

**Some commonly used Idioms**

- *Beat back* (to compel to retire) : The firemen were *beaten back* by angry flames and the building was reduced to ashes.
- *Boil down to* (to amount to) : His entire argument *boiled down to* this that he would not join the movement unless he saw some monetary gain in it.
- *Cast aside* (to reject, to throw aside) : Men will *cast aside* truth and honesty for immediate gains.
- *Cry down* (to deprecate) : Some of the Western powers did their best to *cry down* India's success in the war.
- *To cut off with a shilling* (to give someone a mere trifle in the will) : The father was so angry with the son over his marriage that *he cut him off with a shilling*.
- *Egg on* (to urge on) : Who *egged* you on to fight a professional boxer and get your nose knocked off?
- *Gloss over* (explain away) : Even if you are an important person your faults cannot be *glossed over*.
- *To laugh in one's sleeves* (to be secretly amused) : While I was solemnly reading my research paper to the audience, my friends were *laughing in their sleeves* for they knew what it was worth.
- *Play off* (to set one party against another for one's own advantage) : It best serves the interests of the super powers to *play off* one poor nation against another.
- *Pull one through* (to recover, to help one recover) : Armed with the latest medicines, the doctor *will pull him through*.
- *Cost a slur upon* (by word or act to cast a slight reproach on someone) : Many a man casts a *slur* on his own good name with some mean act.
- *To catch a Tartar* (to encounter a strong adversary) : When Hitler marched in to Russia he little knew that he would *catch a Tartar* in the tough people of that country.
- *To come off with flying colours* (to come out of a conflict with brilliant success) : The 1971 election outcome was uncertain but finally the congress *came off with flying colours*.
- *To come off second best* (to be defeated in every contest) : Be it an election or a tambola, I have always come off the second best
- *To cut the Gordian knot* (to remove a difficulty by bold or unusual measures) : The Parliament threw out the Bill for Abolition of Privy Purses. The Government cut the Gordian knot by abolishing the privy purses through an ordinance.
- *To fall to one's lot* (to become one's fate): It fell to the lot of Mujib and his colleagues to reconstruct the shattered economy of their nation.
- *To get into hot water* (to get into difficulty): The businessman *got into hot water* with the Income-tax authorities for concealing his income from ancestral property.
- *To give someone the slip* (to dodge someone who is looking for you): The police had nearly got the dacoits when the latter *gave* them the *slip* in the Chambal ravines.
- *To go on a fool's errand* (to go on an expedition which leads to a foolish end): Many people earlier believed that going to the moon was like *going on a fool's errand*
- *To go to the wall* (to get the worst in a competition): In the struggle of life, the weakest *goes to the wall*.
- *To go to rack and ruin, to go to the dogs* (to be ruined): If a big war comes, our economy will *go to the dogs*.
- *To have one's hands full* (to be very busy): Pakistan could hardly expect active help from the U.S.A. *as her hands were already full with Vietnam, Laos and West Asia problems*.
- *To have a bone to pick with one* (to have a difference with a person which has not yet been fully expressed). The extreme leftists *have a bone to pick* with the police and if ever they come to power there may be unpleasantness between the two.
- *To have the whip hand of* (to have mastery over): After the split in the party Mrs. *Gandhi has the whip hand of* the Congress.
- *To have too many irons in the fire* (to have so much work in hand that some part of it is left undone or is done very badly): Let the Government not go in for nationalisation so fast. If they *have too many irons in the fire* they are bound to fare badly.
- *To have the tree or right ring* (To be genuine): Nixon's pronouncements on world peace do not *have the right ring*.
- *To have two strings to one's bow* (to have an alternative means of achieving one's purpose): A wife always has *two strings to her bow* if coaxing fails to achieve the desired end; tears succeed.
- *To have an axe to grind* (have personal interests to serve): Bigger nations supply arms to the smaller ones primarily because they (the bigger nations) *have their own axe to grind*
- *To keep the wolf from the door* (to keep away extreme poverty and hunger): Lakhs in India have to struggle everyday to *keep the wolf from the door*.
