Beyond the Words

Use context to uncover what idioms really mean.

9.RV.1.E "Identify and explain idiomatic language in context."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each idiomatic expression in the passage. In the margin, number each one and write a brief meaning based on its context.

The Robotics Tournament

1. On Friday, Maya arrived at the school gym before sunrise for the regional robotics tournament. Her team had spent weeks building a small machine that could sort colored blocks. When the robot rolled across the practice mat, its left wheel froze. Maya's stomach dropped, but Mr. Chen told the team not to throw in the towel. They opened the toolbox, checked the wiring, and found a loose connector. By the time judges entered, the wheel turned smoothly again. Maya knew the problem had been a close call, not a disaster.

2. During the first round, Maya explained the robot's sorting system to a judge. The judge asked why the team had added a backup sensor only the night before. Maya said they had learned to expect the unexpected. The judge smiled and replied that the explanation was clear as day. At the next table, a rival team's robot completed every task quickly. Maya tried not to compare scores, yet she could feel the pressure building. Her teammate Luis whispered, "Keep your eye on the ball. We still have two rounds." Maya focused on recording each result and adjusting the robot's speed.

3. Before the final round, the team discovered that a printed code card was missing. Luis began searching under chairs, while Maya checked the team binder. Mr. Chen said the card might turn up, but he reminded them that time was running out. Maya took a deep breath and suggested using the practice card to rebuild the missing code. Everyone pitched in. Luis found the original card tucked inside a notebook just as Maya finished the new one. The team laughed at the mix-up, then chose the original card. In the final round, their robot sorted every block, and the team left the gym on cloud nine.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 1, what does "throw in the towel" mean? What event in the paragraph helps you figure it out?

2. Why does the judge say Maya's explanation is "clear as day"? What does the idiom mean in this context?

3. What does Luis mean when he says, "Keep your eye on the ball"? Explain what he wants Maya to do.

4. What does "on cloud nine" mean in paragraph 3? What happened that caused the team to feel this way?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence scene about facing a school challenge. Use two idioms, place brackets around each idiom, and explain both meanings in your third sentence.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Words

GRADE 9 · 9.RV.1.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each idiomatic expression in the passage. In the margin, number each one and write a brief meaning based on its context. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does "throw in the towel" mean? What event in the paragraph helps you figure it out?	**It means give up. The team repairs the loose connector and keeps competing instead of quitting.**
2	Why does the judge say Maya's explanation is "clear as day"? What does the idiom mean in this context?	**The judge can easily understand Maya's explanation. "Clear as day" means very easy to understand.**
3	What does Luis mean when he says, "Keep your eye on the ball"? Explain what he wants Maya to do.	**He wants Maya to stay focused on her team's work and the two remaining rounds.**
4	What does "on cloud nine" mean in paragraph 3? What happened that caused the team to feel this way?	**It means extremely happy. The robot sorted every block in the final round.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

With the history quiz tomorrow, I had to [hit the books] instead of playing video games. I would be [in hot water] if I arrived unprepared. The first idiom means study hard, and the second means be in trouble.

Accept reasonable paraphrases when students explain an idiom's nonliteral meaning using details from the passage. For Part 3, accept any original three-sentence scene with two appropriate marked idioms and accurate explanations of both.