

Idioms, Adages, and Proverbs

4th Grade DESK Resource

Idioms

idiom: a combination of words that have a meaning understood by people who speak the language, but cannot found in the dictionary

Idiom example – definition – followed by two examples

Not hurt a flea- to not hurt anything or anyone

- a. My mom advised us to not hurt a flea.
- b. You should not hurt a flea, that's bad.

Hive of activity- a busy place

- a. Our house is the hive of activity every Sunday.
- b. The school turned into a hive of activity last week.

Stir up a hornet's nest- to make trouble, to make people angry

- a. My brother likes to stir up a hornet's nest.
- b. He stirred up a hornet's nest when he called her ugly.

Bug-eyed- to be wide-eyed with surprise

- a. His father's gift made him bug-eyed.
- b. I was bug-eyed when I saw my favorite band.

Clam up- to stop talking or to refuse to talk

- a. He clammed up after his mother scolded him.
- b. She decided to clam up all weekend.

Without a doubt- certainly, for sure

- a. She is the prettiest girl in town without a doubt.
- b. You're without a doubt the most intelligent person I've met.

Bug someone- to annoy or irritate someone

- a. Stop bugging me, I'm busy.
- b. Paulo can't stop bugging my sister.

Green around the gills- to be looking sick

- a. She is green around the gills so the teacher sent her to the school clinic.
- b. Are you alright? You look green around the gills.

Sick as a dog- to be very sick

- a. I was as sick as a dog so I didn't attend school.
- b. You have to bring her to the hospital, she's as sick as a dog.

Over the top- very excessive

- a. She dressed over the top for the party.
- b. Your expression over her remark is over the top.

Doozy- something extraordinary or strange

- a. Her speech about abortion is doozy.
- b. Their parents gave them doozy names.

A dime a dozen- anything that is common and easy to get

- a. I don't think that happiness is a dime a dozen.
- b. They say that love is a dime a dozen.

Bite your tongue- to avoid talking

- a. Bite your tongue and listen to me.
- b. Mom asked Paulo to bite his tongue during the show.

Hit the hay- go to bed or go to sleep

- a. You should hit the hay now, it's past midnight.
- b. I will hit the hay after I finish my homework.

When pigs fly- never

- a. Amanda will date you when pigs fly.
- b. I will ace a Math exam when pigs fly.

A piece of cake- very easy

- a. This experiment is a piece of cake.
- b. Writing an essay is a piece of cake for Nan.

Flesh and blood- family

- a. He cannot betray his own flesh and blood.
- b. I didn't know that we are flesh and blood.

High on the hog- living in luxury

- a. Shiela has been high on the hog since the day she was born.
- b. Being high on the hog can be dangerous sometimes.

Know the ropes- to understand the details

- a. She knows all the ropes about this business.
- b. Anne knows the ropes about Literature.

Dry run- rehearsal

- a. Everybody was present for the dry run.
- b. You all did well in our dry run of this play/

Blue moon- something that happens rarely

- a. Her smile is a blue moon.
- b. Winning this game is a blue moon for our school.

An arm and a leg- very expensive

- a. The new refrigerator cost him an arm and a leg.
- b. I'm not fond of shopping for things that cost an arm and a leg.

The whole nine yards- everything, all of it

- a. She gave the whole nine yards to win this game.
- b. Don't ever give up the whole nine yards.

Tie the knot- get married

- a. My parents tied the knot twenty years ago.
- b. Mary is planning to tie the knot next year.

At the drop of a hat- immediately, without delay

- a. She's willing to sing onstage at the drop of a hat.
- b. I'm ready to go on a vacation at the drop of a hat.

Slap on the wrist- a very mild punishment

- a. The principal gave him a slap on the wrist for cheating on the exam.
- b. My mom just gives us slaps on the wrist when we do something wrong.

Happy as a clam- very happy and content

- a. Barbie is as happy as a clam with Ken.
- b. She's as happy as a clam, she couldn't ask for more.

Come clean- to confess

- a. Hilary came clean after her conscience got to her.
- b. I want you to come clean right away.

Well read- knowledgeable through having read a lot of things

- a. Anne is a well-read girl.
- b. You don't have to be well-read to understand this.

Laughing stock-a figure of laughter or ridicule

- a. Dhexter is the laughing stock of the class.
- b. Mandy has always been the laughing stock cause he is weak and thin.

Class clown- a student who is constantly making jokes to attract attention

- a. Felix is the class clown of the year.
- b. John is the best class clown, he can make you laugh your heart out.

Books for teaching idioms

- *In a Pickle: And Other Funny Idioms* by Marvin Terban
- *My Teacher Likes to Say* by Denise Brennan-Nelson
- *Super Silly Sayings That Are over Your Head: A Children's Illustrated Book of Idioms* by Catherine S. Snodgrass
- *There's a Frog in my Throat: 440 Animal Sayings a Little Bird Told Me* by Pat Street and Loreen Leedy

Adages

adage: a short saying that transmits wisdom (adage is synonymous with proverb)

Don't count your chickens before they hatch.
A friend in need is a friend indeed.
A penny saved is a penny earned.
A picture is worth a thousand words.
A spoon full of sugar makes the medicine go down.
A watched pot never boils.
Actions speak louder than words.
All good things must come to an end.
All is well that ends well.
An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
As busy as a bee.
An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
Beggars can't be choosers.
Better late than never.
Curiosity killed the cat.
Blood is thicker than water.
A bull in a china shop.
Cross that bridge when you come to it.
Do as I say, not as I do.

Proverbs

proverb: a short expression of popular wisdom that includes some traditionally held truth; metaphorical and alliterative (proverb is synonymous with adage)

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link
A change is as good as a rest
A dog is a man's best friend
A house is not a home
A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step
A little knowledge is a dangerous thing
A penny saved is a penny earned
A person is known by the company he keeps
A picture paints a thousand words
A place for everything and everything in its place
Absence makes the heart grow fonder
All that glitters is not gold
Bad news travels fast
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
Beggars should not be choosers

Birds of a feather flock together
Blood is thicker than water
Crime doesn't pay
Cut your coat to suit your cloth
Dead men tell no tales
Do as I say, not as I do
Don't count your chickens before they are hatched
Don't cross the bridge till you come to it
Don't put all your eggs in one basket
Easy come, easy go
Every cloud has a silver lining
Everything comes to him who waits
Failing to plan is planning to fail
Finders keepers, losers weepers

Books for teaching adages and proverbs:

- *Isabelle is a pig: Learning from Proverbs* by Judy Rogers
- *Mice, morals and monkey business: lively lessons from Aesop's Fables* by Aesop
- *My First Book of Proverbs* by Sandra Cisneros