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# Icing on the Cake: Idiom curriculum for deaf and hard of hearing students

Marion E. Ballas

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**ICING ON THE CAKE: IDIOM CURRICULUM FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING  
STUDENTS**

**by**

**Marion E. Ballas**

**An Independent Study  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of:**

**Master of Science in Deaf Education**

**Washington University School of Medicine  
Program in Audiology and Communication Sciences**

**May 16, 2008**

**Approved by:  
Julia West, M.S.S.H.**

*Abstract: A look at the prevalence of idiom usage in the mainstream classroom, and the students' who are deaf/hard of hearing acquisition of idiom comprehension and usage. A complete teacher's guide, including lesson plans and materials, and a list of idiom teaching resources for teachers of the deaf and mainstream teachers.*

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my advisor, Julia West, for her support and guidance through this project; my parents for financial support and encouragement; my friends for art project ideas; Lindsay Poole for her beautiful illustrations; Chris Guerra for keeping me on task; and Buddy, for keeping me sane.

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**Introduction**

Belonging to the category of figurative language, idioms are common at all levels in the school setting. As such, it is important for deaf/hard of hearing students to be familiar with common idioms before entering the mainstream. However, most idiom curricula currently available for students who are deaf or hard of hearing is created for an older target population. As children are implanted younger and younger, and thus are able to mainstream at a younger age, they miss opportunities to learn common idioms with which their hearing peers are already familiar. It is important that students who are deaf/hard of hearing enter the mainstream classrooms are familiar and comfortable with this category of figurative language in both their receptive and expressive vocabulary.

This independent study will look at the prevalence of idiom usage in the mainstream classroom, including in curricula, literature, and teachers' language. A review of the literature will provide a good understanding as to what students who are deaf/hard of hearing need to know, as well as the levels they will be held to in the mainstream. I will then create a teacher's guide that includes lesson plans and materials. Finally, my independent study will include a list of idiom teaching resources for teachers of the deaf and mainstream teachers.

**Definition of an Idiom**

Don't let the cat out of the bag.  
You woke up on the wrong side of the bed.  
She has ants in her pants.  
It's raining cats and dogs.

These sentences each have an element of figurative language that infuses the sentence with character, wit and meaning. Called idioms, they exist outside of the normal categories of phrases in that they have a meaning that "cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its

elements” (Merriam Webster 2007). Idioms hold a double meaning—the literal meaning of the phrase (which is unrelated to the intended message) and the meaning “developed, evolved and shared by a linguistic community and represented in the mental lexicon;” as such, children learn them as part of the linguistic repertoire (Levorato 07).

There are two ways to view idioms: in the traditional view and the cognitive view. The traditional view holds that idioms, as metaphors and non-literal expressions, represent a method of expressing a thought in a conventional, literal manner. Over time, these idioms, through common usage, become conventional and no longer metaphorical (Schnell 07). The cognitive view states that metaphors are “an integral part of our everyday language,” an element of thought, and a method of conveying thoughts in a clear, concise manner (Schnell 07).

### **Idioms in the Classroom**

Results of a study published by Newton (1985) state that there is no difference in the frequency of idiom usage of teachers of typically hearing students versus teachers of students who are hearing impaired and enrolled in an oral deaf school. The study analyzed 300 utterances from 30 different teachers. Of these teachers, 10 taught children in an auditory-oral setting, 10 taught in a Total Communication setting, and 10 taught in a hearing classroom of typically developing children. Analysis showed that there was no difference in the frequency of idiom usage between teachers in auditory-oral programs and teachers in hearing schools, while the total communication teachers used significantly fewer idioms.

Several researchers have shown the rate of idiom usage in the classroom to be surprisingly high. Teachers use common idioms without thinking about them, such as, “got that?” or “come on.” Lazar et al found that teachers use idioms in 11.5% of their utterances, with a range of 4.65% in the kindergarten years to 20.3% in the eight grade. Statistically, this overall

average states that more than one out of every ten utterances contains an idiom. Both children with normal hearing and those with hearing impairments can find idioms hard to understand, since their literal interpretation does not agree with the context of their usage. However, as will be discussed, normal hearing children have a much easier task when learning idioms compared to their peers with hearing impairment (Iran-Nejad et al, 1981.)

Nippold (1990) examined reading text books for grades kindergarten through eighth grade published by Houghton-Mifflin, Ginn and Macmillian for the occurrence of idiomatic phrases. The kindergarten through second grade books focused on decoding strategies, and therefore idioms were rare. For the higher grades, the average number of sentences with idioms was 6.72%, with a range from 6% (third grade) to 9.7% (eighth grade.)

### **How Children Learn Idioms**

Elementary students spend roughly 60% of their classroom time listening, and 2/3 of that time is spent listening to the teacher (Lazar 1989). In the field of oral deaf education, we believe that learning to listen is one of the key components to successful learning; a child needs to be able to hear and understand the teacher and his peers to learn material. That second aspect, the understanding, is where idiom comprehension plays a role.

For children with normal hearing, idiom comprehension is a natural part of language acquisition. There are two theories of idiom acquisition. The first is that of “giant lexical units,” which states that idiomatic phrases are learned the same way as single lexical items (Ackerman, 1982). The metasemantic theories state that instead of learning idiomatic phrases as big chunks, they are learned through understanding their constituent parts (Nippold & Taylor, 1995).

Studies by Nippold and Rudzinski (1993) and Nippold and Taylor (1995) show that the more exposure the child has to the idiomatic phrase, the easier it is to learn the figurative

meaning. Another key factor is transparency, or how closely the literal and figurative meanings are linked (Nippold 2002). For example, “edge of your seat” is somewhat literal; its meaning, to be anxious, is transparent within the language of the idiomatic phrase. On the other hand, a phrase such as “under the weather” has no transparency with its meaning of “being sick.”

Abkarian et al (1992) suggest three different variables that contribute to a child’s comprehension of idioms: socioeconomic status, conversational skill, and risk-taking style. Socioeconomic status directly relates to a child’s world experience, which gives the child a broader exposure to language situations (Abkarian et al 1992). Abkarian et al (1992) suggest that conversational skill and recognition of contextual anomaly is closely related to idiomatic comprehension in five year olds. When faced with an idiom, children search for a meaning that makes sense, scaffolding their interpretation of the idiom on whether the contexts are unfamiliar and irregular or familiar and regular. The third variable, risk-taking style, relates to a child’s desire to select the safest, most literal option over the non-literal meaning. Overall, these three factors are apparent factors in not just idiom acquisition, but in general language acquisition.

The process of learning idioms for students who are deaf or hard of hearing is more complex. Research shows that although students who are deaf or hard of hearing have nonverbal intellectual abilities on par with their peers who are hearing, students who are deaf or hard of hearing tend to fall behind in linguistic and cognitive skills (Marschark & West 1985). When residential schools were the norm, texts were mostly literal and concrete in their vocabulary and syntax, resulting in graduates whose knowledge of figurative language was not adequate. Marschark & West (1985) sampled the creative constructions of four ASL-using students who were deaf or hard of hearing and four students who had hearing. Results showed that both groups



incorporated metaphors and similes into their story telling. The students who are deaf or hard of hearing used American Sign Language, so the results are not applicable to auditory oral students. However, these results are still significant in that they show that students who are deaf or hard of hearing have the ability to learn, understand and incorporate figurative language into story telling.

Research by Iran-Nejad et al (1981) shows that students who are deaf or hard of hearing tend to respond to idiomatic usage literally, and need to be told to view it figuratively. However, the same study suggests that through appropriate experience with language in a classroom setting, the students could increase the probability of “spontaneously seeking metaphorical interpretations of superficially unintelligible language” (Iran-Nejad et al 1981). They are quick to note that while emphasis should be given, too much emphasis placed on figurative language could cause students to over generalize the need to not interpret phrases literally.

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# Icing on the Cake: Idiom Curriculum for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students

Written by Marion Ballas

Cards illustrated by Lindsay Poole

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### **Why Teach Idioms?**

As a teacher of the deaf, you probably find yourself carefully thinking about the language you use in your classroom. We tend to plan language out precisely, choosing structures and vocabulary that we wish our students to learn. One often overlooked category is that of figurative language.

Children with normal hearing typically acquire language through incidental exposure. Learning figurative language, more specifically idioms, occurs in this fashion, without having to be taught. Just as children who are deaf or hearing impaired require explicit teaching of language and vocabulary, they also need direct teaching to understand idioms. This curriculum was developed for kindergarten to second grade students with hearing impairments who are working on higher-level language levels.

### **About the Lessons**

The lessons in this teacher's guide range in topics from animals to weather. The variety of wording suggests easy incorporation into thematic units. For example, "raining cats and dogs" could be taught during weather week, and "hold your horses" during farm week. "Don't spill the beans" can be taught during the winter holidays (keeping holiday gifts a secret!), and "pulling my leg" is a perfect saying for April Fool's Day. However, these lessons do not need to be taught in any particular order; they do not build on each other, but the concepts and the definition of an idiom will get easier as more are taught.

