

What Are French Expressions and Idioms?

Worksheet

French expressions and idioms are set phrases whose meaning cannot be guessed from individual words — 'avoir un chat dans la gorge' (literally 'to have a cat in the throat') means 'to be hoarse,' not about actual cats.

Questions

1. What is an idiom?
A) A formal speech
B) A fixed phrase with figurative meaning
C) A grammar rule
D) A formal letter
2. What does 'avoir une tête de deux mètres' literally mean?
A) To have a two-meter head
B) To be embarrassed
C) To be tall
D) To be angry
3. Which phrase is an idiom, not literal?
A) Je suis fatigué (I am tired)
B) Je me casse la tête (I rack my brains)
C) Je suis grand (I am tall)
D) Je vais à l'école (I go to school)
4. Why must you learn French idioms?
A) They are required by law
B) They are on all exams
C) They show authentic native speech
D) They replace grammar
5. Explain 'avoir les bleus' literally vs. idiomatically.
6. Use 'se casser la tête' in a sentence.
7. What does 'coûter les yeux de la tête' mean?
8. Define: What is a French idiom?
9. Define: 'Avoir un chat dans la gorge' means...
10. Define: Why are idioms important?

Answer Key

1. B) A fixed phrase with figurative meaning — Idioms are phrases that mean something different from their literal translation.
2. A) To have a two-meter head — Literally 'to have a two-meter head' — but the idiom means to look unhappy or ashamed.
3. B) Je me casse la tête (I rack my brains) — 'Je me casse la tête' is figurative — you don't literally break your head.
4. C) They show authentic native speech — Idioms are how native speakers truly speak — ignoring them limits your authenticity.
5. Literal: 'to have the blues' (blue color) Idiom: to feel sad or depressed Example: 'Mon ami a les bleus depuis que sa copine l'a quitté.' (My friend is sad since his girlfriend left him.)
6. Literal: 'to break one's head' Idiom: to rack one's brains / struggle with a problem Sentence: 'Je me casse la tête sur ce problème depuis une heure!' (I've been struggling with this problem for an hour!)
7. Literal: 'to cost the eyes of the head' Idiom: to be very expensive / cost an arm and a leg Example: 'Cette voiture coûte les yeux de la tête!' (This car costs a fortune!)
8. A fixed phrase whose figurative meaning differs from literal word-for-word translation.
9. To be hoarse or have a scratchy throat.
10. They reveal how native speakers truly communicate and add authenticity and color to your French.

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