- *To make short work of* (to bring to sudden end): The locusts *made short work* of the ripe standing corn.
- *To make amends for* (to compensate for damage): By his kindness today he has made *amends pr* his past insolence.
- *To make common cause with* (to unite, to co-operate with): During the last elections the princes *made a common cause with* the rightist parties. Both went down.
- *To make a virtue of necessity* (to do a very disagreeable thing as though from duty but really because you must do it): When a minister knows that he is going to be booted out of the cabinet he *makes a virtue of necessity* and resigns on health grounds.
- *To make much ado about nothing* (make a great fuss about a trifle): Demonstrations and protests over the change in the timing of news bulletins over AIR was *making much ado about nothing*

- *To make a cat's paw or a tool of someone (to use someone as a means of attaining your object):* The super-powers have *made a cat's paw* of the smaller nations of Asia in their game of power politics.
- *To play into the hands of someone (to act as to be of advantage to another)* By raising the slogan 'Indira Hatao' the opposition *played into her hands* and Mrs. Gandhi won the elections hands down (easily).
- *To play second fiddle'* (to take a subordinate part) : With Mrs. Gandhi as the undisputed leader of the Congress and the nation, everyone else is content to *play second fiddle to her*.
- *To put the cart before the horse (to begin at the wrong end to do a thing):* Preparing the blue print of a project without the provision of funds is like *putting the cart before the horse*.
- *To put one's shoulder to the wheel (to make great efforts ourselves):* No amount of foreign aid will pull us out of the economic morass; we have to *put our own shoulders to the wheel*.
- *To set store by (to value highly):* India, *surely sets much store by* the Indo Soviet Treaty of Friendship.
- *To set the Thames on fire (to do something extraordinary):* He is a steady worker but never likely to *set the Thames on fire*.
- *To set one's house in order (to arrange one's affairs):* Let Pakistan *set her own house in order* before talking of the welfare of the Kashmiris.
- *To take into one's head (to occur to someone):* The Manager *look it into his head* that by shutting off the electricity for a few hours daily he could save on refrigeration costs.
- *To take the bull by the horns (to grapple with a problem courageously instead of avoiding it):* There is no short cut to prosperity. We have to *take the bull by the horns* and make people work like slaves.
- *To take a leap in the dark (to do a hazardous thing without any idea of what it may result in):* You *took a leap in the dark* in going into partnership with that man.
- *To throw cold water upon (to discourage something):* The doctor *threw cold water upon* my plans for a world tour by declaring that I could never stand the strain of it.
- *To throw up the sponge (to give up a contest):* Faced with stiff competition from big companies, many a small company will *throw up the sponge*.
- *To turn over a new leaf (to change one's course of action completely):* After a long career of crime the convict suddenly *turned over a new leaf* and became a model citizen.
- *To turn tail (to retreat ignominiously):* The enemy *turned tail* in the face of heavy onslaughts on its key positions.
- *To turn the tables (to reverse someone's success or superiority):* Pakistan started war with a blitz on our positions but the superior tactics of our Armed Forces soon *turned the tables* on them.
- *To cook or doctor an account (to tamper with or falsify the account):* From the balance sheet presented to the shareholders, the company seemed to be flourishing, but it afterwards turned out that the Secretary had *cooked the accounts*.
- *To bear the brunt of (to endure the main force or shock of):* The infantry has to *bear the brunt of a battle*.
- *To beard the lion in his den (to oppose someone, in his stronghold):* The Indian Army broke through strong Pakistani fortifications, and in the Shakargarh area *bearded the lion in his own den*.
- *To bid fair to (to give fair prospect of):* His health is so good that he *bids fair to* live till he is sixty.
- *To blow one's own trumpet (to parade one's own good deeds):* Modesty does not pay. Only if you *blow your own trumpet*, you can succeed.
- *To blunt the edge of (to make something less effective):* Time *blunts the edge of* grief.
- *To build castles in the air (to indulge in reveries or visionary schemes):* There is nothing wrong if you *build castles in the air*; now put foundations under them.