Each lesson has a list of materials needed, a discussion, a play activity, an art activity, and an extension activity. Some materials are included for the activities, and each lesson includes an idiom card. One side of the idiom card illustrates the

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literal meaning, and the other the figurative meaning. The card can be used during the lesson and then as a way to review the idiom.

This guide ends with a list of references divided into three categories. The first, “Commercial Curricula and Workbooks,” suggests books that have a variety of worksheets, games, and reproducible materials. “Idiom Dictionaries” are adult dictionaries for the teacher’s reference. The third category, “Idiom Books for Children,” lists both fiction and non-fiction books about idioms that are geared to the young school-aged child.

### **Suggestions for the teacher**

- Display the student’s artwork on the wall with the idiom written on a banner. Take pictures of the students during the play activity to put up with the artwork to remind them of the idiom and its meaning.
- Use idioms in your own language, and point them out to the children. Encourage them to use idioms as well, and praise their usage. This can be turned into a game of tracking idioms, where students are encouraged to use, and identify, idioms used in the classroom.
- Create an “Idiom Corner” in your weekly or monthly parent newsletter to keep parents informed about the new idioms the students are learning and encourage them to use the idioms in their own language.

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### **All Ears**

#### **Materials:**

- Idiom card
- Paper bag
- Paper plate
- Glue sticks
- Crayons
- Good listener card
- Scissors
- Magazines

#### **Discussion**

Ask the students what they use their ears for, and encourage them to say that they use their ears to hear. Ask them how many ears they have. Ask them if they think they'd hear better with three ears, or four ears, or five ears. Explain that it doesn't matter how many ears you have, but that some people say, "I'm all ears" when they are listening to something important.

#### **Play Activity**

Have each student chose something from the room for show-and-tell and put it in a paper bag. Each student will get a turn saying that they have something special to talk about. Have the other students respond that they are "all ears." Let each student have a turn, and model the language as needed. Reinforce the meaning when if a child is distracted, ask, "Are you all ears?"

#### **Art Activity**

Have each student draw his or her face on the paper plate. Tell them that these are going to be good listener plates, and ask what they should put all over the face. (Hold up an ear picture if needed.) Have the students cut ears from magazines to

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put around the face. Give each student an “I am a good listener because I am all ears!” card to glue on the back of their plates.

### Extension Activity

Give each student five “all ears” necklaces (a paper ear on a piece of yarn.)

Encourage them to give the ears to each other when they notice their friends being good listeners.

I am a good listener because I am all ears!	I am a good listener because I am all ears!
I am a good listener because I am all ears!	I am a good listener because I am all ears!



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### **Ants in Your Pants**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Plastic ants  
Boy and girl dolls  
Idiom card  
Crayons  
Pre-cut Jumping Jack Puppet pieces  
String  
Brads

#### **Discussion**

Hold up a plastic ant and ask the students to identify it. Ask if anyone has ever felt an ant crawl up their skin. Have the ant crawl up the students's arms. Say that some people think ants are itchy. Ask if they think the ants are itchy. Lead them to respond in the affirmative. Ask, "I wonder how the little girl and the little boy would feel if they had ants all over their bodies?" Put the ants on the boy and girl dolls and have them wiggle and act itchy. Have the students act this out as well.

#### **Play Activity**

Have the students think of times when they are wiggly. Have them act it out, using the language of the idiom. Provide the language or let the students come up with it on their own. Offer suggestions such as, "When you really want to get out of your seat, how do you act? What does the teacher say?" or "Pretend that you are very excited to go to the park and you're acting really silly. What would the teacher say?"

#### **Art Project**

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The students will each make their own Jumping Jack puppet, and then they will glue the ants all over their puppet's legs. They can then play with their own idiom puppet!

Directions:

1. Pre-cut the pieces from cardstock, and use a hole punch to make the holes.
2. Cut six short lengths of string. Thread the string from hole A to hole B.  
Tie the ends. Thread the string from hole C to hole D, and tie the ends.  
Thread the string from hole E to hole F, and tie the ends. Thread the string from hole G to hole H, and tie the ends.
3. Join holes I and J with a brad. Join holes K and L with a brad. Make sure that these are fastened loosely, so that the joints can move smoothly.
4. Cut a long piece of string. Connect the arms and the legs by tying the string, first to the center of the string joining the arms, then to the center of the string joining the legs.
5. Tie a loop of string through the hat so that you can hold up the Jumping Jack with one hand. Pull on the central string to see him jump up and down!

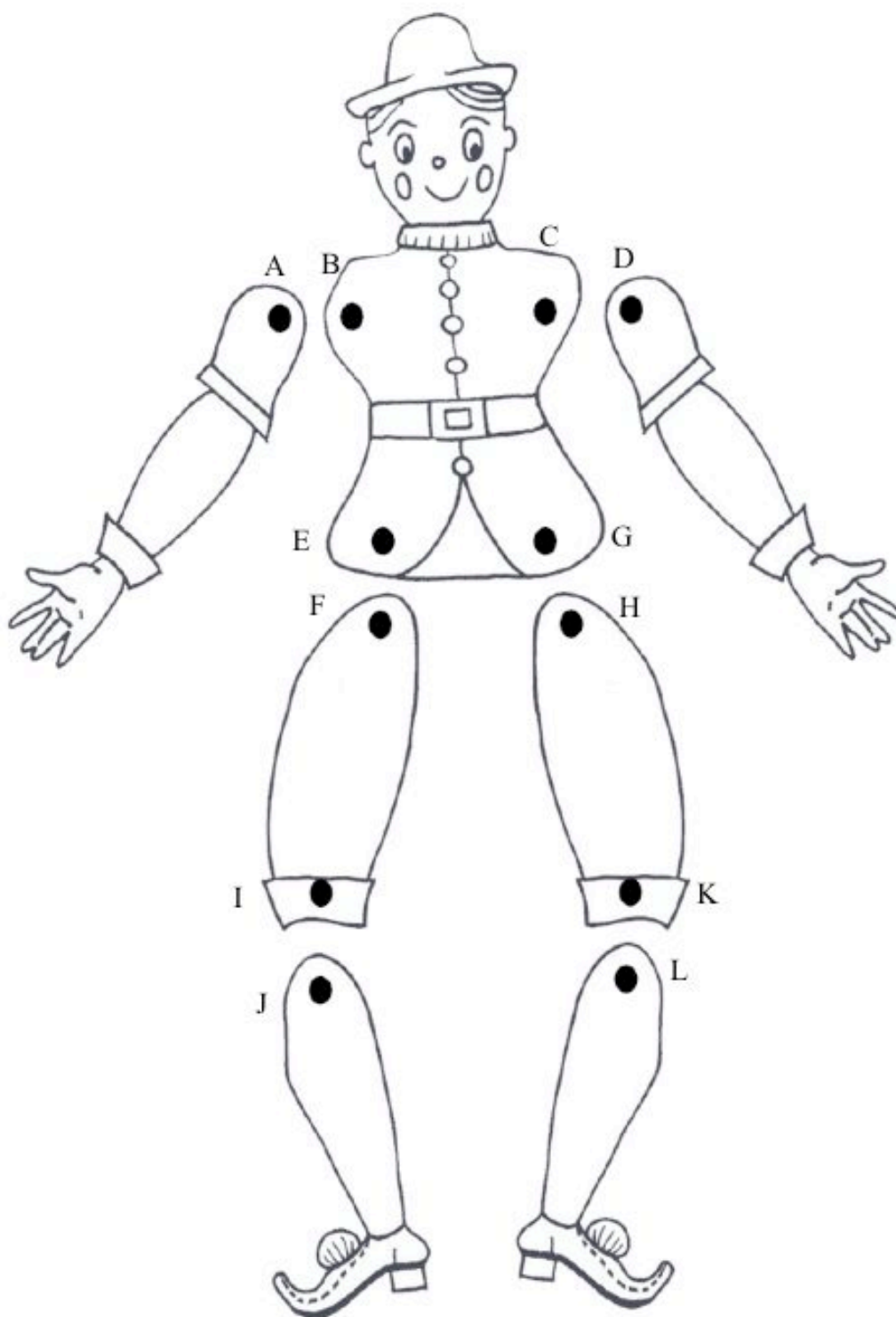
### Extension Activity

Have the students dance to the "Ants in Your Pants" song by Gary Rosen, available on his CD, *Tot Rock*.

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[http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/kids/things\\_to\\_make/jumping\\_jack/index.html](http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/kids/things_to_make/jumping_jack/index.html)

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### **Cat's Got Your Tongue**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Socks  
Hot glue gun  
Wiggly eyes  
Pipe cleaners cut into 2 inch pieces  
Felt cat ears, pre-cut

#### **Discussion**

Ask the students if they have ever got confused and messed up their words. Tell them about a time you were talking to someone and messed up your words. Give an example of messing up your words. Explain that you can say, “cat’s got your tongue?” and that it means “did you mess up your words?”

