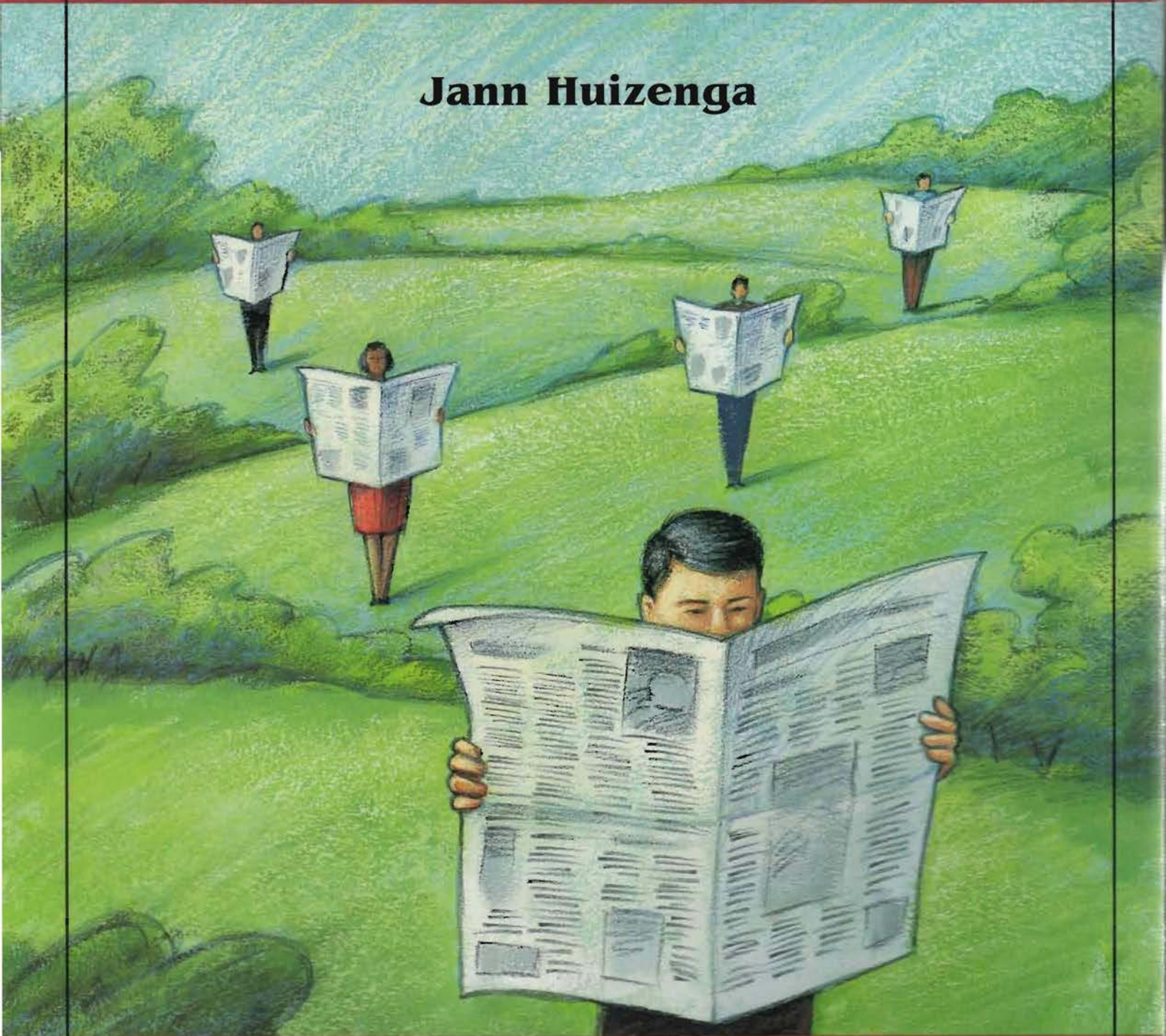


# Can You Believe It?

Stories and Idioms from Real Life

Book 1

Jann Huizenga



OXFORD



# Can You Believe It?

Stories and Idioms from Real Life

Book 1

Jann Hulzenega

UNIVERSITY

Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016 USA  
Great Clarendon Street  
Oxford OX2 6DP England

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi  
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi  
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece  
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan South Korea Poland Portugal  
Singapore Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

OXFORD is a trademark of Oxford University Press

ISBN: 978 0 19 437279 4

Copyright © 2000 by Oxford University Press

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Huizenga, Jann.

