

Idiomatic: Exploring the English language through its idioms.

“Language is fossil poetry. As the limestone of the continent consists of infinite masses of the shells of animalcules, so language is made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

An idiom is an expression that cannot be understood from the meanings of its separate words but that has a meaning of its own. How do these phrases that lend such nuance to our conversation come into common use?

In this seminar each participant will pick one or more categories to explore and present to the group in any format. Use PowerPoint, just talk, use pictures, draw cartoons, tell jokes, bring your grandchild, sing a song, be creative or be straightforward. Feel free to do your presentation with another participant.

There are many online resources to use for your research. A list will be provided, but much can be found with a simple internet search.

Some suggested categories to choose from, each with an example, or come up with your own:

- Love, marriage, baby carriage: (tie the knot)
- Nautical (three sheets to the wind)
- Food (a fine kettle of fish)
- Animals (until the cows come home)
- Plant life (shrinking violet)
- Rooted in enslavement/prejudice (sold down the river)
- Biblical (fly in the ointment)
- Life and death (dead as a doornail)
- Shakespeare said it (break the ice)
- Body parts (nose to the grindstone)
- Sports (the ball is in your court)
- War and military (bite the bullet)
- Weather (steal your thunder)
- Colorful (paint the town red)
- 20th century and beyond (going postal)
- Idioms in British, Scottish, Irish, Canadian, and Australian English (London to a brick)
- Interesting idioms in other languages (be left with the nose, from Russia)