#### **Play Activity**

Pretending that “cat’s got your tongue” may be difficult for the students. Play the roll of the tongue-tied person in this dramatic play. Have the students choose a setting and have them interact with you. (A good idea would be at a grocery store, where the teacher can be the check-out person. ) Get tongue-tied, for example, by saying, “What did you, where did, can I..” and have the students ask, “cat got your tongue?”

#### **Art Activity**

Pre-make a large face from construction paper with a pink or red construction paper tongue glued to its mouth. Give the students each a sock with which to make a cat sock puppet. Help them use a hot glue gun to glue eyes, felt ears and

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pipecleaner whiskers on the cat. Then, have the students use the cat puppets to get the face's tongue.

### Extension Activity

Explained that “tongue-tied” means the same thing as “cat got your tongue. Ask them how they would talk if their tongues were tied. Have them act it out, and encourage them to be silly!

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### **Catch Your Breath**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Large plastic or rubber balls  
Tissue paper, cut into little pieces  
“Catch Your Breath” and “Stop and Think” paper strips  
Glue  
Paintbrushes  
Paper cups

#### **Discussion**

Throughout the day prior to the activity, use the idiom “catch your breath” several times. Ask the students if they know what “breath” is. Explain that breath is when you breathe in, and act out taking a big breath. At the beginning of this lesson, ask the students if they’ve ever heard someone say, “Catch your breath.” Remind them of the situations you used the expression, and ask if they can figure out what it means. Explain that “catch your breath” means that you need to stop and think.

#### **Play Activity**

Take the students outside or into the gym and have them run a lap. When they get back to the starting place, immediately tell them to say their ABC’s. Point out that they are out of breath, and ask if they’d like to “catch their breath” before saying their ABCs. Remind them that “catch your breath” means that you need to stop and think. Do this activity several times, replacing the ABCs with counting, jumping jacks, or answering questions about content they are learning.

#### **Art Activity**

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Give each student a large plastic or rubber ball and have them decoupage the ball with pieces of tissue paper. Give them two pieces of paper, one that says “Catch Your Breath” and another that says “Stop and Think” and have them decoupage the phrases on opposite sides of the ball.

### Extension Activity

Bring out the “Hold Your Horses” stop sign and add “Catch Your Breath” to the sign. Talk about how they both mean to wait, and discuss when you’d use one phrase over the other.

# Catch Your Breath

# Stop and Think

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### **Couch Potato**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card

Paper

“Don’t be a Couch potato! Do something!” spinner board printed on  
cardstock

Crayons or markers

Scissors

Brads

#### **Discussion**

Have the students brainstorm things they like to do after school. Write the activities on slips of paper, and then have the students divide the activities into two piles- one for activities where you move around and one for activities where you sit. Explain that when you sit and don’t move around, you are being a couch potato. Ask the students if they’ve heard mom or dad say that before.

#### **Play Activity**

Have one student be the parent and the other students the kids. Have the kids sit on the couch watching TV, and the parent can come in and say they are couch potatoes. The parent can then suggest that the kids do the “move around” activities the students came up with in the discussion, and the kids respond that they want to be couch potatoes. Let each student have a turn being the parent.

#### **Art Activity**

Give each student a “Don’t be a Couch potato! Do something!” spinner board. Have them cut the arrow out, and in each section of the spinner, draw an



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alternative to being a couch potato. Help the students attach the spinner using a brad.

### Extension Activity

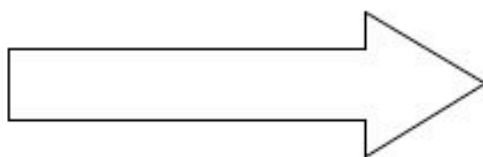
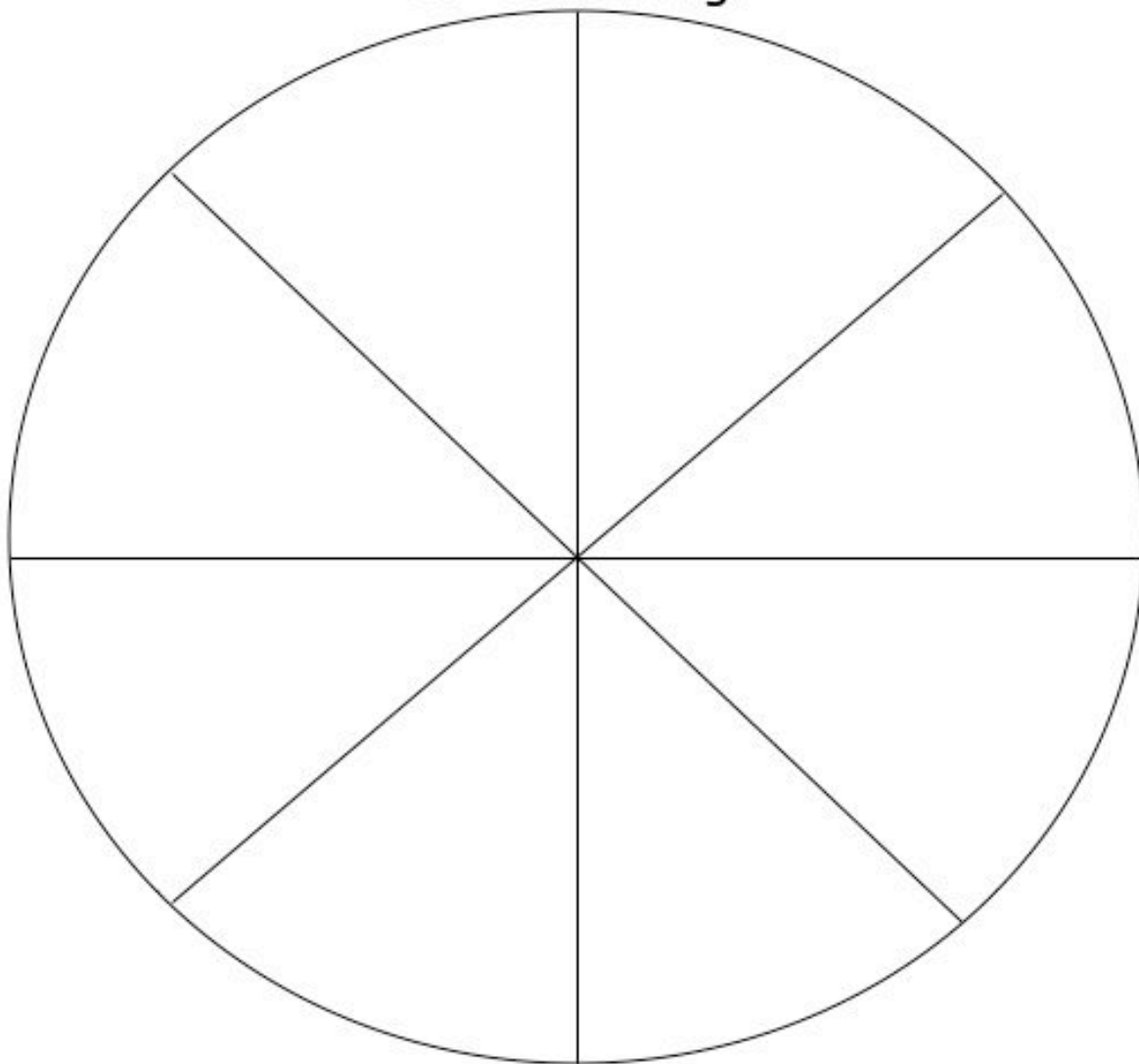
Have the students use their spinners in the morning when they get to school to chose a morning activity.

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Don't Be a Couch Potato!  
Do Something!



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### **Don't Spill the Beans**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Lima beans  
Tempera paint  
Paint brushes  
Small cups cut in half  
Tag or poster board, cut into circles with a 9 inch diameter  
Glue  
Brads

#### **Discussion**

Show the students the idiom card. Ask if they've heard someone say, "Don't spill the beans!" Explain that they aren't talking about real beans, they are talking about secrets.

#### **Play Activity**

Have the students pretend that it is the day before Christmas. One student wants to tell another what she got her for her birthday because she's so excited about the present. The other student then says, "Don't spill the beans!" and explains that she wants it to be a surprise. Provide language as necessary, and remind throughout the dramatic play that "don't spill the beans" means "don't tell your secret!"

#### **Art Activity**

Give each student a tag board circle, a paper cup and lima bean (tell them that it's their special secret bean.) Have them whisper their secret to their bean, and then paint it with their favorite color. While the paint is drying, help them attach the half paper cup to the tag (or poster) board using a brad. Either the teacher or the student

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can write the idiom around the circle. Once the beans are dry, have the students glue their “secret bean” to the bottom of the cup. After the glue has dried, the students can spin the cup without spilling their secret bean.

### Extension Activity

Have the students play the game “Don’t Spill the Beans!”

