**Idioms Are Always Easier in Somebody Else’s Class**

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Key to suggested activities.

Pairs of Adjectives

* Ancient and modern
* For better or for worse

Pairs of Nouns

* Bed and Breakfast
* Friend or Foe
* Heart and Soul
* Heaven and Earth

Collective Noun Phrases

1. A **colony** of ants.
2. A **drove** of cattle.
3. A **flight**/**flock** of birds.
4. A **flock** of sheep.
5. A **herd** of pigs.
6. A **litter** of puppies
7. A **pack** of wolves.
8. A **swarm** of bees.
9. A **school** of dolphins.

Compound adjectives

* A hit-and-run driver
* A nine-to-five job

Adjectives and Noun Phrases

1. E ( An iron will )
2. D ( Second thoughts )
3. C ( An ivory tower )
4. B ( A tall tale )
5. A ( A wet blanket )

Noun Phrases

1. A bolt from the blue.
2. A bull in china shop.
3. A cuckoo in the nest
4. A feather in your cap

Idioms From Special Categories (some suggested answers)

Colours

Red with embarrassment /Red handed /To see red/ a red-letter day/ red-hot/ to be in the red

As white as snow/ as white as sheet/

A blue Monday/ Once in a blue moon / to turn the air blue / to feel blue

As black as coal/ the black sheep of the family/to be in the black/

Origins of idioms (Full table)

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| IDIOM | ORIGIN | MEANING |
| Every cloud has a silver lining. | *This expression of hope was used by the English poet John Milton in 1634. He must have noticed that if the sun is behind a dark cloud, light shines out around the edges like a silver lining. With this idiom Milton said that even the worst situation (“cloud”) has something hopeful or more positive about it. ( “silver lining”)* | There is something good in every bad situation. |
| Gild the lily. | William Shakespeare used a similar expression in his play “King John.” “To gild refined gold, to paint the lily…is wasteful and ridiculous excess.” Over the years, the saying got shortened to just “gild the lily.” *Gild* means to cover with a thick layer of gold. Why did Shakespeare use a lily? Because it is already a beautiful flower and covering it with gold to make it more beautiful would be unnecessary. | *To spoil something that is already beautiful by adding something extra or not needed.* |
| Go fly a kite. | *Something that you say in order to tell someone who is annoying you to go away* | Go away, leave, stop bothering me! |
| It’s Greek to me. | William Shakespeare used this phrase in his play, “Julius Caesar.” In the play, which takes place in 44 BC, a Roman who spoke only Latin said that he had heard another man speaking Greek, but he could not understand what he was saying. | *Too difficult to understand. Unknown.* |
| Head and shoulders above someone. | *When it was first used in the 1800s this saying referred to height. A very tall person towers over a very short one. But over the years the meaning has been stretched to include any skill one has that is better than someone else’s. So a 5 foot person may be head and shoulders a 6 food person in math, tap dancing and writing stories.* | Far superior, much better than. |
| Head over heels in love. | This expression goes back to the ancient Romans and means that being in love with someone makes one’s emotions topsy-turvy, upside-down. | *Completely and helplessly in love* |
| Hit the jackpot. | *In the 19th century America, when this phrase was first used, if you hit the jackpot in a card game you won all the money. Today, the saying refers to any kind of lucky success in any area of life.* | To be very lucky, to achieve amazing success. |
| It takes two to tango. | In the 1920s, tango, a dance style, became popular in the United States, and so did this expression. Just as it takes two dancers to do the tango, there are certain activities that need the cooperation of two people in order to work. | *Two people are required to accomplish this deed.* |
| Keep up with the Joneses. | In 1913, a popular comic strip called “Keeping Up With the Joneses” appeared in many American newspapers, starting with *The New York Globe*. The cartoon was about the experiences of a newly-married young man, and the cartoonist based it on his own life. He chose the name Jones because it was a popular name in America. The name of the comic strip became a popular expression that meant to try hard to follow the latest fashion and live in the style of those around you. | *To try to keep up with what your neighbors have socially and financially. To work hard to have possessions as good as your neighbors.* |
| Kick the bucket. | *This expression was used in England as early as the 16th century. It came from the practice of hanging a criminal by having him stand on a bucket, putting a noose around his neck, and then kicking the bucket out from under him. Prisoners who committed suicide by hanging themselves in their cells sometimes “kicked a bucket” out from under their owl legs. Today this slang expression can be applied to any manner of death.* | To die. |
| Kill two birds with one stone. | There was a similar expression in Latin about 2000 years ago, and kill two birds with one stone became popular in English many centuries later. It comes from hunting birds by throwing stones at them or shooting stones at them with a slingshot. If you actually killed two birds with just one stone, a practically impossible feat, you would be carrying out two tasks with just one single effort. | To do two things by one action, to get two results by just one effort. |
| Let the cat out of the bag. | Centuries ago in England, you might have bought a costly pig at a farmer’s market. But, if the merchant was dishonest and put a worthless cat into the bag instead of a piglet, you might not find out until you got home and let the cat out of the bag. (Related expressions : buy a pig in a poke, spill the beans.) | *To give away a secret.* |
| Mad as a hatter. | *Mercury used to be used in the making of hats. This was known to have affected the nervous systems of hatters, causing them to tremble and appear insane* | Completely crazy, strange, eccentric. |
| Pull your leg. | In the late 1800s, people sometimes tripped other people by catching their legs with a cane or running a string across the sidewalk. Sometimes it was just for fun, at other times robbers did it to steal from the victim after he or she had fallen. | *To tell someone something that is not true as a way of joking with them.* |
| Raining cats and dogs. | The most probable source of 'raining cats and dogs' is the prosaic fact that, in the filthy streets of 17th/18th century England, heavy rain would occasionally carry along dead animals and other debris. The animals didn't fall from the sky, but the sight of dead cats and dogs floating by in storms could well have caused the coining of this colorful phrase. | To rain heavily. |