

# UNDERSTANDING IDIOMS



<http://www.yourowgirl.com/thedirt/2006/09/07/black-seaman-tomato/>

## INSIDE & OUT

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SLM 507

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# INTRODUCTION:

In your English class, you have been learning about various types of figurative language. You've learned that authors use figurative language to help readers visualize and to make their writing more colorful. So far, you have discussed similes, metaphors, hyperboles, and personification.

Today, your English teacher and I will work together to teach you about another type of figurative language--the idiom.

# OBJECTIVES:

Time Flies!



Students will be able to:

- define "idiom"
- use online resources to become familiar with several popular idioms in the English language
- evaluate idiom websites for design and usefulness
- plan, design, and create an instructional PowerPoint slide to teach classmates about an English language idiom

# What is an **IDIOM**?

**Idiom** = a "saying" that is peculiar to a particular language or group

- The combination of words in an idiom has a meaning that is different from the meanings of the individual words themselves.
- Idioms can have a literal meaning in one situation and a different idiomatic meaning in another situation.

# Literal vs. Idiomatic Meaning

Definition taken from: <http://www.idiomconnection.com/whatis.html#A2>

**Example:** *To sit on the fence*

~ Literally means that someone is sitting on a fence



[www.barkers-int.co.uk/images/fence.jpg](http://www.barkers-int.co.uk/images/fence.jpg)

Jeff sat on the fence to see the concert in the park.

~ Idiomatically means that someone is not making a clear choice regarding some issue



[images.jupiterimages.com/.../55/73/22137355.jpg](http://images.jupiterimages.com/.../55/73/22137355.jpg)

The senator sat on the fence and refused to give his opinion about the war in Iraq.

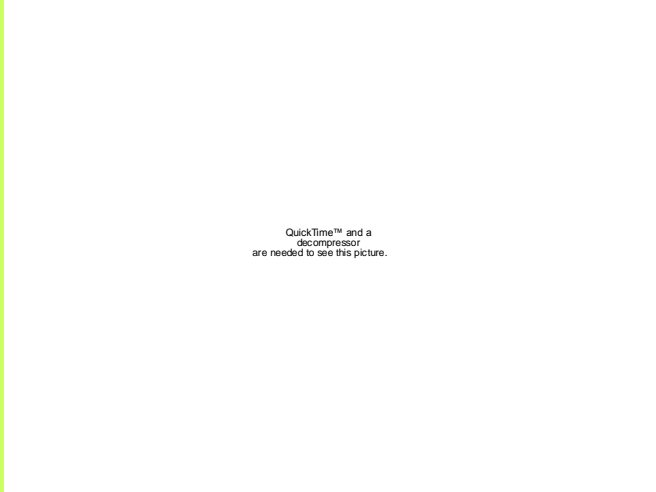
Let's take  
a look  
at some  
idioms in  
the English  
language!

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are needed to see this picture.

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

"The apple of my eye"

# "The apple of my eye"



## Idiomatic Meaning:

something or someone  
cherished above others

## IDIOMS IN CONTEXT

Henry, my fifth grade crush, remained **the apple of my eye** until the eighth grade, when I fell in love with Billy.



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"All your ducks in a row"

# "All your ducks in a row"

## Idiomatic Meaning:

to have one's affairs or business in order; to be organized

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**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

Be sure to get **all your ducks in a row** before going on vacation: pack all of your clothes, ask a neighbor to feed your cat, and stop your mail at the post office.

"Keep  
your  
fingers  
crossed"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
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"Keep your  
fingers crossed"

Idiomatic Meaning:

to hope for the  
best

**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

I think my job interview  
went well, but I won't  
know until tomorrow.

I'm **keeping my fingers  
crossed!**

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"Hit the books"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

"Hit the books"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

"Hit the books"

# IDIOMS IN CONTEXT

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are needed to see this picture.

Idiomatic  
Meaning:  
to study

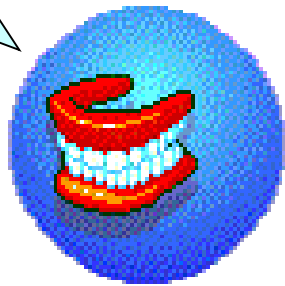
Meg was dying to go shopping with her friends, but with her English exam the next day, she decided to **hit the books** instead.