- *To burn the candle at both ends (to use too much energy):* Our resources are limited. Let us use them judiciously and not *burn the candle at both ends*.
- *To buy a pig in a poke (to purchase a thing without previously examining it):* Buying shares in a new Company started by unknown entrepreneurs is like buying a *pig in a poke*.
- *To cross or pass the Rubicon (to take a decisive step forward):* The Government will have to think of many things before nationalising the textile industry for once they *cross the Rubicon* there will be no going back.
- *To cry over spilt milk (to nurse unnecessary regrets):* We have failed to build up a sizeable total against England's meagre first innings total. It is no use crying *over spilt milk* now.
- *To err on the safe side (to choose a course which may in fact be inaccurate, but which will keep you safe from risk or harm):* In going *in* for mixed economy rather than wholesale nationalisation the Government were *erring on the safe side*.
- *To flog a dead horse (waste one's energies):* We are *flogging a dead horse* if we are trying to make Sanskrit the national language of India.
- *To feather one's nest (to provide for oneself through dishonest means):* Many tax collectors make a point of *feathering their own nests* well while they have opportunity.
- *To Eat one's heart out (to brood over one's sorrows or disappointments):* Don't *eat your heart out* over failure in this competition.
- *To eat humble pie (to have to humiliate oneself):* Since none came to his support he had to eat *humble pie* and give in to their demands.
- *To eat one's words (to retract one's assertions under compulsion):* It is hard for a haughty man to have to *eat his words*.
- *To throw down the gauntlet, to take up the gauntlet (to offer or give a challenge, to accept a challenge):* It is not for a small country to throw down the gauntlet to the right and the left.
- *To run the gauntlet (to undergo severe criticism or ill treatment):* Most trend-setting books have to *run the gauntlet* of the literary critics.
- *To burn one's fingers (to get oneself into unexpected trouble):* They were happily placed in the woollen industry. But they went in for cosmetics and *burnt their fingers*.
- *To force one's hands (to compel one to do something unwillingly or earlier than he wished to do it):* The Government wanted to do all that they could to meet the workers' demands. But the violence by the strikers *forced their hands* to declare a lockout.

- *To haul over the coals* (to scold a man, reprove him): If your bad habits become known, you will get *hauled over the coals* and richly deserve it.
- *To let the grass grow under your feet* (to be inert and passive to things around): The authorities should listen to students' grievances. By being indifferent they would only *let the grass grow under their feet* till it will be too late to turn these young people away from the path of violence.
- *To put in a nutshell* (this is said of a thing which is capable, of, or presented in, brief expression): His conduct is weird. *To put in a nutshell* he is insane. The explanation of his conduct can be *put in a nutshell* - he is insane.
- *To let loose the dogs of war* (to set in motion the destructive forces of war): Pakistan has *let loose the dogs of war* in Kashmir, through organized terrorism.
- *To lord it over someone* (to domineer over someone, to act as a lord): The love of power is so strong in human nature, that when a man becomes popular he seeks *to lord it over* his fellows.
- *To mind one's Ps and Qs* (to be punctilious): The manager suspects his chief clerk of dishonesty, and if the clerk does not *mind his Ps and Qs*, he will soon find himself without a job.
- *To muster in force* (to assemble in large numbers): The citizens *mustered in force* to welcome their beloved leader.
- *To pay one back in one's own coin* (to give tit for tat, to retaliate): Howsoever revengeful you may be, unless you are strong enough you cannot *pay him back in his own coin*.
- *To plough a lonely furrow* (to work without help or support): In the organised society of today no individual or nation can *plough a lonely furrow*.
- *To poison the ears or mind* (to prejudice another person): A judge must not allow anyone to *poison his mind* against either the plaintiff or the defendant.
- *To rest on one's laurels* (to rest satisfied with honours already won, and to make no attempt to gain further distinction): Even if he wins the biggest award, a film star will never *rest on his laurels*. He will try to rise higher and higher.