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### **Edge of Your Seat**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Elaborately decorated box with a treat inside (stickers, small toys, etc.)  
Little plastic tables that come in delivery pizza or empty spools of thread  
Sculpting clay  
Small milk cartons with one side cut and the top cut away  
Ribbons  
Balloon stickers  
Scissors

#### **Discussion**

Tell the students that you have something really exciting to tell them. Act enthusiastic and animated. The students should move to the edge of their seats. Point out that they are on the edge of their seats, and say when someone says they on the edge of their seat, it means they are excited about something.

#### **Play Activity**

Show the students the decorate box. Say that you have something really exciting that you think they will love. Build up the excitement, and ask if they want to peek in the box. Encourage them to say that they are on “the edge of their seats,” and allow them to peek in the box after they say the idiom.

#### **Art Activity**

Give each student a little “stool” (the plastic tables that come in a delivery pizza or an empty spool of thread.) Have each student model him or herself with the sculpting clay. While the model is drying, glue the stool in the milk carton. Decorate the milk carton room with streamers (ribbons), and balloons (stickers).

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Glue the person to the edge of the stool, and glue the stool in the middle of the room.

### Extension Activity

Play Red Light, Green Light with the students sitting on their chairs and carrying their chairs with them. Give lots of false starts and use, and encourage use of, the idiom phrase “edge of your seat.”

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### **Hold Your Horses**

#### **Materials**

- Idiom card
- Crayons
- Paper bags
- Pre-cut horse pictures
- Pre-cut puppet features (head, eyes, mouth, nose, hair, mouth) made from cardstock or construction paper

#### **Discussion**

Ask the students if they have ever heard someone say, “Hold your horses!” If so, ask when and what was happening. Explain that hold your horses means wait or stop.

#### **Play Activity**

Have the students brainstorm a list of times when they have to wait. Start the list by suggesting, “Sometimes you really want to go to the park, but Mom has to get baby brother ready, so you need to wait” or “Sometimes you have something really important to say, but Dad is on the phone. What does he tell you?” Have the students come up with other situations, and write them on the board. (Even if they can’t read, this is good for emerging literacy and associating print with ideas.) Have two of the students pick one of the situations to act out. Facilitate as necessary, using a level of language breakdown appropriate for the students. For example, some kids may need all of the language, some may need just the beginning of the script, and others may be fine acting out the scene.

#### **Art Activity**

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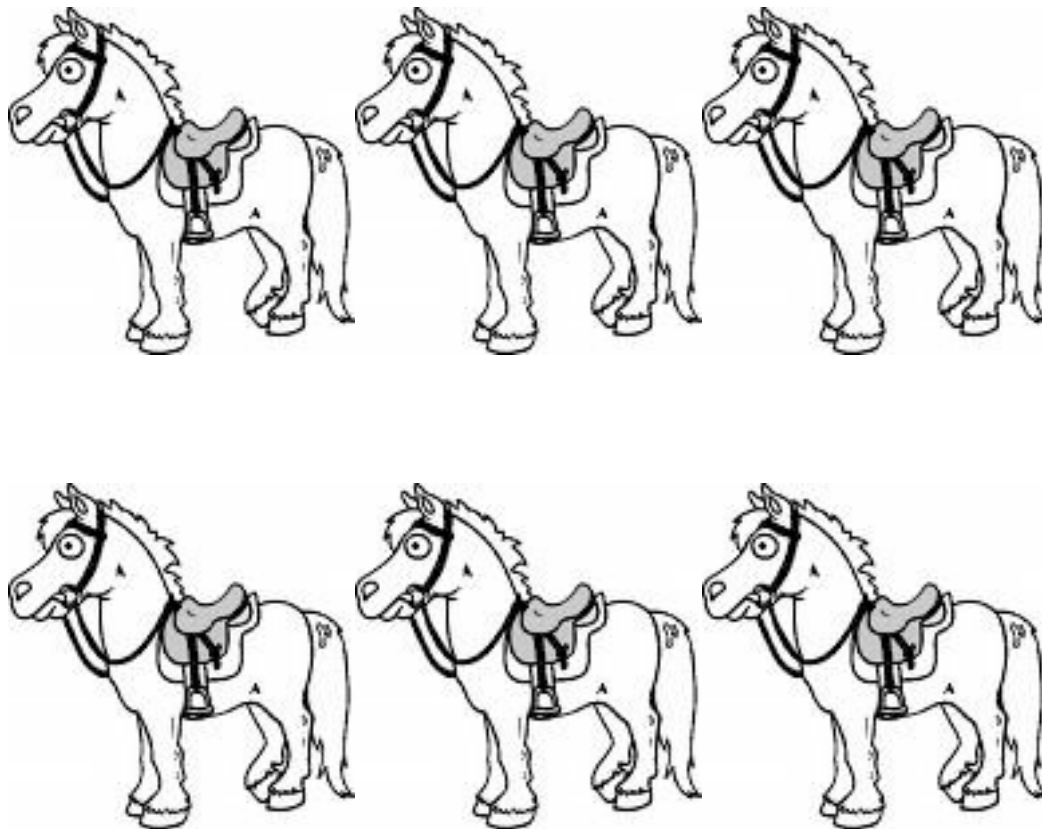
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Have the students make paper bag puppets using pre-cut pieces made from cardstock or construction paper. Have the students glue the horses on the puppet's "stomach," and fold the arms over so that the puppet is "holding his horses."

### Extension Activity

Have the students work as a class to color a poster board stop sign. Talk about what a stop sign means, and have them make the connection that hold your horses means the same as stop. Instead of writing "stop" in the middle, write "hold your horses!"





## **Icing on the Cake: Idiom Curriculum for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students**

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### **Icing on the Cake**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Icing on the Cake cards  
Yellow sponges  
Shaving cream  
Paint  
White glue  
Small bowls  
Paintbrushes  
Glitter  
Different flavors of store-bought icing

#### **Discussion**

Hold up a piece of cake. Ask the students if they like cake, and which part is their favorite, the cake or the icing. Say that the icing is your favorite part. Ask the students if they'd like to taste the icing. Say that lots of people say that the icing is the best part. Explain that people say that something is the "icing on the cake" when something good has something that makes it even better, like how cake is good but the icing is even better.

#### **Play Activity**

Make game cards out of the "icing on the cake" cards. Use the cards to play a matching game. Explain to the students that they are going to match things that go together because one card shows something good and the matching card is the "icing on the cake." Have the students use the idiom. (Example: The presents are icing on the cake.)

#### **Art Activity**

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Have the students mix shaving cream, glue, and paint in the small bowls. Explain that this is the pretend frosting. Give each student two yellow kitchen sponges for the cake. Have them use the “icing” to glue them together like a layer cake, and then frost the top of their cake. Let them use the glitter to add “sprinkles.”

## Extension Activity

Let the students sample several flavors of icing. Ask which was their favorite, and use the information to make a “cake chart” (which is just a pie chart!)

 <p>Christmas Tree</p>	 <p>Christmas Tree with Presents</p>	 <p>One Lollipop</p>
 <p>Lots of Lollipops</p>	 <p>Ice Cream</p>	 <p>Ice Cream with Chocolate Sauce</p>

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A Cupcake



A Cupcake with  
Sprinkles

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### **In a Pickle**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Green paint  
Toilet paper rolls  
Plastic Easter eggs  
Modeling clay

#### **Discussion**

Tell the students about a time when you were “in a pickle.” For instance, tell them that once when you were little, you had only three dollars and you had to buy a birthday present for your Mom, but you lost the money. Say that you were “in a pickle,” and ask if they know what that means. Tell them that “in a pickle” means you have a troubling problem. Have the students brainstorm times when they were “in a pickle.”

#### **Play Activity**

Have the students play school. Select one student to be the teacher and one to be the principal. Have one student pretend that they left their homework at home, and encourage the students to use the idiom “in a pickle” as much as possible. Some other possible scenarios: have two students vying for another student to sit next to them; have a student chose between going to a pizza party or going home like mom said.

#### **Art Activity**

Give each student a toilet paper roll and a plastic Easter egg to paint green. While the paint is drying, have each student model themselves with the clay. After the paint dries, write “trouble” on one side of the roll and “in a pickle” on the other.

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Glue one half of the plastic egg to one end of the toilet paper roll. After the clay person has set, place them inside the “pickle” and cap the other end with the remaining plastic egg half.

### Extension Activity

Throughout the day, encourage the students to use the idiom. Each time they use it in appropriate situations, give them a “get out of a pickle” card they can use as a homework or seatwork pass.

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### **Piece of Cake**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Wooden puzzles  
Coloring pages  
Crayons  
Glue sticks  
Tag board  
Scissors

#### **Discussion**

Have the class brainstorm a list of things they can do, like skip, snap, button their shirt, etc. Ask them if these things are easy to do. Explain that instead of saying something is easy, they can say it's a piece of cake. Have them take turns going through the list of things they brainstormed and practice saying it's a piece of cake.

#### **Play Activity**

Set out puzzles that are below the student's ability level. Model doing one really fast, and say that it was a piece of cake. Have them do the same, using the idiom as often as possible.

