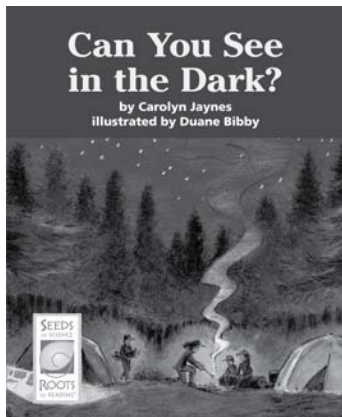


Teaching About Idioms

with *Can You See in the Dark?*
from *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*®



Introduction

This strategy guide introduces an approach for teaching about idioms. Idioms are common expressions (such as *I'm all ears*) that carry distinct meanings that are not literal and cannot be inferred directly from context. Since they are typically learned through experience, idioms can be confusing for students who are not familiar with them, particularly for students who are English Language Learners. This guide includes an introductory section about teaching idioms, a general overview of how to teach this strategy with many science texts, and a plan for teaching about idioms with the *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*® book *Can You See in the Dark?*

Book Summary

Can You See in the Dark? invites readers to wonder about whether people need light to see. The book details a search for a completely dark place with no light at all—no lamplight, no sunlight coming through the window, and no light from stars. Readers follow the narrator from a dark movie theater, to a dark campsite, to a dark closet, all the while finding some amount of light. Finally, the book takes readers into a cave where there is truly no light at all. Reading this text encourages the identification of many different sources of light, such as movie projectors, streetlamps, and campfires. As students read, they are invited to ask whether they can see in a place that is completely dark or whether light is always needed in order to see.

About This Book

Reading Level

Guided Reading Level*: N

Key Vocabulary

explore, light, source, test, travel

Text Features

bold print, glossary, illustrations

*Guided Reading Levels based on the text characteristics from Fountas and Pinnell, *Matching Books to Readers*.

Science Background

Light is a form of energy. No matter what the light source, the basic characteristics of light are the same—it travels through empty space, and it travels in a straight line. We are able to see things because our eyes detect light. Seeing always involves some version of this basic process: light is emitted by a source, this light reflects off an object, the reflected light enters our eyes, our retinal cells are stimulated, a signal is sent to our brain, and we finally “see” the object. In general, we only see things that either reflect or emit light. All light originally comes from a source, which is an object that emits light. Examples of light sources include a lightbulb, a flame, a star, red-hot lava, a laser, and a firefly. Each of these sources gives off energy in the form of light. The Sun is our most important source of light energy. Most objects do not produce light on their own. Instead, they reflect the light that falls on them, and our eyes see the reflected light. Although we cannot see in true darkness, most “dark” places still have some sources of visible light. In a place that at first seems dark, our eyes gradually adjust to the darkness. Our pupils—the circular openings located in the center of the iris of our eyes—can expand to allow more light to enter.

About Idioms

Words and phrases can have very different meanings based on the context in which they are used. This is especially true for idiomatic expressions. Idioms suggest one idea when interpreted literally, but actually have a unique, figurative meaning based on common usage in an everyday context. While students will likely learn to make sense of idioms as they hear them used in conversation and see them used in text, increasing students' awareness of these unique words and phrases can help them learn to identify and interpret them with greater success. While all students can benefit from learning about idioms, this instruction is especially helpful for English Language Learners. Instruction about idioms helps English Language Learners become more comfortable and familiar with English. The sheer number of idioms and their high frequency in oral and written discourse make them an important aspect of language learning.

Teaching About Idioms

The following guidelines can be used to teach students to recognize idiomatic expressions encountered in any content-rich book.

