

Name: _____ Date: _____

Answer Key: When Words Wear Masks: An 11th Grade Idiom Investigation

Pragmatic analysis, rhetorical intent, and cultural context—this 10-question assessment sharpens analytical skills through the lens of sophisticated linguistic expressions.

1. In a legal context, if an attorney is said to 'throw the book' at a defendant, what is the most likely outcome for the accused?

Answer: B) The maximum possible legal penalty or sentence.

To 'throw the book' at someone means to charge or punish them to the fullest extent of the law, referencing the 'book' of statutes.

2. The expression 'stealing someone's thunder' refers to the act of physically intimidating a competitor during a performance.

Answer: B) False

False; it actually means to take credit for someone else's ideas or to diminish their surprise by revealing it first.

3. An aspiring politician who tries to win over both conservative and liberal voters simultaneously might be accused of 'trying to ____ the fence.'

Answer: C) straddle

To 'straddle the fence' implies remaining neutral or trying to maintain a position on both sides of an issue.

4. Which of the following idioms best describes a situation that is the 'final straw' in a series of unfortunate events?

Answer: C) The camel's back breaking

This refers to the proverb 'the straw that broke the camel's back,' denoting a minor action that causes a large reaction due to previous cumulative stress.

5. During a high-stakes negotiation, if one party suggests a '____-vixen' strategy (though more commonly a 'red herring'), they are attempting to introduce a distraction. The correct term for a misleading clue is a 'red ____.'

Answer: A) Herring

Name: _____ Date: _____

A 'red herring' is a logical fallacy or literary device meant to lead readers or adversaries toward a false conclusion.

6. To 'gird one's loins' means to prepare oneself for a difficult task or a period of hardship.

Answer: A) True

True; this archaic expression refers to tucking in long garments to move more freely, signifying preparation for action.

7. In the context of financial journalism, if a company is described as a 'white elephant' to its parent corporation, the company is:

Answer: B) A burdensome possession that costs more than it is worth

A 'white elephant' is an idiom for a possession that is useless or troublesome and expensive to maintain.

8. If a CEO decides to '_____ the rug out from under' their employees, they have suddenly withdrawn support or changed plans unexpectedly.

Answer: B) pull

To 'pull the rug out' is a metaphor for removing the foundation or support someone relies on, causing them to fail or stumble.

9. What is the rhetorical effect of using the expression 'jumping the shark' when critiquing a long-running television series?

Answer: C) To indicate the show has declined in quality and is using gimmicks to stay relevant.

Originating from 'Happy Days,' this idiom describes the moment a brand or show starts a decline marked by absurd plot twists.

10. If an investigative journalist is 'barking up the wrong tree,' they have successfully identified a secondary suspect in a case.

Answer: B) False

False; it means they are pursuing a mistaken line of thought or accusing the wrong person entirely.