

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: Nail These High School Figurative Language Essentials Quiz

Moving beyond literal definitions, students identify subtle idiomatic nuances and recall the origins of complex phrases in this foundational assessment.

1. If a political candidate is described as 'jumping the shark,' what does this idiom imply about their campaign?

Answer: A) They have reached a point where they are using desperate gimmicks because they've run out of ideas.

Originating from a television trope, 'jumping the shark' refers to the moment something that was once popular starts a decline in quality by using far-fetched tactics.

2. The expression 'to pull someone's leg' is used when you are trying to provide them with helpful, honest advice.

Answer: B) False

To pull someone's leg actually means to tease them or joke with them by telling them something that isn't true.

3. When an author describes a character as having a 'chip on their shoulder,' they are suggesting the character:

Answer: B) Is holding a grudge or has an angry attitude due to a past slight.

This idiom describes an inclined disposition to quarrel, often because the person feels they have been treated unfairly in the past.

4. Which of the following phrases best describes a 'Pyrrhic victory'?

Answer: C) A win that comes at such a great cost it is hardly worth it.

Named after King Pyrrhus, this refers to a success that leaves the 'winner' in such a devastated state that it feels like a defeat.

5. If a manager tells an employee to 'climb the _____' to get a promotion, they are referring to moving up the hierarchy of a company.

Answer: B) Corporate ladder

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The 'corporate ladder' is a standard metaphor for the series of hierarchical levels in a business or profession.

6. The idiom 'to steal someone's thunder' means to take credit for someone else's ideas or to lessen their excitement by doing something first.

Answer: A) True

This phrase originated in the 1700s when a playwright's sound effect technique was copied by another theatre before his own play could succeed.

7. What does it mean to 'throw down the gauntlet' in a formal or literary setting?

Answer: C) To issue a challenge or an invitation to a struggle.

This comes from the medieval custom of a knight throwing his armored glove (gauntlet) to the ground to challenge someone to a duel.

8. An 'Achilles' heel' refers to a person's _____ despite overall strength.

Answer: C) Vulnerable weakness

Drawing from Greek mythology, this expression signifies a specific point of vulnerability in an otherwise strong individual.

9. When someone says 'the elephant in the room,' they are referring to a small, insignificant detail that everyone is over-analyzing.

Answer: B) False

The 'elephant in the room' refers to a major, obvious problem or controversial issue that everyone is deliberately ignoring.

10. Which idiom would you use to describe a situation that has become chaotic and out of control?

Answer: C) The wheels have fallen off.

The phrase 'the wheels have fallen off' implies that a plan or situation has failed completely or become dysfunctional.