

Activities for classroom use

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



1. Use the dictionary to complete the following idiomatic expressions of comparison. Which pairs have an exact Italian equivalent?

old **mad** **pleased** **high** **smooth** **plain**
thick **happy** **quick**

1. as as Punch
2. as as the hills
3. as as a flash
4. as as a kite
5. as as a mill pond
6. as as two (short) planks
7. as as thieves
8. as as Larry
9. as as day/as the nose on your face
10. as as a hatter/as a March hare

snug **proud** **fit** **sweet** **meek** **clear** **solid**
hard **stiff** **safe**

11. as as a bug in a rug
12. as as a rock
13. as as a rock
14. as as houses
15. as as a fiddle
16. as as a poker
17. as as a peacock
18. as as crystal
19. as as a lamb
20. as as pie

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



2. Use the dictionary to match each verb with its corresponding simile. Underline the word under which you have found the expression and write the translation, as in the example.

1. to live	a. like grim death	<i>I.e. vivere da paschià</i>
2. to get on	b. like a fishwife	
3. to drink	c. like headless chickens	
4. to shout	d. like poison	
5. to hold onto somebody	e. like <u>fighting cocks</u>	
6. to have eyes	f. like a sack of potatoes	
7. to run around	g. like a million (dollars)	
8. to feel	h. like the back of one's hand	
9. to work	i. like a house on fire	
10. to hate someone	j. like nobody's business	
11. to look	k. like a fish	
12. to know something	l. like a hawk	

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



3. Look up the translation of the following Italian idiomatic expressions of comparison. Under which headword did you find the expression?

	Translation	Headword
1. dormire come un ghio
2. gridare come un ossesso
3. sbuffare come una locomotiva
4. parlare come una macchinetta
5. fumare come un turco
6. piangere come una vite tagliata
7. correre come un disperato
8. lavorare come una bestia
9. saltare come un grillo
10. guidare come un pazzo

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



4. Use the dictionary to complete the following proverbs.
 - Under which headword did you find the proverb?
 - Which proverbs have an exact Italian equivalent? For which proverb(s) is an explanation given?

	Headword	Translation/ equivalent
1. take care of the pennies	a. the merrier	.....
2. the proof of the pudding	b. as handsome does	.....
3. birds of a feather	c. is in the eating	.....
4. don't cross your bridges	d. make light work	.....
5. many hands	e. before you get to them	.....
6. handsome is	f. as good as a mile	.....
7. two heads	g. spoil the broth	.....
8. a miss is	h. (flock together)	.....
9. the more	i. are better than one	.....
10. too many cooks	j. and the pounds will take care of themselves	.....

1. j.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



5. Complete the following Italian proverbs. Look up the missing words in the dictionary and find out which proverbs have an exact equivalent in English and which are translated literally or explained.

	Equivalent/explanation
1. Nessuno nasce
2. Il ha l'oro in bocca
3. Una al giorno leva il medico di turno
4. Col tempo e con la paglia maturano le
5. Can che abbaia non
6. La notte tutti i gatti sono
7. con i tuoi, Pasqua con chi vuoi
8. Uomo avvisato salvato
9. Partire è un po'
10. La paura fa
11. Chi troppo vuole stringe
12. L'..... è come il pesce, dopo tre giorni puzza
13. non vede cuore non duole
14. Nessuna, buona

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



6. Complete each group of idiomatic expressions with one of the following adjectives:

fine big cold high dark sharp

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. a. to have a head | 2. a. to get feet |
| b. to have a mouth | b. hands, warm heart |
| c. he's always had ideas | c. my blood runs |
| d. to talk | d. in the light of day |
| d. to make it | e. to throw water on something |
-
- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 3. a. to be at the end | 4. a. to have a time |
| b. to look | b. to hold one's head (up) |
| c. you're so you'll cut yourself | c. to search and low |
| | d. it's time that we went |
-
- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 5. a. to be in the | 6. a. don't put too a point on it |
| b. he left me in the | b. a chance would be a thing! |
| c. to take a leap in the | c. to cut it a bit |
| d. to work in the | d. to tread a line |

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



7. A. Use the dictionary to complete the following idiomatic expressions with the correct animal.

wolf bee butterflies ants sheep
bat rat duck cats snake

- You've really got in your pants tonight!
- She's got a in her bonnet about punctuality.
- I always have (in my stomach) before an exam.
- The children have taken to it like a to water.
- He dashed out of the room like a out of hell.
- They say it's a good deal, but I smell a
- They earn just enough to keep the from the door.
- It's been raining and dogs for one hour.
- She was making 's eyes at him.
- Don't trust him. He's a in the grass.

