

SAMPLE UNIT

James Milton
Virginia Evans

a Good Turn of Phrase

Advanced Idiom Practice



Express Publishing

Unit 5

- 1** Read the advertisement and try to explain the idioms in bold. Then, look at the picture and say which idiom it represents.

- 2** Match the items with the idioms from Ex. 1.

a unwell	f active after an illness
b very thin	g very lively and energetic
c to get worse in health/ quality/status, etc	h very strong and fit
d about to die	i weaker or less capable than one used to be
e to be doubted/considered untrue	j very old age

- 3** Fill in the gaps with phrases from the list:

go downhill, pinch of salt, up and about, ripe old age, off colour

- As soon as your leg is out of the cast, you'll be in no time.
- John has a reputation for being a liar, so whenever he tells me anything, I take it with a
- Peter didn't go to school today because he was feeling a bit
- The recession will affect industry badly and many companies will
- My grandfather lived to a He was 104 years old when he passed away.

- 4** Fill in the gaps with phrases from the list:

as strong as an ox, full of beans, but skin and bone, at death's door, a shadow of his former self

Mary: Hello Mr Herriot. I was wondering if you could have a look at Fido, my dog. He's usually so **1)** but he's been refusing his food for a week now and, well, look at him, he's nothing **2)**

Vet: Let me see now. Oh dear, he's just **3)**, isn't he? Let's have a look ... hmm, yes, I think I know what it is. Don't worry — I don't think he's **4)** just yet!

Mary: So what is it Mr Herriot?

Vet: Just a stomach bug, dear. Give him one of these tablets three times a day and he should be **5)** in a week or so.



DOCTOR HERBERT'S CURE-ALL LIFE TONIC

Unlike some "remedies", whose creators' claims have to **1) be taken with a pinch of salt**, DR HERBERT'S LIFE TONIC IS NO GIMMICK!

Whether you're **2) at death's door** or simply feeling a bit **3) off colour**, Dr Herbert's Life Tonic will have you feeling **4) full of beans** again in no time. But don't just take our word for it. Mr Jethro Franklin of Dodgeville, Texas had been suffering from heart problems and severe back pains for over ten years, before he turned to Dr Herbert for help.

"I had been **5) going downhill** for a long, long time before I came to Dr Herbert. I had lost so much weight that I was **6) nothing but skin and bone**, and on most days I couldn't even get out of bed in the mornings! However, Dr Herbert's Life Tonic changed all that. I was just **7) a shadow of my former self** when I started taking his Life Tonic, but I was **8) up and about** again in just two weeks. That was just six months ago and now I feel **9) as strong as an ox** - in fact, after giving me just three months to live last year, my doctor now says that I should live to a **10) ripe old age**!"

DON'T DELAY! FOR THE CURE-ALL REMEDY,
GET DR HERBERT'S LIFE TONIC TODAY!

5 Read the dialogue and try to explain the idioms in bold.



Frank: Hey Jack! Here, you'll never guess what I heard yesterday.

Jack: What?

Frank: Old Trevor's **1) kicked the bucket**.

Jack: No! But I saw him out with the dog just last week and he was **2) alive and kicking** then!

Frank: Well, you know, appearances can be deceptive. Apparently it had been **3) touch and go** as to whether his heart would keep going since last year when he had all those problems.

Jack: Oh blast! I had no idea. Poor Trevor. How's your brother?

Frank: Ah yes, Donald. Well, the doctors reckon **4) the writing is on the wall** for him too, but he seems to be **5) holding his own**. I saw him just last night at Reg's and he can still beat me at poker - the old rascal was **6) grinning from ear to ear** when I left! No, I'm pretty certain **7) there's life in the old dog yet**. But what about Betty? Are her eyes still bad?

Jack: Yes, they've got worse, she's **8) as blind as a bat** now. Mind you, the kids have been great, they seem to think that both me and their mum **9) have got one foot in the grave**, so they've been helping out a lot with the shopping and cleaning and stuff. I'll tell you what though ...

