



Speaking idiomatically...

There are plenty of idioms in English. Let's look at a few of them related to Nature today

WHAT IS AN IDIOM?

An idiom is a phrase (a group of words) or an expression whose meaning goes beyond what the words that make up the idiom say. In other words, it is not meant to be taken literally, and has a new meaning peculiar to a language. You may not understand what the idioms mean when you hear them for the first time. But if you familiarise yourself with them, they come in handy. They make the language rich and interesting.



ONCE IN A BLUE MOON

Meaning: Rarely or something that does not happen frequently

Origin: The phrase refers to the appearance of a second full moon within a month which happens about every 31 months.

Usage: I go to the cinema once in a blue moon.



MAKE A MOUNTAIN OUT OF A MOLEHILL

Meaning: To exaggerate or overreact to a minor issue

Origin: This idiom is believed to have existed from the late 16th Century. Molehills are small heaps of soil thrown up by a burrowing mole. So the meaning of the idiom is clear - making something small seem really huge like a mountain.

Usage: It was just a minor issue, but she made a mountain out of a molehill.

STEAL SOMEONE'S THUNDER

Meaning: Pocketing credit or praise for someone else's effort.

Origin: The phrase comes from the 18th Century dramatist John Dennis who devised a thunder machine to be used in his play. However, to his shock, he found it being used in some other performance and screamed, "That was my thunder."

Usage: He stole my thunder when he told the teacher that he had done all the work on the project.



NIP SOMETHING IN THE BUD

Meaning: Put an end to something before it can grow into a major problem.

Origin: This has reference to gardening. A flower that's nipped in the bud will not grow and blossom. The first use of the idiom can be traced back to the late 16th Century when "bloom" took the place of "bud".

Usage: Many serious illnesses can be nipped in the bud.

TO FEEL UNDER THE WEATHER

Meaning: To feel unwell

Origin: The phrase has its roots in maritime language. In the old days, when a sailor fell ill or sick he would be sent under the deck, away from the weather, to help him recover.

Usage: My daughter has a terrible cold and is feeling under the weather.

A RAY OF SUNSHINE

Meaning: Someone or something that makes one feel happy and positive, especially during a difficult time.

Origin: The phrase alludes to the sun's rays which illuminate the entire planet and which cannot be blocked by anything.

Usage: Reading books is a ray of sunshine in this gloomy lockdown period.



EXTENDING AN/THE OLIVE BRANCH

Meaning: Saying or doing something to show a willingness to end a fight.

Origin: This comes from the Bible from the story of Noah's Ark. The olive branch is a symbol of peace. An olive branch brought back to the Ark by a dove signified the end of the great flood.

Usage: Whenever I have an argument with my friend, it's always me who has to extend the olive branch.

OUT OF THE WOODS

Meaning: Out of danger, difficulty or a problem.

Origin: This expression is suggestive of having been lost in a forest. First recorded in English in the late 18th Century.

Usage: The heart attack she suffered was really serious, but my grandma is finally out of the woods.

BEAT AROUND THE BUSH

Meaning: Waste time by saying things that are irrelevant or talking in an indirect way so as to conceal one's intentions.



Origin: In medieval times, hunters would beat the area around bushes where birds were sleeping so that the scared birds would come out, and the hunters could kill them.

Usage: Will you stop beating around the bush and get to the point?



AS FRESH AS A DAISY

Meaning: Healthy and full of energy.

Origin: The expression comes from a daisy reopening its petals early in the morning, bright and beautiful.

Usage: After getting some sleep, she looks as fresh as a daisy.

ACTIVITY

Compile five animal-related and five bird-related idioms.

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QUEST

Do your dreams seem real?

How does our body react to an action-packed dream? Can we fly a plane simply by pedalling it?

Dream sleep

Sometimes we awake from an action-packed dream to find ourselves safe and sound in bed. Why doesn't our physical body react to what our mind experiences?

There are two types of sleep: regular sleep and dream sleep. During regular sleep our muscles remain ready for action. If we are uncomfortable, we move; if our name is called out we awaken.

Regular sleep gives way to dream sleep. When we're in this state, breathing and heartbeat are irregular and the muscles that move our body become paralysed. It is this paralysis that prevents us from reacting to our dream and perhaps hurting ourselves in the process. Sometimes, when we have a frightening dream, we realise that we're dreaming and try to rouse ourselves only to discover that we can't move a muscle! We have to make an effort to rouse ourselves. Normally, dream sleep lasts for 10-15 minutes at a stretch. Then it gives way to regular sleep when we can move again.



Pedalling a plane

Is it possible to propel a plane using pedals?