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"Bite off more  
than you can chew"

YUMMY!



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are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

**"Bite off more than you can chew"**

Idiomatic Meaning:

to take responsibility for  
more than one can manage

# **IDIOMS IN CONTEXT**

When my mother offered to be my wedding coordinator, she bit off more than she could chew! Now she has no free time for herself.

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"Until you're  
blue in  
the face"

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are needed to see this picture.

"Until you're  
blue in  
the face"

Idiomatic Meaning:

forever

## ***IDIOMS IN CONTEXT***

You can beg until you're  
blue in the face, but I  
still won't let you drive  
my brand new Nissan  
370Z Coupe!

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decompressor  
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# "Elbow grease"

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Idiomatic Meaning:

hard work; effort

"Elbow grease"

**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

Heather knew it would take a little elbow grease to remove the yellowed wallpaper in her grandmother's old house.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are required to see this picture

"Tight-fisted"

# "Tight-fisted"

## Idiomatic Meaning:

unwilling to spend  
money unnecessarily;  
very frugal

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**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**



My neighbor was too  
tight-fisted to donate  
even a dollar to my  
school's fundraiser.

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decompressor  
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"Kick the bucket"

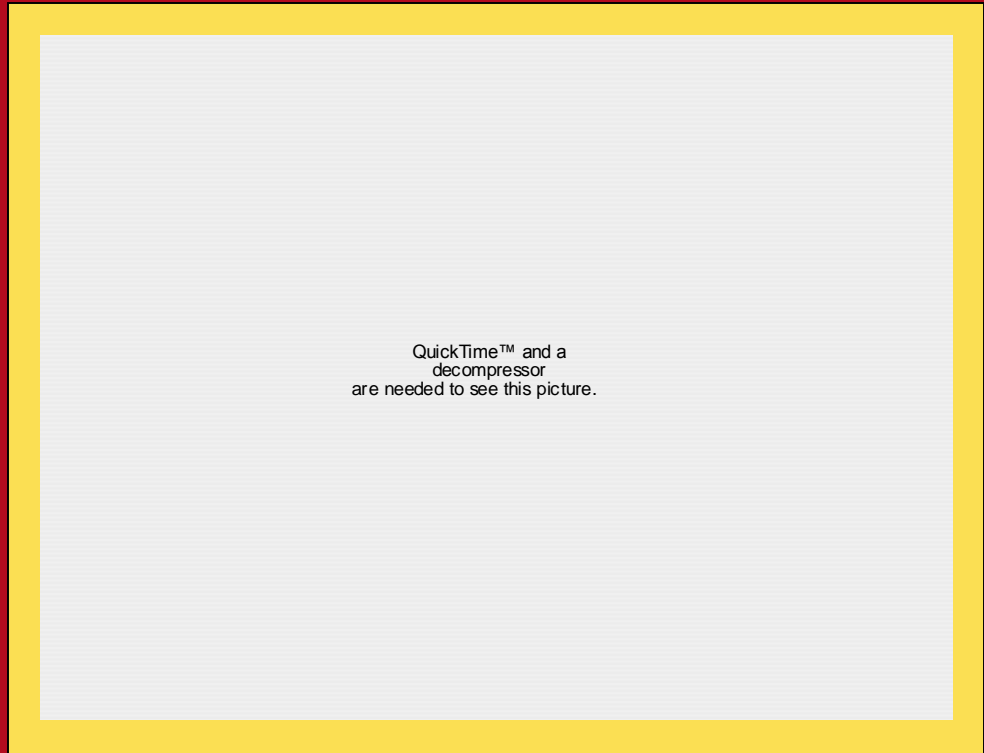
# IDIOMS IN CONTEXT

The annoying mosquito finally **kicked the bucket** when it drowned in my glass of iced tea.

