



# Reading Comprehension Obfuscations

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## Obfuscations

Students that groan when asked to work on their vocabulary skills often love to do word puzzles. Just don't tell them the puzzles improve their vocabulary! This activity includes obfuscations of common idioms for students to solve, such as "at the decline of a cranial ornamentation" (at the drop of a hat) and "a portion of drum-shaped confection" (a piece of cake). Next, they are provided with a list of common idioms from which they can create their own obfuscations. Created obfuscations can be enjoyed among fellow students as classmates try to solve each other's concoctions. I have found that students really enjoy both these tasks, while getting substantial practice using a thesaurus and dictionary, and learning the meaning of less familiar idioms. Includes an answer key.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Obfuscations

Definition of obfuscate: To confuse or bewilder, to make obscure or unclear.

**Directions:** Translate the following obfuscations into familiar idioms.

(Note: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus can help!)

**Example:** *“Inquisitiveness murdered the feline”* means *“Curiosity killed the cat”*

At the decline of a cranial ornamentation \_\_\_\_\_

A blazing tuber \_\_\_\_\_

Nonpareil of twain macrocosms \_\_\_\_\_

Consecration in masquerade \_\_\_\_\_

You shouldn't evaluate a tome from its sheath \_\_\_\_\_

Acting as Satan's helping hand \_\_\_\_\_

End the life of a pair of warm-blooded, feathered vertebrae using a singular, small geological specimen \_\_\_\_\_

Upon the balustrade \_\_\_\_\_

A portion of drum-shaped confection \_\_\_\_\_

View ocular organ to ocular organ \_\_\_\_\_

Talk of the supreme spirit of evil \_\_\_\_\_

Overlook the vessel for transport by water \_\_\_\_\_

Your opinion reached on the basis of probability is as splendid as the one belonging to me  
\_\_\_\_\_

On one occasion in a primary color between green and violet in the visible spectrum

Earth's natural satellite \_\_\_\_\_

Now go back and discuss the meanings of each idiom you translated.



Now it's your chance to create your own obfuscations.

(Note: Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary will help tremendously!)

**Directions:** Create obfuscations for the following familiar idioms.

A penny for your thoughts

Actions speak louder than words

Add insult to injury

Back to the drawing board

The ball is in your court

Barking up the wrong tree

The best thing since sliced bread

Bite off more than you can chew

Caught between a rock and a hard place

Costs an arm and a leg

Cross that bridge when you come to it

Don't cry over spilt milk

Don't give up your day job

Don't put all your eggs in one basket

Desperate times call for desperate measures

Elvis has left the building

Every cloud has a silver lining

Feeling a bit under the weather

Give the benefit of the doubt

Heard it through the grapevine

Hit the nail on the head

In the heat of the moment



## Creating Obfuscations (cont.)

It takes two to tango

That was the last straw

Let sleeping dogs lie

Let the cat out of the bag

To make a long story short

Method to my madness

Pull the wool over your eyes

A picture's worth a thousand words

Steal someone's thunder

Get a taste of your own medicine

I wouldn't be caught dead

The Devil's in the details

Better late than never

Think outside the box

It's not rocket science

Pull someone's leg

Nothing ventured nothing gained

Now see if others can translate your obfuscations!

And go back and discuss the meanings of each idiom translated.



## Obfuscations—Answer Key

Definition of obfuscate: To confuse or bewilder, to make obscure or unclear.

**Directions: Translate the following obfuscations into familiar idioms.**

(Note: Using a dictionary and/or thesaurus can help!)

**Example:** *“Inquisitiveness murdered the feline”* means *“Curiosity killed the cat”*

At the decline of a cranial ornamentation—At the drop of a hat (without any hesitation)

A blazing tuber—A hot potato (a highly controversial issue that’s risky to discuss)

Nonpareil of twain macrocosms—Best of both worlds (all the advantages)

Consecration in masquerade—Blessing in disguise (something good that isn’t recognized at first)

You shouldn’t evaluate a tome from its sheath—Don’t judge a book by its cover (you shouldn’t judge something based solely on its appearance)

Acting as Satan’s helping hand—Playing Devil’s advocate (presenting a counter argument)

End the life of a pair of warm-blooded, feathered vertebrae using a singular, small geological specimen—Kill two birds with one stone (accomplish two different things with one action)

Upon the balustrade—On the fence (stuck between two courses of action when making a decision)

A portion of drum-shaped confection—A piece of cake (simple, easy)

View ocular organ to ocular organ—See eye to eye (agree on something)

Talk of the supreme spirit of evil—Speak of the Devil (the person you have just been talking about arrives)

Overlook the vessel for transport by water—Miss the boat (miss your chance)

Your opinion reached on the basis of probability is as splendid as the one belonging to me—Your guess is as good as mine (to have no idea)

On one occasion in a primary color between green and violet in the visible spectrum earth’s natural satellite—Once in a blue moon (happens very rarely)





Now it's your chance to create your own obfuscations.

(Note: Using a thesaurus and/or dictionary will help tremendously!)

**Directions:** Create obfuscations for the following familiar idioms.

A penny for your thoughts (a way to ask what someone is thinking)

Actions speak louder than words (actions demonstrate intentions better than words do)

Add insult to injury (to worsen an already bad situation)

Back to the drawing board (having to start all over)

The ball is in your court (it's up to you to take the next step)

Barking up the wrong tree (accusing the wrong person, looking in the wrong place)

The best thing since sliced bread (a fantastic idea or invention)

Bite off more than you can chew (take on more than you can handle)

Caught between a rock and a hard place (stuck between two bad situations)

Cost an arm and a leg (absurdly expensive)

Cross that bridge when you come to it (deal with a problem only when necessary)

Don't cry over spilt milk (don't complain about something irreversible or in the past)

Don't give up your day job (you're not that good at something)

Don't put all your eggs in one basket (don't put all your hopes into one thing)

Desperate times call for desperate measures (when you're in a dire situation you need to do something extreme)

Elvis has left the building (it's all over)

Every cloud has a silver lining (every bad occurrence contains some benefit)

Feeling a bit under the weather (feeling ill)

Give the benefit of the doubt (assume the best intentions from someone's actions)

Heard it through the grapevine (hearing rumors but not saying from whom)



Hit the nail on the head (expressing something exactly right)

In the heat of the moment (overwhelmed by something happening right then)

It takes two to tango (both people involved in a situation are responsible)

That was the last straw (the final occurrence that puts someone over the edge)

Let sleeping dogs lie (do not disturb a situation that doesn't need fixing)

Let the cat out of the bag (share a secret or concealed information)

To make a long story short (get to the point, be concise)

Method to my madness (although an approach seems random there is a plan)

Pull the wool over your eyes (to deceive someone)

A picture's worth a thousand words (a visual presentation tells you far more than words)

Steal someone's thunder (to take recognition for yourself away from someone else)

Get a taste of your own medicine (something negative that you've caused to happen to someone else happens to you)

I wouldn't be caught dead (definitely don't want to be seen doing something)

The Devil's in the details (something may look simple at first glance, but will require more effort than you think it will)

Better late than never (it's better to be late than to not arrive/finish at all)

Think outside the box (to think creatively – outside the standard way of thinking)

It's not rocket science (it's not complicated)

Pull someone's leg (to joke with someone)

Nothing ventured nothing gained (you can't expect to achieve something if you don't try)