography. There have also been questions asked about the usage of prop guns in general, reopening a debate dating back to 1993, when actor Brandon Lee was shot dead on the set of *The Crow*.
2. Lee's death propelled the topic of gun safety on film sets into the public eye. In this instance, the prop gun was loaded with poorly-made dummy cartridges which had been created from live ones. Due to carelessness and ignorance of good practices, a real bullet became stuck in the barrel of the gun, which went unnoticed during safety checks. Even though the rest of the bullets were replaced by blanks, the live round was forced out of the weapon during a crucial scene in the film, resulting in Lee being struck in the stomach. He died in hospital.
3. Despite the media attention and debates that followed, there have been a number of on-set accidents over the years. According to The Associated Press, between 1990 to 2014, at least 194 serious accidents, including 43 deaths, occurred on television and film sets. Most commonly, these involved stunt doubles, such as Harry O'Connor, who lost his life when he hit a bridge in Prague. In 2015, Olivia Jackson, a stuntwoman working on the film *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter*, crashed into a piece of camera equipment during a motorcycle scene. Although she survived, she suffered various serious injuries, including nerve damage around her spine.
4. Potential injury or death may be an inevitable risk in the life of a stunt double, but for crew members like Halyna Hutchins, human error may be to blame. There have been suggestions that Hannah Gutierrez-Reed, the armourer responsible for overseeing all weapons on set, was inexperienced with reports of complaints about the way in which she handled firearms. During the filming of *The Old Way*, Gutierrez-Reed's first film as a lead armourer, actor Nicholas Cage walked off set when she discharged a gun without warning. The assistant director, Dave Halls, had also received complaints, including allegations that he had ignored safety protocols. Prior to the fatal shooting of Hutchins, Gutierrez-Reed placed three prop guns on a cart. Hall later selected one of these - a .45 Long colt revolver - and handed it to Baldwin.
5. After the *Rust* incident, members of the film industry spoke out against the use of guns as props in movies. Shannon Lee, the sister of Brandon Lee, said that "with all the special effects that are possible and all of the technology, there is no reason to have a prop gun or a gun on a set that can fire a projectile of any sort." There has already been action taken: Alexi Hawley, showrunner of television series *The Rookie* announced that live guns would be banned on set. Instead, Airsoft guns would be used, with special effects added in post-production to create the illusion of gunfire. Perhaps the film and television industry is finally ready to move on from prop guns to safer alternatives.

Sources: BBC, The Guardian, Associated Press, Los Angeles Times

Vocabulary

Before you carefully read the article on weapons used in the films, scan through the text again to find a word that means the following.

1. resulting in the loss of life (para 1): _____
2. something that expands outwards through something (para 1): _____
3. the effects that actions or decisions will have on something in the future (para 1) _____
4. push a subject into general conversation (para 2): _____
5. the long bone running down the back of a human (para 3): _____
6. being in charge and making sure that a job or an activity is done correctly (para 4): _____
7. accusations or statements about something without proof (para 4): _____
8. a system of rules or acceptable behaviours, particularly in the workplace (para 4): _____

Reading comprehension

Part A: Decide whether the following statements based on the text are true, false or not given.

1. Hutchins was producing the movie *Rust* at the time of her death.
2. *The Crow* was a movie released in the year 1993.
3. Brandon Lee died after being struck in the stomach by a dummy cartridge.
4. Stuntman Harry O'Connor was working on an action film.
5. Olivia Jackson was fatally wounded during the filming of *Resident Evil: The Final Chapter*.
6. It has been suggested that the woman in charge of weapons on the set of *Rust* was inexperienced.
7. The Assistant Director of *Rust* chose a real gun from three prop weapons and passed it to Alec Baldwin.
8. Some members of the film industry think prop guns should still be used on set.
9. The television series *The Rookie* will no longer use live guns on set.

Part B: Now, complete the short text with collocations (a pair of words that often go together) using words from the article.

The _____¹ world has been shaken by a series of accidents on film and television sets. _____² injuries to _____³ doubles have been blamed on human error, leading to questions being raised about _____⁴ protocols. Additionally, recent deaths have led to calls for prop guns to be banned, with _____⁵ taken by one television showrunner already.

Extended activity/writing homework

Choose ONE of the writing tasks below.

- Essay

Read the essay topic below. Write an opinion essay of 250-300 words. You should choose a position – supporting or disagreeing with the statement – and provide evidence for your answer, as well as an introduction and conclusion.

Guns have no place on screen in the 21st century. Aside from safety issues, they encourage real-life violence.

- Letter of complaint

Write a letter of complaint to the production team following a series of health and safety breaches on a film set you've been working on. Your letter should include suggestions for the future, as well as mentioning the issues you've had during your time on set.