



Banha University
Faculty of Arts- English Department
Time: 3 hours



First Grade
Second Term-2013/2014
Year's Work Make ups

Guiding Answer

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Respond to the following questions:

1. What are idioms?

Idioms are a type of formulaic language. Formulaic language consists of fixed expressions which you learn and understand as units rather than as individual words, for example: type of formulaic language examples greetings and good wishes Hi there! See you soon! Happy birthday! Prepositional phrases at the moment, in a hurry, from time to time sayings, proverbs and quotations It's a small world! Don't put all your eggs in one basket. To be or not to be – that is the question. Compounds car park, bus stop, home-made phrasal verbs take off, look after, turn down collocations blonde hair, deeply disappointed Idioms. Idioms are fixed



combinations of words whose meaning is often difficult to guess from the meaning of each individual word. For example, if I say ‘I put my foot in it the other day at Linda’s house – I asked her if she was going to marry Simon’, what does it mean? If you do not know that put your foot in it means say something accidentally which upsets or embarrasses someone, it is difficult to know exactly what the sentence means. It has a non-literal or idiomatic meaning. Idioms are constructed in different ways and this book gives you practice in a wide variety of types of idiom. Here are some examples:

Tim took a shine to [immediately liked] his teacher. (verb + object + preposition)

The band’s number one hit was just a flash in the pan [something that happens only once]

(Idiomatic noun phrase)

Little Jimmy has been as quiet as a mouse [extremely quiet] all day. (simile. See Unit 9 for more similes.)

We arrived safe and sound [safely]. (binomial. See Unit 10 for more binomials.)

Idioms are often based on everyday things and ideas, for example, the human body:



Mark and Alistair don't see eye to eye. [don't agree with each other]

2. When and how are idioms used?

Idioms frequently change in English. Although many idioms last for a long time, some disappear very quickly. Therefore, some idioms that were popular fifty years ago may sound very old-fashioned and odd today. For example, the idiom as stiff / straight as a ramrod [to sit or stand with a very straight and stiff back] is not frequently used nowadays. It is, therefore, important to be careful if you learn an idiom from, say, an older novel, as it may sound unnatural if you use it in your own speech or writing.

What are idioms used for?

- For emphasis, e.g. The singer's second album sank like a stone. [failed completely]
- To agree with a previous speaker, e.g.

A: Did you notice how Lisa started listening when you said her name?



B: Yes, that certainly made her prick her ears up. [start listening carefully]

- To comment on people, e.g. Did you hear Tom has been invited for dinner with the prime

minister? He's certainly gone up in the world! [gained a better social position – or more

money – than before]

- To comment on a situation, e.g. The new finance minister wants to knock the economy

into shape. [take action to get something into a good condition]

- To make an anecdote more interesting, e.g. It was just one disaster after another today, a

sort of domino effect. [when something, usually bad, happens and causes a series of other

things to happen]

- To catch the reader's eye. Idioms – particularly those with strong images – are often used



in headlines, advertising slogans and the names of small businesses. The writer may play

with the idiom or make a pun (a joke involving a play on words) in order to create a

special effect, e.g. a debt of dishonour instead of the usual debt of honour. [a debt that

you owe someone for moral rather than financial reasons]

- To indicate membership of a particular group, e.g. surfers drop in on someone, meaning

to get on a wave another surfer is already on. This kind of group-specific idiom is outside

the focus of this book.

Where will you see or hear idioms?

You will see and hear idioms in all sorts of speaking and writing. They are particularly

common in everyday conversation and in popular journalism.

For example, they are often



found in magazine horoscopes, e.g. You'll spend much of this week licking your wounds

[trying to recover from a bad experience], or in problem pages, e.g. Do you think that my

relationship has run its course? [come to a natural end] However, idioms are also used in

more formal contexts, such as lectures, academic essays and business reports, e.g. It is hoped

the regulations will open the door to better management. [let something new start] See Unit

41 for more idioms used in formal writing.