

Literal vs. Nonliteral Meanings

3rd–5th Grade Objectives

CCSS Language/Vocabulary Acquisition and Use:
L.3.5.a, L.4.5.b

- Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings:
 - a. Distinguish the literal and nonliteral meanings of words and phrases in context (e.g., *take steps*).
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings:
 - b. Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms.



Materials Needed

- *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish
- Chart paper [TA3385] and marker or chalkboard and chalk or document camera
- Illustrating Idioms page
- Wrap-Around Language Idiom cards and answer key
- Markers [DD338] or Crayons [VX818]
- Best-Buy Scissors [TS547]

Products with item numbers are available at LakeshoreLearning.com.

Before You Begin

1. Explain to students that words or phrases can have literal or nonliteral meanings. Tell them that a nonliteral meaning is when a phrase means something other than the exact words in it. Explain that authors sometimes use nonliteral meanings in their writing as a way to make a comparison or an exaggerated statement about something. For example, an author writing that someone is a “night owl” is really saying that this person is awake and active at night (nonliteral meaning) rather than stating that the person turns into an animal at night (literal meaning).
2. Tell students that you are going to read the story *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish. Ask students to actively listen for the idioms, or nonliteral phrases, that are used in the story.

Introduction

1. Begin reading aloud to the class *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish.
2. As you read, pause to point out one or two forms of figurative language (e.g., “change the towels” on p. 16 or “draw the drapes” on p. 25) that cause confusion for Amelia. Ask students to explain and describe what they really mean, as opposed to Amelia’s literal interpretation of the phrases.
3. Before you continue with the story, ask students to pay special attention to some of the other forms of figurative language in the story as Amelia encounters them.

Procedure

1. Invite students to identify a few of the remaining idioms, or nonliteral phrases, that Amelia encountered in the story.
2. Write these idioms on a chart, chalkboard or document camera for students to see. Then, next to each phrase, ask students to help you write the actual meaning of the phrase.
3. Ask students if they have ever heard someone say, "That was a piece of cake!" or "It's raining cats and dogs out there!" Explain that these expressions are also idioms, which have figurative, rather than literal, meanings. Add these expressions to the list and invite students to offer explanations about their figurative meanings. (For example, "a piece of cake" means "easy" or "easily accomplished," and "raining cats and dogs" means "strong and heavy rain.")
4. Invite students to add to your list of idioms by asking them to think of nonliteral expressions they have heard at home, on television shows or in daily conversations with friends.
5. As students offer their examples, add them to the class list on the chart or chalkboard until you have 10–15 examples or more. Keep the list on display so students can learn and practice the idioms on their own.

Independent Practice

1. Give each student a copy of the Illustrating Idioms page and encourage students to choose an idiom from the class list to illustrate. For example, explain that for "raining cats and dogs," they might show a picture of cats and dogs falling from the sky onto umbrellas!
2. Encourage students to write a simple explanation for the practical meaning of their phrase. For example, "it costs an arm and a leg" really means "it costs a lot of money."
3. Display the finished products on a bulletin board or in a class book titled "Interesting Idioms," "Understanding Idioms" or "What Are We Really Trying to Say?"