#### **Art Activity**

Let each student choose a picture of a piece of cake that they can then color. Have them use a glue stick to glue the picture to a piece of tag board or construction paper. Show them how to cut the picture into pieces to make a "piece of cake" puzzle.

#### **Extension Activity**

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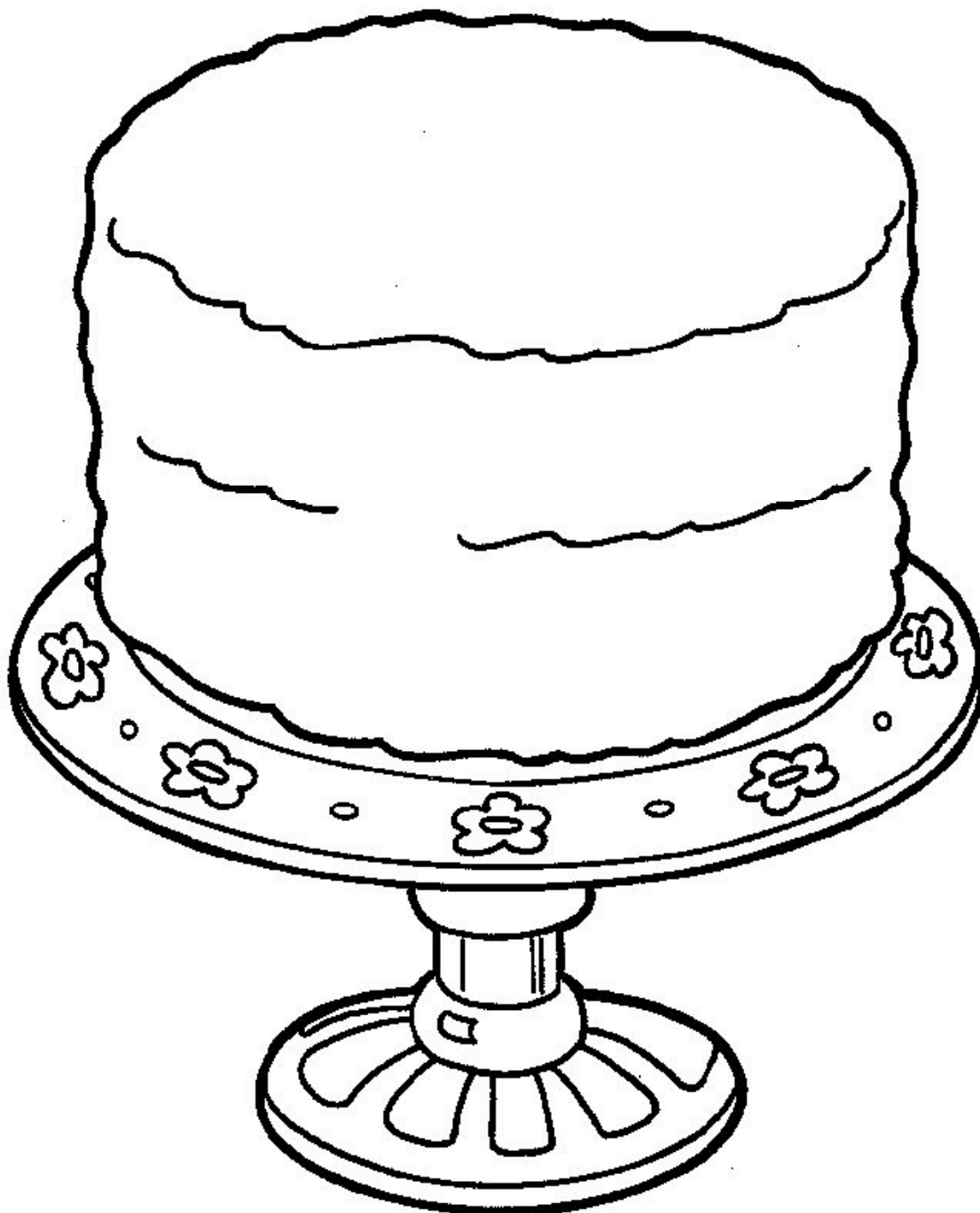
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Make a cake using a boxed mix. Pre-mix the wet ingredients so that the only steps to making the cake are mixing it all together, pouring it in a cake pan, and baking it. It's a piece of cake to make this cake! Or, you can make both a boxed mix cake and a cake from scratch. Ask which was easier, and point out that the boxed mix was "a piece of cake!"

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<http://outer-limit.net/coloring/brb24.gif>



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[http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/Pretty%20Birthday%20Cake%20\(9%20candles\).gif](http://www.activityvillage.co.uk/Pretty%20Birthday%20Cake%20(9%20candles).gif)

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### **Pulling My Leg**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Hat  
April Fool's cards  
1 1"x4" strip of paper per student  
Paper doll  
Crayons or markers  
Glue

#### **Discussion**

Ask the students if they know what holiday is on April 1. Explain that it is April Fool's Day, and sometimes people like to play jokes on each other on April Fool's Day. Tell them that when you think someone is teasing or playing a joke on you, you can ask, "are you pulling my leg?" Explain that it doesn't mean that someone is pulling their leg, but that it's a way of asking if someone is not telling the truth or is being silly.

#### **Play Activity**

Have the students pull April Fool's jokes on each other. Place slips of paper with April Fool's Cards in a hat. Have one student pick a card, "call" the other student, and say what's on the card. The other student will then respond, "are you pulling my leg?"

#### **Art Activity**

Have each student pick an April Fool's card. Give each student a paper doll and have them glue the card to the doll's hand. Let the student decorate the doll. When the students are done, give them each a strip of paper and have them watch as you

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write “pulling my leg.” Show them how to fold it like an accordion. Cut the foot off of one of the doll’s legs. Glue the foot onto the accordion strip and glue the strip to the doll’s leg.

### Extension Activity

Make copies of the April Fool’s cards and the extension cards. Have the students pick a card and read it to them. Have them say whether you are pulling their leg or not.

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## April Fool's Cards

There's a dinosaur in your kitchen!	I have three eyes!	You have a mouse on your head!
I can see your belly button!	I have a new pet lion!	The sun is purple!

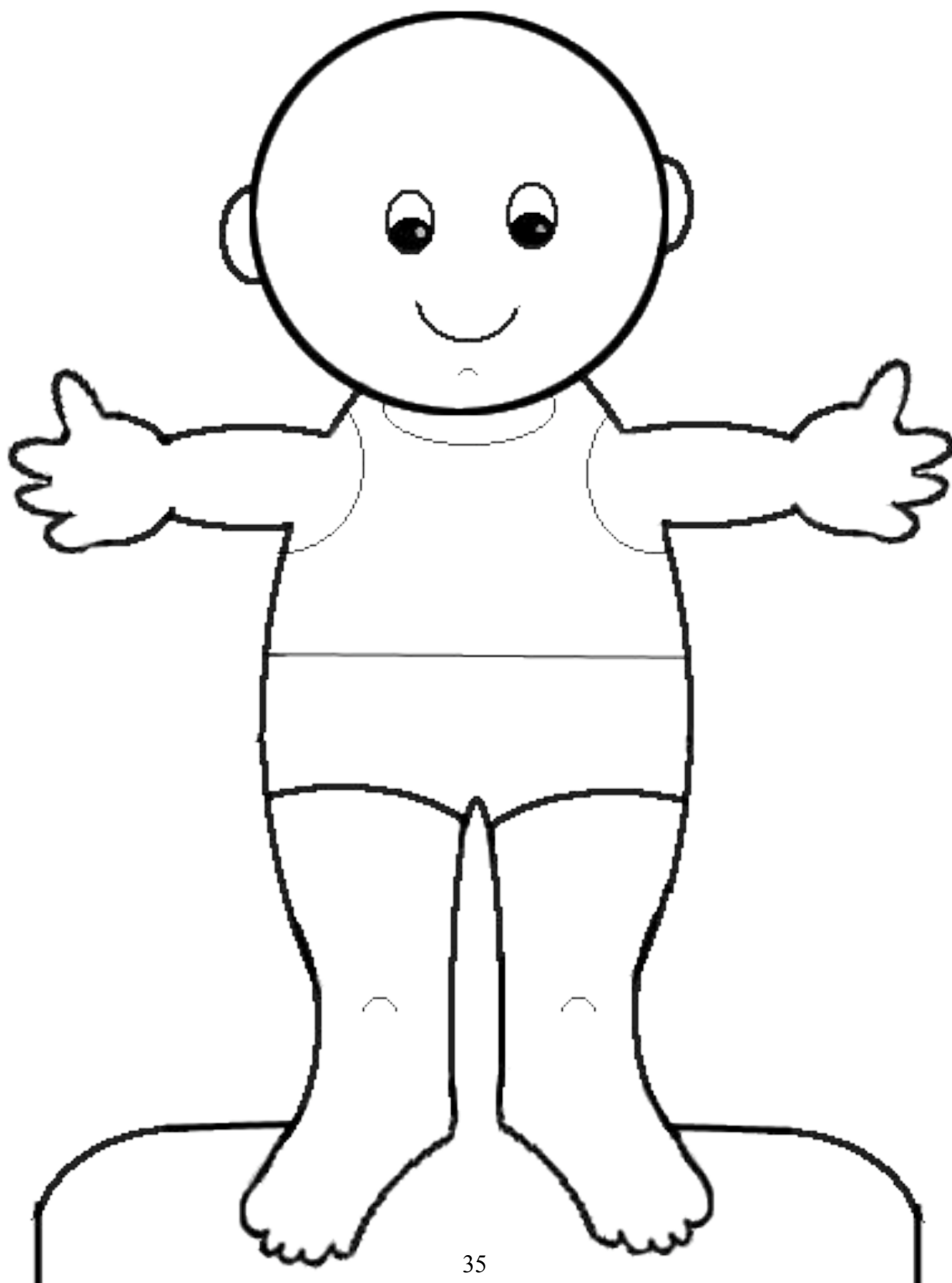
## Extension Cards

There's a stove in your kitchen!	I have two eyes!	You have hair on your head!
I can't see your belly button!	I have a new pet rabbit!	The sun is yellow!