Can you believe it?: stories and idioms from real life/Jann

Huizenga.

p.cm.

includes index.

Contents: bk. 1

ISBN: 978 0 19 437279 4

1. English language—Textbooks for foreign  
speakers. 2. English language—United States—Idioms. 3.  
Americanisms. 4. Readers. I. Title.

PE1128.H777 2000

428.6'4—dc21

00-021653

#### No unauthorized photocopying.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,  
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any  
means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,  
without the prior written permission of Oxford University Press.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of  
trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated  
without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover  
other than that in which it is published and without a similar  
condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent  
purchaser.

Editorial Manager: Susan Lanzano, Janet Aitchison

Editor: Lynne Szarsky

Senior Production Editor: Robyn F. Clemente

Associate Production Editor: Justin Hartung

Design Manager: Lynne Torrey

Designer: Elizabeth Onorato

Art Buyer/Photo researcher: Stacy Godlesky

Production Manager: Abram Hall

Production Controller: Shanta Persaud

Printing (last digit): 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11

Printed in Hong Kong

#### Acknowledgments

Illustrations and realia by Patrick Merrell, Wally Neibart, Tom Powers,  
William Waitzman

Cover illustration by Ken Condon

The publishers would like to thank the following for their permission to reproduce  
photographs: AP/Worldwide; Rachel Cobb; Wayne Lockwood, David A.  
Northcott/Corbis; Bill Cramer; Jann Huizenga; Norman Y. Lono/People  
Weekly c. 1998; Jack Hollingsworth/Photodisc; Joshua Sheldon/  
Photonica; Gavriel Jecan, William Whitehurst/The Stock Market; Sid  
Avery/Stockfood; Ron Lee Brown/Tony Stone.

#### Credits

The stories in this book have been adapted from the following  
material: p. 2, *The New Mexican*, December 3, 1997; p. 6 Ann Landers in  
*The New Mexican*, November 11, 1997; p. 9, *Reuters* on-line, January 22,  
1999; p. 10, *Reuters* on-line, November 1, 1998; p. 13, *The Associated Press*  
on-line, June 7, 1998; p. 14, *Reuters* on-line July 3, 1998; p. 18, *Reuters*  
on-line, January 1, 1999; p. 21, *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio,  
December 31, 1998; p. 26, *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio,  
October 9, 1998; p. 30, *The New Mexican*, January 24, 1999; p. 33, *The*  
*Associated Press* on-line, September 30 1998; p. 34, *The Funny Times*;  
p. 38, *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 1, 1998; p. 42, *The London Daily*  
*Telegraph*, September 5, 1998; p. 45, *The Associated Press* on-line, June 7,  
1998; p. 50, *The Associated press* on-line, November 14, 1998; p. 53,  
*Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, December 2, 1998; p. 54, *People*  
*Weekly*, November 2, 1998; p. 57, *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio,  
November 27, 1997; p. 58, *The New Mexican*, May 8, 1998; p. 62,  
personal interview, January 5, 1999; p. 66, *People Weekly*, September 21,  
1998; p. 69, *People Weekly*, September 21, 1998.

General Introduction... This book is designed to help students understand the English language through stories and idioms...

# Can You Believe It?

## Stories and Idioms from Real Life

### Book 1

Jann Huizenga

Teachers contend that we acquire new lexical items by meeting them a number of times... This is the first book in the series...

#### Extra Features

##### Listening Cassette

The cassette features dramatic readings of the stories... Appendix B: The stories are read by native speakers...

OXFORD  
UNIVERSITY PRESS



# To the Student

In this book you will enjoy learning everyday idiomatic American English through amazing, true stories from around the world.

