

What are Idioms and Expressions?

Worksheet

An idiom is a phrase whose meaning is figurative, not literal — for example, 'break the ice' means to start a conversation, not to physically break ice.

Questions

1. "I'm going to break the ice with the new team." What does this mean?
A) Physically break ice
B) Start a conversation to ease tension
C) Ruin their mood
D) Freeze something
2. "That problem was a piece of cake." The person is saying...
A) There was actual cake involved
B) The problem was very easy
C) The problem was very hard
D) Cake was the solution
3. When is an expression an idiom?
A) When it's literally true
B) When its meaning is not the sum of the word meanings
C) When it's short
D) When it rhymes
4. "It's raining cats and dogs." Is this literally true?
A) Yes, animals fall from the sky
B) No, it means heavy rain
C) Only in certain regions
D) Never
5. "I'm not crying; I just have something in my eye" — what does this expression really mean?
6. "That exam was a piece of cake." What does 'piece of cake' mean?
7. "I'm going to hit the hay." Is the person attacking hay?
8. Define: break the ice
9. Define: piece of cake
10. Define: hit the hay

Answer Key

1. B) Start a conversation to ease tension — 'Break the ice' is an idiom meaning to start a conversation and ease awkwardness.
2. B) The problem was very easy — 'Piece of cake' is an idiom for something easy.
3. B) When its meaning is not the sum of the word meanings — Idioms have figurative meanings that differ from their literal word-by-word interpretation.
4. B) No, it means heavy rain — 'Raining cats and dogs' is an idiom for very heavy rain — no actual animals fall.
5. Literal meaning: There is physically something (dust, etc.) in the person's eye. Actual meaning (idiom): The person is upset and trying to hide tears. Why: This is a playful, self-aware idiom — the speaker pretends the tears are accidental.
6. Literal meaning: A slice of edible cake. Actual meaning (idiom): Something is very easy. Why: Cake is pleasant and simple to enjoy, so metaphorically easy tasks are 'pieces of cake'.
7. Literal meaning: Striking hay with something. Actual meaning (idiom): Going to sleep. Why: Historically, people slept on hay; thus 'hitting the hay' = going to bed.
8. Start a conversation; ease social tension. Example: 'He broke the ice with a funny joke.'
9. Something very easy. Example: 'This puzzle is a piece of cake.'
10. Go to sleep. Example: 'I'm exhausted; I'm going to hit the hay.'

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