



Figurative Language Practice Exercises

by LearningExpress Editors

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[Figurative Language Study Guide](#)

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Practice 1: *Paul Bunyan and the Big Jam*

A Legend Retold

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.



- (1) Folks say that one spring, the lumberjacks up North had cut down so many trees that there was the biggest logjam ever seen. There must have been a zillion logs crammed together 200 feet high by the bend of the river! The loggers chopped, sawed, and tugged at the wood, but they couldn't budge that jam one inch. That's when the call went out to get Paul Bunyan, the greatest logger who ever lived.
- (2) It was raining cats and dogs as Paul and his faithful Blue Ox, Babe, arrived. Suddenly the rain stopped and Paul led Babe to the front of the huge log pile. "You stay here," Paul said. "Okay," Babe replied with a nod of her head. Then Paul took a slingshot and fired bits of feathers at Babe, who thought she was being attacked by pesky flies. Babe began to swish her big old tail back and forth. It stirred up the river so much that the water turned and flowed upstream, taking the logs with it! The giant jam was broken! When Paul called Babe out of the water, the logs turned again and began to float back downstream to the mill!
- The idiom *raining cats and dogs* means
 - toy puppies and kittens fell from the sky.
 - it was raining very hard.
 - the message was sent quickly.
 - people were talking very fast.
 - The author uses personification by
 - making the river water go upstream.
 - saying the loggers called for Paul Bunyan.



- c. having Paul talk to Babe.
 - d. having Babe talk to Paul.
3. Which is an example of hyperbole?
- a. swish her big old tail
 - b. couldn't budge that jam one inch
 - c. there must have been a zillion logs
 - d. attacked by pesky flies

Practice 2: Letter to a Friend

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.

Hey, Jen,

- (1) Hope you're not burning the midnight oil studying. I sure wish you were here. I can't believe our schools got their wires crossed this year and we have different vacation schedules! It seems unreal being on this trip without you and your family. Frankly, it's the worst vacation anyone ever had!
- (2) I was really feeling down in the dumps this morning, so Mom suggested I go shopping. No kidding! At home, I have to ask her at least a million times before she lets me head off to the mall! Well, there isn't any mall near here, but there is this cool local street market. You can find everything there from footwear to fossils! There are colorful tents set up all up and down the streets, and the most delicious smells of different kinds of foods invite you to get closer.
- (3) Just walking around the market, I was so hungry I could have eaten a horse! I tried everything . . . I think the sellers knew they'd found a real tourist! I bought lots of cool stuff. . . . At first the sellers try to charge an arm and a leg, but you can negotiate for a better price. I got some real bargains. . . . You'll see when we get home. Don't worry; I remembered to pick out something special for you. I bought so much I thought I'd need a pickup truck to get it all back to the hotel!
- (4) As I passed this one tent, a wacky yellow hat called to me. . . . I could almost hear it screaming, "Buy me! Buy me!" So I did. That hat was awesome. The seller said it was one-of-a-kind. It had this intricate beaded work and Mom thinks there are semiprecious stones and ostrich feathers on it, too. All I know is, I figured everyone would get a kick out of it when I wore it to school. But just then, up comes this storm. The wind starts to howl, stretches out its icy fingers, and grabs the hat right off my head! My new hat tumbled over and over across the ground, with me in hot pursuit. Just when I'd reached it, off it would tumble. Finally, a big gust of wind blew it totally out of sight. The bottom line is, my fabulous hat is gone forever. I tried to find another, but no luck. Sorry you'll never have a chance to see it. . . . It really was special.
- (5) Well, hey, Mom just popped in and says we have to get going. There's some kind of dinner thing. . . . Sure hope they have some good old American food.
- (6) Say "Hi" to your family from Mom and me.
- Pat

