

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: Will You Miss the Subtext? 9th Grade Idiomatic Expressions Quiz

Deconstruct complex metaphors and analyze linguistic nuances within classic literature and contemporary rhetoric to prove your mastery of figurative speech.

1. In a political debate, a candidate is accused of 'whistling past the graveyard.' What does this idiom imply about the candidate's behavior?

Answer: B) They are trying to remain cheerful despite a dire or dangerous situation.

To 'whistle past the graveyard' is a figurative expression for trying to keep up one's confidence or ignore a very real threat or fear.

2. The CEO's decision to cut the research budget was seen as '_____ the goose that lays the golden eggs,' sacrificing long-term prosperity for short-term gain.

Answer: C) Killing

To 'kill the goose that lays the golden eggs' refers to destroying a source of continuous profit or benefit out of greed or short-sightedness.

3. True or False: If a lawyer describes a piece of evidence as a 'red herring,' they are claiming it is the most critical fact in the case.

Answer: B) False

A 'red herring' is actually a distraction or something intended to mislead or divert attention from the relevant issue.

4. When a character in a novel is described as having an 'albatross around their neck,' what does this figuratively represent?

Answer: C) A heavy psychological burden or past mistake

Originating from Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' this idiom refers to a heavy burden of guilt that prevents progress.

5. After failing to secure the lead role, the actor claimed the part wasn't very good anyway—a classic example of '_____ grapes.'

Answer: B) Sour

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Based on Aesop's Fables, 'sour grapes' refers to a person disparaging something they want but cannot have.

6. True or False: If a diplomat says they are 'crossing the Rubicon,' they mean they have reached a point of no return where a decision cannot be undone.

Answer: A) True

This historical idiom refers to Julius Caesar crossing the river Rubicon, signaling an irrevocable commitment to a course of action.

7. In the context of architectural criticism, describing an expensive but useless stadium as a 'white elephant' suggests it is:

Answer: C) A possession that is very costly to maintain but yields no profit.

A 'white elephant' is something whose cost of upkeep is out of proportion to its usefulness or value.

8. The journalist decided to '___ the sword' by refusing to reveal her anonymous sources, even when threatened with jail time.

Answer: A) Fall on

To 'fall on one's sword' is an idiom meaning to take full responsibility or sacrifice oneself for a cause or principle.

9. True or False: If a scientist says their discovery happened 'in a vacuum,' they mean it was influenced by many outside factors and other researchers.

Answer: B) False

To happen 'in a vacuum' means to occur in isolation, completely separate from outside influences or context.

10. Which idiom best describes a situation where someone accidentally helps the person they are trying to oppose?

Answer: B) Playing into someone's hands

To 'play into someone's hands' means to act in a way that unintentionally gives an advantage to an opponent.