

16 Expressions from history and legend

Activity A

A number of expressions refer to people, places, etc. from history and legend in order to symbolize something. Which of the legends associated with the expressions below have you heard of? Compare what you know with a partner.

Achilles heel	Cinderella	Herculean	Midas touch	narcissism	Promethean
Pyrrhic victory	Robin Hood	Scylla and Charybdis		Titan	

Activity B

Match each word in A with a definition.

- 1 a victory that is not worth winning because the winner has suffered or lost so much in winning it _____
- 2 needing a lot of strength, determination or effort _____
- 3 a person who is very large, strong, intelligent or important _____
- 4 a person or thing that has been ignored and deserves to receive more attention _____
- 5 the ability to make a financial success of everything you do _____
- 6 the habit of admiring yourself too much, especially your appearance _____
- 7 a weak point that somebody has, which can be attacked by other people _____
- 8 used to refer to a situation in which an attempt to avoid one danger increases the risk from another danger _____
- 9 a person who takes or steals money from rich people and gives it to poor people _____
- 10 doing things in an individual and original way and showing no respect for authority and rules _____

Activity C

Complete the sentences with the expressions.

- 1 Diego Maradona was a true _____ among footballers—one of the all-time greats.
- 2 Karl Marx was a(n) _____ who sought to understand society not in order to follow its rules, but to change how it worked entirely.
- 3 Insurance law has always been a(n) _____ subject, which few people want to study.
- 4 This is her first failure as an entrepreneur—could she be losing her _____?
- 5 The Prime Minister now faces a(n) _____ task if she is to regain the trust of voters.
- 6 I've never known such _____—he spends all his time looking at himself in the mirror!
- 7 His _____ as a businessman is his kindness—he's not ruthless enough to be really successful.
- 8 The extra funding for free school meals will come from a new tax on the wealthiest, but this _____ policy is a gamble.
- 9 He is caught between _____, faced with the options of either fighting in the civil war, or leaving the country with his family as refugees.
- 10 He successfully sued the newspaper for libel, but it was a(n) _____ as the legal costs bankrupted him.

Activity D

Choose three of the idioms and tell your partner

- 1 how you would express the same idea in your language.
- 2 about a real person you could use each idiom about.