1. Focus

Explain Using Idioms in Personal Narratives

Say: When I write a personal narrative, I do so from my own point of view. I choose my words carefully and try to communicate a distinct tone. Often, the tone is natural, similar to my own voice. Sometimes, I use idioms. Idioms are expressions that mean something different from what the words themselves say. For example, if I write, “That shirt cost an arm and a leg,” I don’t mean I had to give up an arm and a leg for the shirt. I mean that the shirt was expensive. Using idioms helps us make our writing more vivid and descriptive. It helps us sound more like we do when we speak. Today I’m going to show you how to include idioms in your personal narratives.

Model How Writers Use Idioms in Personal Narratives

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for idioms as you read the text aloud.

We went up 102 floors to the top of the Empire State Building. The elevator ride went on and on and on. However, when we got to the top, the view took my breath away.

Modeling Text

Say: In the second sentence, I read that the elevator ride “went on and on and on.” From just this phrase, it sounds as though the elevator trip never ended. I suspect it felt like it went on forever, but it obviously didn’t because the writer went on to do other things. The writer is using an idiom to express how long the ride was and how tall the building is. The idiom is a familiar phrase that the writer assumes readers will know. In the next sentence, I read that “the view took my breath away.” I know the writer doesn’t mean that the view made it impossible for him to breathe! This is an idiom that means that something is beautiful or exciting. The writer uses it to describe how thrilling it was to see the city from high in the sky. The writer has chosen to use these idioms to make his tone sound more natural and vivid, which is important in a personal narrative.

Create a Class Idioms Anchor Chart

Work with students to brainstorm idioms and their meanings. Write these on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Post the anchor chart for students to refer to throughout the unit.
## Strategies to Support ELs

### Beginning

Idioms are difficult for ELs to understand. Beginning ELs are not ready to work on this skill. While other students collaborate on the small-group activity or write independently, meet one on one with students to support developmentally appropriate skills based on their independent writing and language level. For example, you may want to work with students’ recognition of other descriptive or conversational word choices in personal narratives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>happy as a clam</td>
<td>very happy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cool as a cucumber</td>
<td>very calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said something under my breath</td>
<td>muttered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saw red</td>
<td>got angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt my heart break</td>
<td>became sad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Idioms Anchor Chart

### Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the group activity. Ensure that the fluent English speakers are helping to explain the meanings of idioms as necessary.

### All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: *expression/la expresión.*

## 2. Rehearse

### Practice Writing with Idioms

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Explain that the sentence is a line from a personal narrative, which could sound more like someone speaking if it were written using an idiom.

**Practice Text**

Last night, my sister was really mad.

Ask students to work in small groups to rewrite and add to this sentence, using at least one idiom. They may use idioms from the class anchor chart or that they think of on their own. Encourage each group to come up with several idioms and sentences. Students should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class. They should be ready to explain the word choices they made to add an idiom or idioms to the practice text.

### Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite groups to read aloud their sentences and explain the word choices they made. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they revise their own personal narratives. Underline the idioms students used in their sentences.

## 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that using idioms can help us add description and feeling to our personal narratives. They can help our writing sound more like we do when we talk. A good personal narrative has a strong point of view and communicates a distinct personality. As you write your personal narrative, remember to include idioms to make your writing more descriptive, vivid, and similar to your speech.

Ask students to identify a section of their personal narratives in which they could strengthen their narrative voice by using the idioms they use when they speak. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

## 4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite two or three students who effectively used idiomatic language to reflect their own voice to read aloud an example from their personal narratives.