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## **Icing on the Cake: Idiom Curriculum for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students**

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### **Raining Cats and Dogs**

#### **Materials**

Umbrella  
Raincoats  
Idiom card  
Crayons  
Scissors  
Glue  
Blue paint  
Paper

#### **Discussion**

Say that when it's raining really hard, when there is a lot of rain, sometimes people say it's raining cats and dogs. Ask if there are real cats and dogs coming from the sky, to which the students will say no. Explain that real cats and dogs are not raining from the sky, but it's just a silly way to say that it's raining hard. Show the students the flashcard, which will be posted on the wall along with their pictures.

#### **Play Activity**

Set up the umbrella and raincoats and say that the class is going to pretend it is raining really hard outside. Lead the dramatic play, going to the window and acting out discovering that it's raining very hard. The students can dress up for the pretend weather, and act out running out of the rain, getting wet, etc.

#### **Art Project**

The teacher will have the students create a collage of "raining cats and dogs," using the student's own drawing, pictures from magazines, and/or these images. Have the students draw an outdoor scene with clouds in the sky and someone holding an umbrella. Glue the cats and dogs onto the picture as raindrops. After the

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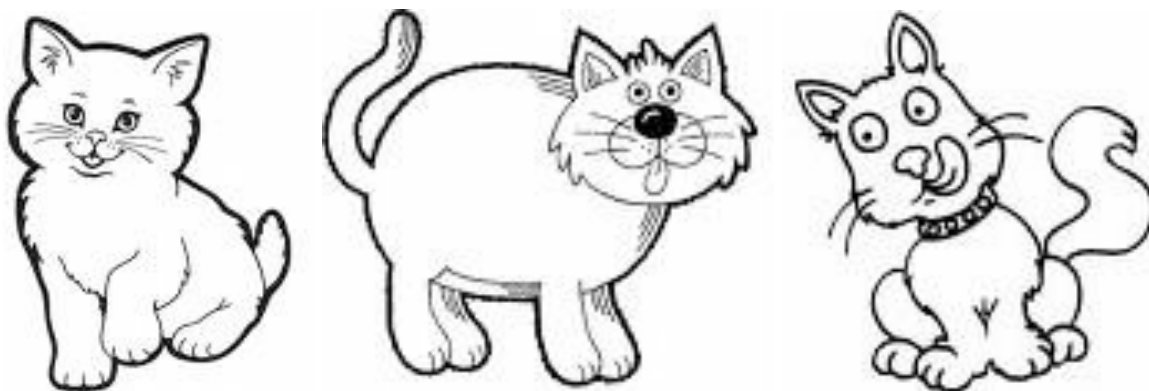
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images are glued, the teacher can help the students make the “rain” on the page by squeezing glue that has been colored with blue paint on top of the collage.

### Extension Activity

Have the students contrast raining hard versus sprinkling. Explain how “raining cats and dogs” means raining very hard.

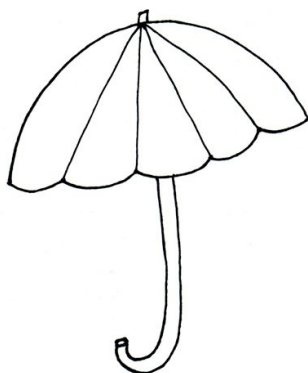
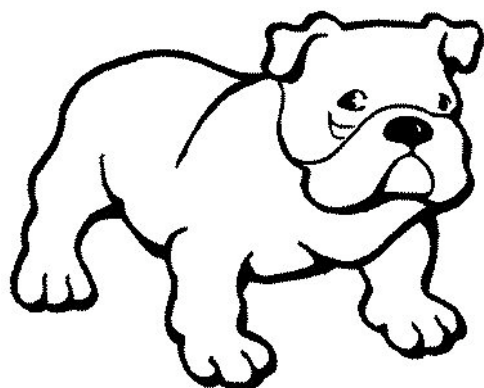




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## **Icing on the Cake: Idiom Curriculum for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students**

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### **Under the Weather**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card  
Doctor's office props (costumes, band aids, thermometer, stethoscope, etc)  
Pictures of people feeling "under the weather"  
Shaving cream  
Black paint  
Blue construction paper  
Yellow pipe cleaners

#### **Discussion**

Show the idiom flash card. Ask if they've ever heard mom or dad say they are feeling under the weather. Explain that "under the weather" means you feel sick.

#### **Play Activity**

Set up a doctor's office. Assign roles (patient, parent, doctor, nurse) and have the kids act out going to the doctor's office. Encourage the students to use the phrase "under the weather" instead of the word "sick."

#### **Art Activity**

Have the students create a thundercloud using a mixture of two parts shaving cream to one part black paint. Talk about how you are making a picture of bad weather. Bend yellow pipe cleaners to make lightening, and glue them coming from the thundercloud. Ask them to paint "under the weather," and give them pictures of students feeling sick to glue "under the weather."

#### **Extension Activity**

Introduce the idiom "sick as a dog," and explain that it means worse than "under the weather."

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<http://msteenybopper.blogspot.com/2007/06/i-feel-very-weak.html>



[http://pictures.directnews.co.uk/liveimages/ill+boy\\_669\\_18347629\\_0\\_0\\_6000074\\_300.jpg](http://pictures.directnews.co.uk/liveimages/ill+boy_669_18347629_0_0_6000074_300.jpg)

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### **Woke Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed**

#### **Materials**

Idiom card

Kitchen dramatic play materials (stove, plates, cups, silverware, etc)

Styrofoam balls

Decorations for making a face (pom-poms, pipe cleaners, Sharpie Markers, wiggly eyes, felt, etc)

Glue

Doll crib

#### **Discussion**

Show the students the idiom card. Explain that sometimes, you wake up on the wrong side of the bed. Ask them if they know what that means. Explains that “waking up on the wrong side of the bed” means you are grumpy for no reason. Ask they if they or their siblings have ever been grumpy in the morning.

#### **Play Activity**

Set up the kitchen area. Assign roles (mom, dad, daughter, son, etc). Have the family eat breakfast, and let each student have a turn pretending to be grumpy. Encourage the other students to use their new idiom phrase, and allow each student the opportunity to practice using it.

#### **Art Activity**

Give each student a Styrofoam ball. Explain that they are going to make two faces, one on each side of the ball. Have them glue yarn “hair” down the coronal line of the head. Put face decorations on the table, and have them decorate one face as “work up on the wrong side of the bed” and the other has “happy.” Have them put

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the heads to bed in a doll's crib, and act out waking up on the wrong side of the bed verses waking up happy.

### Extension Activity

Have the students come up with a list of other words that mean grumpy and happy.

Encourage them to use these words in their expressive language.

