

Rafflesia has no stems, leaves or roots, but just five red and white spotted petals.

All top quotes contributed by Aharshi Kumar, AIS Noida, IV



You don't know me...

...Till You Know My History, Says The Idiom

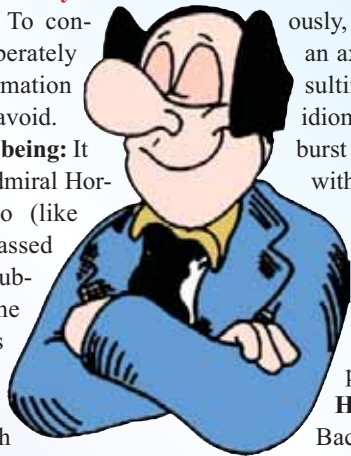
Vyakhya Gupta
AIS Gurugram 46, X

How many times have you heard someone say that something is a piece of cake! Or that they have heard something straight from the horse's mouth? Have you ever wondered how these idioms found their way to our tongues? Even when they sound so bizarre and out of context, most people tend to let the sleeping dogs lie or bury their heads in the sand and don't give a second thought to the reason behind the phrases. To those who till now were ignorant of the very interesting history behind these idioms, we give you a view beneath what is the tip of the iceberg.

Idiom: Turn a blind eye

What it means: To consciously and deliberately ignore the information that one wants to avoid.

How it came into being: It all started with Admiral Horatio Nelson, who (like some of us), passed every degree of stubbornness when he defied his senior's orders to withdraw from battle. He looked through the telescope with his one blind eye when naval orders were transmitted via a system of signal flags. "I have a right to be blind sometimes. I really do not see the signal" were his words, and since then turning a blind eye to something has become a common phrase on our lips.



Idiom: Mad as a hatter

What it means: To be completely crazy

How it came into being: Contrary to common belief, this famous idiom doesn't come from Lewis Carroll's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'. In fact, it dates back to 17th century France, where poisoning occurred among hat-makers who used mercury for the hat felt. The "Mad Hatter Disease" was marked by shyness, irritability and tremors that would make the person appear 'mad'. This sure is a rather grim background to something that we use so lightly.



Idiom: Giving someone a cold shoulder

What it means: To purposely be unwelcoming or antisocial towards someone

How it came into being: In medieval England, it was customary to give a guest a cold piece of meat from the shoulder of mutton, pork or beef



chop when the host felt it was time for the guest to leave. So the next time if your guests impose on your hospitality for a little too long, pick up a piece of whatever coldest item (ice cream not included!) you can find in the refrigerator and serve it. The effect, we assure you, will be instantaneous.

Idiom: Flying off the handle

What it means: To suddenly become very enraged and lose temper

How it came into being: This particular idiom has a rather gruesome origin from the 1800s. Axe heads were known to fly off the handle while being used because they were often crudely fitted together. This, obviously, resulted in injury. The suddenness of an axe-head being flung off, and the resulting trouble it caused, leads to this idiom's origin, for it suggests a wild outburst of anger and loss of self-control, all with a possible threat of harm.

Idiom: Break the ice

What it means: Overcoming awkwardness often experienced between people

How it came into being: Back when road transportation was not developed, ships were the only transportation and means of trade. Sometimes, the ship got stuck during the winter because of the frozen seas. The receiving country then sent small ships to 'break the ice' and clear a way for the trade ships. This was regarded as a welcome gesture and a mark of understanding.

Idiom: Letting the cat out of bag

What it means: To let out a secret carelessly or by mistake

How it came into being: Another idiom with roots in the past, this is related to the existing corruptions in the medieval markets, when people used to sell piglets in bags for farmers to carry home. Sometimes, a shady dealer substituted it with cats (being less expensive). If someone let the cat out of the bag, the deceit was uncovered, or, the secret was out.



