

Signals and Sayings

Use context to unpack idioms in a technical narrative.

11.RV.1.E "Explain and analyze idiomatic language in context."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each idiom, then circle at least one nearby word or action that helps you infer its intended meaning.

The Drone Repair

- ① At 6:30 on Saturday, the robotics team gathered in the school workshop to repair the sensor array on its underwater drone. The regional competition was two days away, and the machine had stopped sending depth readings during a trial. "We are not out of the woods yet," captain Imani said, studying a loose wire near the battery case. Around her, teammates tested cables, compared diagrams, and recorded each failed connection. No one packed up when the first repair failed. Instead, they divided the work, knowing that a second problem could be hiding behind the first.
- ② By noon, software specialist Leo noticed that the drone's map screen froze whenever its camera turned toward a metal railing. He told Imani, "That clue is a needle in a haystack, but it is the only one we have." The group moved the drone through the pool again, changing one condition at a time. When the screen froze near the railing, Leo grinned and asked everyone to hold their horses while he checked the compass sensor. His careful test showed that the railing's magnetic field was interfering with the sensor. The team replaced a damaged shield and watched the map redraw without interruption.
- ③ On Sunday, the team faced another choice. A volunteer offered a newer battery, but using it would require redesigning the drone's balance system. Imani said the offer sounded promising, yet she did not want to "jump the gun" before the required safety inspection. The team used the original battery for one final practice run and saved the new design idea in its notebook. At the competition, their drone completed the course and delivered clear depth data. Although they did not win first place, the judges praised their method because each decision rested on evidence rather than a quick guess.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What does Imani mean when she says the team is “not out of the woods yet”? Use one detail from paragraph 1 to support your answer.

2 In paragraph 2, what does Leo suggest by calling the clue “a needle in a haystack”? How does the situation support that meaning?

3 What does Leo ask the group to do when he says, “hold their horses”? Why is that request important at that moment?

4 Explain what Imani means by “jump the gun.” How do the team's later actions show that they follow her advice?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 3 or 4 sentence scene about a group making a decision. Use one idiom that does not appear in the passage, include context clues that reveal its meaning, and explain in the final sentence what the idiom means and what it reveals about the situation.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each idiom, then circle at least one nearby word or action that helps you infer its intended meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Imani mean when she says the team is “not out of the woods yet”? Use one detail from paragraph 1 to support your answer.	She means the team has not solved all of its problems yet. The first repair failed, and the team thinks another problem may be present.
2	In paragraph 2, what does Leo suggest by calling the clue “a needle in a haystack”? How does the situation support that meaning?	He suggests that the useful clue is difficult to find among many possible causes. The team has been testing cables and conditions, and the freezing near the railing is the only clue they have.
3	What does Leo ask the group to do when he says, “hold their horses”? Why is that request important at that moment?	He asks them to pause and wait. He needs time to check the compass sensor after noticing that the screen freezes near the metal railing.
4	Explain what Imani means by “jump the gun.” How do the team's later actions show that they follow her advice?	She means acting too soon before the safety inspection. The team keeps the original battery for practice and saves the new battery idea instead of using it immediately.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During the bridge-model test, Nia suggested skipping the weight checks so the group could leave early. Omar pointed to a cracked support from the previous trial and insisted that they measure every joint before adding more load. “We cannot cut corners now,” he said. Here, cut corners means leaving out necessary steps to save time, and it reveals Omar's concern for safety.

Accept equivalent explanations when students use passage details to support the idioms' nonliteral meanings. For the open response, accept any appropriate idiom not used in the passage if the surrounding scene supplies meaningful context clues and the final sentence accurately explains the idiom.