

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

PART 1

KATIE MCKNIGHT, PH.D.



Overview and Tips for Classroom Implementation

Idiomatic expressions are particularly problematic for English language learners because the meaning is implied, not directly stated. Most idiomatic expressions have cultural references that have been long forgotten, even by native English speakers.

Step-by-Step Lesson Instructions

- Step One** You will need to photocopy (figure 1) for student handouts. The phrases listed on the handout are a sample of the many idiomatic expressions that are commonly used in American English.
- Step Two** Distribute the handouts and ask the students to guess the meaning of each idiomatic expression. The students can work either independently or in pairs.
- Step Three** Using a variety of sources, have the students verify the guess. An idiomatic dictionary and various websites (listed below) will help the students to verify the guess. Using the websites and reference books, have the students trace the origin of some of our more common idiomatic expressions.
Helpful websites include: www.idiomsite.com
www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms
www.yourdictionary.com
- Step Four** Ask the students to share their answers with the class and how they created a definition for each idiomatic expression. Tally the students to see how many of the students' guesses were accurate.

Additional Tips

In addition to completing the handout, I always like to have the students illustrate the idiomatic expressions. Visualization is essential for vocabulary internalization.

FIGURE 1

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Directions: Guess the meaning of each of the following idiomatic expressions. Using a web search engine, look for websites like www.idiomsite.com or www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms to verify each of your guesses. Also use these websites to discover the origin of these idiomatic expressions.

CHARACTER

GUESS THE MEANING

VERIFY THE MEANING

ORIGIN OF THE IDIOMATIC EXPRESSION

A picture paints a thousand words

Back seat driver

Bad hair day

Break a leg

Chip on his shoulder

Cut to the chase

Diamond in the rough

Face the music

Houston, we have a problem

Like a chicken without its head

Nerd

OK

Pedal to the metal

Play by ear

Raining cats and dogs

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

PART 2

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Overview and Tips for Classroom Implementation

Lesson 19 provides students with additional practice to learn about idiomatic expressions. Learning about idiomatic expressions is particularly useful for English language learners since the meaning is implied and not directly stated. Most idiomatic expressions have cultural references that have been long forgotten, even by native English speakers.

Step-by-Step Lesson Instructions

- Step One** You will need to photocopy (figure 2) for student handouts. The phrases listed on the handout are a sample of the many idiomatic expressions that are commonly used in American English.
- Step Two** Distribute the handouts and ask the students to guess the meaning of each idiomatic expression. The students can work either independently or in pairs.
- Step Three** Using a variety of sources, have the students verify the guess. An idiomatic dictionary and various websites (listed below) will help the students to verify the guess. Using the websites and reference books, have the students trace the origin of some of our more common idiomatic expressions.
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FIGURE 2

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

Directions: Guess the meaning of each of the following idiomatic expressions. Using a web search engine, look for websites like www.idiomsite.com or www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms to verify each of your guesses. Also use these websites to discover the origin of these idiomatic expressions.

CHARACTER

GUESS THE
MEANING

VERIFY THE
MEANING

ORIGIN OF THE
IDIOMATIC
EXPRESSION

Apple of my eye

Back to square one

None of your beeswax

Brownie points

Close, but no cigar

Deadline

Elvis has left the
building

Get out of bed on
the wrong side

Knock on wood

Murphy's law

Peeping Tom

Shot in the dark

Tongue in cheek

Under the weather

Wolf in sheep's
clothing