- Select a book that includes concepts related to your curriculum. Identify three to five idioms included in the book that may be unfamiliar to students.
- Prepare to discuss these idioms by writing the nonliteral definitions based on the intended meaning of the idioms, as well as the literal definitions. You may want to use the Idioms copymaster included with this guide to introduce the idioms and definitions to students.
- Explain to students that idioms are phrases that do not mean exactly what the words say. Discuss an example: *This homework is a piece of cake*. Ask students what this phrase might mean. [The homework is easy.] Point out that *piece of cake* does not mean the homework is made of cake. Ask students if the homework is easy or hard and why. [Easy, because eating cake is enjoyable and easy.] Explain that to understand some expressions in English, it is necessary for students to think about the phrase and use their background knowledge to make sense of it.
- Introduce a few idioms and discuss both their literal and nonliteral meanings. The following are some examples:
 - a. *Sticking your neck out* might seem to mean that someone is bending their head down and forward. Instead, it is a way of saying that someone is doing something bold and a bit dangerous. Tell students that another idiom that expresses a similar idea is *going out on a limb*.
 - b. *To break the ice* might seem to imply that someone is cracking through a thick piece of ice, but instead it means to be the first one to say or do something. Another idiom for expressing this same idea is *to get the ball rolling*.
- Ask students to share other common idioms they may have encountered in books they have read or in conversations they have had.
- Model a process that students can use to identify an idiom and make sense of its meaning. Introduce a scientific scenario where an idiom might be used: A scientist has returned to her lab to find that a piece of equipment is missing. She looks around and remarks, "Something is fishy here."
- Ask students to identify a phrase from the scenario that contains an idiom [Something is fishy here.] Ask if the scientist was investigating fish. [No.] Discuss the intended meaning of *fishy* (something that is out of place and does not seem right). Explain that thinking about the broader context of a situation will bring nonliteral meanings to mind and will help students understand the intended meaning of the idiom.
- Introduce the idioms you identified from the text students will read. Have students read the text and notice when and how these idioms are used. Ask students to use the context to help them identify the meaning that is intended.
- Have students discuss the strategies they used to figure out the more applicable meaning. Confirm the intended (nonliteral) meaning of each idiom with the class.
- Continue to highlight idiomatic expressions in other texts that students read, as well as in oral language.

Idiom, page number	Meaning 1	Meaning 2
light is creeping in, page 4	light is becoming more noticeable	light is crawling in slowly and quietly
light is traveling, page 11	light is riding in a car or train	light is moving
dive under your bed, page 16	go under your bed quickly	to go head first under the bed, as you would into a swimming pool
a smile crosses your face, page 22	a smile makes an X shape on your face	you slowly begin to smile

Teaching About Idioms with *Can You See in the Dark?*

Can You See in the Dark? provides opportunities for students to determine the intended meaning of several idiomatic expressions.

Getting Ready

Using the model above as a guide, write four idioms from the book, their literal meanings, and their figurative meanings on the Idioms copymaster. Leave the page numbers blank. The correct responses are shown in green type for your reference. Make a copy for each student.

During Class

1. Explain that idioms are phrases that do not mean exactly what the words say. Discuss a familiar example of an idiomatic expression such as *Josh feels like a fish out of water*. Ask students if this means that Josh feels cold and scaly, like a fish. [No.] Have students put themselves in the place of the fish and share how the fish might feel when it is out of the water. [Uncomfortable, out of place.] Confirm that *out of place* is the intended meaning of this idiom.
2. Provide a few more examples of idioms and have students suggest idioms they have encountered. For each example, discuss the literal meaning, the intended meaning, and the associations needed to arrive at the intended meaning.
3. Tell students that identifying idioms can help them better understand what they read. Let students know that they will read

the book a first time through, taking time to find and discuss the meanings of idioms they encounter. They will then read the book a second time to reflect on the content it contains.

4. Introduce *Can You See in the Dark?* by explaining that it is a book about the narrator's search for a truly dark place. Tell students there are several idioms in the book.
5. Model a process students can use to identify an idiom and make sense of its meaning. Ask students to turn to page 4 and identify a phrase that sounds out of place. [Light is creeping in.] Follow up by asking if the light was actually crawling. [No.] Discuss the intended meaning of *creeping in*. [Slowly becoming more noticeable.]
6. Distribute the Idioms student sheets and have students look for and think about the intended meanings of these phrases as they read the book. Have students select and circle the intended meanings of the idioms on their student sheets.
7. Lead a class discussion about each of the idioms, focusing on the strategies students used to determine which meanings were intended. For each of the idioms, ask a student to:
 - read the sentence or group of sentences from the book in which the idiom was found.
 - discuss the clues and background knowledge used to figure out which meaning applied.
 - share ideas about why the author might have included the idiom in the book.
8. Reflect on how paying attention to idioms can help students better understand the important ideas from books and conversations. Invite students to use this strategy as they read and discuss other books.