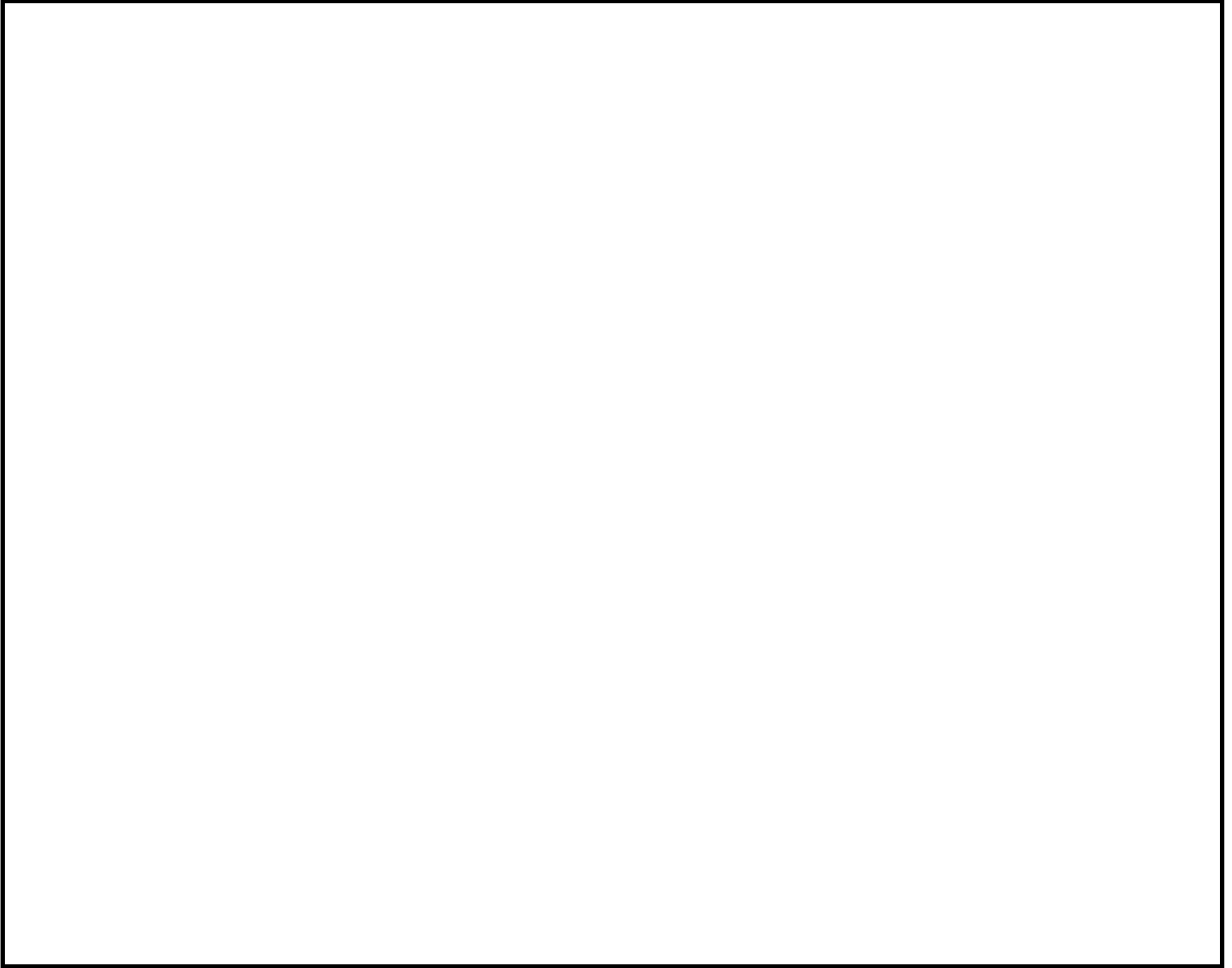
Learning Extension

1. For additional practice, invite students to join in this all-class participation game with idioms!
2. Print and cut out the Wrap-Around Language Idiom cards for each student. (You may need to give some students more than one card if there are cards left over.)
3. Students take turns calling out their card ("I have...") and asking for the next card by reading the meaning of a new idiom ("Who has..."). The student with the corresponding idiom responds. The game continues until all cards have been played and all idioms have been read. (An answer key is provided for the teacher, or to help with game play for students who may be struggling.)

Name: _____

Illustrating Idioms

Idiom: _____



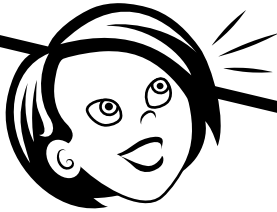
What it really means: _____

Idioms



I have
really easy.

Who has the
meaning of
"I'm all ears"?



Idioms



I have
listening carefully.

Who has the
meaning of
"the bee's knees"?

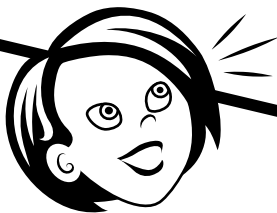


Idioms

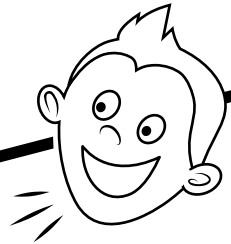


I have
completely wonderful.

Who has the
meaning of
"beating around
the bush"?



Idioms



I have
avoiding a direct
answer.

Who has the
meaning of
"biting off more than
you can chew"?

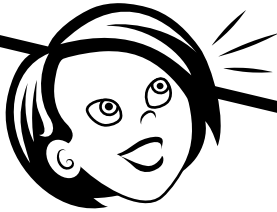


Idioms

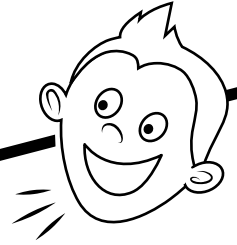


I have
taking on too much
responsibility.

Who has the
meaning of
"getting on my nerves"?

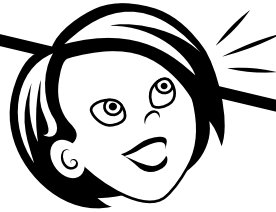


Idioms



I have
irritating me.

Who has the
meaning of
"go with the flow"?

