

## English Language Arts (Secondary Cycle 2)



# LETTING THE CAT OUT OF THE BAG

### Cultural references

- › Figurative language, i.e. idioms and expressions
- › Texts intended for youth
- › Media texts

### Anecdote

In England, in the 1500s, you could buy a piglet at a farmer's market, and it would cost quite a bit. A dishonest merchant might put a stray cat in the bag instead of the piglet, and you wouldn't find out until you got home and let the cat out of the bag!

### Context

In order to add life, humour and cultural interest to their texts, authors and media producers often use figurative language in the form of idioms and expressions. Isn't it curious that languages contain these expressions that, if taken literally, can lead to confusion and sometimes hilarity? Students play with words and learn more about these figures of speech.

### Activity 1

Small groups of students research advertisements, looking for effective use of idioms to discuss their meanings and how they make the advertisements more effective. They share their findings to broaden their awareness of the use of idioms in advertising and the possible impact of idioms on different readers.

### Activity 2

Students select a service or product and create their own advertisement, which they will later present to the class, using idioms for an intended effect. Students research the idiom used in their advertisement to discover its origin and to consider how its meaning has changed over time.

### Activity 3

In collaboration with the FSL class, to encourage transfer of language learning, students analyze the similarities and differences between expressions and idioms in the two languages, as well as their evolution over time. With their peers, the ELA students discuss the meanings and interpretations of the idioms and expressions within the context of the ads they've created.



## Additional resources

### Targeted elements of the QEP

- › Reading: Reads and produces advertisements, including public service announcements, posters, book trailers
- › Writing and production processes: Understands the purpose of techniques and devices when producing texts (e.g. humour, figurative language, persuasive language)
- › Communicating: Actively participates in collaborative group activities
- › Uses a variety of media and technology resources

### Questions that students could be asked during the activity

- › What are some expressions and idioms that are part of our life and culture?
- › How might these expressions lead to misunderstanding and confusion?
- › What purpose do these expressions serve in a text? How do they impact the message in a text?
- › How have these expressions changed over time?
- › Why are idioms and expressions used in advertising?

### Suggestions for activities with cultural partners

- › As part of the [Culture in the Schools program](#), invite an artist from the [Répertoire de ressources culture-éducation](#) to explore different media and techniques that can be used to produce illustrations and ads (English content available)
- › Invite an author to look at the choices authors/producers make in crafting a text
- › Invite an illustrator to discuss how illustrations carry meaning that complements and enhances a text

### References

- › To browse children’s literature, visit the [Québec Reading Connection](#) website
- › For more information on the media competency, visit the [Literacy Today](#) website
- › For information about advertisements and media texts, visit the [Media Smarts](#) website