

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

## Answer Key: Ancient Origins, Augmented Artistry: 12th Grade Idiom Quiz

Analyze the etymology and rhetorical impact of complex expressions like 'Pyrrhic victory' and 'Siren song' through contextual application.

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**1. In a political debate, a candidate's strategy results in a 'Pyrrhic victory.' Which scenario best illustrates this idiom?**

**Answer:** A) Winning the election but losing all legislative support and personal reputation in the process.

A Pyrrhic victory refers to a success that comes at such a high cost that it is tantamount to defeat, named after King Pyrrhus of Epirus.

**2. The CEO's proposal to move all operations to an unproven tech platform was described by the board as a \_\_\_\_—a pursuit of something beautiful or promising that is ultimately deceptive or destructive.**

**Answer:** A) Siren song

Derived from Greek mythology, a 'Siren song' refers to an alluring appeal that is deceptive and leads to disaster.

**3. The expression 'to throw down the gauntlet' originated from the medieval practice of challenging someone to a duel by casting a heavy armored glove on the ground.**

**Answer:** A) True

This idiom accurately reflects the historical context of knighthood, where an opponent would pick up the gauntlet to accept the challenge.

**4. Which of the following literary allusions functions as an idiom for an inescapable, self-contradictory circular logic?**

**Answer:** B) A Catch-22

Coined by Joseph Heller, 'Catch-22' describes a paradoxical situation where an individual cannot escape because of contradictory rules.

**5. Determined to change his reputation, the former convict sought to \_\_\_\_—a metaphor for starting over without the influence of past mistakes.**

**Answer:** C) Turn over a new leaf

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In this context, 'leaf' refers to a page in a book; flipping to a new page represents a fresh start in one's life story.

**6. The expression 'to cross the Rubicon' means to make a minor error that can be easily corrected before a project is finished.**

**Answer:** B) False

Crossing the Rubicon refers to passing a point of no return, based on Julius Caesar's irreversible decision to march his army into Rome.

**7. If a modern architect describes a massive, expensive, but useless stadium as a 'white elephant,' they are highlighting its:**

**Answer:** B) Heavy financial burden and lack of utility

A 'white elephant' is a possession that is useless or troublesome, and expensive to maintain, originating from the story of kings of Siam gifting them to ruin courtiers.

**8. While the scientist's findings were groundbreaking, her refusal to acknowledge her predecessors' work became an \_\_\_\_\_ around her neck, dragging down her professional credibility.**

**Answer:** B) Albatross

Referencing Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' an albatross is a heavy burden or a source of psychological guilt.

**9. The idiom 'to read the riot act' implies giving a stern warning or reprimand to someone to cease their current behavior.**

**Answer:** A) True

This originates from an actual 1714 British Act of Parliament which had to be read aloud to disperse an unlawful assembly.

**10. When a journalist refers to 'tilting at windmills,' which literary figure's actions are they referencing to suggest someone is fighting imaginary or futile battles?**

**Answer:** B) Don Quixote

In Cervantes' novel, Don Quixote attacks windmills he imagines to be giants, leading to this idiom for impractical idealism or misplaced conflict.