When you study vocabulary, it is not enough to learn individual words. Everyday English is filled with expressions that are two or more words long, such as *turn over*, *get along with someone*, and *after a while*. These expressions are essential to successful communication in English, and they need to be learned as individual units, in the same way as individual words. In this book you will find **idioms**, **fixed expressions**, and **phrasal verbs**.

## What is an idiom?

An **idiom** is a group of words that has a meaning different from the meaning of its individual parts. In the example below, you probably know all the individual words, but you still may not understand the meaning of the expression. This is because the expressions are idiomatic.

*Miguel is into computer games, but I can't stand them.*

*Be into* means *like very much* and *can't stand* means *dislike very much*.

## What is a fixed expression?

*Take a vacation*, *again and again*, and *be at death's door* are **fixed expressions**. You will understand the whole expression if you know the meaning of the parts. But the translation of a fixed expression into your language may not be word for word.

## What is a phrasal verb?

A **phrasal verb** is a verb followed by a particle such as *in*, *at*, *on*, *for*, etc. *Look for* and *look into* are phrasal verbs that mean *try to find* and *investigate*. Phrasal verbs are usually idiomatic. You can learn more about phrasal verbs in Appendix D, page 87.

The steps to learning idioms in this book are as follows:

1. **Read** the story quickly to get the main idea.
2. **Listen** several times to the story while you look at pictures to get used to the idioms.
3. **Read** the story and study the idioms.
4. **Complete** the idioms.
5. **Tell** the story using the idioms while looking only at pictures.
6. **Talk** about the story and then about yourself using the idioms.
7. **Write** about yourself using the idioms.
8. **Take a dictation** that uses the idioms.
9. **Fill in the blanks** in a dialogue or story using the idioms. Then **role-play** the dialogue or tell the story.

Extra study aids to use with this textbook include:

- A listening cassette
- **Appendix A:** An Answer Key (page 74)
- **Appendix B:** Dictations (page 77)
- **Appendix C:** An appendix that groups the idioms in the book in various ways to help you remember their form and meaning (page 80)
- **Appendix D:** An appendix that explains the grammar of phrasal verbs (page 87) and gives a list of phrasal verbs (page 88)
- **Lexicon:** A lexicon that lists all the idioms in the book, and gives further examples, language notes, and idiomatic synonyms and antonyms (page 91)



# To the Teacher

## A General Introduction

The goal of *Can You Believe It? Book 1* is to teach high-frequency idioms, two-word verbs, and fixed expressions in the context of true, memorable stories to ESL/EFL students at a beginning level. It is founded on two basic premises: 1) that everyone loves a good story, and 2) that vocabulary acquisition occurs more readily when new items are embedded in engaging, whole contexts and used in tasks that have meaning and purpose. The book is written for classroom use, but it will also work well for self-study when used with the audio program.

Thanks in part to Michael Lewis's influential work on lexical issues, TESOL professionals are increasingly aware that idioms and fixed expressions form a significant part of the lexicon of English and are central to natural language use. These prefabricated multi-word expressions must be acquired as wholes in the same way as individual words. *Can You Believe It? Book 1* teaches the following kinds of high-frequency fixed lexical expressions:

- traditional, graphic idioms, such as: *easy as pie*, *see eye to eye*, and *be dirt poor*;
- non-traditional idioms, such as: *spend time with*, *fall asleep*, and *can't stand*;
- two- or three-word adverbial chunks, such as: *on the way*, *after a while*, and *at once*;
- two- or three-word phrasal verbs, such as: *slow down*, *be frightened by*, and *get over*;
- common expressions consisting of de-lexicalized verbs, such as *make* or *get* + a noun or adjective (*make a living*, *get better*), word partnerships that are likely to produce translation mistakes and need to be learned as chunks.

*Can You Believe It? Book 1* is compatible with comprehension approaches such as The Natural Approach. The picture sequences that correspond to the stories provide the basis for great "comprehensible input." So the book can be used for listening comprehension and general language acquisition at a beginning level as well as for the specific mastery of idioms and expressions. (Note that the first ten stories use only present tense, while the last five use past tense.)

