1. Focus

Explain Using Idioms to Define a Character

Say: Figurative language can be language that has a meaning different from what individual words say. Idioms are examples of this type of figurative language. Many idioms are such common expressions that we may not even realize we’re using them. For example, I’m using an idiom when I say, “It's raining cats and dogs.” I don’t mean that cats and dogs are falling from the sky! I mean that it’s raining really hard. Sometimes, historical fiction writers use idioms to help define or describe a character in a story. Today I’m going to show you how to use idioms to define a character so you can do this in your historical fiction stories.

Model How Writers Use Idioms to Define a Character

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen for an example of an idiom used to describe a character as you read the text aloud.

Patrick wished he could be more like Sacagawea, but it was hard—between the never-ending trek, hunger, and cold, he was full of complaints!

Modeling Text

Say: The writers use an idiom to describe Patrick as full of complaints. When I think about it, I realize that a person cannot actually be filled with complaints. Complaints don’t actually take up any space. Still, visualizing the image of Patrick loaded with complaints is striking and memorable. It helps me understand his character. I’m going to underline this phrase and label it idiom.

Underline and label the identified phrase.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idiom</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>had nine lives</td>
<td>was lucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was a breath of fresh air</td>
<td>was pleasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had a chip on his shoulder</td>
<td>was grumpy or angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was born with a silver spoon in her mouth</td>
<td>was very fortunate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saw the world through rose-colored glasses</td>
<td>was cheerful and optimistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Idioms Anchor Chart
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Using Idioms to Define a Character

Ask students to work with a partner to write a sentence using an idiom to describe one of the characters in their historical fiction stories. If they choose an idiom from the class anchor chart, make sure they can tell how it defines their fictional character. Pairs of students should write down their sentence and be prepared to read it to the class. They should be ready to explain the idiom they chose.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain how their idioms help explain the character. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write or revise their historical fiction stories.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that we can use idioms to help describe the characters in our stories. Remember, a good historical fiction story includes well-developed characters. Idioms can help writers to describe characters with striking language. Consider using idioms to describe the characters in your historical fiction stories.

Encourage students to identify sections of their historical fiction stories where they could use idiomatic expressions to make the writing more interesting or vivid. 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 volunteers to read aloud a section of their historical fiction stories in which they used an idiom to describe a character in a vivid way.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Beginning ELs are not ready to work on this skill. While other students collaborate on the practice 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 adjectives and descriptive language used to describe fictional characters.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner 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 these English/Spanish cognates: expression/la expresión; figurative/figurado(a).