

**Shakespeare's idioms (higher level)**

## Lesson plan

**Topic:** Idioms and Shakespeare**Level:** C1**Time:** 40–55 minutes**Aims**

- To enable students to learn the meaning of six idioms which come from Shakespeare, which are all frequently used today
- To help students to understand a little about the contribution that Shakespeare made to the English language as it is today
- To help students understand the difference between literal and idiomatic meaning, and raise their awareness about idioms in general

**Preparation and materials**

Make one copy of the student worksheet for each learner.

**Introduction**

Students start by discussing a very well-known idiom. They then consider some true/false statements about Shakespeare and idioms before reading a text to check their ideas. The lesson then focuses on six Shakespearean idioms which are in common use today, looking at the literal and idiomatic meaning. Finally, students use the idioms to talk about situations in their own lives.

**Procedure****Warmer – Idioms (5–10 minutes)**

The warmer is intended to make sure that students understand exactly what an idiom is, and get them thinking about idioms in their own language.

- a. Ask students to work in pairs, look at the dialogue and discuss the questions.

**Answers**

1. *The idiom 'to eat someone out of house and home' means to eat a lot at someone else's home, without thinking about how much it costs or how much food will be left.*
  2. *It isn't literally true. An idiom is a way of describing something in a creative way, often by comparing it with something else.*
  3. *This seems to be quite a universal idea, so it is likely that students will have something similar in their own language. If not, you can ask about other idioms related to food.*
- b. Then ask them to discuss the statements with their partner. They may not be sure about some of the answers, but reassure them that it is fine to guess as they will soon be reading a text to find out the answers to these questions. For that reason, don't give them any answers at this stage.

**Task 1 – Reading to check predictions (10 minutes)**

Ask students to read the text and check their predictions. They could discuss the answers with their partner before a class feedback stage.

Answers

1. True
2. False – some idioms are more obvious than others
3. True – for example, in a pickle
4. False, but he was the first author to write much of it down
5. True

**Task 2 – Literal and idiomatic meaning (15 minutes)**

- a. Ask students to read the text again and match each idiom in the text (they are numbered 1–6) with one of the pictures, showing the literal meaning. The text should help them with this.

Check answers and make the point that these literal meanings are NOT exactly what the idioms really mean.

Answers

1. to melt into thin air – d
2. to come full circle – e
3. a laughing stock – f
4. mum's the word – b
5. in a pickle – c
6. the game is up – a

- b. Students then match the idioms again, this time with the second set of pictures showing the idiomatic meaning.

- Check as a class.
- Encourage students to use the idioms in a sentence to describe what is happening, rather than just saying the idiom on its own, e.g.

~~melt into thin air~~ > When the old lady appeared with her dog, the man just melted into thin air.

Answers

1. to melt into thin air – i
2. to come full circle – g
3. a laughing stock – l
4. mum's the word – k
5. in a pickle – h
6. the game is up – j

**Task 3 – Practice (5–10 minutes)**

Ask students to complete the sentences using one of the idioms in Task 2. Get them to check their answers together and monitor to see that the idioms are being used correctly (e.g. using correct tense).

*Answers*

1. *The city grew and prospered by manufacturing cars in the 1970s, became poorer in the 1990s, but it has now come full circle with the growth of new IT-based industries.*
2. *Mum's the word! Don't tell him, or it won't be a surprise!*
3. *I got myself in a pickle when I forgot to fill the car with petrol and ran out miles from anywhere.*
4. *OK, the game is up. I know what you've been doing and I'm going to tell your parents.*
5. *I can't possibly wear that ridiculous hat. I'll be a laughing stock.*
6. *No one knows where he has gone. He seems to have melted into thin air.*

**Task 4 – Personalisation (5–10 minutes)**

- Give students a few minutes to choose three of the idioms and think about situations in their lives where they could have used each one. It may help to give them a situation from your own life.
- Then put the students into small groups to share their ideas. Briefly feed back as a class.