

Unit five

Vocabulary

SECTION 5

Metaphor

A metaphor is a combination of vocabulary items we use to express a particular feeling or encourage imagination, e.g. *her sunny smile, have a big head, purr with delight, a sun-drenched beach, pull strings.*

1 COMPOUND ADJECTIVES AND NOUNS AS METAPHORS

Some compounds are always metaphorical – they have a meaning that each part of the compound doesn't have. A *bloodbath* is never 'a bath full of blood'; the compound has only the meaning of 'a massacre'. Other examples of compounds that are always metaphorical include:

*mindgames nutcase thought-reader sun-trap
sinbin wine-lake narrow-minded warm-hearted
bone-dry hard-bitten green-fingered soul-searching*

1 Underline the words that we always use metaphorically.

*clampdown summit dead-end rock-bottom
cold-blooded world-shattering*

2 SINGLE WORDS USED METAPHORICALLY

We can also use many single words in metaphorical contexts:

I hope this will have cushioned your loss. Seeing him on stage fired my enthusiasm. She just froze when she saw her ex-boyfriend. I didn't think she'd have the bottle to ask.

2 Underline the verbs that best complete the sentence.

'Get out!' the boss barked / thundered / cooed / squeaked / purred / roared / snapped / bleated.

3 IDIOMATIC PHRASES

Some idiomatic phrases are combinations of two words connected with *and* or *or*, for example *come rain or shine*. The pairs have a fixed order:

✗ *She was the soul and life of the party.*

✓ *She was the life and soul of the party.*

- Here are some examples:

It's a case of swings and roundabouts. Making mistakes is part and parcel of growing up. I'll move heaven and earth to achieve my goal. This selling season is make or break for the car industry. She may act strangely, but live and let live is what I always say.

3 Underline any of the following combinations in which the two words are given in the wrong order.

*flesh ... blood ins ... outs lows ... highs
hell ... heaven black ... white dance ... song
downs ... ups shoulders ... head*

Practice

1 Write down the theme that the metaphors in each set of sentences share.

- a A wave of emotion spread throughout the country on the news of her death.
 - b We were met by a sea of faces.
 - c Perhaps the tide has turned for our economy.
- a He's now at a crossroads in his life.
 - b Successful businesswoman and company owner, she's in the fast lane now.
 - c I wish he would stop going from one dead-end job to the next.
- a I think this attitude stems from the 1980s.
 - b But juvenile rebellion has its seeds in the 60s.
 - c I reckon our present-day youth culture has its roots in the 50s.
- a Alternative medicine is a flourishing business.
 - b My young nephew is a budding pianist.
 - c Our next-door neighbour's daughter is really blossoming at secondary school.
- a It would be easier if the boss didn't always want to be at the hub of things.
 - b We need to get to the heart of the matter.
 - c It's time we reduced the size of our core-staff.
- a If only he'd see the light and get a haircut!
 - b The tragic news cast a shadow over the evening's events.
 - c After years of recession, there's light at the end of the tunnel.
- a She's been floating on air since her engagement.
 - b I'd be over the moon if I scored one goal, let alone three.
 - c She'll be in seventh heaven if she's passed.

- 8 a If you play your cards right, you could end up Area Manager.
 b I'd rather we didn't show our hand yet; let's keep them guessing.
 c We've got one last ace up our sleeve.
- 9 a He's rarely out of the spotlight nowadays.
 b Keep scoring goals; there are some good young players waiting in the wings.
 c You never know what's happening behind the scenes in politics.

2 Underline the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

- 1 What happened in 1989 was a in European political history.
 a watershed b borderline c waterfall
- 2 That ghastly concrete block of flats is a real
 a eye-sore b eye-strain c eye-catcher
- 3 The bottom end of our garden is a real
 a sunshade b sun-trap c sunseeker
- 4 There was a(n) moment when the lorry suddenly veered towards us.
 a ear-splitting b earth-shattering c heart-stopping
- 5 To succeed in this job you have to be utterly
 a hot-blooded b single-minded c kind-hearted
- 6 The poor boy was absolutely when she left.
 a level-headed b short-sighted c broken-hearted
- 7 Having to rewrite a report that you thought was pretty good can be rather
 a back-breaking b soul-destroying c mind-blowing
- 8 If you want a half-way decent standard of living, there's no escape from the
 a rat-race b brat-pack c jet-set
- 9 The authorities had been accused of conducting a against non-conformists.
 a manhunt b witch-hunt c treasure-hunt
- 10 We'll have to wait and see if there's a after this temporary peace agreement.
 a backhand b backlash c backdrop

3 Underline the word or phrase that best completes each sentence.

- 1 The bride suddenly turned on her heels and out of the church.
 a soared b accelerated c flew
- 2 Don't you think the British sometimes have a rather sense of humour?
 a creased b warped c chipped

- 3 There would be a of protest if they showed the victims on TV.
 a sea b stream c storm
- 4 There's been a of public sympathy since her death.
 a wave b sea c river
- 5 I could have been one of the of the game of golf.
 a monsters b mountains c giants
- 6 Mum's so good to us; she's an absolute
 a fairy b angel c nurse
- 7 My brother's been a of strength through all the problems I've had.
 a tower b heap c mountain
- 8 I wish you would be absolutely with me.
 a bent b crooked c straight
- 9 The Chancellor is trying to put the on the economy.
 a accelerator b brakes c gears
- 10 The boy in the flat above ours is becoming a real for his parents.
 a backache b toothache c headache

4 Choose the word or phrase which best completes each sentence.

- 1 You'll have to be on your if you want to beat her.
 a fingers b feet c toes
- 2 These girl pop groups are heading for a
 a drop b fall c trip
- 3 A rise in interest rates at the time would have thrown our plans out of
 a place b half c gear
- 4 With all these scandals, she's never off the
 a front pages b headlines c tabloids
- 5 Why do you always walk at a pace?
 a snail's b tortoise's c snake's
- 6 I wouldn't marry him – not in a years!
 a hundred b million c billion
- 7 He'd have been over the if he'd been selected for that management course.
 a world b moon c sun
- 8 Aim for the and you're bound to be a success.
 a planets b moon c stars
- 9 If you set your sights too high, you may fall flat on your
 a back b nose c face
- 10 Sacked from one job, offered a better one; it looks as if he's landed on his again.
 a feet b back c face