



February

Idioms from the Heart



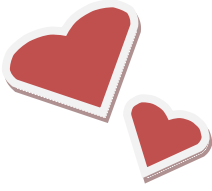
Chef Luigi puts his heart into his work.

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Student Notes

Have you ever wondered why we often write and talk about the human heart as if it were an emotional being with a distinct personality? We boast that we know the words of a song *by heart*, suggesting that it has mental abilities. We find it *in our heart* to help someone in need, indicating that it has the capacity to care about another. And, alas, a snub from one's *sweetheart* can *break one's heart*. It's like we completely forget that the major function of this hard-working organ is to pump blood.

Understanding our off-track thinking requires that we go back in time—way back!

The heart, it seems, has enjoyed a place of prominence throughout recorded history. More than four thousand years ago, ancient Egyptians thought part of the soul lived in it. When preparing a mummy, they carefully preserved the heart and put it back in the body or stored it in jars along with other organs. They didn't think much of the brain, so they pulled it out through the nostrils and threw it away.

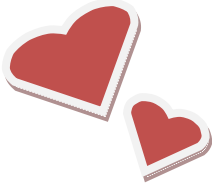
Fast forward a couple thousand years to ancient Greece where early physicians and philosophers argued over which organ produced human thought and emotion. Many were certain it was the heart. As for the brain, some Greek thinkers characterized it as no more than a cooling system for the blood or as a delicate, airy "spirit" that kept the all-important heart working properly. Some contended that the brain might be a crucial organ, but most Greek doctors continued to insist that the heart was responsible for human emotions and personality traits.

Thus, the debate rolled along for centuries before people finally understood the specific functions of both organs.

Still, even with modern technology and thousands of years of learning at our disposal, many antiquated ideas about the heart still hang around. They show up constantly in our language as idioms—those versatile words and phrases that allow us to say one thing and mean another. To declare, for example, that Mr. Anderson is a strict teacher, but he *has a heart of gold* doesn't mean that his heart is constructed of precious metal. Rather, the statement refers to his kind and generous nature, and it attributes its origin to his heart. And so, without thinking about it, we perpetuate ancient misconceptions about the heart. Fortunately, it's one of the idiosyncrasies that make our language intriguing and fun to use.

The following pages are filled with sentences constructed around idioms with the word *heart* in them. Now that you know their origins, check your knowledge of their hidden meanings. Go ahead! Put your whole heart into it!





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Part One



Ben's *heart skips a beat* every time Myra walks by.

All of the following sentences are structured around an idiom with the word **heart** in it. Idioms, as you know, are figures of speech that allow us to say one thing and mean another. In the cartoon caption above, for example, Ben's heart does not actually skip a beat when Myra walks by, but it does react to the emotional surge that he feels in Myra's presence, and it probably beats a little faster. The hidden message in the idiom is that Ben really likes Myra!

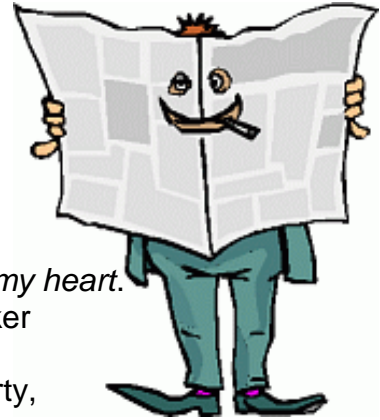
Read each of the following sentences and its accompanying question. Prove that you have skills in unmasking the disguised meanings in the idioms by writing the letters of the correct answers in the blanks to the left.

- _____ 1. *Though he has a reputation for having a heart of stone, Raymond couldn't resist the pleading look in the lost puppy's eyes.*
The lost puppy proved that, in spite of his reputation, Raymond is not always
(A) unfriendly and unkind,
(B) stubborn and difficult to deal with,
(C) angry and argumentative,
(D) willing to help someone in need.
- _____ 2. *Marion and Rebecca had a heart-to-heart talk about their tendency to compete and argue with each other, and they are now the best of friends.*
Marion and Rebecca
(A) had one loud, final argument,
(B) had orders from their parents to stop competing with each other,
(C) got together and talked honestly and openly about their feelings,
(D) decided to be teammates rather than members of competing teams.
- _____ 3. *At first, Simon thought the substitute teacher was awful, but he had a change of heart when she complimented his hair style.*
What happened when Simon had a change of heart?
(A) He formed a different opinion of the substitute.
(B) He realized things were worse than he thought.
(C) He wondered if he might be wrong about the teacher.
(D) He made up his mind to ignore the substitute.

4. Aunt Catherine is _____ because she loves mystery stories and solving puzzles.

Which of the following idioms, when placed in the blank, will characterize Aunt Catherine as someone the writer admires because the two of them like some of the same things?