B. Decide which of the idiomatic expressions in A means:

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|---|--|
| a. rain very hard | f. feel very nervous |
| b. a false and deceitful friend | g. earn just enough money to survive |
| c. guess that something is wrong | h. be unable to sit or stand still |
| d. look at somebody in a loving and silly way | i. learn how to do something very easily |
| e. very fast | j. have an obsession for |

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



8. Complete these Italian idiomatic expressions. Look up the missing words and find the translations. Are the same animals used in both languages? If they are different, write the Italian and English translations, as in the example.

caprone		gallo		asino		mulo
polli	lepre		talpa	pulcino		topo
bue	lupo		gallina	gatte		buoi

Ex: essere carico come un *asino*

Trans.: *to be loaded down like a mule* it. *asino donkey* ingl. *mule mulo*

1. mangiare come un
2. mettere il carro davanti ai
3. puzzare come un
4. lavorare come un
5. uccidere la dalle uova d'oro
6. alzarsi al canto del
7. essere bagnato come un
8. far ridere i
9. essere cieco come una
10. fare la fine del
11. gettarsi in bocca al
12. allevare una in seno
13. scappare come una
14. avere altre da pelare

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



9. Who are these people? Look them up in the dictionary and complete the following idiomatic expressions. Which expressions have an exact Italian equivalent? For which of them is an explanation given?

Hobson **Achilles** **Aladdin** **Pandora**
Adam **Croesus** **Job** **Midas**

Italian equivalent/explanation

1.' heel
2.'s cave
3.'s box
4.'s choice
5. She has the touch.
6. He is as rich as
7. He has the patience of
8. I don't know him for

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



10. Use the following proper nouns to complete the Italian idiomatic expressions below. Then match each expression with its corresponding translation.

Berta **Pulcinella** **Colombo** **Tizio** **Pietro** **Francesco**

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|--|--|
| 1. viaggiare con il cavallo di san | a. open secret |
| 2. non è più il tempo che filava | b. every Tom, Dick and Harry |
| 3. questo si chiama (e torna indietro) | c. obvious but brilliant solution to a problem |
| 4., Caio e Sempronio | d. it's not like in the good old days |
| 5. segreto di | e. to travel on foot |
| 6. l'uovo di | f. he's called Jack (and comes back) |

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



11. Use the dictionary to complete the following idiomatic expressions with the appropriate “food word”.

tea	beer	cake	bean	cheese
butter	cherry	bread	apple pie	grapes
bananas	pancake	beef	mustard	fruit cake
mincemeat	omelette	bacon	biscuit	

- She found everything in order.
- Mum will go when she sees this.
- Bob walked into the room looking as cool as a
- Come on! Put a bit of into it!
- They know which side their is buttered on.
- He'd like to become an actor, but he earns his bread and as a waiter.
- I can't pay you now – I haven't got a!
- “How do you do that?” “Watch, it's a piece of!”
- Politics is definitely not my cup of
- Your brother and you are as different as chalk and
- She is the one who brings home the
- He really wants to get two bites at the
- John earns \$ 30,000 but that's small compared with his wife's salary.
- Well, that really takes the!
- Old Tom is as nutty as a!
- She says she hates their house, but I think that's just sour
- Italy made of Portugal, beating them 5 goals to nil.
- She is as keen as
- She gets here first in the morning and she's the last to leave.
- You can't make an without breaking eggs!
- Apart from a few hills, the landscape here is as flat as a

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



12. Now complete the following Italian sentences with the appropriate “food word”. Look up the missing words in the dictionary and match each expression with its translation.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. vendersi come il | a. to have straight hair |
| 2. portare a casa la | b. to be as sweet/nice as pie |
| 3. essere tutto | c. to bring home the bacon |
| 4. spremere qualcuno come un | d. to be as white as snow |
| 5. sembrare una | e. to milk somebody dry |
| 6. avere capelli dritti come | f. to sell like hot cakes |

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



13. Look at the speech bubbles and then study the list of people below them. Use the dictionary to work out who is speaking, what the situation is and the meaning of the idiomatic expression with **play**.

a. If you **play along** with me, you won't get hurt.

b. If you **play ball** with me, I'll **play ball** with you.

c. If this terrible weather keeps up, it'll **play havoc** with our arrangements for sport's day!

e. I'm leaving this job. I'm tired of **playing second fiddle** to a man I don't respect.

d. I felt really sick yesterday - I wasn't **playing truant**.

g. Let me just **play devil's advocate** for a moment ...

f. It's no good **playing for time** - you've got one more hour and then we're going to kill her!

h. We don't know what kind of questions you will be asked in the debate. So it's best just to **play it by ear**.