The approach thoroughly integrates the four skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Activities are sequenced so that input precedes output. The initial approach relies heavily on listening, with picture sequences used as visual supports for comprehension. It is through this richly contextualized (and repeated) listening that students begin to make hypotheses about the new expressions and develop a feel for their use. Students then go on to read the story—an essential step that will provide welcome written reinforcement for visually-oriented learners and will help all students with their literacy skills. After students' pumps have been primed, so to speak, with the listening and reading input, they are ready to begin producing the idioms in speaking and writing. The output activities become progressively more demanding: these include story retelling, thought-provoking personal questions, personalized sentence completions, and dictation.

Researchers contend that we acquire new lexical items by meeting them a number of times (seven times, some say). Thus, in *Can You Believe It? Book 1*, students will revisit the idioms and expressions many times within each unit as well as in review units and, to some extent, from unit to unit. (The idioms that are recycled between units have been indicated as such in the Table of Contents, as well as in the New Idioms and Expression Box which follows each reading.)

## Extra Features

### Listening Cassette

The cassette features dramatic readings of all the stories in the text, and **Dictations** for each unit (from **Appendix B**). The stories are read by different actors with varying voices and styles so students are exposed to language variety.



## Answer Key (Appendix A)

Students who use the book independently will especially appreciate this feature, though classroom teachers will also find it handy.

## Idiom Groups (Appendix C)

This appendix is a rich resource for those students who would like a better sense of how the idioms in *Can You Believe It? Book 1* can be grouped together semantically.

## Phrasal Verbs (Appendix D)

Simple but detailed grammar explanations of phrasal verbs are included here for students who feel ready for this information.

## Lexicon

The Lexicon gives extra information about each idiom and fixed expression in the book. Additional examples, grammar information, more collocations, and idiomatic synonyms and antonyms are included.

## Specific Teaching Suggestions

The exercises and activities in each unit can be used in a variety of ways, and you are encouraged to experiment and adapt them as you see fit. The suggested sequence below can be changed, depending on your goals and your specific class needs.

### 1. Quick Reading

Before students read the story quickly to get the gist, have them do one of the following prediction activities:

- a. Cover the story and look at the picture sequence on the opposite page. Discuss (in pairs or small groups) what the story seems to be about.
- b. Cover the story. Look at the title and the picture on the story page. Make predictions about the story.

Then ask students to read the story quickly just to get the main idea or the basic story line. You might give them a time limit of two or three minutes for this. (The details of the story will become clear during Exercise 2 as they listen to it repeatedly while looking at the picture sequence.) Previewing the story in this manner will allow students, especially those who are stronger visual than oral/aural learners, to relax and better comprehend the story and the new idioms in context during the listening "input" stage. It is best to have students read silently at this stage since they will want to process the text in their own way.

### 2. Listen

Ask students to cover the story. Play the cassette or, if you prefer, read the story to the students. If you are not using the cassette, be sure to say the numbers as you move from picture to picture so students can follow (at least during the first listening). Tell the story at a natural speed, pausing somewhat longer than usual at the end of breath groups and sentences. This will give students important processing time. The goal of this activity is to provide students with truly "comprehensible input," i.e., an acquisition stage in which a high degree of contextualization will allow them to formulate hypotheses and discover meaning in language that they are hearing for the first time. Making inferences and hypotheses about new language in context is a skill that all language learners need to feel comfortable with; this exercise thus develops good learning strategies while helping students acquire new language. During the third telling of the story, you may want to write the new idioms on the board, as reinforcement for your visually-oriented students. (The easiest thing would be to write them on the board prior to the retelling and point to them as they occur.)

As an assessment technique (to see how well students have understood and internalized the new expressions in the story), tell students you are going to talk about the pictures out of order. They should point to the picture you are describing. Or, as an alternative, retell the story



making some major “mistakes.” Have students signal somehow (by raising their hands, making a face, or making a buzzing sound) when they hear a mistake.

