

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

## Answer Key: Analyze 9th Grade Rhetorical Idioms

Can you distinguish between stylistic nuance and literal meaning? Synthesize complex expressions used in political oratory and classic literature for your next close-reading assignment.

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**1. In a geopolitical context, when a diplomat refers to an 'olive branch' during a heated summit, they are primarily engaging in which rhetorical strategy?**

**Answer:** B) An idiomatic offer of peace or reconciliation

Derived from ancient Greco-Roman and biblical traditions, the 'olive branch' has become an idiom for a peace offering or a gesture of goodwill to end a conflict.

**2. True or False: The expression 'to throw down the gauntlet' originally referred to a physical action in medieval chivalry but is now used to describe issuing a formal challenge.**

**Answer:** A) True

This idiom transitioned from a literal act (throwing a glove or armored gauntlet to challenge someone to a duel) to a figurative expression for any serious challenge.

**3. When a critic describes a politician's speech as 'Damoclean' or mentions a 'Sword of Damocles' hanging over a budget meeting, they are suggesting a state of:**

**Answer:** B) Imminent and constant danger

References to the Sword of Damocles signify a precarious situation where peril is ever-present, regardless of one's current power or success.

**4. True or False: To describe an endeavor as a 'Pyrrhic victory' implies that the success was achieved at such a high cost that it is almost equivalent to a defeat.**

**Answer:** A) True

Named after King Pyrrhus of Epirus, this idiom describes a win that is so devastating to the victor that it ruins them, requiring synthesis of history and intent.

**5. Analyze the nuance: If a CEO says, 'We need to cut the Gordian knot of our supply chain issues,' what methodology are they advocating?**

**Answer:** C) Solving a complex problem with a single, bold action

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The 'Gordian knot' refers to an intricate problem; 'cutting' it represents a decisive, creative, and often unconventional solution.

**6. In heavy academic writing, the idiom \_\_\_\_\_ is often used to describe a secondary or incidental consequence that was not the primary intent of an action.**

**Answer:** C) A side effect

While 'watershed moment' refers to a turning point and 'red herring' to a distraction, 'side effect' describes an incidental outcome, though in high-level rhetoric, 'fallout' or 'byproduct' might also be used.

**7. If an author describes a character as 'tilting at windmills,' they are using an idiom derived from Miguel de Cervantes to suggest the character is:**

**Answer:** B) Fighting imaginary or insignificant enemies

Referencing Don Quixote, this idiom critiques someone for attacking perceived opponents that do not actually pose a threat or do not exist.

**8. In a formal debate, if you accuse an opponent of using a 'Scorched Earth' policy, you are claiming their strategy is to:**

**Answer:** B) Destroy everything that might be useful to an enemy

This idiom comes from military strategy where retreating armies burn crops and infrastructure; rhetorically, it means a ruthless approach that leaves nothing behind.

**9. True or False: To 'cross the Rubicon' is an idiomatic way of saying that one has reached a point of no return after making a fateful decision.**

**Answer:** A) True

Referring to Julius Caesar's crossing of the river, this idiom signifies a commitment to a course of action from which one cannot retreat.

**10. Which idiom would best describe a situation where a politician is being criticized for something they themselves have done, highlighting their hypocrisy?**

**Answer:** A) The pot calling the kettle black

This idiom highlights hypocrisy, where one person accuses another of a fault that they both share.