- The headmaster to a pupil *b*
- A political advisor to a politician
- A physical education teacher to the students
- A kidnapper to the police
- A pupil to the headmaster
- An employee to a colleague
- A kidnapper to a hostage
- A TV anchorman to a politician

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



14. A. Use the dictionary to complete the idiomatic expressions in the speech bubbles with one of the following parts of the body.

legs lip eye hair heel neck throat chest
head mouth arms breath foot skin heart

1. The view from the top just took my away

2. I have got it off my now.

3. When the engine caught fire, I just lost my

4. I have set my on it.

5. His smile made my stand on end.

6. I am prepared to dig my in over this!

7. I am really on my last now.

8. He managed to keep a stiff upper

9. I have never seen to with you.

10. I have really put my in it this time.

11. I nearly jumped out of my when I saw two rats.

12. Bill and I have always been at each other's

13. Why are you so down in the?

14. She's such a pain in the!

15. I'll welcome it with open

B. Match each expression in A. with the word in B. that best conveys the emotion.

obstinacy	weakness	calmness	panic
incompatibility	depression	disagreement	embarrassment
wonder	relief	irritation	enthusiasm
	strong determination	terror	surprise

C. Which expressions have an exact Italian equivalent?

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



15. Use the dictionary to complete the following idiomatic expressions with the appropriate number. Some numbers are used more than once.

five	one	thousand	two	nine
eight	million	seventh	first	four
	nineteen	second	six	third

- As he had a car, he was _____ up on me when it came to inviting girls out.
- “I find this film really dull.” “That makes _____ of us.”
- Never mind – _____ time lucky!
- He’s just had one over the _____ .
- Let’s see if we can’t find something to set the mood. _____ things _____: some music.
- I’m exhausted! Let’s take _____!
- The baby was crawling about on all _____ .
- She talks _____ to the dozen. You never have a chance to get a word in edgeways.
- Where are you going dressed up to the _____ like that?
- I haven’t had time to organise everything, so I’m all at _____ and sevens.
- When he was given his first motorbike, he was in the _____ heaven.
- As a singer, he is _____ to none.
- I felt so ashamed. I was dying a _____ deaths.
- There’s no-one like her. She’s one in a _____ .
- I can’t go out. I have a million and _____ things to do!
- He sold his old house without giving it a _____ thought.
- He was in _____ minds about telling her or not.
- All her things were scattered to the _____ winds.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



16. Use the dictionary to complete the following pairs of words joined by “and”.

earth	verse	skittles	clear	sound
dry	pieces	part	mild	early
hale	tongs	games	heart	spills
	high	square	hand	wide
				rack

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. meek and <i>mild</i> | 11. heaven and |
| 2. beer and | 12. chapter and |
| 3. safe and | 13. loud and |
| 4. bits and | 14. home and |
| 5. and hearty | 15. and parcel |
| 6. and ruin | 16. fair and |
| 7. and mighty | 17. fun and |
| 8. hammer and | 18. far and |
| 9. and foot | 19. and soul |
| 10. bright and | 20. thrills and |

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



17. Complete the following Italian idiomatic expressions. Look up the missing words in the dictionary and match each idiom with its corresponding translation.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. comprare a chiusa | a. to be hard-pressed, to be in deep water |
| 2. scherzare col | b. to have an ace up one's sleeve/in the hole |
| 3. giocare a scoperte | c. to act above board, to play fair |
| 4. avere l'acqua alla | d. to be sitting pretty, to be as safe as houses |
| 5. andarci con i piedi di | e. to play with fire |
| 6. essere in una botte di | f. to buy a pig in a poke |
| 7. avere un nella manica | g. to tread carefully/warily |
| 8. passare un brutto quarto d' | h. to kill two birds with one stone |
| 9. prendere due con una fava | i. to preach to the converted |
| 10. sfondare una aperta | j. to spend a few unpleasant minutes |