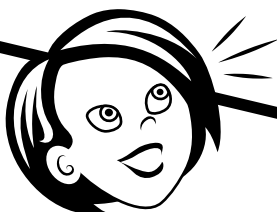


Idioms

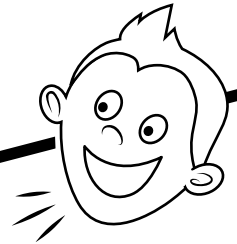


I have
take things as
they come.

Who has the
meaning of
"make up your mind"?



Idioms



I have
decide what to do.

Who has the
meaning of
"easy does it"?

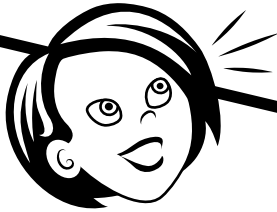


Idioms

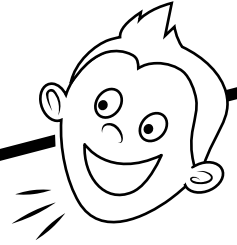


I have
be very careful.

Who has the
meaning of
"over the top"?



Idioms



I have
beyond reasonable
limits.

Who has the
meaning of
"cut it out"?



Idioms

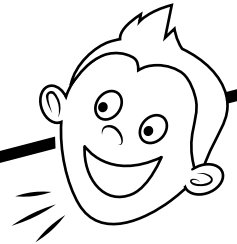


I have
stop doing that.

Who has the
meaning of
"costs an arm and
a leg"?

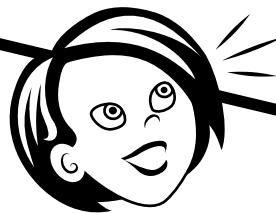


Idioms



I have
very expensive.

Who has the
meaning of
"by the book"?

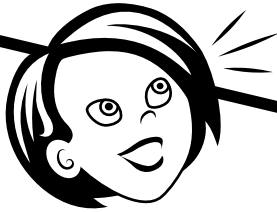


Idioms



I have
according to
the rules.

Who has the
meaning of
"face the music"?



Idioms



I have
accept the
consequences.

Who has the
meaning of
"hit the books"?

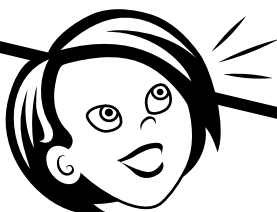


Idioms

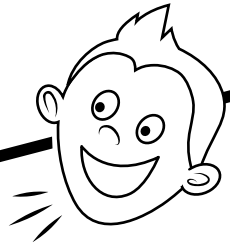


I have
study.

Who has the
meaning of
"hard-headed"?



Idioms



I have
stubborn.

Who has
the meaning of
"having your
hands full"?

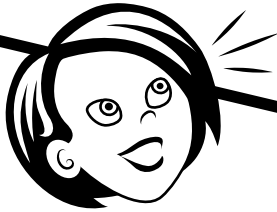


Idioms

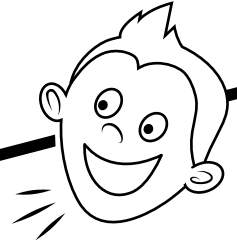


I have
very busy.

Who has the
meaning of
"hit the sack"?

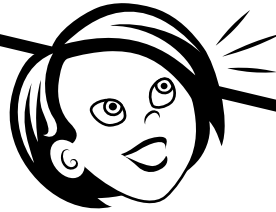


Idioms



I have
go to bed.

Who has the
meaning of
"keep an eye out"?



Idioms

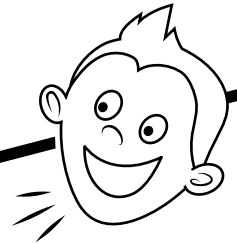


I have
be watchful for.

Who has the
meaning of
"lend a hand"?



Idioms



I have
help out.

Who has the
meaning of
"fender bender"?

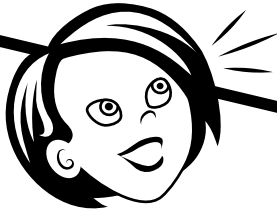


Idioms

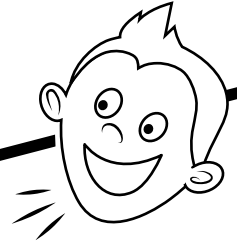


I have
minor car accident.

Who has the
meaning of
"on the dot"?



Idioms



I have
at an exact time.

Who has the
meaning of
"step on it"?



Idioms

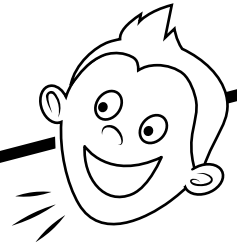


I have
go faster.

Who has the
meaning of
"take it easy"?

