Colloquialisms and Clichés

Sometimes when we compare one thing to another or attempt to generalize when writing paragraphs, we often use colloquial expressions and clichés. Each of these is an example of "**figurative language**" – words or statements that transfer meanings or impose the actual meaning from one object to another. Figurative language is diction that deviates from its traditional dictionary definition.

Colloquialisms - Everyday words or casual phrases whose meanings are socially derived.

Ex. Groovy
Literal Meaning: "inclined to follow a fixed routine"
Colloquial Meaning: "attractive or excellent!"

Common American Colloquialisms: Can you guess the real meaning?

- Take a rain check
- Keeping up with the Jones
- Bought the farm
- Your hat is cool
- Hooked on Something
- Epic Fail
- Rip off

Clichés - figurative words or phrases that have become common place with overuse.

Ex. "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree."
Literally Meaning: The harvesting of this fruit.
Cliché Meaning: Children often resemble their parent's personalities and actions

Common Clichés: Can you guess the figurative meaning?

- Don't cry over spilt milk
- The rest is history
- Every cloud has a silver lining.
- Don't judge a book by its cover.
- When it rains, it pours.

Tips:

- Avoiding colloquialisms and clichés will help you write more formally and with more authority. Write using literal language, not figurative diction.
- Here are some questions to consider for revision: What does this word actually mean? How do we actually use it?