

Activity 10

Name: _____

Source: <http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0769301.html>

If you say, "The cat's out of the bag" instead of "The secret is given away," you're using an idiom. The meaning of an idiom is different from the actual meaning of the words used. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is a proverb. Proverbs are old but familiar sayings that usually give advice. Both idioms and proverbs are part of our daily speech. Many are very old and have interesting histories.

Did you know...?

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away."

This proverb comes from the ancient Romans, who believed the apple had magical powers to cure illness. In fact, apples are filled with vitamin C, protein, pectin, natural sugars, copper, and iron. They do promote health.



To "climb on the bandwagon."

Long ago, bands on the platforms of travelling wagons played music to announce a parade or political speech. To show their support, people would often jump onto the platform and join the band. Today, this idiom usually refers to someone who hopes to benefit from supporting another person's idea.



"Bury the hatchet."

Native Americans used to bury weapons to show that fighting had ended and enemies were now at peace. Today, the idiom means to make up with a friend after an argument or fight.



To "have a chip on one's shoulder."

In nineteenth-century America, a boy who thought he was pretty tough would put a wood chip on his shoulder and dare anyone to knock it off. Today the idiom refers to anyone who is "touchy" or takes offence easily.



"A close shave."

In the past, student barbers learned to shave on customers. If they shaved too close, their clients might be cut or even barely escape serious injury. Today, we use this idiom if a person narrowly escapes disaster.

"Dot the i's and cross the t's."

When only handwritten documents were used, it was very important for the clerk to write everything properly, especially letters like l and t, which could easily be confused. The idiom has since come to mean paying attention to every little detail.

"He who pays the piper calls the tune."

In medieval times, people were entertained by strolling musicians. Whoever paid the price could choose the music. This proverb means that whoever pays is in charge.

"The pen is mightier than the sword."

In seventeenth-century England, a free press was banned by the government. This meant that people who disagreed with the government and printed their views were punished. In spite of this, people published their ideas and opinions in illegal pamphlets that were distributed to the public. The proverb means that the written expression of ideas cannot be stopped by physical force.

"The pot calling the kettle black."

In the seventeenth century, both pots and kettles turned black because they were used over open fires. Today, this idiom means criticising someone else for a fault of one's own.

To "shed crocodile tears."

Crocodiles have a reflex that causes their eyes to tear when they open their mouths. This makes it look as though they are crying while devouring their prey. In fact, neither crocodiles nor people who shed "crocodile" tears feel sorry for their actions.

1. Use 5 of these sayings in sentences of your own that show that you understand the meanings.

2. A teacher gave her class the first part of these proverbs and asked them to complete them. Their answers are funny and in many cases, make good sense. Enjoy reading them before supplying the correct ending by linking Column A and B.

COLUMN A	COLUMN B
Don't change horses	until they stop running.
Don't bite the hand that	looks dirty.
A miss is as good as a	Mr.
If you lie down with dogs, you'll	stink in the morning.
Where there's smoke there's	pollution.
Don't put off till tomorrow what	you put on to go to bed.
Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and	you have to blow your nose.
Children should be seen and not	spanked or grounded.
If at first you don't succeed	get new batteries.
You get out of something only what you	see in the picture on the box.
A bird in the hand	is going to poop on you.