Idiom: Butter someone up

What it means: To praise or flatter someone excessively

How it came into being: A customary religious act in ancient India included throwing butter balls at the statues of gods to seek good fortune and earn their favour. This was supposed to be a praise for the Gods so that



the people are rewarded with luck. Speaking of ancient customs, similar practice can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty of Tibet where sculptures made out of coloured butter would be displayed as gifts to the heavens marking the new year.

Idiom: Pull someone's leg

What it means: Joking, teasing or fooling with someone

How it came into being: Originally, this 'pulling of leg' was a method used by bandits to trap and rob clueless pedestrians. One member of the gang was assigned 'tripper up' duty, ie, to knock the person to the ground. Luckily, these days the saying is much friendlier and less dangerous, though being on the receiving end of a joke might not always be fun.



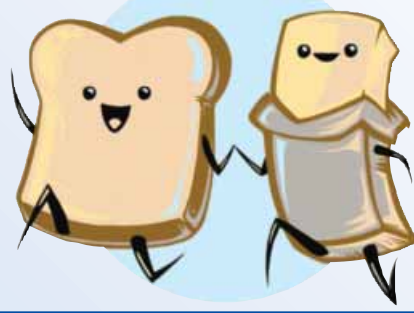
Idiom: White elephant

What it means: A possession that is useless or troublesome, especially one that is expensive to maintain

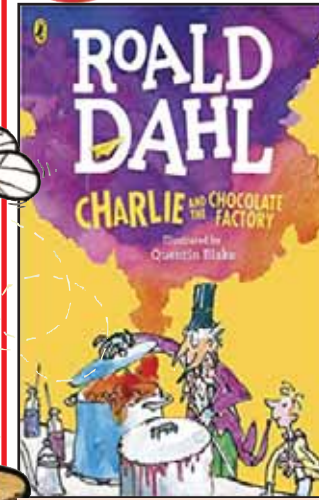
How it came into being: According to legend, the ancient kings of Thailand used to gift actual white elephants to those who they wanted to punish. The white elephant was



considered sacred, required the highest and the most expensive management. By presenting people with these grand animals, the kings hoped, and often succeeded, to financially ruin those he disfavoured. Nowadays, the white elephant still means useless and much expensive possessions.



Book Review



Book name: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Author: Roald Dahl
Rating: ★★★★★
Genre: Children's literature, fantasy, adventure
Publisher: George Allen & Unwin
First Published: 1964
Suited for: 7-15 years

Number of days I took to read the book: 10 days.

Synopsis

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory is a children's novel that follows the life of Charlie Bucket and his journey to and inside the chocolate factory of eccentric chocolatier Willy Wonka. Charlie lives a life of poverty with his parents and four grandparents until he earns a golden ticket for a trip to the chocolate factory. There he meets gluttonous Augustus

Gloop, the spoiled and petulant Veruca Salt, the chewing gum-addict Violet Beauregarde and the television-obsessed Mike Teavee. One by one the kids are eliminated as they also meet a new race of small people called Oompa-Loompas.

What I liked

I liked how the book talks about morality and poetic justice dressed up as an entertaining story. The protagonist of the story, Charlie, is justly rewarded for his honesty and forbearance, teaching us how self-discipline is the key to success and glory.

Alternate ending

No, I don't think there can be any other way to finish this beautiful book. How nature works mysteriously to punish the spoiled kids is just perfect. It sends a good message and no other ending could have done justice to it.

Favourite character

Charlie Bucket, because he is honest, selfless, kind hearted, optimistic and is always respectful towards others.

New words I learnt

Enormous: Huge
Verdict: Decision
Peculiar: Unique
Bewildered: Surprised
Dumbfounded: Amazed

Review by: Shreeja, AIS Mayur Vihar, III A

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GT Travels to Bern



Arush Awana, AIS Noida, III, poses with his copy of The Global Times at Bern, Switzerland. Built around a crook in the Aare River, it traces its origins back to the 12th century, with medieval architecture preserved in Altstadt (old town).

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