- *To rest on one's oars* (to suspend efforts after something has been attained): The agitators have been vigorously at work during the winter, but at present they seem to be *resting on their oars*.
- *To harp on the same string* (to keep repeating the same sentiment over and again): This gentleman *keeps harping on the same string*: he is from Oxford and deserves this and deserves that etc.
- *To rise like a phoenix from its ashes* (the phoenix was a fabulous Arabian bird. It had no mate but when about to die, made a funeral pile of wood and aromatic gums and on it burned itself to ashes. From the ashes a *young phoenix* was believed to rise): Germany was completely decimated in the second world war. But she has *risen like a phoenix from its ashes*.
- *To rule the roast or roost* (to lord it over others in a party or group): In almost every party there is some overbearing person who tries to *rule the roost*.
- *To run in the same groove* (to move forward on the same path, to advance in harmony): It is clear that the ideas of both reformers *run in the same groove*.
- *To run in the blood* (a peculiarity which clings to certain families): Snobbery *runs in the blood* of the Englishmen.
- *To scatter to the winds* (to waste, to scatter abroad): We have *scattered to the winds* what we had gained by our independence.
- *To be on the right scent* (to be on the right track): The customs have decided to patrol the Kerala seas to nab smugglers from Dubai. They are *on the right scent* (Its opposite is to be on the wrong scent or wrong track)
- *To see how the wind blows* (to observe what influence, favourable or adverse, is likely to affect the existing state of things): In party-politics people sitting on the fence keep on watching *how the wind is blowing* before deciding on their options.
- *To see a thing through coloured glasses* (to regard something favourably because of one's prejudice): Pakistan has for long *looked at India through coloured glasses* and never trusted even the most genuine gestures for peace. (The world is a place of strife and one should not see it through coloured glasses.)
- *To show the white feather* (to show signs of cowardice): The agitators shouted and gesticulated but the moment the police appeared on the scene they seemed to *show the white feather*.
- *To sow broadcast* (to scatter widely or without stint): The emissaries of the banished king were *sowing sedition broadcast*.
- *To split hairs* (to make subtle and useless distinctions): As the drought played havoc in Bihar, the authorities were busy *splitting hairs* trying to decide whether it was 'scarcity conditions' or famine.
- *To steal a march* (to gain an advantage over another stealthily): While we were still debating the desirability of joint ventures with foreign concerns, Singapore and Malaysia *stole a march* over us and opened their gates to foreign investment in a big way.
- *To steer clear of* (to avoid): India decided on non-alignment to *steer clear* of the hazards of alignment with one block or the other.
- *To stick at nothing* (the phrase implies readiness to stoop to baseness or deception to reach one's end): An ambitious politician will *stick at nothing* if he can only serve himself.
- *To strain every nerve* (to use one's utmost efforts): We have *to strain every nerve* to get over the poverty line.
- *To strike while the iron is hot* (to take advantage of the opportunity when it arises): If you want to succeed in life, you must *strike the iron while it is hot*. In going in for general elections immediately after the war, the Congress *struck while the iron was hot*.
- *To swallow the bait* (to catch others by guile, by offering them large promises): The candidate offered the people everything on earth and in the heavens if selected. The people *swallowed the bait* and elected him.
- *To talk shop* (to use the phrases peculiar to one's circumstances): Except for the undertakers, people of the same professions always *talk shop* at parties.
- *To tie one's hands* (to restrain one from action): The *Government's hands are already tied* with problem plants. It would not like to go in for nationalisation in a big way.
- *To tread on the heels of* (follow close behind): Famine *treads on the heels* of drought.

- *To fish in troubled waters* (to make personal profit out of a disturbance): The super powers are *there* in West Asia *to fish in troubled waters*.
- *To pour oil on troubled waters* (to say or do anything which soothes and calms angry passions): The government *poured oil on troubled waters* by announcing a judicial enquiry into the firing
- *To win or gain laurels or to bear away palm* (to achieve success in a contest): The Indian Cricket Team *won* laurels on two successive occasions once in West Indies and then in England.