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### **Teacher's Resources**

#### **Commercial Curricula and Workbooks**

- Dormac Idiom Series by Myra Shulman Auslin, Dormac, Inc.
- Idioms by Karen Shackelford, Barker Creek Publications
- The Idioms Workbook (Second Edition) by Myra Shulman Auslin, PRO-Ed Inc.
- Playing with Idioms: Reproducible Games for Practicing Idiom Usage by Danielle M. Legler, Children's Publishing

#### **Idiom Dictionaries**

- A Dictionary of Idioms for the Deaf, Barrons Educational Series Inc.
- NTC's American Idioms Dictionary by Richard A. Spears, NTC Publishing Group
- The Oxford Dictionary of Idioms by Judith Siefring, Oxford University Press, USA

#### **Idiom Books for Children**

- Ack! There's a Bug in My Ear! (And Other Sayings that Just Aren't True) by Cynthia Fillerer Klingel and Mernie Gallagher-Cole, Child's World Inc.
- Bookworm: Discovering Idioms, Sayings and Expressions by Karen Emigh and Steve Dana, Future Horizons
- Cat Got Your Tongue by Tracy Porter, Troll Communications
- Go Fly a Kite!: And Other Sayings We Don't Really Mean by Cynthia Fillerer Klingel and Mernie Gallagher-Cole, Child's World, Inc.
- Idioms for Everyday Use by Milada Broukal, McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT

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- In a Pickle: And Other Funny Idioms by Marvin Terban, Clarion Books
- The Lion King- The Flamingos are Tickled Pink: A Book of Idioms by Chip Lovitt, Disney Press
- Mad as a Wet Hen!: And Other Funny Idiom by Marvin Terban and Giulio Maestro, Clarion Books
- Monkey Business by Wallace Edwards, Kids Can Press, Ltd.
- Monkey Business: Fun with Idioms (Milet Wordwise series) by Laura Hambleton, Sedat Turhan and Herve Tullet, Milet Publishing
- My Grandma Likes to Say by Denise Brennan-Nelson, Sleeping Bear Press
- My Momma Likes to Say by Denise Brennan-Nelson, Sleeping Bear Press
- My Teacher Likes to Say by Denise Brennan-Nelson, Sleeping Bear Press
- Ned Loses His Head (Missy Swiss and More) by David Michael Slater, Abdo & Daughters
- Penny and Drew's Penciltips: Idioms by Laura Sebastiani and Colin Adams, ThoughtRockets, Inc.
- Punching the Clock: Funny Action Idioms by Marvin Terban and Thomas Huffman, Clarion Books
- Scholastic Dictionary of Idioms by Marvin Terban, Scholastic Reference
- Super Silly Sayings that are Over Your Head: A Children's Illustrated Book of Idioms by Catherine S. Snodgrass, Starfish Specialty Press
- There's a Frog in My Throat: 440 Animal Sayings a Little Bird Told Me by Loreen Leedy, Holiday House
- Who Let the Cat Out of the Bag? Written and illustrated by fourth-grade students of Newcastle Avenue Elementary in Reseda, California, Scholastic

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- You Let the Cat Out of the Bag! (And Other Crazy Animal Sayings) by Cynthia Fillerer Klingel and Mernie Gallagher-Cole, Child's World Inc.
- You're Clean as a Whistle!: And Other Silly Sayings by Cynthia Fillerer Klingel and Mernie Gallagher-Cole, Child's World Inc.



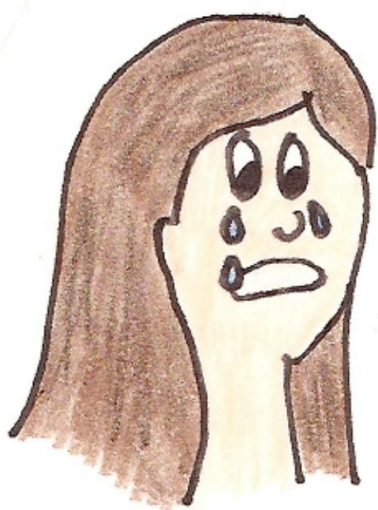
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## **Idiom Cards**