### 3. Read the Story

Your more visual learners will be especially eager to take a closer look at the story at this point, double-checking their hypotheses with the New Idioms and Expressions box. After students have had some silent time for re-reading, you might want to have them read aloud for pronunciation practice. Volunteers could take turns reading to the whole class, or pairs could read to each other, helping each other with pronunciation. You may want to do part or all of Exercise 6 at this point (see suggestions below).

For a bit of extra practice with the idioms, and as a good lead-in to Exercise 4, you could conduct the following matching activity: Write the unit idioms on slips of paper or index cards. Cut the idioms in half. Give half to each student. Tell students to stand up, walk around the room, and find the other halves of their idioms. As a check, have the pairs say their idioms aloud to the whole class.

### 4. Complete the Idiom/Match

This activity functions as an assessment of sorts, making sure students can put the parts of the idiom together and understand its meaning before using the idioms in the story retelling in Exercise 5.

### 5. Tell the Story

At this point, the exercises move away from recognition into production. Elicit the story orally from the whole class first. Encourage students to call out the ideas of the story in chronological order. They can, of course, look at the picture sequence during this activity, but the story should be covered. The retelling will be a paraphrase of the original story, but students will probably reuse most of the new idioms. (You could have the idioms listed on the board to give students a bit of extra help.) You may want to run this activity as a variation on *Language Experience*, writing down sentences and phrases on the board as students suggest them. Underlining the idioms and fixed expressions that students generate will help to highlight them.

Next, ask students to work in pairs or small groups to retell the story to each other. Once again, make sure they cover the story. One way for them to work is with *Talking Chips*, communication regulators used in *Cooperative Learning*. Working in pairs or groups of three, each student takes four or five *Talking Chips* (e.g., tokens, such as buttons, poker chips, or paint chips). Together, they reconstruct the story. As each student contributes a sentence, he or she puts in a token. (The chips ensure that each student speaks and that all have an equal opportunity to participate.)

### 6. Answer the Questions

The questions in the section either use an idiom from the unit or elicit an idiom in the answer. As an alternative to the traditional Whole-Class-Question-Answer here, you might want to try using *Numbered Heads Together*, a *Cooperative Learning* structure. The steps to *Numbered Heads Together* are as follows:

- a. Students get into teams of four and number off from 1 to 4.
- b. The teacher asks a question.
- c. Students on each team literally put their heads together and reach a consensus on the answer and the phrasing of the answer.
- d. The teacher calls a number at random. Students with that number raise their hands (or stand up) and report on their team’s answer. You will probably want to get each team’s answer, as there will be variations to discuss and comment on.

The advantages of this questioning technique over the traditional Whole-Class-Question-Answer are the following: All students are involved since no one knows who will be called on;



stronger students help weaker ones; students have “think time” and “rehearsal time” in small groups before they have to respond in front of the whole class; and a wrong response is not so embarrassing because it comes from a team rather than an individual.

The “About you” questions can be answered orally, either in a whole-class setting or in small groups. These questions are also good springboards for mini-paragraph writing. Allow students to choose their favorite one to respond to, and to share their writing with partners.

### 7. Write About Yourself

These sentence completions may be somewhat personal, so students may prefer to share them in small groups rather than with the whole class. You might ask volunteers, though, to put their sentences on the board after groups have shared. Be sure that the volunteers understand that correction may be involved!

### 8. Take a Dictation

Play the cassette or use **Appendix B** to read students the dictation. A recommended procedure for the dictation is as follows:

- a. Read the dictation once at normal speed. Students should not write at this stage.
- b. Read the dictation again, this time pausing long enough after each breath group for students to write. (Be sure, in advance, that students know the words *comma* and *period*.)
- c. Read the dictation a third time, at near-normal speed, allowing students to check their writing.

Students can correct their own work or the work of a partner using **Appendix B**. Students might also like to try peer dictations, where one student dictates to another.

### 9. Complete the Dialogue/Story

After students work individually, in pairs, or groups to fill in the blanks with the appropriate expressions from the box, they can check their answers in **Appendix A**.

