

## **On the Fence with Idioms**

**Subject:** Language Arts

**Grades:** 4-6

### **Overview**

Don't leave your students "on the fence" over idioms. Help students understand idiomatic expressions with this game of charades.

### **Objectives**

Students will:

- Demonstrate their understanding of idiomatic expressions.

### **IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language Arts**

**Standard 4:** Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

**Standard 6:** Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

### **Materials Needed**

- WordTeasers: Idioms
- (Optional) Index cards to make your own Idiom Charades cards

### **Preparation**

Select 30 to 40 Idiom Challenge cards from the WordTeasers: Idioms box. Be sure to select those cards with idioms that can easily be acted out. Put those selected cards in the box and set the other cards aside.

### **Getting Started**

Write these two sentences on the chalkboard.

Alice is sitting on the fence about who to vote for in the school election.

Pete is sitting on a fence thinking about his favorite candidate, Bill.

Ask students: Where is Alice? (*We don't know.*) Where is Pete? (*He's sitting on a fence.*) Who is Alice going to vote for? (*She hasn't decided.*) Who is Pete going to vote for? (*Most likely Bill.*) What is the difference between the saying "sitting on the fence" and "sitting on a fence"? (*Sitting on a fence means to literally be sitting on a fence. Sitting on the fence is an idiomatic expression meaning to be undecided.*")

### **Development**

Explain to students that there are many phrases in English that don't mean exactly what the individual words might suggest. These phrases are called idioms. "Sitting on the fence" is an idiomatic expression that means to be undecided or unsure of something. Tell students you're going to play to see how many idiomatic expressions they know or can guess. It's a game of charades. (Explain the game of charades, if necessary.)

### **Activity**

Have students come up to the front of the room one at a time, pull out a WordTeaser Challenge Card from the box, and then act out the idiom (the words in bold) on the card. They can act out one word at a time or try to act out the whole idiom at once (by indicating a "picture frame" with their hands for "the whole picture" or sweeping their arms through the air for "the whole concept"). See who can guess the correct idiom. After they guess the idiom, ask the class what the idiomatic expression means. How do they think the expression got started? (See *Origin* on the back of the WordTeaser Challenge card for an explanation.)

**Variation:** For a faster, easier variation of this activity, write the idioms that you've selected on the chalkboard. Students can refer to this list as their classmates act out their idioms. Or divide the room into teams. See which team can guess the most number of idioms.

**For more Teacher Lesson Plans and Resources go to [www.wordteasers.com](http://www.wordteasers.com).**