Frank: What?

Jack: I just hope they don't **10) run out of steam** before I do!

6 Match the items with the idioms from Ex. 5.

- | | |
|--|---|
| a to be near death | f a sign/warning of danger/unhappiness/failure, etc |
| b blind or unable to see well | g to die |
| c still alive and active | h to manage despite difficulties/obstacles |
| d one is still physically/mentally energetic despite old age | i to smile broadly |
| e uncertain | j to lose the energy that one had previously |

7 Rewrite the following sentences replacing the words in bold with phrases from the list.

kick the bucket, am as blind as a bat, grinned from ear to ear, there's life in the old dog yet, run out of steam

1 Without my glasses I **can't see anything**.

.....

2 If I don't have a cup of coffee with my lunch, I **become weak and faint** by three o'clock.

.....

3 Everyone thinks that Mr Jones is about to **die**, but **he's still alright in spite of his age**.

.....

4 When Cathy heard that she had been promoted, she **had a huge smile on her face**.

.....

8 Fill in the gaps with phrases from the list:

one foot in the grave, touch and go, alive and kicking, writing was on the wall, held his own

John: I was amazed to see Gerald back at work.

David: Yes, me too. When he was in hospital it was **1)** for a while, according to the doctors.

John: That's right. Two weeks ago it looked like the **2)**; he had **3)**

David: Apparently it was just a virus. All he needed was a long rest.

John: Well, he **4)**, didn't he?

David: I'll say! He's certainly **5)** now!

9 Fill in the gaps with phrases from the list:

ripe old age, held our own, there's life in the old dog yet, touch and go, up and about, at death's door, took it with a pinch of salt, as strong as an ox, writing is on the wall, a shadow of his former self

- The patient might not survive; it's for now, I'm afraid.
- The for the factory. It will probably close next year.
- We lost the debate although we in all the arguments.
- After the take-over we were told to expect a pay rise but we
- We were surprised to see James only two weeks after his operation.
- Bill isn't weak at all; in fact, he's
- Mr Marshall has recovered unexpectedly, so it seems
- Matthew never really got over his road accident. He's been ever since.
- She survived until the of 92.
- When the old man realised he was, he asked to see a priest.

10 Rewrite the following sentences using the words in bold. Do not change these words in any way.

- You don't look very well, I think you should go home.
colour
- Jason has a big smile in all the wedding photographs.
ear
- I suddenly became very tired while shopping and had to sit down and have a coffee.
steam
- John's work deteriorated rapidly after he fell ill.
downhill
- You know, Geoff can't see a thing without his glasses.
bat
- Let's face it, Kate Moss is very thin!
bone
- We haven't heard from Marion for a while, but Tim tells me she's fit and healthy.
alive
- We all thought Rachel had died until she leapt up and started laughing at us.
bucket

- I went for a swim early this morning and I've felt energetic all day.
beans
- We thought Sir John was almost ready to die but he was just pretending to be ill.
foot