Seven of the fifteen units have a dialogue exercise. In this case students can practice the dialogue in pairs, perhaps preparing for an expressive reading for the whole class.

The other eight units have a story exercise. After filling in the blanks, students can either practice reading the story to each other in pairs or paraphrase it to each other, being sure to use the idioms in the box in the retelling.



## Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to *Can You Believe It? Book 1*, and I'm grateful to them all. Susan Lanzano at Oxford University Press was the guiding light from start to finish. Lynne Barsky was a generous and patient editor whose care and expertise made this a much better book. Special thanks to Justin Hartung and Robyn Clemente, production editors, who toiled with good humor under tight deadlines. Good friend and colleague Ken Sheppard was crucial in getting the project off the ground, contributing key ideas during an autumnal stroll down Fifth Avenue. Linda Huizenga's help with writing made the project fun, and husband Kim Crowley's constant search for stories yielded some of the best ones. Thanks also to Joel and Dolly for feeding me stories from their local papers. My reviewers were a gold mine of wonderful suggestions and comments:

Lubie Alatraste, New York, NY

Christel Antonellis, Boston, MA

Vicki Blaho, Los Angeles, CA

Susan Burke, Atlanta, GA

Gloria Horton, Pasadena, CA

Tay Lesley, Los Angeles, CA

Ellen Pentkowski, Chicago, IL

Barbara Jane Pers, Brooklyn, NY

Barbara Smith-Palinkas, Tampa, FL

Stephanie Snider, Suffolk County, NY

Candice Ramirez, Moreno Valley, CA

Christine Tierney, Houston, TX

Barbara Webster, Phoenix, AZ



# Table of Contents

<b>1. Please Get Rid of that Smell!</b>	<b>2</b>
get rid of something • turn something on • get worse and worse • can't stand something • What's the matter (with something or someone)? • take a look (at something) • lose it	
<b>2. Red in the Face</b>	<b>6</b>
be red in the face • take a ferry (a bus, a train, a plane) • sit down • pick something up • walk off • go back (to a place) • take something out (of a place)	
<b>3. Leopard Makes Himself at Home</b>	<b>10</b>
make oneself at home • at home • be horrified by something • run away • turn over • fall asleep • take a nap	
<b>4. Heart Patient Walks Home Fast Asleep</b>	<b>14</b>
be fast asleep • get over something • turn something off • get out (of something) • get on (something) • be back • get better	
<b>5. Businessman Freaks Out</b>	<b>18</b>
freak out • go shopping • pay for something • head for a place • on the way (to a place) • calm down • congratulations on something	
<b>Review (Units 1–5)</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6. Toy Saves Man's Life</b>	<b>26</b>
drop by (a place) • after a while • listen to someone or something • be frightened by someone or something • lots of • right away • just in time	
<b>7. Hat Lady Wants to Cheer You Up</b>	<b>30</b>
cheer someone up • be into something • put something on • look like someone or something • as well as • laugh at someone or something • be crazy about someone or something	
<b>8. Bear Goes on Vacation</b>	<b>34</b>
on vacation • take a vacation • take a picture (of someone or something) • get in (something) • look for someone or something • do one's best • not believe one's eyes recycled idioms: get rid of (1), get out (4)	
<b>9. Man Hangs on for Dear Life</b>	<b>38</b>
hang on for dear life • break into something • take off • speed up • slow down • be in (big) trouble • as for someone or something recycled idiom: get on (4)	
<b>10. Neighbors Fed Up with Loud Music</b>	<b>42</b>
be fed up (with someone or something) • get along (with someone) • again and again • turn something down • take something away • be steaming • go after someone or something	
<b>Review (Units 6–10)</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>11. Prison Escape is Easy as Pie</b>	<b>50</b>
(as) easy as pie • spend time (with someone) • be over • let someone out • later on • make a mistake • so far recycled idioms: be red in the face (2), look for (8)	
<b>12. Smart Pig Saves the Day</b>	<b>54</b>
save the day • belong to someone • have trouble doing something • be at death's door • lie down • get up • show up recycled idioms: at home (3), get out of (4), get in (8)	