Independent Extension

Have students choose one of the idioms they read in *Can You See in the Dark?* (or one they know from their own experience) and write a sentence using that idiom. Have students illustrate the literal and figurative meanings of the idiom. Then, students can explain to a partner why the figurative meaning is intended in their sentence.

Name _____

Date _____

Idioms

Title of book: _____

Find each idiom in the book and write down the page number(s). Circle the meaning that is used in the book.

Idiom, page number	Meaning 1	Meaning 2

About Strategy Guides

A six-page strategy guide is available for each *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*® student book. These strategies support students in becoming better readers and writers. They help students read science texts with greater understanding, learn and use new vocabulary, and discuss important ideas about the natural world and the nature of science. Many of these strategies can be used with multiple titles in the *Seeds/Roots* series. For more information, as well as for additional instructional resources, visit the *Seeds/Roots* Web site (www.seedsofscience.org/strategyguides.html).

Available Student Books for Grades 3–4

Eighteen engaging student books are now available, each with a corresponding strategy guide. The books are part of the *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*® curriculum program described on page 6. Nine *Weather and Water* student books and strategy guides will be available in late 2009.

<i>Digestion and Body Systems</i>	
Strategy	Student Book
Analyzing Part-to-Whole Relationships	<i>Systems</i>
Teaching About the Nature and Practices of Science	<i>Secrets of the Stomach</i>
Teaching Process Description Writing	<i>Voyage of a Cracker</i>
Searching for Information in Science Texts	<i>Handbook of Body Systems</i>
Making Sense of Data in Science Texts	<i>What's the Diagnosis?</i>
<i>Variation and Adaptation</i>	
Strategy	Student Book
Teaching Scientific Comparison Writing	<i>Blue Whales and Buttercups</i>
Using Discourse Circles	<i>The Code</i>
Using Visual Evidence to Make Inferences	<i>Mystery Mouths</i>
Teaching About the Nature and Practices of Science	<i>Evidence from the Past</i>
<i>Light Energy</i>	
Strategy	Student Book
Teaching About Idioms	<i>Can You See in the Dark?</i>
Teaching Summary Writing	<i>The Speed of Light</i>
Teaching About the Nature and Practices of Science	<i>Why Do Scientists Disagree?</i>
Using Discourse Routines with Science Texts	<i>I See What You Mean</i>
Searching for Information in Science Texts	<i>Handbook of Light Interactions</i>
Teaching Scientific Explanation Writing	<i>Light Strikes!</i>
Teaching Vocabulary with Science Texts	<i>Cameras, Eyes, and Glasses</i>
Teaching Concept Mapping	<i>It's All Energy</i>
Interpreting Visual Representations	<i>Sunlight and Showers</i>

Extend Learning with *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*®

The strategy featured in this guide is drawn from the *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*® curriculum program. *Seeds/Roots* is an innovative, fully integrated science and literacy program.

The program employs a multimodal instructional model called “Do-it, Talk-it, Read-it, Write-it.” This approach provides rich and varied opportunities for students to learn science as they *investigate* through firsthand inquiry, *talk* with others about their investigations, *read* content-rich books, and *write* to record and reflect on their learning.

Take advantage of the natural synergies between science and literacy instruction.

- Improve students’ abilities to read and write in the context of science.
- Excite students with active hands-on investigation.
- Optimize instructional time by addressing goals in two subject areas at the same time.

To learn more about *Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading*® products, pricing, and purchasing information, visit www.deltaeducation.com



Light Energy Science and Literacy Kit



Developed at Lawrence Hall of Science and the Graduate School of Education at the University of California at Berkeley.

Seeds of Science/Roots of Reading® is a collaboration of a science team led by **Jacqueline Barber** and a literacy team led by **P. David Pearson** and **Gina Cervetti**.

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