- *To worship the rising sun* (to pay respect to the man who is rising in power the influence): The newly appointed manager has taken over and his clerks *worship the rising sun*.
- *Argus-eyed* (jealously watchful): The husband of a pretty wife has got to be *Argus-eyed*.
- *Aegean stables*: (*to clean Aegean stables*, To correct a great abuse, from the stables of king Agues of Greece, whose stables had not been cleaned for thirty years): The law against prostitution has cleaned no Aegean stables; it has merely pushed it underground.
- *Backstairs influence* (influence exerted secretly and in a fashion not legitimate): The moneyed people do exercise *backstairs influence* on Parliament.
- *Bad blood*: (active enmity): There has been *bad blood* between India and Pakistan since 1947.
- *A bone of contention* : (subject of dispute): Kashmir continues *to be a bone of contention* between India and Pakistan since 1947.
- *A bosom friend* (A very intimate and trusted friend): Bosom friends never betray one another.
- *A bull in a China shop*: (Someone who destroys everything at the same time he happens to be in): The plainsmen proved to be a *bull in a China shop* in the hills, ruining the hill people in all ways.
- *A close shave*: (a narrow escape from collision accident): The bus had a close shave as its driver swerved to the right a split second before the on-coming truck could run into it.
- *A cold comfort*: (something calculated to cause pain or irritation): The promise of a better future is only *cold comfort* to the frustrated youth of today.
- *A dog in the manger policy*: (said of a person who cannot himself use what another wants, and yet will not let that other have it): The affluent nations are a *dog-in-the manger*, destroying what they can't use themselves than giving it to the poor nations of Asia and Africa.
- *Elbow room*: (opportunity for freedom of action): Only give him *elbowroom* and he will succeed.
- *A fair-weather Friend*: (one who deserts you in difficulties): *A fair-weather* friend disappears the moment your money disappears.
- *French leave*: (*absence* without permission.) He went on a *french leave* and was summoned by the direction the next day he went to office.
- *Good offices*: (recommendation): One can get a good job only through the *good offices* of some one in power.
- *A good Samaritan*: (one who be-friends a stranger or a friendless person): Centuries ago, India played a *good Samaritan* to the hapless Parsees fleeing their native land.
- *The green-eyed monster*: (jealousy): The *green-eyed monster* strikes a woman the moment she sees her husband talking to a pretty woman.
- *A Herculean task* (a job requiring great efforts): Eradication of poverty is a *Herculean task* requiring the collective efforts of the entire country.
- *Lynch Law*: (the practice of punishing people where the punishment is inflicted by unauthorised persons and without judicial trial): Mob law denotes the same thing when carried out by a mob. In African countries they often resort to *lynch laws*.
- *A maiden speech* (the first speech of a new member in a public body as in Town Hall or in Parliament): Amitabh's *maiden speech* was very impressive.
- *A nine day's wonder* (*a fascinating but temporary phenomenon*): *Beauty* is, *proverbially*, a *nine day's wonder*.
- *An open question*: (*a matter for discussion and not yet decided*): As far as India is concerned, Kashmir is no longer *an open question*.
- *A red-letter day*: (an auspicious, fortunate or important day): The 26th January, 1950 is a *red-letter day* in India's history.
- *Scot-free*: (exempt from payment, unhurt, safe): Because he had influential connections, the culprit went *scot-free*.
- *A sheet anchor*: (the chief safety, the last refuge for safety): One's faith in God is one's *sheet anchor* in times of stress and strain.
- *Tall Talk*: (boastful language): If we have no real accomplishments, we indulge in tall *talk* to delude ourselves and others too.
- *A white elephant* (an unprofitable possession): The upper Houses are *white elephants* and should be abolished.
- *A white lie*: (an evasion, a harmless and non-malicious untruth): Professional members often indulge in *white lies*.
- *A wild goose chase* (a foolish, *wild, unprofitable adventure*): Attempts towards stabilisation of prices in a developing economy, is a *wild goose chase*.
