

THE DEPARTED

Screenplay Analysis Report

Writer: William Monahan (based on 'Infernal Affairs')

Overview

Logline: A young cop goes undercover in Boston's Irish mob while a mole within the state police secretly works for the same crime boss, pitting the two men against each other in a deadly race to uncover the other's identity.

Genre: Crime / Thriller / Drama

Setting: Boston, Massachusetts – police headquarters, criminal haunts, and city locations

Keywords: undercover, mole, mob, corruption, identity, betrayal, investigation, Boston

Script Score (Balanced Professional Assessment)

Character Development — 8/10

The dual-protagonist structure gives both Billy Costigan and Colin Sullivan strong arcs, with clear internal and external conflicts. Frank Costello, Dignam and Queenan are memorable, though some supporting characters are less developed.

Plot Construction — 9/10

The script is tightly structured, weaving parallel investigations and deceptions with precision. Reversals are well seeded, and tension escalates consistently towards the climactic rooftop sequence.

Dialogue — 9/10

Dialogue is sharp, character-specific and often darkly funny. It strongly reflects Boston's working-class and criminal milieus while maintaining clarity of stakes and subtext.

Originality — 8/10

Adapted from 'Infernal Affairs', the narrative framework is not original, but the Boston setting, character dynamics, and thematic focus on institutional corruption give this take a distinct identity.

Emotional Engagement — 9/10

The audience is heavily invested in both leads' survival and exposure. The constant risk of discovery and the emotional toll of undercover work are strongly felt.

Theme & Message — 7/10

Themes of identity, loyalty, corruption and moral rot within institutions are clear, though they often serve the plot's mechanics more than the other way around.

Overall Rating — 8.5/10

What's Working

- Compelling dual-protagonist design with mirrored pressures and stakes.
- High-tension undercover scenarios that constantly threaten exposure.
- Distinct, memorable character voices, particularly Costello and Dignam.
- Strong pacing with regular reversals and rising stakes.
- Well-judged mix of dark humour and genuine menace.

Areas for Development

- Some secondary characters could benefit from clearer internal motivation beyond function in the plot.
- Madolyn's role as a romantic connection to both leads is effective but could be deepened to emphasise her own perspective.
- The thematic critique of institutional corruption could be highlighted more overtly in the resolution.

Major Character Analysis

Billy Costigan

Overview: A volatile but intelligent cop from a criminal family background, recruited for deep cover work because of his heritage and emotional toughness.

Strengths: Emotionally raw and sympathetic; his vulnerability and fear in the undercover world create strong audience identification.

Weaknesses: His self-destructive tendencies can occasionally overshadow his tactical intelligence.

Function: One of the two narrative anchors; represents the cost of duty and the psychological toll of undercover work.

Archetype: The Doomed Hero

Colin Sullivan

Overview: A polished, ambitious state police officer secretly groomed by Costello to be a mole within the department.

Strengths: Complex dual life; morally compromised yet human, with a clear sense of ambition and self-preservation.

Weaknesses: His emotional life beyond career and survival is less explored than Billy's.

Function: Mirror protagonist and antagonist; embodies institutional corruption from within.

Archetype: The Corrupted Insider

Frank Costello

Overview: A charismatic and frightening mob boss who manipulates both the police and his own crew with brutal ease.

Strengths: Memorable, unpredictable presence; drives much of the film's tension and moral ambiguity.

Weaknesses: Later revelations slightly undercut his mystique, though this also humanises him.

Function: Primary antagonist and puppet master; shapes both Billy and Colin's lives and choices.

Archetype: The Crime King

Sergeant Dignam

Overview: A foul-mouthed, sharp-witted cop who serves as both comic relief and a moral counterpoint to institutional politics.

Strengths: Highly entertaining; his blunt honesty and refusal to play politics make him instantly distinctive.

Weaknesses: Limited personal arc; operates mainly as a force of personality and pay-off mechanism.

Function: Represents unvarnished anger at corruption; delivers catharsis in the final act.

Archetype: The Loose Cannon Truth-Teller

Captain Queenan

Overview: A calm, principled leader who shepherds Billy through his undercover mission and anchors the moral side of the police.

Strengths: Warm, steady presence; his death is a key emotional blow and structural turning point.

Weaknesses: Serves primarily as a mentor figure; we see less of his internal life beyond the job.

Function: Mentor and moral compass; his loss destabilises both Billy and the investigation.

Archetype: The Tragic Mentor

Madolyn

Overview: A psychologist romantically involved with both Colin and Billy, unknowingly tying their lives together.

Strengths: Offers a different perspective on both men; scenes with Billy are especially emotionally effective.

Weaknesses: Her own inner world and stakes could be further explored.

Function: Emotional and thematic bridge between the two leads; humanises and complicates their journeys.

Archetype: The Conflicted Confidante

Plot Summary

In Boston, mob boss Frank Costello grooms young Colin Sullivan to infiltrate the state police as his long-term mole. Years later, Colin is a rising star within the Special Investigations Unit, while Billy Costigan—a recruit with a criminal family background—is selected by Captain Queenan and Sergeant Dignam to go deep undercover in Costello’s organisation.

