

UNIT 6

Idioms from Animals



Reading

Read the story. Then discuss the questions.

Two Very Different Brothers

At school, Randy was shy and **as quiet as a mouse**. He was also very clever. He had a twin brother, Jason. Jason loved football and had to **work like a dog** to make good grades. In school, Randy was the **bookworm**. He loved to read. But without his glasses he could not see. He was **as blind as a bat**. Jason **ate like a horse** and was two hundred pounds at age seventeen. Both of them were **early birds** and got out of bed at four every morning. Randy read and studied. Jason went training. Today, because they were **pigheaded** and did not give up, Jason is quarterback for the Glendale Geeks, and Randy is the owner of the team.

1. If you **work like a dog**, do you work hard or don't you work hard? When have you worked like a dog?
2. Are you an **early bird**? Tell why or why not.
3. If you are **pigheaded**, do you change easily?

Meanings

Each example has an idiom with an animal word. Read the example carefully to find the meaning of the idiom. Then look at the definitions that follow the examples. Write the idiom next to its definition.

as blind as a bat	I'm as blind as a bat without my glasses.
as quiet as a mouse	When the teacher walked into the room, each student was at his or her desk, reading a book, as quiet as a mouse .
a bookworm	Howard reads twelve books a week. He's a real bookworm .
a copycat	My little brother Marvin is a copycat . If I get black sneakers, he wants to have black sneakers, too.
chicken	Richard is too chicken to try waterskiing.
an early bird	Allan arrives at the office before everyone else. He's an early bird .
to eat like a horse	Every time Jess goes walking in the mountains, he comes home with a big appetite, and he eats like a horse .
pigheaded	Adam is so pigheaded that he never listens to anyone. He always does what he has decided.
to smell a rat	I could smell a rat . Someone stopped me on the street and offered to sell me a gold watch for five dollars.
to talk turkey	Let's stop being polite and talking around the problem. Let's start to talk turkey .
to work like a dog	Javier works two jobs and goes to college. He works like a dog because he wants to get a good education.

- _____ making almost no noise, being shy and not talking much
- _____ to work very hard
- _____ not taking advice, stubborn
- _____ to eat a lot
- _____ the first person to be somewhere, a person who gets out of bed early
- _____ not able to see well because of very bad eyesight
- _____ someone who reads a lot
- _____ afraid, scared

9. _____ to talk openly and directly
10. _____ to think there may be something wrong
11. _____ a person who wants to do the same thing as other people

Practice

A. Answer each question with **yes** or **no**. Explain your answer.

1. Marvin stays in bed all day. Does he work like a dog?
2. Gloria always listens to other people's advice. Is she pigheaded?
3. Bert is very original. He dresses in his own style. Is he a copycat?
4. I can't see a thing without my glasses. Am I as blind as a bat?
5. Hank eats a lot. Does he eat like a horse?
6. Manuel never says very much. Is he as quiet as a mouse?
7. Carlo is always late. Is he an early bird?
8. If Stamo thinks there is something wrong or dishonest going on, does she smell a rat?
9. Are you chicken if you go skydiving?
10. If you won't talk openly to someone, will you talk turkey?
11. Larisa never reads. Is she a bookworm?



B. Complete each example with an idiom from this unit.

1. Janos goes to school all day and then works two evening jobs. He _____.
2. At the sale, the _____ will get all the bargains before anyone else arrives.
3. Andrew never speaks at meetings. He's _____.
4. Reiko always wears the same clothes as her friends. She is such a _____.

5. Every time we invite Tony to dinner, he finishes every dish.
He _____.
6. The store was advertising TVs for one hundred dollars. I
_____.
7. Let's _____. We need to
solve this problem quickly.
8. Jaime goes to the library three times a week because he's a
_____.
9. You're just _____. Everyone
can ride a bike.
10. Roger won't take advice from anyone. He's just plain
_____.
11. I'm _____ without my
glasses.

Conversation

Practice each conversation with a partner.

SITUATION 1

Alfred is asking Alice about her new neighbors.

ALFRED: What are your new neighbors like?

ALICE: I don't know. I haven't met them yet.

ALFRED: Oh, really.

ALICE: All I know is that I haven't heard a sound from next door. They're as quiet as mice.

SITUATION 2

Liza is talking to Nathan.

LIZA: Did you hear that Louis has a new girlfriend?

NATHAN: No, what's she like?

LIZA: I hear that she works in a library. Maybe she's a bit of a bookworm.

SITUATION 3

Kyle is talking to his little brother.

BRUCE: Can I ride on your bike?

KYLE: No, you can't. And stop being such a copycat. You don't have to do whatever I do.

BRUCE: Why not? What else are big brothers for?

On Your Own

Work with a partner. Choose three idioms. Write a short conversation for each idiom. Then act out your conversations.

Discussion

Work with a partner or in a small group. Do the following activities.

1. The idioms in this unit all use animals. Do you know any other English idioms that use animals?
2. Are there animal idioms in your native language? Are any idioms like the ones in English?
3. Would you **smell a rat** if someone who is normally **as quiet as a mouse** demanded that you **talk turkey**?
4. **A copycat** sees someone else do something and wants to do the same thing. Describe a situation where someone was a copycat.