- (A) a bleeding heart
- (C) all heart
- (C) a woman after my own heart
- (D) faint-hearted



5. I really want to come to your birthday party, cross my heart.

The idiom in this sentence indicates that the speaker

- (A) isn't telling the truth,
- (B) is looking for an excuse to skip the birthday party,
- (C) hasn't yet made up his/her mind,
- (D) sincerely wants to go to the birthday party.

6. Mr. Elliott is interviewing students about the hall disturbance to **get to the heart of the matter**.

Which of the following can take the place of the bold print idiom without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) decide who should be punished
- (B) find out the truth about what happened
- (C) make sure such a disturbance doesn't happen again
- (D) avoid involving innocent bystanders

7. Wyatt tried to develop an interest in stamp collecting, but his heart just wasn't in it.

Wyatt's experience with stamp collecting

- (A) proved to be more expensive than he could afford,
- (B) caught his interest right away,
- (C) wasn't interesting or exciting enough for him to continue,
- (D) was not appealing to his friends, and they didn't want to hear about it.

8. Franklin accused Nancy of being _____ about wildlife conservation and every other animal cause.

Which idiom would tag Nancy as being excessively emotional and sympathetic to animal causes?

- (A) half-hearted
- (B) all heart
- (C) a bleeding heart
- (D) lion-hearted

9. Taking on the task of cleaning out our garage and storage room is not for the faint-hearted.

According to the idiom, cleaning out the garage and storage room

- (A) should not be attempted by someone who faints easily,
- (B) is not a job for someone who is afraid of a challenge,
- (C) will be a long and exhausting challenge,
- (D) requires more strength and stamina than most people have.

- _____ 10. *When her best friend moved to another state, Amanda was heart sick for months.*

How was Amanda affected by her friend's absence?

- (A) She was sad and distressed.
- (B) She was angry for a long time.
- (C) She refused to talk to anybody about the situation.
- (D) She kept in touch on Facebook, but quickly found a new best friend.

- _____ 11. *Daniel knew that he shouldn't loan Walt more money, but his sympathetic nature let his heart rule his head.*

Daniel's decision to loan Walt more money was

- (A) a true act of friendship,
- (B) not difficult since Walt was his best friend,
- (C) based on the fact that Walt always repaid his loans,
- (D) based on emotion rather than logic.

- _____ 12. *When her boyfriend went away to college, Susan texted and talked about him more than ever, so I suppose it's true that absence makes the heart grow fonder.*

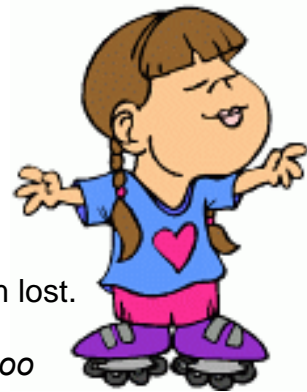
This sentence's idiom suggests that when someone you love goes away,

- (A) you tend to love them even more,
- (B) it sets up the tendency to gossip,
- (C) staying busy will make the separation easier to handle,
- (D) separation anxiety makes you do odd things.

- _____ 13. *Eat your heart out, Bradley! Our team won fair and square!*

The speaker is taunting Bradley to

- (A) stop complaining and go get something to eat,
- (B) practice more and complain less,
- (C) suffer from feelings of envy or jealousy,
- (D) be a good sport and accept the fact that his team lost.



- _____ 14. *Sometimes Aunt Michelle's gifts are tacky and way too babyish, but her heart is always in the right place.*

Which of the following is a **true** statement about Aunt Michelle gifts?

- (A) Her gifts are way too expensive.
- (B) She gives them with good intentions even when they are not appropriate.
- (C) They are not appreciated as much as they should be.
- (D) She should stop giving them or ask for advice before she does.

- _____ 15. *Bob has his heart set on going to summer camp, and he's saving every penny of his allowance and birthday cash to finance the trip.*

How does Bob feel about going to summer camp?

- (A) Bob really wants to go, and nothing else is acceptable.
- (B) He wants to go, but he will have money for a different trip if necessary.
- (C) He would love to go if his parents pay part of the expenses.
- (D) He wants to go, but he won't be too disappointed if it doesn't work out.

_____ 16. *All the personally created get-well cards from Chloe's classmates did her heart good.*

The get-well cards

- (A) made Chloe want to go back to school,
- (B) helped Chloe feel better emotionally,
- (C) made Chloe realize how much she missed her friends,
- (D) encouraged Chloe to try to complete some of her homework.

_____ 17. *When Daren found and returned her lost cell phone, Olivia thanked him **from the bottom of her heart**.*

Which of the following can be substituted for the bold-print idiom without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) right away
- (B) though she was suspicious
- (C) half-heartedly
- (D) sincerely

_____ 18. McKenzie was _____ when the trip with her father was cancelled at the last minute.

Which idiom, when placed in the blank, will complete the thought that McKenzie was disappointed?