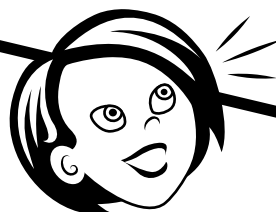


Idioms



I have
relax.

Who has the
meaning of
"under the weather"?

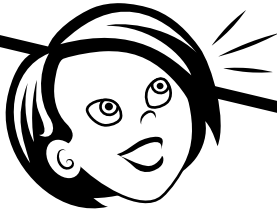


Idioms

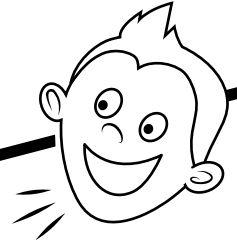


I have
sick.

Who has the
meaning of
"let the cat out
of the bag"?

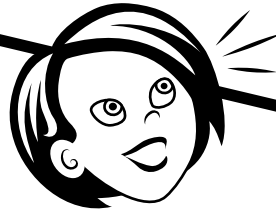


Idioms



I have
reveal a secret.

Who has the
meaning of
"once in a blue moon"?

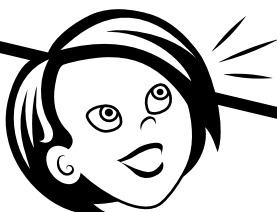


Idioms

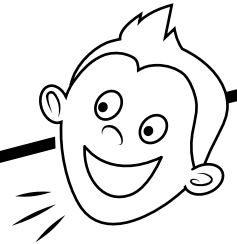


I have
not very often.

Who has the
meaning of
"rings a bell"?



Idioms



I have
sounds familiar.

Who has the
meaning of
"tie the knot"?

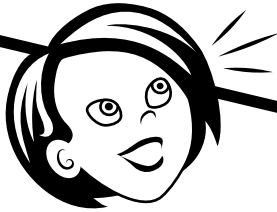


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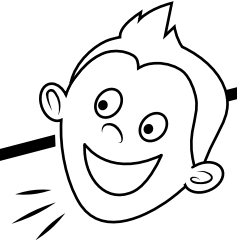


I have
get married.

Who has the
meaning of
"between a rock and
a hard place"?



Idioms



I have
in a difficult situation.

Who has the
meaning of
"over the moon"?

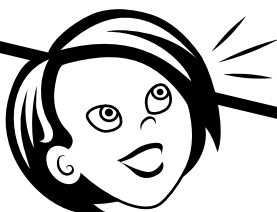


Idioms

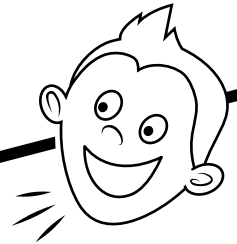


I have
very happy.

Who has the
meaning of
"run of the mill"?



Idioms



I have
ordinary.

Who has the
meaning of
"true blue"?

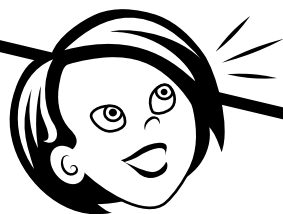


Idioms

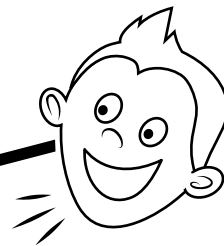


I have
loyal.

Who has the
meaning of
"fancy-free"?

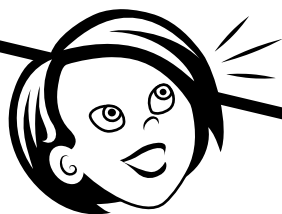


Idioms



I have
without worry.

Who has the
meaning of
"all thumbs"?



Idioms



I have
clumsy.

Who has the
meaning of
"piece of cake"?



Answer Key

I'm all ears	listening carefully
the bee's knees	completely wonderful
beating around the bush	avoiding a direct answer
biting off more than you can chew	taking on too much responsibility
getting on my nerves	irritating me
go with the flow	take things as they come
make up your mind	decide what to do
easy does it	be very careful
over the top	beyond reasonable limits
cut it out	stop doing that
costs an arm and a leg	very expensive
by the book	according to the rules
face the music	accept the consequences
hit the books	study
hard-headed	stubborn
having your hands full	very busy
hit the sack	go to bed
keep an eye out	be watchful for
lend a hand	help out
fender bender	minor car accident
on the dot	at an exact time
step on it	go faster
take it easy	relax
under the weather	sick
let the cat out of the bag	reveal a secret
once in a blue moon	not very often
rings a bell	sounds familiar
tie the knot	get married
between a rock and a hard place	in a difficult situation
over the moon	very happy
run of the mill	ordinary
true blue	loyal
fancy-free	without worry
all thumbs	clumsy
piece of cake	really easy