

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer Key: Loose Lips Sink Scripts: Advanced Idiomatics for University Scholars

Can you deconstruct the sociolinguistic layers of the 'swan song' or 'tilting at windmills'? Analyze the etymological roots and rhetorical functions of fossilized metaphors.

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**1. In the context of architectural history or professional ethics, if a structure is described as a 'white elephant,' what is being synthesized about its value?**

**Answer:** B) The asset's maintenance costs far outweigh its practical utility or financial return.

The idiom 'white elephant' refers to a possession that is useless or troublesome, especially one that is expensive to maintain or difficult to dispose of, referencing the historical legend of Thai monarchs gifting them to subordinates to cause financial ruin.

**2. The expression 'to throw down the gauntlet' originally functioned as a literal challenge to combat within the socio-legal framework of medieval knighthood.**

**Answer:** A) True

This is true; the gauntlet was a heavy armored glove. Throwing it down was a formal gesture used to challenge an opponent to a duel or trial by combat.

**3. When a politician is accused of 'dog-whistle politics,' they are intentionally utilizing \_\_\_\_\_ language that conveys a specific message to a subgroup while remaining innocuous to the general public.**

**Answer:** B) Coded

The idiom 'dog-whistle' relies on the concept of coded language—frequencies only heard by a specific 'canine' audience—to mobilize targeted demographics without alerting critics.

**4. Which idiosyncratic literary allusion best characterizes a person who obsessively pursues a goal that is fundamentally illusory or based on a misinterpretation of reality?**

**Answer:** C) Tilting at windmills

Derived from Cervantes' Don Quixote, 'tilting at windmills' describes someone attacking imaginary enemies or pursuing futile, idealistic goals.

**5. In formal logic and debate, a speaker who creates a weak or distorted version of an opponent's argument just to defeat it is said to be attacking a \_\_\_\_\_.**

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**Answer:** C) Straw Man

The 'Straw Man' fallacy involves substituting a person's actual position with a distorted, exaggerated, or misrepresented version of that position to make it easier to attack.

**6. The idiom 'the die is cast' serves as a metaphorical acknowledgement that a decision has reached the point of no return, historically attributed to Julius Caesar.**

**Answer:** A) True

True. Suetonius reports that Caesar said 'Iacta alea est' (the die is cast) when crossing the Rubicon, signaling an irrevocable step toward civil war.

**7. If a diplomat warns that a policy might 'open a Can of Worms,' they are employing a metaphor to suggest that the action will:**

**Answer:** C) Set off a cascade of complex, unforeseen, and unpleasant problems.

The expression 'can of worms' implies that once a specific topic or problem is introduced, it will reveal many more complicated and difficult issues that are hard to control.

**8. A 'pyrrhic victory' is a success that is ultimately damaging because the \_\_\_\_\_ of achieving it were too high.**

**Answer:** D) Devastating costs

Named after King Pyrrhus of Epirus, whose losses against the Romans were so great that another such 'victory' would have utterly ruined him.

**9. When a scholar refers to a 'shibboleth' in high-level discourse, they are identifying:**

**Answer:** B) A custom or belief that distinguishes a particular group but may be outdated.

A 'shibboleth' is a linguistic marker or cultural tenet that signals belonging to a specific group or class, derived from a Biblical account of a password used to identify tribe members.

**10. To 'gild the lily' implies to improve a flawed object until it reaches a state of perfection.**

**Answer:** B) False

False. To 'gild the lily' means to add unnecessary ornamentation to something already beautiful, thereby diminishing its original aesthetic or value through excess.