

17 Expressions from literary sources

Activity A

What is he like?

Some common English expressions are derived from literary sources. They are easier to understand if you have some background knowledge of the literary source and the character or place they refer to. Match the expressions in the box with the correct meaning. There are example sentences containing the expressions that will help you to understand the meaning. Check your answers in the dictionary, where you will also find interesting information on the origin of each expression.

Match each expression to its meaning:

EXPRESSION (AND EXAMPLE SENTENCE)	MEANING
1 Pollyanna My friends say I'm such a Pollyanna but I don't see the point in always expecting the worst.	a a person who is sometimes very pleasant and sometimes very unpleasant or who leads two very separate lives
2 Jekyll and Hyde She's very serious at work but away from the office she is loud and crazy. She is such a Jekyll and Hyde character.	b an imaginary place or state in which everything is perfect
3 Scrooge Don't expect a pay rise from that boss. Everybody knows he's a Scrooge.	c a person who tries to find an explanation for a crime or something mysterious or who shows that they understand something quickly, especially something that is not obvious
4 Pied Piper Mr Johnson is the Pied Piper of the school. His pupils will do anything for him because he's such a good teacher.	d a person who is always cheerful and expects only good things to happen
5 Sherlock I'm no Sherlock but I think the burglar came in through the bathroom window because one of the panes is broken.	e used to describe a political system in which a government tries to have complete control over people's behaviour and thoughts
6 Frankenstein Protesters against genetically modified food call it Frankenstein food.	f a person who is very unwilling to spend money
7 Utopia The tribe lived in Utopia until the tourists arrived with money, cameras and diseases, too.	g used to talk about something that somebody creates or invents that goes out of control and becomes dangerous, often destroying the person who created it
8 Orwellian He emigrated when he could no longer bear living in the Orwellian regime of his home country.	h a person who persuades a lot of other people to follow them or do something with them

Activity B

Here are three more names from literary sources. What is the connection between them?
Check your idea in the dictionary.

Peter Pan Rip Van Winkle Shangri-la

Do you use people or places from literature in expressions in your language?
If so, which expressions are common and who or where do they refer to?