- (A) cruel-hearted
- (B) broken-hearted
- (C) half-hearted
- (D) lion-hearted

_____ 19. *Kevin's heart was in his throat during the hour that his town was under a tornado warning.*

During the tornado warning, Kevin

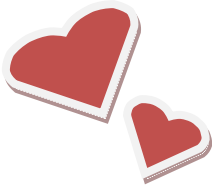
- (A) distracted himself by thinking of other things,
- (B) couldn't wait for it to be over,
- (C) felt a great deal of fear,
- (D) didn't feel like eating.

_____ 20. *Since the way to a man's heart is through his stomach, Sue decided to invite Keith over and cook a great meal for him.*

The idiom in this sentence suggests that

- (A) men fall in love with women who can cook,
- (B) Keith likes home-cooking,
- (C) Sue knows that Keith can't afford a restaurant meal,
- (D) Sue does not enjoy dining alone.





February

Idioms from the Heart

Part Two



The fair maiden has **stolen the heart** of the fearless knight.

All of the following sentences are dressed up in an idiom that contains the word **heart**. Study the sentences and their companion question. Then write the letters of the correct answers in the blanks to the left.

- _____ 1. *When Randy struck out twice in one game, his dad kept him from losing heart by promising to help him become a better hitter.*
The idiom in the sentence means that Randy's dad
(A) prevented his son from losing confidence that he could succeed,
(B) really wants his son to be a good hitter,
(C) was once a really good baseball player himself,
(D) probably doesn't have a lot of time to spend with his son.
- _____ 2. *Ellen is all heart, and she always offers kind and encouraging words when one of her friends is unhappy.*
If Ellen is *all heart*, then which of the following words would **not** apply to her?
(A) compassionate
(B) sympathetic
(C) critical
(D) thoughtful
- _____ 3. *Jennifer's mom wanted her to take piano lessons, but she allowed her daughter to follow her heart and enroll in dancing class.*
The idiom indicates that
(A) Jennifer and her mom disagree quite often,
(B) Jennifer's mom understood how much her daughter wanted to take dancing lessons,
(C) Jennifer is a spoiled child,
(D) Jennifer doesn't have a lot of musical ability.

_____ 4. *Jason's thank-you note to his grandmother for the trip to Disney World came straight from his heart.*

Which of the following correctly describes Jason's thank-you note according to the sentence's idiom?

- (A) It was short, but complete.
- (B) It was sent within a reasonable length of time.
- (C) It was approved by both his parents before it was mailed.
- (D) It was sincere, loving, and appreciative.

_____ 5. *The performer sang his heart out, and the audience gave him an energetic standing ovation.*

The performer sang

- (A) really loud,
- (B) with enthusiasm and deep feeling,
- (C) longer than the audience expected,
- (D) without missing a note or forgetting a word.



_____ 6. *Every child's right to a safe, happy life, anywhere in the world, is an issue that is _____.*

Which of the following idioms, when placed in the blank, would indicate that children's rights are very important to the speaker?

- (A) close to my heart
- (B) in my heart
- (C) lost in my heart
- (D) part of my heart

_____ 7. *Sam made a half-hearted attempt to do his homework before he turned on the TV.*

The sentence's idiom characterizes Sam's homework attempts as

- (A) serious and purposeful,
- (B) his best effort under the circumstances,
- (C) lacking in effort and enthusiasm,
- (D) not his best effort, but adequate enough to get the work done.

_____ 8. *I know Mom has my best interest at heart when she won't allow me to stay up past ten, but I wish she would bend a little on Saturdays.*

Mom's rule about the ten o'clock curfew is an indication that she

- (A) wants some time for herself after her children are asleep,
- (B) is doing what she thinks is best for her children,
- (C) thinks that following rules is the basis for a happy life,
- (D) will probably be willing to compromise every now and then.

_____ 9. *Though there was a lot of misbehavior on the last class trip, Mr. Connors found it in his heart to take his students to the local museum to see the special dinosaur display.*

Mr. Connors decision shows that he

- (A) is not a very good disciplinarian,
- (B) doesn't dwell upon what happened in the past,
- (C) has banned the misbehaving students from the museum trip,
- (D) has compassion for his students.

_____ 10. **Taylor's heart sank** when he realized he would not be able to go fishing with his grandfather because he was grounded for the weekend.

Which of the following can be substituted for the bold print idiom without changing the meaning of the sentence

- (A) Taylor was really disappointed
- (B) Taylor was angry with himself
- (C) Taylor's heart fluttered
- (D) Taylor's temper flared

_____ 11. *Hannah doesn't mind moving around the world with Chris. Home is where the heart is, and her heart is with Chris.*

Hannah doesn't mind moving around because she

- (A) likes to travel and see the world,
- (B) doesn't care about owning things, including property,
- (C) feels at home anywhere as long as Chris is there,
- (D) and Chris share an adventuresome spirit.