Human-made materials such as fibreglass make it possible to build very light aircraft whose propellers are turned by pedals. Some people have built such aircraft but the amount of physical effort needed to keep the propellers turning is too exhausting to keep up for long. In April 1988, a Greek cycling champion named Kanellos Kanellopoulos pedalled a plane from the island of Crete to the island of Santorini — a distance of 120 kilometres. The plane weighed only 32 kilograms.

(Content provided by Amrita Bharati)

GAME ON

Marco polo

Though this game is usually played outdoors, it can be enjoyed indoors with family too. All you need is a room in the house and a minimum of two players.

To ensure no one gets hurt, you could move the furniture in the room to the corners or to another room.

The rules of the game are simple — One person is named seeker. The seeker faces the wall and says 'Marco' while other players run around the room and reply 'Polo'. This exchange happens thrice and then the seeker says 'Freeze' or 'Melt'. If the seeker says freeze, the players have to stand in their respective places without any movement. The seeker keeps his/her eyes closed and tries to find the people in the room. At any given time, the seeker can choose to say freeze or melt. If the seeker says melt, then the players are free to move around. The seeker has to catch a player and identify who he/she is. If the seeker is right, then the player who is caught becomes the new seeker.

ARTIVITY



Artwork: K. Aakash, Class 7, Virutcham International Public School, Cheyyar

Read the newspaper and create an original artwork based on a news item that interests you and send your entry to school@thehindu.co.in with the subject - Artivity. Select entries will be published.

Please mention your name, class, school and city.

This week in sports history...

Here, we take a look at interesting, iconic and unforgettable sporting moments that took place in the week of May 10-16 through the years.



MAY 11
2008

UNITED'S DOUBLE DELIGHT

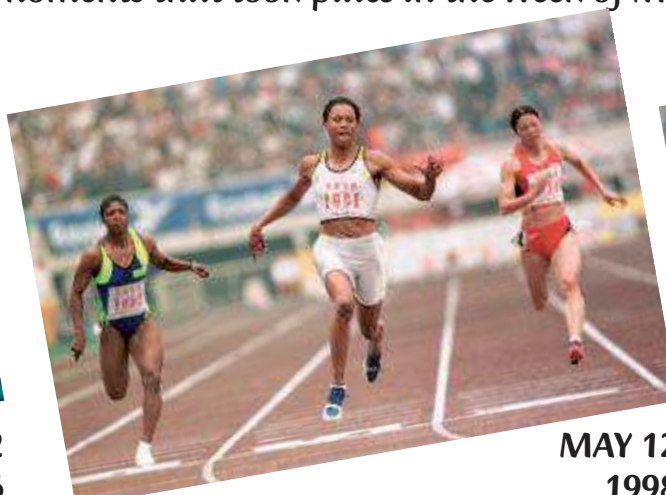
Cristiano Ronaldo, who won the Premier League Golden Boot for his 31 league goals, and Nani celebrate after winning the Premier League title. A 2-0 win over Wigan Athletic on the final day of the season, courtesy a penalty from Ronaldo and a goal from Ryan Giggs, gave United the title as Chelsea finished second two points behind following a 1-1 draw with Bolton Wanderers. Ronaldo, who finished with 42 goals in all competitions for United that season, also helped his side claim the Champions League title later that month.



MAY 12
1996

A CHAMPION'S STEPPING STONES

At just 15, Swiss tennis player Martina Hingis was already competing with the best, and finished runners-up to Spaniard Conchita Martinez at the Italian Open. She felt like a champion, however, as she had defeated top-seed Steffi Graf in the quarter-finals. She became the youngest Grand Slam winner of all time later that year when she won the Wimbledon women's doubles with Helena Sukova. She went on to win five Grand Slam singles titles and 13 Grand Slam women's doubles titles and held the number one ranking in multiple categories.



MAY 12
1998

BEATING YOUR OWN BEST

Sprinter and world 100 m champion Marion Jones bettered her personal best on her way to victory in the 100 m event in 10.71 seconds in front of a packed stadium during a meet in Chengdu, China. Jones, who won gold at the 1997 World Championships in a time of 10.83 seconds, created a championship record by winning the event at the 1999 World Championships in 10.70 seconds. She won three gold medals and two bronze medals at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, but these were later stripped after she admitted using steroids.



MAY 13
2003

A HISTORIC RUN CHASE

The morale of the West Indies players was low at the start of the fourth Test against Australia on May 9 at St. John's. Having already lost the four match series 3-0, they were merely playing for pride. But by the time the Test match ended on May 13, they had not only restored their pride, but had also scaled heights never reached before in history. By chasing down 418 in the fourth innings and winning the match by three wickets, West Indies had achieved the highest successful chase ever in the fourth innings of a Test match!