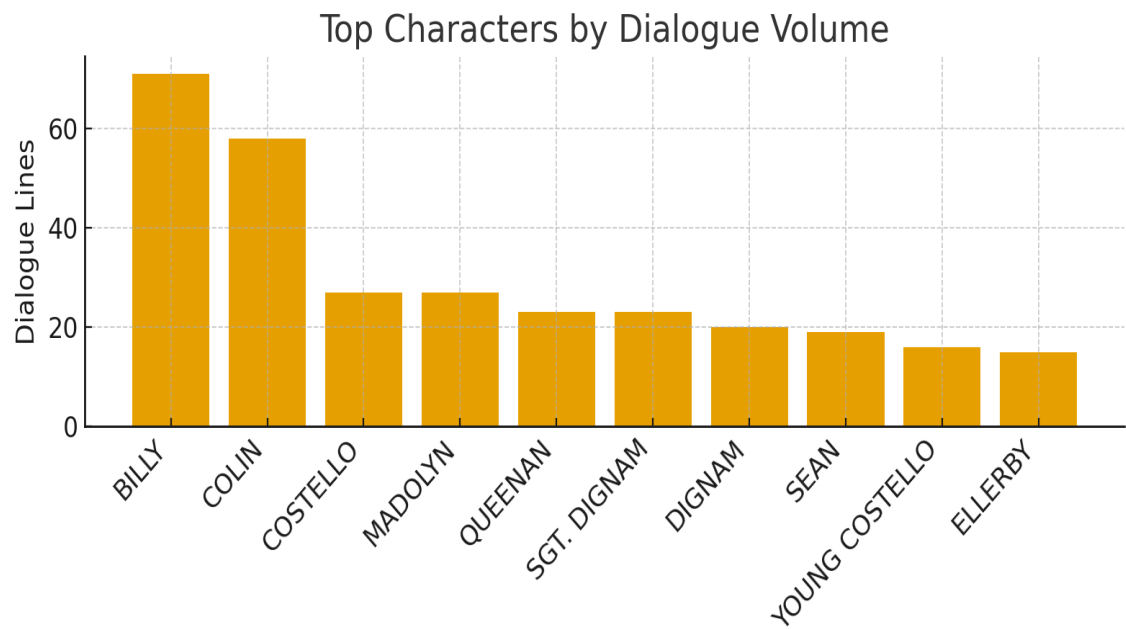
As Billy endures the brutality and paranoia of mob life, feeding information back to Queenan, Colin uses his position to keep Costello ahead of the police. Both sides realise they have a leak, and a tense race begins: Billy and Colin each try to identify the other without exposing themselves. Madolyn, a police psychiatrist, becomes romantically involved with both men, unknowingly linking their personal lives.

Queenan’s death during a failed meet with Billy raises stakes and destabilises the police unit. Billy grows increasingly desperate to escape his assignment and reclaim a normal life, while Colin scrambles to erase his connection to Costello as the noose tightens around the mob boss. The story builds to a rooftop confrontation where Billy attempts to bring Colin to justice, only for further betrayals and sudden violence to unravel any hope of clean resolution. The final sequences underline the pervasive corruption of the system and the tragic cost for those who tried to do the right thing within it.

Visual Data & Graphs

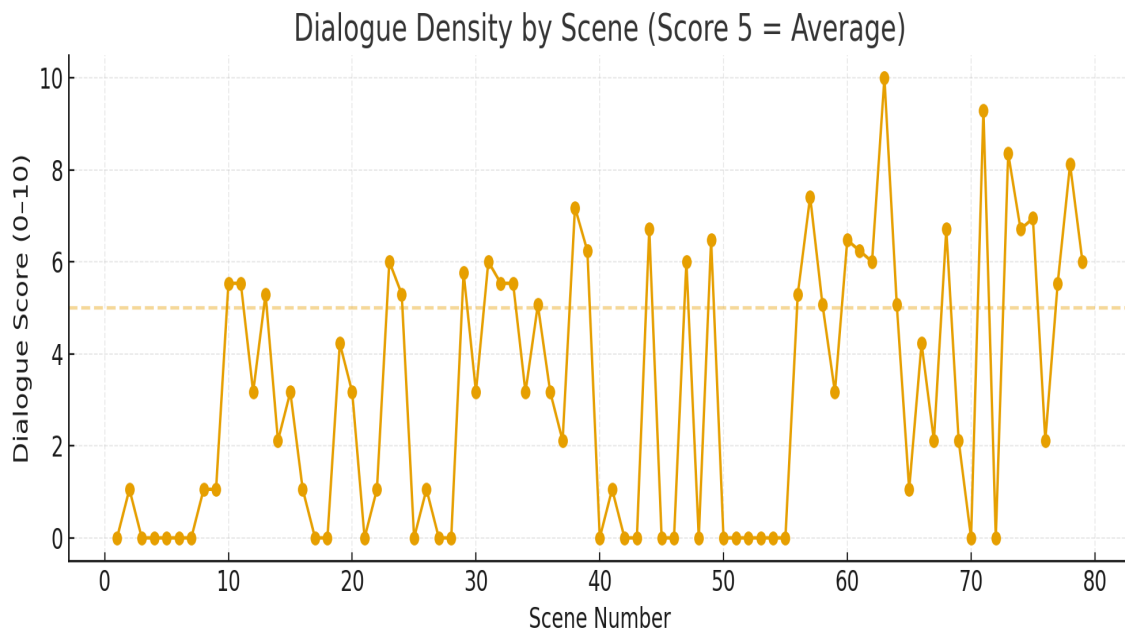
Top Characters by Dialogue Volume

This chart highlights which characters dominate the spoken dialogue, giving a quick sense of where performance and narrative weight lie across the ensemble.



Dialogue Density by Scene

Each scene's dialogue score is normalised so that 5 represents the screenplay's average dialogue density. Scenes above the line are more talk-heavy; those below rely more on visuals, action, or silence.



Emotion, Action and Dialogue by Scene

This combined graph tracks three semantic scores across the film: emotional intensity, physical action, and dialogue density. It provides an at-a-glance view of how the script modulates tension, kinetic energy and talkiness over its full length.

Emotion, Action, and Dialogue by Scene

