

Idioms

September 1st

Well, the summer is over, and school is here again! It feels crazy that I'm now officially in eighth grader.

With all my new school supplies organized in my backpack, I returned to the crowded hallways, hugged and chatted with all my friends, found my new locker, and wrote the code on the back of my hand (just in case). I looked around, but no new students were in our grade.

Classes were mainly just the basics: do homework, cite sources, and wear deodorant. But our new English teacher wanted to start things off with a fun lesson, so he told us about idioms.

"An idiom is an expression or phrase with a figurative meaning," he explained. "For example, when someone is pregnant, some might say they have a bun in the oven!" Some students laughed, and I remembered hearing my grandpa say that one before. My dad's dad was full of idioms.

"For your homework, I'd like you to write down a list of five idioms and their meanings. And you'll get extra points if yours are unique, meaning no one else has the same ones."

Once we were dismissed, we all walked in a jumbled blob down the hall to the cafeteria for lunch. Some students got lunch served on lunch trays while others packed their own (my siblings and I have always been in the second category).

I sat at a long blue rectangular table with Shelby, Simone, Ernesto, Dan, and Sophia. Last year, the girls sat at one table, and the boys sat at the other, but it seemed like everyone was mixing up this year.

We traded snacks—a big green apple for some chips, a brownie for two cookies, a bag of carrots for some crackers—and chatted about how we'd spent the summer.

I told my friends about Ty and Ruby's splash contest, almost losing a turtle, and visiting New York City. Shelby went to a soccer camp. Simone had a cousin visit from Asia who stayed for a month. Ernesto got braces. Dan was a junior lifeguard at the pool (and he happily reported no one drowned). Sophia helped her mom who worked at a store.

Then someone brought up the new English assignment: The idioms.

"I think I'll write one of mine about 'cat got your tongue!'" Shelby thought aloud.

"Oh, I'll definitely use 'bring home the bacon' for mine!" Sophia said.

"I'm going to talk about being in a real pickle!" Dan declared.

I was surprised my friends could list so many! I sat there, trying to think of one.

“What about being full of beans?” Simone offered the group.

“Or spilling the beans?” Ernesto added.

“Or cutting the cheese!” Yelled Roger from another table, who apparently had been listening, and made us all laugh.

I tried to think of an idiom for the rest of the day but I couldn't. If thinking of one was hard, doing five would be impossible!

In the car ride home with Amy, I told her I tried to come up with something, but I could only think of the ones my friends had said and didn't want to steal theirs. She told me she could think of at least one million. (Not helpful, Amy!)

When I got home, I went to my room to organize my school supplies, writing the name of each subject in clear, neat handwriting across the top of each folder and notebook. When that was done, I opened the 'English' notebook to complete the first assignment on the first page.

I wrote today's date on the left side and my name right above it. I then wrote "Idioms" at the top of the page and underlined it. I added numbers 1-5, with a few lines of spacing in between. The page was all laid out, but there were big blank spaces where the idioms should be.

Think. Think. Think.

Nothing.

I could hear some commotion downstairs, and it was nearly dinner time. So, I went down, hoping for inspiration.

My whole family was gathered around the dinner table, paying attention to my dad's phone, which was lying in the middle. They were laughing, listening to Gramps (my dad's dad) talking on speakerphone. He lived in Texas and liked to call from time to time.

He was sharing a story from his life on the farm, and I squished myself between Grant and Ty to listen, too. *This was perfect!*

His voice has a deep familiar twang that makes him so fun to listen to.

“...Well, I'll tell you what, those rabbits may be a dime a dozen, but they're fast as lightning. They had me running around like a chicken with its head cut off. Of course, when I finally caught

them, I was happy as a pig in the mud. But doing so had me beat. The neighbors were all laughing their heads off! When all that was over, I was just about ready to hit the hay....”

And at that moment, I ran upstairs to grab my English notebook.

Your Friend,
Joanie