_____ 12. *Kari put her heart and soul into the Valentine she made for Spencer.*

According to the idiom, Kari

- (A) wanted to show Spencer what a great friend he is,
- (B) tapped into her deepest feelings for Spencer to create the Valentine,
- (C) was trying to get Spencer's attention with a the Valentine,
- (D) wasn't quite sure how she should design Spencer's Valentine.

_____ 13. *Although she did not win the race, Christine can _____ that she improved her time.*

Which of the following, when placed in the blank, suggests that Christine should be encouraged?

- (A) take heart
- (B) be brokenhearted
- (C) cross her heart
- (D) keep it in her heart

_____ 14. *Though Mr. Whitaker is past sixty, he is young at heart, and we love it when he comes over to umpire our back-yard games.*

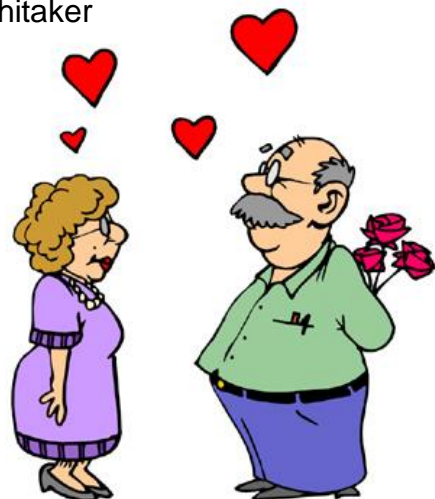
The idiom *young at heart* means that Mr. Whitaker

- (A) is immature,
- (B) liked to interrupt children at play,
- (C) has a youthful outlook on life,
- (D) is in great physical shape.

_____ 15. *Grandpa admits that he lost his heart to Grandma the very first day they met.*

In Grandpa's own words, he

- (A) didn't like Grandma much at first,
- (B) liked Grandma more than she liked him in the beginning,
- (C) fell in love with Grandma when they first met,
- (D) asked Grandma to marry him on their first date.



- _____ 16. *John wears his heart on his sleeve, so there's no doubt as to how he feels about Marsha.*

When it comes to his feelings about Marsha, John

- (A) tries to hide his emotions,
- (B) displays his feelings openly,
- (C) changes his mind quite often, so he is never sure how he feels,
- (D) makes it clear that he doesn't care much for her.

- _____ 17. *Joseph always looks forward to a snow day when he can stay home, watch TV, and play video games **to his heart's content**.*

What phrase can be substituted for the bold print idiom without changing the meaning of the sentence?

- (A) because he likes to be lazy,
- (B) for a few hours
- (C) as much as he wants,
- (D) until he gets bored.

- _____ 18. *Kelly felt in her heart of hearts that Angela was not telling the truth, but she still defended her friend.*

This sentence implies that Kelly knew Angela was not telling the truth, but she

- (A) did not want to believe it,
- (B) understood her friend's behavior,
- (C) decided not to get involved,
- (D) didn't tell because she owed Angela a favor.

- _____ 19. *My heart goes out to the families whose homes were damaged during the terrible storm.*

The speaker in this sentence

- (A) is thinking of volunteering with a rescue group,
- (B) feels sympathy for the storm victims,
- (C) doesn't fully understand what has happened,
- (D) probably lives near where the storm took place.

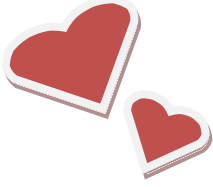
- _____ 20. *Sitting up late on a summer Saturday night watching scary movies with my friends warms the cockles* of my heart.*

This idiom means that a scary Saturday night movie with friends,

- (A) doesn't happen very often.
- (B) is a frightening experience that should not be attempted alone,
- (C) creates a feeling of happiness and affection,
- (D) is the most fun the group of friends have ever had.



* Some scholars believe the word *cockles* in the idiom *cockles of my heart* refers to bivalve mollusks, a type of clam whose empty heart-shaped shells wash up on sandy beaches. Others think the word is a corruption of *cochleae*, the Medieval Latin word for heart ventricles. Either way, it's an interesting idiom!



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Answer Keys

Part One

1. A
2. C
3. A
4. C
5. D
6. B
7. C
8. C
9. B
10. A
11. D
12. A
13. C
14. B
15. A
16. B
17. D
18. B
19. C
20. A

Part Two

1. A
2. C
3. B
4. D
5. B
6. A
7. C
8. B
9. D
10. A
11. C
12. B
13. A
14. C
15. C
16. B
17. C
18. A (or B)
19. B
20. C