

# TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

## IDIOMS



# What are idioms?

- An idiom is “a speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements”
- Here are some from *To Kill a Mockingbird*



# “Acid tongue in her head”

- “True enough, she had an acid tongue in her head.”
- To have an acid tongue is to speak sharply or bitterly



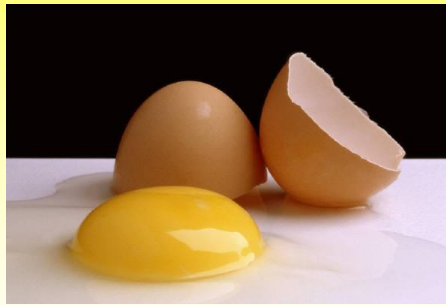
# “To get Miss Maudie’s goat”

- "He said he was trying to get Miss Maudie’s goat."
- To get someone’s goat is to make them angry or disgusted



# “Walked on Eggs”

- “On the days he carried the watch, Jem walked on eggs”
- To walk on eggs is to walk very carefully.



# “As sure as eggs”

- “Say nothing, and as sure as eggs he will become curious and emerge.”
- To be as sure as eggs is to be positive



# “Bowed to the inevitable”

- “ ‘I merely bowed to the inevitable.’ ”
- To bow to the inevitable is to realize this fact and resist fighting it.



# “Drew a bead on him”

- “I drew a bead on him.”
- To draw a bead on someone is to aim at or focus on that person.





# “On tenterhooks”

- "I waited, on tenterhooks, for Uncle Jack to tell Atticus my side of it."
- To be on tenterhooks is to be filled with suspense or anxiety.



# “Set my teeth permanently on edge”

- "She hurt my feelings and set my teeth permanently on edge..."
- To set one's teeth on edge is to annoy someone or make them feel nervous.



# “Break Camp”

- “When Atticus returned he told me to break camp.”
- To break camp means to pack up or move on.



# “Tooth and nail”

- "I would fight anyone from a third cousin upwards tooth and nail."
- To fight someone tooth and nail is to fight that person as fiercely as possible.



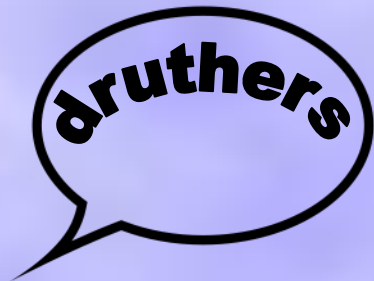
# “Tribal Curse”

- "He was nearly blind in his left eye, and said left eyes were the tribal curse of the Finches."
- A tribal curse is a family curse or an affliction shared by members of a family.



# “ ‘Druthers’ ”

- " '...but we can't always have our ‘druthers.’ ”
- ‘Druthers is a contraction of the phrase "I'd rather." It means your choice or preference; what you'd rather do or have.



# “Slow fuse”

- "He had a naturally tranquil disposition and a slow fuse."
- Having a slow fuse means you are not easily upset or angered.



# “Stood as much gruff”

- "Jem had probably stood as much gruff about Atticus lawing for niggers as had I..."
- To have stood as much gruff is to have had enough of foolish, rude talk.





# “When the chips are down”

- “ '...the way we conduct ourselves when the chips are down....’ ”
- When the chips are down means at the most important time.



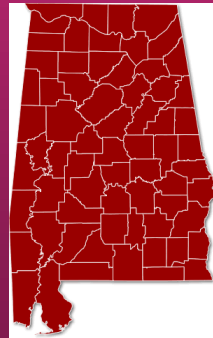
# “Scrape a few barnacles off the ship of state”

- "The Governor was eager to scrape a few barnacles off the ship of state...."
- To scrape a few barnacles off the ship of state means that it is necessary to maintain and update (scrape a few barnacles off) the workings of the government (the ship of state).



# “Traveled in state”

- “...she traveled in state.”
- To travel in state is to do so in the position of a person of great wealth and rank.

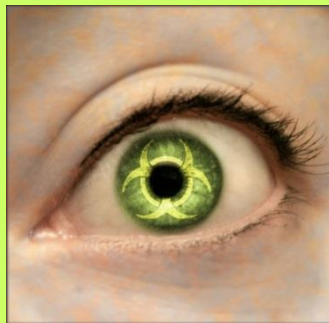


# **“He had seen the light”**

- **"Mr. Heck Tate was present, and I wondered if he had seen the light."**
- **To have seen the light means to have become religious.**

# “Blind spots”

- " 'Mr. Cunningham's basically a good man,' he said, 'he just has blind spots along with the rest of us.' ”
- A blind spot is prejudice or an area of ignorance that someone has but is unaware of.



# “Counting his chickens”

- "I thought Jem was counting his chickens."
- For someone to be counting their chickens means that they are sure that something will happen before it does



# **“Guests of the county”**

- **“...people like the Ewells lived as guests of the county ....”**

- **To be guests of the county means to be on public assistance or welfare**

# “Looked daggers”

- "Judge Taylor looked daggers at Atticus...."
- To look daggers at someone is to look sharply at that person.





# “Give the lie”

- "...in a way that did not give the lie to Dill's observation."
- To give the lie to something is to prove that thing to be false or untrue.

# “Runner”

- " 'You can take that runner with you.' "
- A runner is a chicken leg



# “Blue in the face”

- " 'We can educate 'em till we're blue in the face...' "
- To be blue in the face means to be angry and upset or excited and emotional

# “Fighting the good fight”

- "Today Aunt Alexandra and her missionary circle were fighting the good fight all over the house."
- To fight the good fight means to aid missionaries around the world in their cause of converting people to Christianity.





# “Wool”

- " 'It's never entered that wool of hers...'"
- Wool means head or hair

# “Into the limelight”

- " '...taking the one man who's done you and this town a great service an' draggin' him with his shy ways into the limelight....'"
- To be in the limelight is to be put in a prominent position before the public.