4. Which is NOT an idiom?
 - a. got their wires crossed
 - b. feeling down in the dumps
 - c. isn't any mall near here
 - d. get a kick out of it
5. In the selection, the idiom *burning the midnight oil* means
 - a. going to a gas station late at night.
 - b. staying up late at night to do homework.
 - c. sitting in front of a fireplace.
 - d. sleeping until well past noon.
6. One use of personification in the selection was when
 - a. the market was filled with delicious smells.
 - b. Pat's mom suggested going to the street market.
 - c. the hat called out to Pat.
 - d. Pat hoped there would be American food.
7. The author used personification to give human-like fingers to the
 - a. letter.
 - b. tents.
 - c. hat.
 - d. wind.
8. Which is an example of hyperbole?
 - a. a big gust of wind
 - b. had this intricate beaded work
 - c. need a pickup truck to get it all back
 - d. got some real bargains
9. *I could have eaten a horse* is hyperbole that means
 - a. I needed something . . . anything, to eat.
 - b. I was too tired to walk anymore.
 - c. I had too much to eat.
 - d. I was too sleepy to eat anything at all.

Practice 3: *The Bat, the Birds, and the Beasts*

An Aesop's Fable Retold

Read the selection, and then answer the questions that follow.

- (1) Once, about a quadrillion years ago, the Birds and the Beasts of the earth prepared for a great war. No one knows exactly who started the war; it just

happened. There were rumors that one of the winged creatures got a bit bent out of shape and said something that rubbed one of the Beasts the wrong way! Whatever the reason, the day and time for battle were set.

- (2) The winged creatures flew to the meeting place. On the way, they passed Bat, who was perched in a tree. "Come with us!" they called to Bat. "You are a winged creature, too!"
 - (3) Bat looked at the other flying creatures. He did not want to fight at all, so he said, "No, I can't join you!"
 - (4) "Why not?" asked a gruff vulture that was as big as a house!
 - (5) "Please, don't jump all over me!" Bat replied as he pointed to his sharp teeth. "I can't join you because I'm . . . a Beast!"
 - (6) The winged creatures just shrugged their shoulders and moved on.
 - (7) Later, the Beasts walked by. "Come with us!" called one Beast who had feet the size of logs! "You're a Beast, like us. Come and help us fight!"
 - (8) Bat didn't beat around the bush; he just fluttered his wings and said, "I hate to blow my own horn here, friends, but can't you see I am a Bird?"
 - (9) The Beasts just shook their heads and marched away.
 - (10) Later that day, representatives from the Birds and the Beasts met to talk things over. Luckily, a peace treaty was negotiated and there was no battle. Instead, each side had its own feast of celebration.
 - (11) Bat saw that there were parties going on and wanted to join the fun. First, he went to the Birds' party, but they flew at him and chased him away. "You have sharp teeth so you're not a Bird!" they cried. "This party is for Birds only!"
 - (12) Then Bat went to join the Beasts, but had to fly away before they tore him apart! "You have wings, so you must be a Bird," they cried. "This party is for Beasts only!"
 - (13) High in the tree, Bat watched the celebrations and said sadly, "If you don't claim to be one thing or the other, you have no friends!" Since then, the friendless Bat hides from other creatures in caves by day, and hunts only in the dark of night.
- 10.** Personification is used in this fable to
- a. make humans do things that animals do.
 - b. have animals talk and act like humans.
 - c. have the Beasts play like humans in a rock band.
 - d. make the Bat use human-like arms to row a boat to a desert island.
- 11.** What is the meaning of the idiom *get bent out of shape*?
- a. Get plenty of exercise.
 - b. Reverse direction.
 - c. Get upset or angry.
 - d. Buy a pretzel.
- 12.** Which is NOT an idiom?
- a. rub one the wrong way
 - b. blow my own horn

- c. beat around the bush
 - d. shrug their shoulders and moved on
13. Which is an example of hyperbole?
- a. a gruff vulture
 - b. as big as a house
 - c. perched in a tree
 - d. feast of celebration
14. The author uses the hyperbole *feet the size of logs* to help readers
- a. visualize an animal with really long feet.
 - b. visualize an animal that would make squeaking sounds.
 - c. visualize an animal with very long hair.
 - d. visualize an animal sitting on a log.