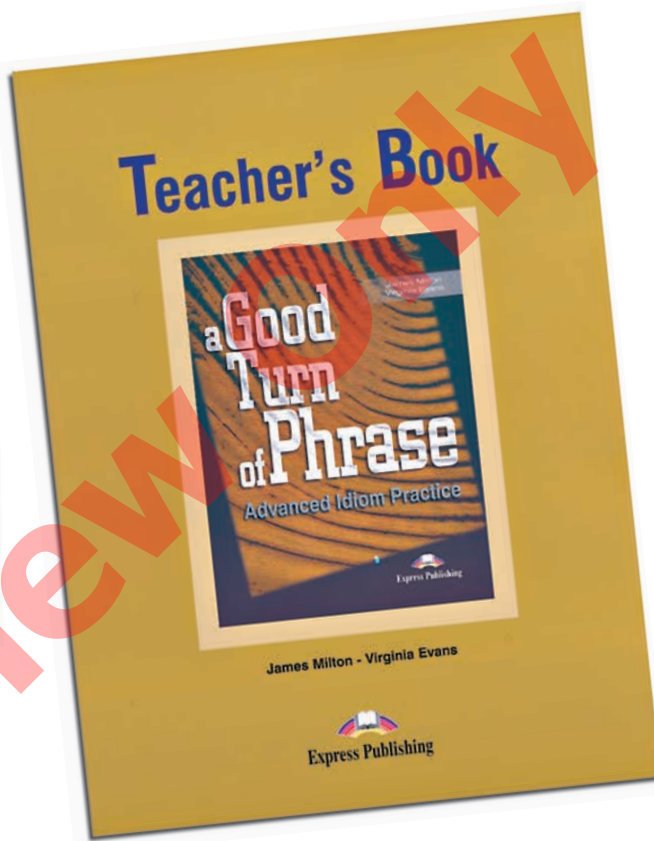
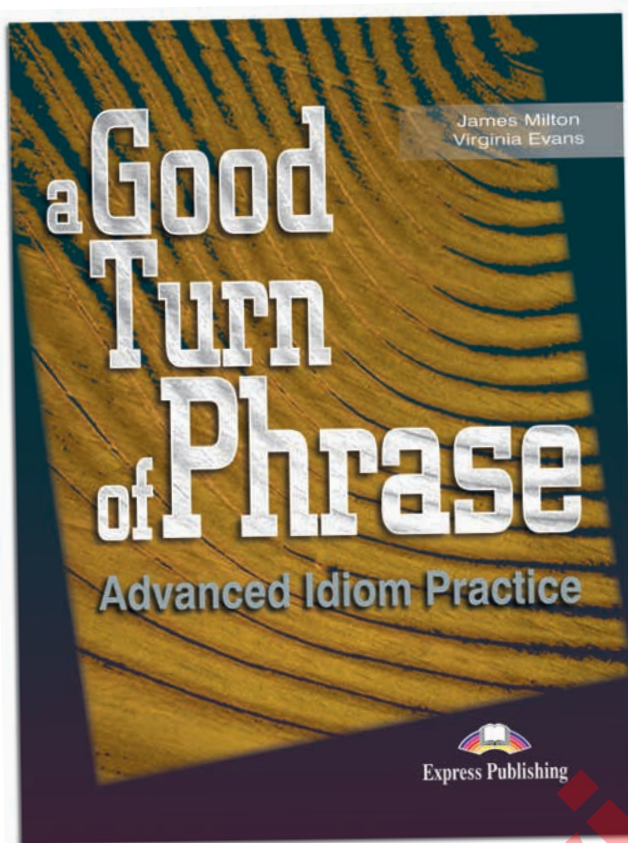
11 Answer the questions below:

- Can somebody be **alive and kicking** after they **have kicked the bucket**? Why/Why not?
- Can you be **full of beans** and **off colour** at the same time? Why/Why not?
- When somebody tells you something serious while they are **grinning from ear to ear** should you **take it with a pinch of salt**? Why/Why not?
- Could **there be life in the old dog yet** even if he were **as blind as a bat**? Why/Why not?
- If a doctor told you that someone's condition was **touch and go** after an operation, would you be surprised to see the person **up and about** the next day? Why/Why not?
- Do you think that the fax machine will continue to **hold its own** in this era of electronic mail? Why/Why not?

12 Use the idioms in the list to talk about the man in the picture below.

full of beans, as strong as an ox, at death's door, a shadow of his former self, ripe old age, to run out of steam





A Good Turn of Phrase consists of fifteen units, each presenting and practising English idioms in current use. Idioms are presented in context, then they are tested in such activities as “key-word” transformation, multiple choice, gap filling, word matching, crosswords and picture discussion. The **Teacher's Book** contains the answers to the exercises as well as three tests, each of which has two alternative versions.

A Good Turn of Phrase is aimed at students at post-intermediate and advanced levels. It can be used in the classroom or for self-study to help learners use the English language successfully.