

English Language Arts (Elementary Cycle 2)



LETTING THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

Cultural references

- › Figurative language, i.e. idioms and expressions
- › Texts intended for youth
- › Media texts

Anecdote

In England, in the 1500s, you could buy a piglet at a farmer's market, and it would cost quite a bit. A dishonest merchant might put a stray cat in the bag instead of the piglet, and you wouldn't find out until you got home and let the cat out of the bag!

Context

In order to add life, humour and cultural interest to their texts, authors and media producers often use figurative language in the form of idioms and expressions. Isn't it curious that languages contain these expressions that, if taken literally, can lead to confusion and sometimes hilarity? Students play with words and learn more about these figures of speech.



Activity 1

The teacher reads aloud a text that contains idioms and expressions. Students explore different types of texts to find more idioms and expressions. They record their findings, noting the meaning of the expressions within the texts, as well as the effect of the figurative language on the meaning of the text and on the reader.



Activity 2

Students choose two expressions that are related to the same theme. They create posters that represent the expressions, literally as well as figuratively. In small groups, they share the illustrations of literal meanings in a game that challenges peers to guess the expression and its figurative meaning.



Activity 3

In collaboration with the FSL class, to encourage the transfer of language learning, students use graphic organizers to compare expressions from both languages and to look at similarities and differences in terms of the meanings of the expressions explored.



Additional resources

Targeted **elements** of the QEP

- › Reading: Uses reading strategies to construct meaning from texts
- › Writing and production processes: Uses signs, symbols, illustrations and words to communicate to a familiar audience
- › Communicating: Actively participates in collaborative group activities

Questions that students could be asked during the activity

- › What are some expressions and idioms that are part of our life and culture?
- › How might these expressions lead to misunderstanding and confusion?
- › What purposes do these expressions serve in a text? How do they impact the message in a text?
- › How have these expressions changed over time?
- › Why are idioms and expressions used in advertising?

Suggestions for activities with cultural partners

- › As part of the [Culture in the Schools program](#), invite an artist from the [Répertoire de ressources culture-éducation](#) to explore different media and techniques that can be used to produce illustrations and ads (English content available)
- › Invite an author to look at the choices authors/producers make in crafting a text
- › Invite an illustrator to discuss how illustrations carry meaning that complements and enhances a text

References

- › To browse children’s literature, visit the [Québec Reading Connection](#) website
- › For more information on the media competency, visit the [Literacy Today](#) website
- › For information about advertisements and media texts, visit the [Media Smarts](#) website