Beyond the Marquee

Use context to uncover nonliteral meaning and effect.

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

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each idiomatic expression, number it, and write a brief context clue beside it that reveals its nonliteral meaning.

A Theater's Second Act

1. On the morning the Riverton Theater reopened, Maya Torres arrived before sunrise with her school newspaper notebook. The building had stood empty for twelve years, and volunteers had spent months repairing its cracked plaster and faded marquee. Maya's editor warned her that the story could not be a "piece of cake." She would need to interview donors, former performers, and neighbors whose memories did not always agree. When the doors opened, a crowd gathered beneath the restored lights, eager to see whether the theater could reclaim its place downtown.

2. Inside, Maya found Leon Bell, a retired projectionist, beside the old ticket booth. Bell said that, during the first fundraising campaign, "the city gave us the cold shoulder." He pointed to a folder of unanswered letters and recalled how officials avoided their calls. Later, he smiled when a local contractor offered free labor, saying, "That turned the tide." Before then, volunteers had only cleaned on weekends, and the repairs had barely moved forward. With the contractor's crew, work continued daily, and donations increased. Maya noted that Bell's expressions showed both frustration and relief.

3. Near noon, Maya interviewed Councilmember Priya Shah, who had supported the project after early resistance. "We are not out of the woods," Shah said, even as musicians tested the stage. The theater still needed to pass a fire inspection and raise money for accessible seating. Her phrase kept the celebration from sounding careless. Maya ended her article by describing the reopened theater as a "second act" for downtown. The words did not mean that the neighborhood had performed in a play. Instead, they suggested a renewed chance for businesses, artists, and residents to gather around a shared public space.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does Maya's editor mean by saying the story cannot be a "piece of cake"? Use details from the paragraph to explain.

2. How do the unanswered letters and avoided calls reveal the meaning of "gave us the cold shoulder"? What does the expression show about Bell's view of the city?

3. What changed when Bell says the contractor's offer "turned the tide"? Why is this expression stronger than simply saying the offer helped?

4. Compare "not out of the woods" with "second act." How does each expression shape the article's tone?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences about a group restoring or improving a place. Use one idiom that does not appear in the passage, then explain its contextual meaning and the tone it creates in the second sentence.

Beyond the Marquee

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each idiomatic expression, number it, and write a brief context clue beside it that reveals its nonliteral meaning. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does Maya's editor mean by saying the story cannot be a "piece of cake"? Use details from the paragraph to explain.	**The story will not be easy to report because Maya must interview several groups, and their memories may conflict.**
2	How do the unanswered letters and avoided calls reveal the meaning of "gave us the cold shoulder"? What does the expression show about Bell's view of the city?	**They show that city officials ignored the group. The expression conveys Bell's frustration at being dismissed.**
3	What changed when Bell says the contractor's offer "turned the tide"? Why is this expression stronger than simply saying the offer helped?	**The contractor's crew allowed daily work and increased donations. "Turned the tide" suggests a decisive reversal from stalled progress to forward movement.**
4	Compare "not out of the woods" with "second act." How does each expression shape the article's tone?	**"Not out of the woods" creates a cautious tone because major work remains. "Second act" creates a hopeful tone by presenting the reopening as a renewal for downtown.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Winning the grant was a long shot, but the community garden committee submitted its plan anyway. Here, a long shot means an unlikely chance, and it creates a determined, hopeful tone.

Accept equivalent explanations when students use passage details to support each idiom's nonliteral meaning and effect. For Part 3, accept any appropriate idiom not used in the passage if the explanation accurately connects meaning and tone.