

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: Lexical Labyrinth: 12th Grade Idioms and Expressions Quiz

Can you untangle the sociopolitical roots of archaic metaphors? Deconstruct the etymology and nuanced usage of idioms within high-stakes academic and literary contexts.

1. In a legal or diplomatic setting, the term 'to throw the baby out with the bathwater' is used to warn against which specific logical fallacy or strategic error?

Answer: C) Eliminating essential elements while attempting to purge unwanted scrap.

This idiom cautions against over-correction; in the process of attempting to remove something undesirable ('the bathwater'), one inadvertently loses something of primary value ('the baby').

2. When a pundit claims an administration is 'tilting at windmills,' they are making an intertextual reference to Cervantes to suggest the administration is _____.

Answer: B) attacking imaginary enemies or perceived threats that don't exist.

Originating from Don Quixote, this expression describes a protagonist who fights imaginary giants (windmills), symbolizing a futile battle against non-existent or misunderstood adversaries.

3. The expression 'the exception that proves the rule' suggests that a rule is only valid if there is a known instance that contradicts it.

Answer: B) False

The word 'prove' in this archaic context means 'to test' (from the Latin 'probat'). Therefore, the exception tests the validity of the rule; it does not confirm it by contradiction.

4. Which idiom best describes a 'Pyrrhic victory' in the context of a corporate hostile takeover?

Answer: B) A triumph that inflicts such devastating costs on the victor that it is tantamount to defeat.

Named after King Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose losses against the Romans were so heavy that he famously remarked, 'One more such victory and we are undone.'

5. To describe a situation as 'crossing the Rubicon' implies that an individual has _____.

Answer: C) committed to a course of action from which there is no return.

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When Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon river with his army, he committed an act of treason from which he could not retreat, signifying an irrevocable decision.

6. If a literary critic describes a character's dialogue as 'Gordian,' they are most likely implying the speech is:

Answer: B) Extremely intricate, tangled, and difficult to resolve.

The 'Gordian Knot' was an impossibly complex knot; descriptive use of 'Gordian' refers to problems or structures that are intensely complicated.

7. In professional discourse, to 'beg the question' is synonymous with 'raising the question' or prompting a new inquiry.

Answer: B) False

In formal logic and 12th-grade rhetoric, 'begging the question' (petitio principii) is a fallacy where the conclusion is assumed in the premises. Using it to mean 'raising a question' is technically incorrect in academic registers.

8. Which scenario best exemplifies the idiom 'hoist with one's own petard'?

Answer: A) A hacker whose own computer is frozen by the virus they created.

A 'petard' was a small explosive device; to be 'hoisted' by it means to be blown up or thwarted by one's own scheme or weapon.

9. An 'Old Guard' member of an organization typically represents _____.

Answer: C) the traditionalist, long-standing members resistant to change.

Originating from Napoleon's elite veterans, the 'Old Guard' now metaphorically refers to the conservative, established members of any group who uphold traditional values.

10. In the context of fiscal policy, a 'sacred cow' refers to:

Answer: B) A program or institution considered immune from criticism or budget cuts.

A 'sacred cow' is something held in such high regard or so entrenched in culture/policy that it is considered 'untouchable,' even if it is inefficient.