Idiomatic

Meaning:

to die



"Kick the bucket"



"Put your foot  
in your mouth"

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

"Put your foot  
in your mouth"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

## Idiomatic Meaning:

to say something that causes pain or embarrassment; to say something stupid or embarrassing

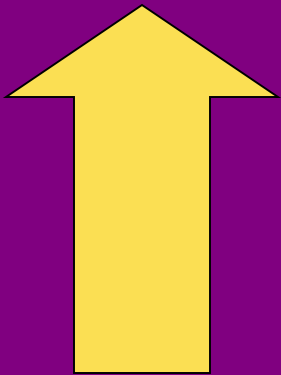
**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

Bob tries to say nice things about his boss , but somehow he always seems to **put his foot in his mouth!**

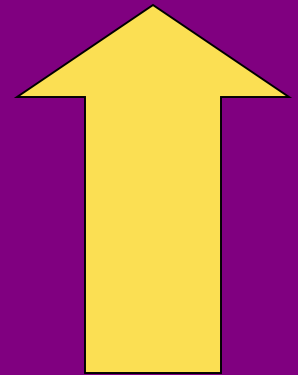
QuickTime™ and a  
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"Over your head"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.



QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.



# "Over your head"

## Idiomatic Meaning:

Too difficult or complicated for someone to understand

## IDIOMS IN CONTEXT

Html code is over my head, therefore I use a program like iWeb to format and encode the web pages I create.

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QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

# "Bookworm"

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QuickTime™ and a  
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are needed to see this picture.

“Bookworm”

Idiomatic Meaning:

someone who reads a lot

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are needed to see this picture.

**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

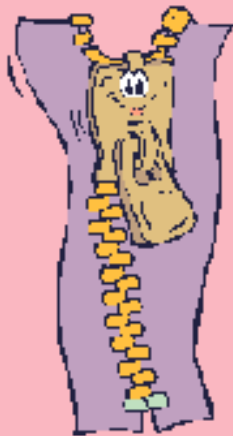
Elizabeth is a bookworm; she  
reads at least five novels a week!

"Zip your lip"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Idiomatic Meaning:

to keep something  
secret



[http://www.gifs.net/image/Hobbies\\_and\\_Entertainment/Sewing\\_and\\_Stitching/Zipper\\_2/10505](http://www.gifs.net/image/Hobbies_and_Entertainment/Sewing_and_Stitching/Zipper_2/10505)

# "Zip your lip"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

You must not tell *anyone* who won the contest! We will announce it on the morning news show tomorrow, so please, **zip your lip!**



QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

"On a slow boat to China"

# "On a slow boat to China"

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

Idiomatic Meaning:

describes  
something that is  
very slow & takes a  
long time

**IDIOMS  
IN CONTEXT**

Amazon.com must have sent my package **on a slow boat to China**, as it's been three weeks since I placed my order.

# STUDENT CHALLENGE:

1. Complete the "Understanding Idioms" Scavenger Hunt worksheet and the "Website Evaluation" as you explore the following websites. These activities will help you become familiar with some other commonly used English language idioms:

 [The Idiom Connection](#)

 [GoEnglish.com Idioms](#)

 [English Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions](#)

# "Understanding Idioms" Scavenger Hunt

Use the following websites to locate the idiomatic meaning for each idiom listed below. Then use each idiom in an original sentence with context clues.

The Idiom Connection <http://www.idiomconnection.com/>

GoEnglish.com: Idioms <http://www.goenglish.com/Idioms.asp>

English Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions <http://www.usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/>

1) Idiom: “on (someone or something’s) last leg”

Idiomatic Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Original Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Idiom: “ride or hang on (someone’s) coattails”

Idiomatic Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Original Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Idiom: “have a bone to pick (with someone)”

Idiomatic Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Original Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Idiom: “I’m all ears.”

