

Colourful English phrases and idioms

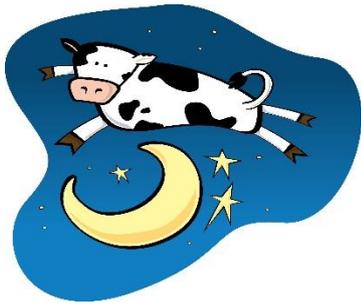
English has a lot of strange phrases which are difficult to understand when you first hear them. For example:

- 1) Cold turkey
- 2) Elephant in the room
- 3) Go pear-shaped
- 4) Hold your horses
- 5) Monkey business
- 6) Over the moon
- 7) Thick as thieves
- 8) Under the weather
- 9) Wet blanket
- 10) Whole nine yards

What do you think they mean? If you don't know, try to guess. Then look at the photos, read the description, and add the correct phrase.

Task:

Find other English idioms, discover their meanings, research their origins and illustrate them.



Phrase:

Meaning: Be thrilled about something

Origin: The image is taken from nursery rhyme for children. In this song, a cow was so happy that she jumped incredibly high.



Phrase:

Meaning: To be ill, unwell, or tired

Origin: It is a phrase connected to sailors. When they were ill, they had to get under the deck and away from bad weather. If there were too many, the captain would put their names in the column reserved for noting down weather conditions.



Phrase:

Meaning: Give up a habit or addiction abruptly

Origin: Nobody is sure, but one explanation is that "goose bumps" on the skin, which appear when a person suddenly stops taking intoxicants, look like the skin of a plucked and refrigerated turkey.



Phrase:

Meaning: Close friends who share each others' secrets

Origin: In the past, "thick" meant "closely allied with". Also, thieves are known to share secrets only with each other – nobody understands a thief as well as another thief.



Phrase:

Meaning: A huge and obvious problem that nobody wants to talk about

Origin: In the 19th century, a Russian author wrote a short story about a man who went to the museum and noticed everything there except a huge elephant.



Phrase:

Meaning: Everything possible, the whole lot, all the way

Origin: Nobody knows for sure. It might have something to do with measuring fabric, machine guns in World War 2, or even concrete mixers.



Phrase:

Meaning: Activities that could be considered mischievous, questionable or even illegal

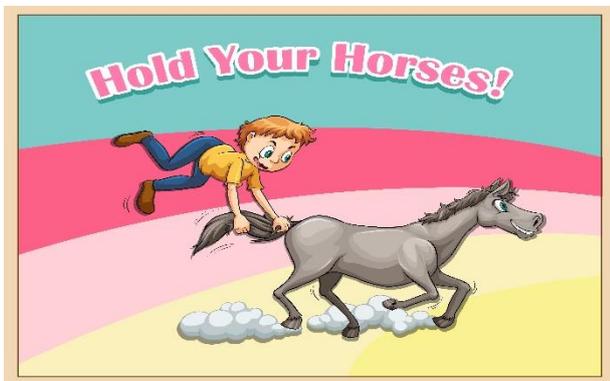
Origin: It refers to the playfulness and tricks that monkeys are famous for, and because of which they should not be trusted.



Phrase:

Meaning: A person who spoils all the fun

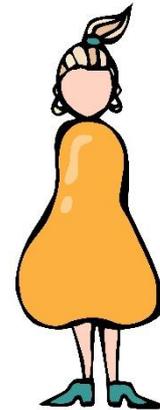
Origin: It comes from using a damp piece of cloth to take out a fire – just like some people can ruin the enthusiasm of others.



Phrase:

Meaning: Slow down, stop

Origin: The phrase comes from history and is related to travelling by horse: either riding or driving a horse-drawn vehicle. If such horses went too fast, they needed to be slowed down.



Phrase:

Meaning: Something wrong

Origin: The phrase is connected to flying, but people are not sure if it means that an airplane did not make a perfect circle, or that a hot-air balloon is not full of gas. In both cases, a strange shape is visible instead of a circle.