

Idioms that comment on stories and reports

A

Note how some idioms in the text below set the scene (1–3), some make the events more intense or exciting (4–8), and some comment on the events and draw conclusions (9–16).

One day, I was sitting at my desk in the office, **minding my own business**¹ and just **twiddling my thumbs**², when my colleague Tom Jessop came walking towards me. **I could feel it in my bones**³ that something was going to happen. Suddenly, **out of the blue**⁴, and **without so much as a by-your-leave**⁵, he pulled the power cable out of the back of my computer, switching it off instantly. **Before I knew where I was**⁶, he was switching it on again, and **in next to no time**⁷, it was working normally. He explained that he had noticed out of the corner of his eye that I was just about to open an e-mail which he knew contained a dangerous virus, and he reacted quickly to stop me doing it. He explained that he had just opened the

infected e-mail himself and that now his computer had completely crashed. **To cap/crown it all**⁸, he had lost a long, important report he had almost finished. But, **would you believe it?**⁹, I had not saved my work for about an hour, and, **to cut a long story short**¹⁰, by pulling out my power cable he caused me to lose a report I was writing too, even though he saved me from the virus! However, **as luck would have it**¹¹, I remembered later that I had a copy on my laptop, so everything **turned out all right in the end**¹², and **all's well that ends well**¹³, at least for me. **I lived to tell the tale**¹⁴, but poor old Tom lost everything on his computer. I know **it was just one of those things**¹⁵, but still, **it just goes to show**¹⁶ how you can never trust technology.

¹ doing nothing special

² feeling bored, with nothing to do

³ I could sense

⁴ completely unexpectedly

⁵ without asking permission or warning anyone

⁶ before I had time to be aware of what was happening

⁷ very quickly

⁸ as the worst event in a series of bad ones

⁹ said when one is about to tell a coincidence

¹⁰ to tell something briefly

¹¹ purely by luck

¹² finished well

¹³ said as a comment on a good ending to a series of bad events

¹⁴ I survived the events

¹⁵ it was an event that one just has to accept

¹⁶ used to state the moral or logical conclusion of the events

B

Other expressions that occur in narratives

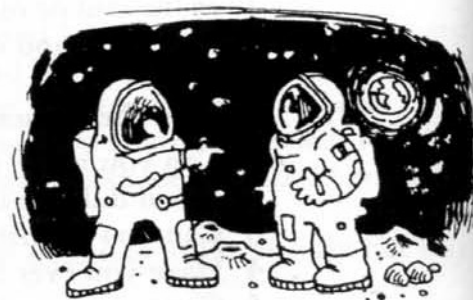
A: It turned out she went to the same school as my sister.

B: Well! It's a **small world**, isn't it? [said when a coincidence happens between people]

"So I said, I'm not afraid of animals, let me carry it. **Famous last words!** It was a six-foot snake!" [said when one later regrets something one has said]

A: I don't think I'll ever trust her again.

B: Well, **you live and learn**, don't you? [comment on events from which someone has learnt a lesson]



"So you're from Earth too? **Small world isn't it!**"

Exercises

92.1 Complete the idioms in these sentences.

- 1 I was just standing there, and then, out of, a man on a horse rode up to me.
- 2 I was in the office, minding, when I heard a bell ringing in the street.
- 3 I could feel that it wasn't going to be an ordinary day.
- 4 We were just twiddling, waiting for something to happen.
- 5 Then, without so much, he took my bike and rode off.

92.2 Which idiom means ...

- 1 to get quickly to the end of the story?
- 2 you usually learn something from a bad experience?
- 3 coincidences happen in this world of ours?
- 4 I survived all the bad things?
- 5 the events prove/demonstrate that ...?
- 6 the events were something you just have to accept?

92.3 Match the beginnings and endings of the idioms below.

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1 as luck | that ends well |
| 2 famous | believe it |
| 3 in next | would have it |
| 4 all's well | it all |
| 5 to crown | last words |
| 6 would you | to no time |

92.4 Match the underlined idioms with their definitions. Use a good general dictionary or a dictionary of idioms if necessary.



Idioms

- 1 I had a feeling of déjà vu.
- 2 So far so good, I thought.
- 3 One thing led to another.
- 4 If you can't beat them, join them.
- 5 You can't win them all.
- 6 I had nothing to lose, so I did it.

Definitions

- a) A series of events all happened, over which the speaker had little control.
- b) The speaker felt he or she had already experienced what was about to happen.
- c) One always has to accept that bad things will happen as well as good.
- d) Things were already bad, and the proposed action could not make them worse.
- e) Things were going fine up to that point.
- f) One is resigned to accept something that one has been struggling against.

FOLLOW UP

Look in the letters column of an English language magazine at the kind of letter where someone writes in to recount something unusual that has happened to them. Note any idioms of the kind illustrated in this unit.