### **All Ears**

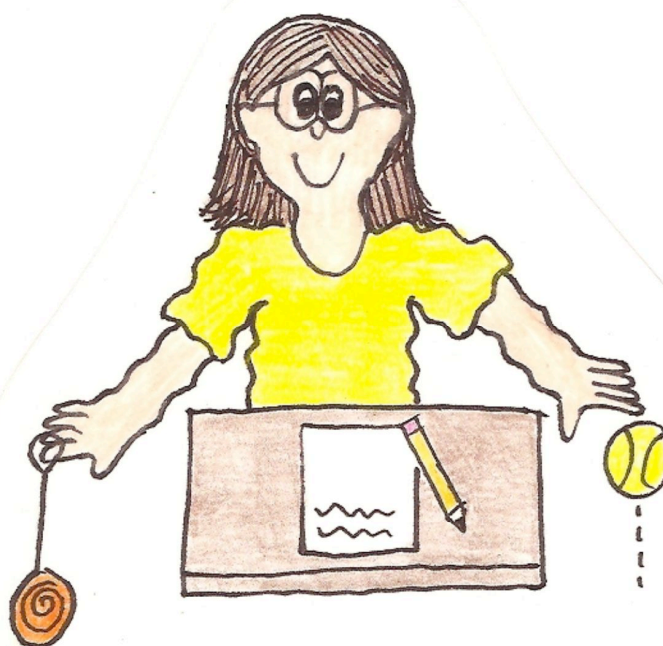


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### Ants in Your Pants

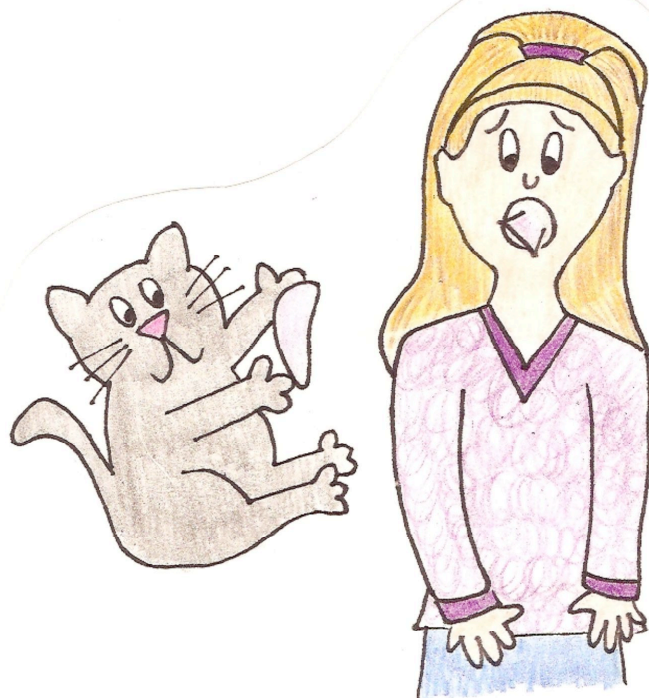


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### Cat's Got Your Tongue



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### Don't Spill the Beans





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### Edge of Your Seat

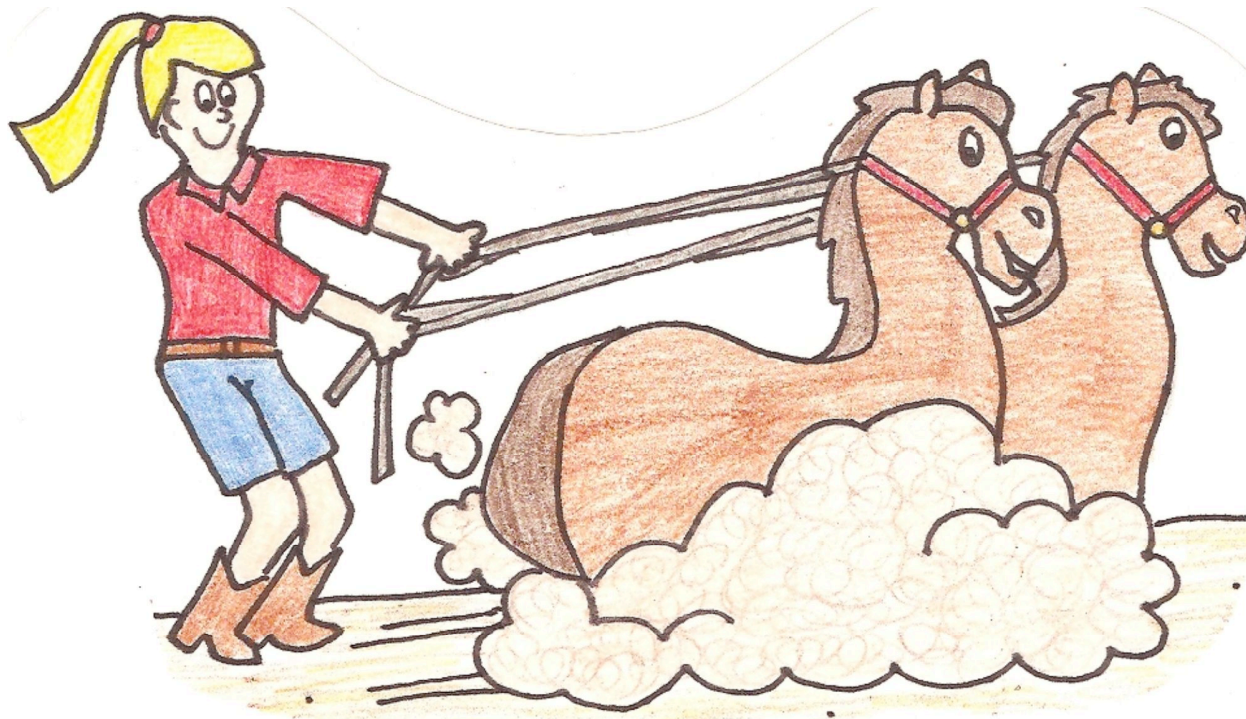


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### Hold Your Horses



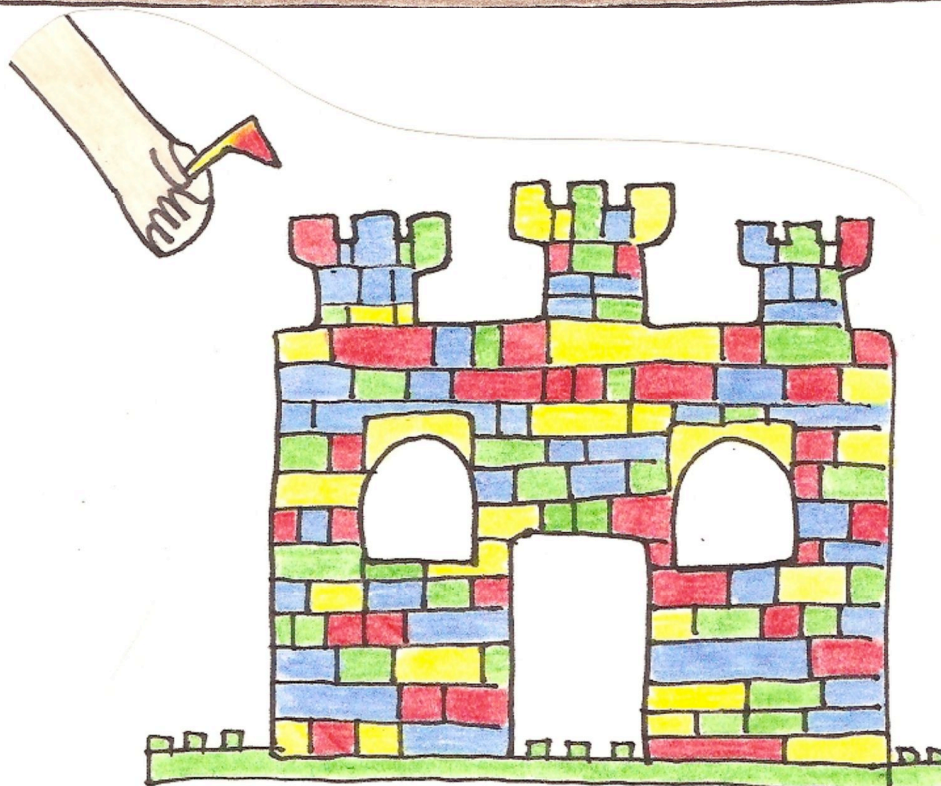


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## Icing on the Cake

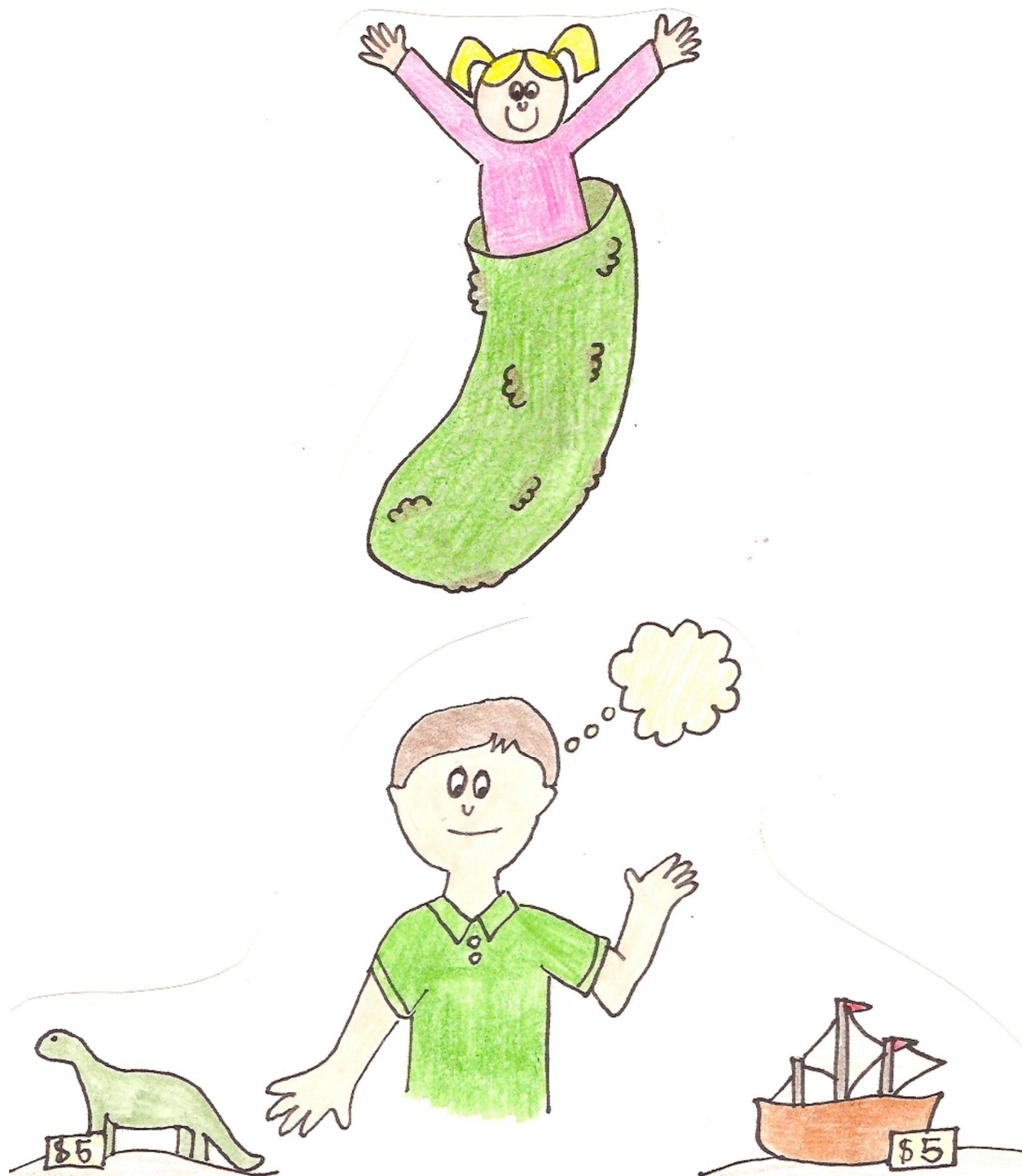


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### In a Pickle





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### Piece of Cake



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### Pulling My Leg





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### Raining Cats and Dogs

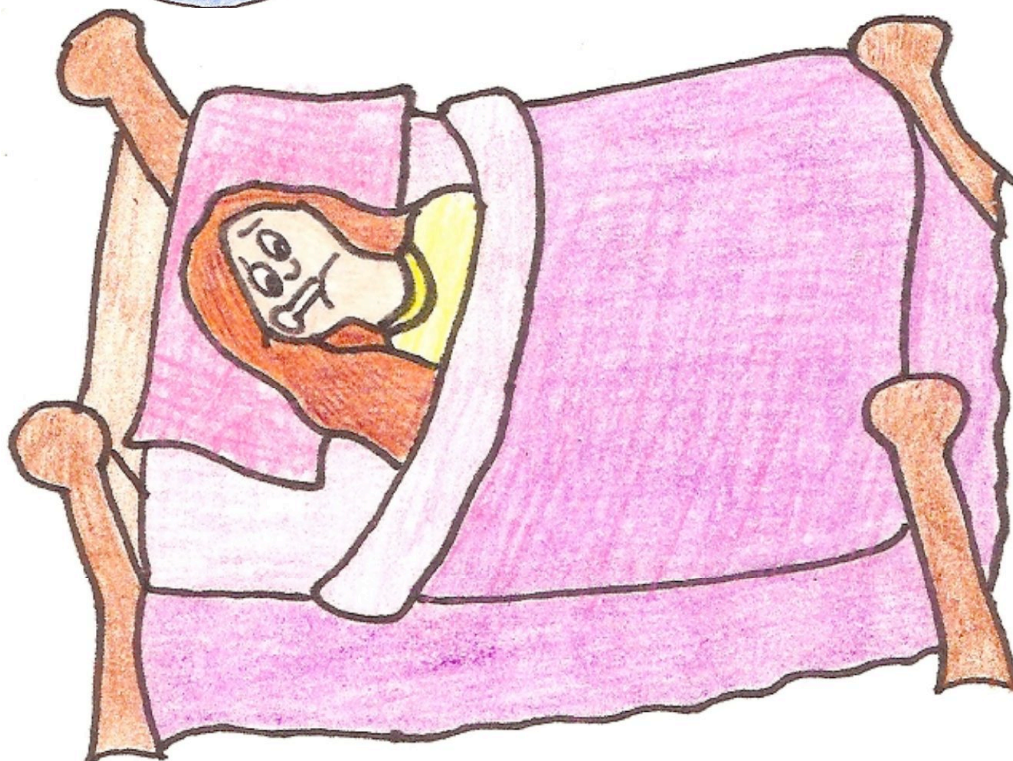


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### Under the Weather





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### Woke Up on the Wrong Side of the Bed

