

Idioms "Boggle My Mind" and "Blow Me Away"!

by Judith Maginnis Kuster

When writing these columns, at times I "draw a blank" trying to "crank out a paper." I have to "put on my thinking cap," "exercise my gray matter," and occasionally "hit the books" to "cover some new ground" and hope I don't "fall flat on my face." It is "a load off my mind" when I learn I'm not "teaching your grandmother to suck eggs." (I bet that's a new one to most of you—it means telling you something you already know). Even those of us who have completed not only "the three Rs," but also "higher education" and may even "live in an ivory tower" are "at our wit's end" when we "come face to face" with a "deadline."

Now—draw pictures to illustrate the above paragraph!!

Teaching figurative language is often an important part of treatment for children and adults who have language disabilities or who are learning English as a second language. One interesting component of figurative language is the understanding and use of idioms. Everyday conversation and writing is filled with idioms.

A 2008 ASHA Convention poster session, "Implementation of Classwide Peer Tutoring Strategies to Facilitate Idiom Comprehension," by Erin Lundblom and Juliann Woods, states that "idioms should be an integral part of vocabulary and reading instruction in the classroom; however, idioms are often neglected" (search "Lundblom" at <http://convention.asha.org/handouts.cfm>).

This column highlights several Internet resources for introducing idioms to children and adults.

Idiom Illustrations

Idioms by Kids (www.idiomsbykids.com) has more than 1,000 pictures of idioms drawn by children. The pictures illustrate the literal, rather than the figurative, meaning. Children can submit their own drawings.

EEOS Codes provides URLs to four pages of clever idiom glitter graphics (www.eeoscodes.com/graphics/idioms-graphics) that illustrate literal meanings.

Eye on Idioms (www.readwritethink.org/materials/idioms) is an interactive site that contains nicely illustrated idioms, choices of what they represent, a box to enter the metaphorical meaning of the idiom, and another box to use the idiom in a sentence. Students can print out their answers to hand in.

Create a PowerPoint activity using several of the idiom illustrations, starting with templates available at:

- www.hlschool.org/cwalkerweb/PPPARAETECH07/PowerPointParadise/PPTgame-update.ppt
- www.icteachers.co.uk/resources/literacy/idioms.ppt
- <http://staff.fcps.net/mgaines/Idioms.ppt>

Idioms for Kids

Paint by Idioms (www.funbrain.com/idioms) is especially for children,

with "easy" or "hard" idioms and several choices of activities; for each correct answer, part of a character is painted.

Quia has several idiom activities: Face Idioms (www.quia.com/jg/66234.html) and additional games by Pamela Bordas (www.quia.com/pages/pbordasidioms.html) and Lonn Swanson (www.quia.com/quiz/261977.html).

Lesson Plans, Activity Ideas

- Idiom Lesson Plans for Elementary Students, by Debbie DeSprit (http://classroom-activities.suite101.com/article.cfm/idiom_lesson_plans_for_elementary_students)
- What Are Idioms, by Beth Lewis (<http://k6educators.about.com/cs/lessonplans/a/lessonplan46c.htm>), for children grades 4–6
- Building Competency with Figurative Language One Idiom at a Time, by Beverly Vicker (www.iidc.indiana.edu/irca/communication/figlanguage.html), provides "simple informal suggestions on how to help individuals, such as children with ASD [autism spectrum disorders] learn about idiom usage while in natural settings"

For Older Clients

- English Idioms and Idiomatic Expressions (www.learn-english-today.com/idioms/idioms_proverbs.html) lists idioms and their meanings.
- English Idioms (<http://web1.150240.vserver.de/cgi-bin/main.cgi>) includes an "idiom of the day."
- Pocket English Idioms (www.GoEnglish.com/EnglishIdiomsPhrasesLearningDictionaryKeywordsIndex.asp) provides an alphabetical dictionary with keywords in the idiom and a sentence illustrating the idiom.
- Idiom Site (www.idiomsite.com) lists many common idioms and their metaphorical meanings.
- Self-Study Idiom Quizzes (<http://a4esl.org/q/h/idioms.html>) has several multiple-choice quizzes with the idiom illustrated in a sentence.
- Idiom worksheets (www.cccoe.net/social/SAIdiomintro.htm) provides a literal picture of each idiom and a worksheet.
- American English Idioms (<http://funeasyenglish.com/american-english-idioms.htm>) provides idioms,

definitions, and illustrating sentences.

- The ESL Idiom Page by Dennis Oliver (www.eslcafe.com/idioms/id-mngs.html) provides a long list of idioms, definitions, and illustrating sentences
- The Idiom Connection (www.towerofenglish.com/AthensAegean6720.html) organizes idioms alphabetically and by theme and offers a dictionary.
- English idioms and quizzes (www.idiomconnection.com) includes idioms A ("all thumbs") to Z ("zonk out") in addition to 25 categories of idioms (e.g., school idioms such as "book worm" and "school of hard knocks").
- Online Tutoring World.com offers three levels of idioms quizzes:
 - www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/idioms-beginner.htm
 - www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/idioms-intermediate.htm
 - www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/idioms-advance.htm

It also offers tic-tac-toe games using idioms about relationships (www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/tictactoe.htm), medicine (www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/tictactoeemical.htm), business (www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/tictactoebusiness.htm), and education (www.onlinetutoringworld.com/activities/tictactoeeducation.htm).

If clients do not understand figurative language, they will be "fooled." I hope these resources "make light work" for you to "take matters into your own hands" and "be on the ball" in providing some "cutting-edge" activities about idioms for some of your clients!



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