

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: Diplomatic Idioms: A 11th Grade Lexical Bridge-Building Quiz

Junior level students analyze the etymology and rhetorical impact of idioms within high-stakes political and literary discourse to refine their interpretive skills.

1. In the context of 19th-century geopolitics, a diplomat might refer to a 'Jingoist' policy. This expression implies which of the following rhetorical stances?

Answer: B) Extreme patriotism expressed through an aggressive foreign policy

Originating from a British music hall song during the Russo-Turkish War, 'Jingoism' became an idiom for bellicose nationalism.

2. When a legal scholar argues that a specific precedent is a '___ red herring,' they are suggesting the evidence is intended to mislead or distract from the core issue.

Answer: D) Proverbial

A 'proverbial red herring' uses the idiom to denote a diversionary tactic, referencing the practice of using strong-smelling fish to distract hunting dogs.

3. The idiom 'to throw down the gauntlet' survives from medieval judicial combat and signifies a formal challenge to an opponent.

Answer: A) True

A gauntlet was an armored glove; tossing it at someone's feet was a literal gesture that evolved into a figurative expression for a challenge.

4. Which idiom best describes the 'Sword of Damocles' in a modern sociological analysis of environmental policy?

Answer: B) An ever-present threat or imminent danger

Referencing Greek mythology, the 'Sword of Damocles' represents the constant peril faced by those in positions of power or precarious situations.

5. To describe an individual as having 'crossed the ___' implies they have made an irrevocable commitment to a course of action, much like Julius Caesar in 49 BCE.

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Answer: A) Rubicon

Crossing the Rubicon river was a point of no return for Caesar, leading to civil war; it is now an idiom for a decisive, unchangeable step.

6. The expression 'writing on the wall' originates from a modern architectural idiom regarding urban decay.

Answer: B) False

This idiom comes from the biblical Book of Daniel, where supernatural writing appeared on a wall to portend the fall of a kingdom.

7. Analyze the following sentence: 'The CEO's Pyrrhic victory left the board wondering if the merger was worth the collapse of their stock value.' What is the nature of this victory?

Answer: C) A victory won at such a high cost that it amounts to a defeat

Named after King Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose losses against the Romans were so great that his wins were functionally unsustainable.

8. In literary criticism, an author who provides a '____ ex machina' resolution is often criticized for using an improbable plot device to resolve a conflict.

Answer: B) Deus

'Deus ex machina' (God from the machine) refers to Greek theater where a god was lowered onto the stage to solve the characters' problems.

9. The term 'White Elephant' refers to a possession that is useless or troublesome, and expensive to maintain.

Answer: A) True

Originating from stories of the Kings of Siam, who supposedly gave rare white elephants to courtiers they disliked to ruin them financially.

10. If a political commentator notes that a candidate is 'tilting at windmills,' which literary figure are they evoking to characterize the candidate's behavior?

Answer: C) Don Quixote's idealistic but delusional battles

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The idiom comes from Cervantes' Don Quixote, describing the act of attacking imaginary enemies or fighting futile, misguided battles.