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?


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.

1. __________________________ making almost no noise, being shy and not talking much

2. __________________________ to work very hard

3. __________________________ not taking advice, stubborn

4. __________________________ to eat a lot

5. __________________________ the first person to be somewhere, a person who gets out of bed early

6. __________________________ not able to see well because of very bad eyesight

7. __________________________ someone who reads a lot

8. __________________________ 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.