Idiomatic Meaning: \_\_\_\_\_

Original Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

# "Understanding Idioms" Scavenger Hunt Website Evaluation

Now that you have explored three online resources for locating idiomatic meanings, it's time to evaluate how user-friendly and effective these websites were in the completion of your scavenger hunt activity.

|   | The Idiom Connection | GoEnglish.com: Idioms | English Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Is the purpose of this website clear?   |                      |                       |  |
| Is the sponsoring organization's name visible on the home page?   |                      |                       |  |
| Are there advertisements on this website? If so, are they clearly separated from informational content? |                      |                       |  |
| Does this site have a navigational toolbar?   |                      |                       |  |
| Does this website have a clear, organized set-up?   |                      |                       |  |
| Does this website contain idiomatic meanings AND example sentences?                                     |                      |                       |  |
| Overall, was this website easy to use when searching for idiomatic meanings?                            |                      |                       |  |

1) Which of the three websites was the most useful for this assignment? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2) Which of the three websites did you find the most difficult to use? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please turn this activity and evaluation in to the media specialist when you are finished! Thanks!

# STUDENT CHALLENGE:

2. Choose an English language idiom that has not been featured in this instructional presentation.
3. Complete a paper template for a PowerPoint slide (like the ones I've put together) to teach your idiom to the class. Your slide must include:
  - the English language idiom
  - the idiomatic meaning
  - a sentence using the idiom in context
  - a sketch or detailed explanation of the digital photograph you will use in your slide to represent the literal meaning of the idiom

# STUDENT CHALLENGE:

4. After your idiom template has been approved, you will be asked to bring in the props (if any) needed to stage your idiom image. We will digitally photograph your idiom image, and you will complete the final PowerPoint slides here at school.
5. If, for some reason, you determine that your idiom cannot be photographed here at school, you will need to digitally photograph the image yourself and either email it or save it to your personal flash drive.

# Your final PowerPoint slide will be graded using the following rubric:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Ideas</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- idiom is an actual idiom</li><li>- accurate idiomatic meaning</li><li>- sentence uses the idiom correctly and provides adequate context clues</li><li>- digital image clearly conveys the literal meaning of the idiom</li></ul> | <p style="text-align: center;">_____/5 x 2 = ____/10</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Organization</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- all information is clearly displayed on PPT slide</li></ul>   | <p style="text-align: center;">_____/5 = ____/5</p>      |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Conventions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- no errors in spelling, capitalization, usage, &amp; punctuation</li></ul>  | <p style="text-align: center;">_____/5 = ____/5</p>      |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Presentation</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- colors and fonts on PPT slide are easy to read</li><li>- digital image is clear (not blurry)</li><li>- slide layout is visually appealing</li></ul>   | <p style="text-align: center;">_____/5 = ____/5</p>      |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Portfolio</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- slide template, printed final copy, and reflection form have been turned in</li></ul>  | <p style="text-align: center;">_____/5 = ____/5</p>      |
| <p><b>Total Score = ____/30</b></p>   | <p><b>Total Percentage = ____%</b></p>                   |



# Idiom PowerPoint Project Template

Idiom =

Idiomatic Meaning =

Sketch/Description of Image

Sentence using your  
idiom in context =

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Block \_\_\_\_\_

# Acknowledgements & Sources:

## Digital Photograph Models and Prop Assistants:

"Keep your fingers crossed" - Marisa Penn

"Hit the books" - Sam Mongilio

"Bite off more than you can chew" - Jennifer Baik & Alice Lee

"Until you're blue in the face" - Daniel Goldstein

"Elbow grease" - Tyler Brown & Agastya Parikh

"Tight-fisted" - Sam Mongilio, Jennifer Baik, Marisa Penn, & Alice Lee

"Kick the bucket" - Joey Kader

"Put your foot in your mouth" - Sam Mongilio

"Over your head" - Joey Kader

"Bookworm" - Daniel Goldstein

"Zip your lip" - Jennifer Baik, Sam Mongilio, & Alice Lee

"On a slow boat to China" - Agastya Parikh

# Acknowledgements & Sources:

## Graphics and Content Sources:

### Graphics:

Digital photos were edited using The Print Shop software for Macintosh. Photographs were taken by Christy Batelka unless a website URL was provided. URL addresses have also been listed under all images acquired under the provisions of the fair use copyright law.

### Content:

Idiom notes and idiomatic meanings have been quoted (for the most part) from [www.idiomconnection.com](http://www.idiomconnection.com). The "Idioms in Context" sample sentences are original.