- *An apple of discord*: (a subject of envy and strife): Kashmir continues to be the *apple of discord* between India and Pakistan.
- *Cock and bull story* (a silly improbable story): That India wanted to break up West Pakistan was a *cock and bull* story published by the U.S.A.
- *A fish out of water* : (a person in uncomfortable surroundings): An Indian may earn tons of money in the Western countries, but he will always feel like a *fish out of water* there.
- *The gift of the gab*: (fluency of speech): The *gift of the gab* combined with a slight cunning makes for a successful politician.
- *Lion's share*: (an unfairly large share): The big nations continue to have the *lion's share* of world trade.
- *A mare's nest* : (a discovery that turns out to be false or worthless): There was much fanfare about the solar cooker. Later *it* turned out to be a *mare's nest*.
- *The milk of human kindness*: (kindly feelings a phrase used by Shakespeare.): With all their poverty, Indians do not lack *the milk of human kindness*.
- *Penelope's web* : (a work which seems to be going on and yet never comes to an end.): A housewife's chores are a *penelope's web*.
- *The pros and cons of a question*: (arguments for and against a thing) They discussed the *pros and cons* of the matter before taking a decision.

# Exercise

**DIRECTIONS :** Each of these questions has an idiomatic expression followed by four options. Choose the one closest to its meaning.

1. *To smell a rat*  
(1) Signs of plague epidemic (2) Bad smell  
(3) Suspect foul dealings (4) To be in a bad mood
2. *To be above board*  
(1) To have a good height (2) To be honest in any deal  
(3) To have no debts (4) To be able to swim
3. *To have the gift of the gab*  
(1) A talent for speaking  
(2) To do exactly the right thing  
(3) To be cheerful (4) To get lots of gifts
4. *To fall flat*  
(1) Retreat (2) To meet accidentally  
(3) Quarrel  
(4) To be met with a cold reception
5. *Right-hand man*  
(1) An honest person (2) Most efficient assistant  
(3) One who cannot use his left hand  
(4) A foolish person
6. *In the blues*  
(1) Being colourful  
(2) Melancholy and low spirited  
(3) Behave like a lord (4) Cheerful and happy
7. *See eye to eye*  
(1) State at each other (2) Agree  
(3) Depend on (4) Make an effort
8. *Talk shop*  
(1) Talk about one's profession  
(2) Talk about shopping  
(3) Ridicule (4) Treat lightly
9. *Bad blood*  
(1) Infected blood (2) Ill-feeling  
(3) Unfaithful (4) Suspicion
10. *Wear one's heart on one's sleeve*  
(1) Lure passionately (2) Do the right thing  
(3) Show one's feelings (4) Be intimate
11. *Dog in the manger*  
(1) A person who is not liked by others  
(2) A person who is hounders  
(3) A person who puts himself in a difficulty on account of other people  
(4) A person who prevents others from enjoying something useless to himself
12. I saw him *make a wry face*.  
(1) abuse (2) feel sick  
(3) cry with pain (4) show disappointment
13. *Stick to one's guns*  
(1) Maintain one's stand under attack  
(2) Suspect something  
(3) Make something fail (4) Be satisfied
14. *To cut the crackle*  
(1) to stop talking and start (2) to dig a well  
(3) to annoy others (4) to act in a friendly way
15. *To miss the boat*  
(1) to miss an opportunity (2) to feel lonely  
(3) to act like a coward (4) to swim in a river
16. *Blue blood*  
(1) something impossible (2) an aristocrat  
(3) something costly (4) a funny object
17. *At one's wit's end*  
(1) to be very witty (2) to confuse others  
(3) to be completely confused  
(4) to minimise expenses
18. *To eat an humble pie*  
(1) to eat cheap food (2) to eat slowly  
(3) to swallow one's pride and apologise for doing something wrong  
(4) to defy authority
19. *A snake in the grass*  
(1) a very poisonous snake (2) a secret agent  
(3) an unrecognisable enemy or danger  
(4) not a reliable person
20. *To turn over a new leaf*  
(1) to change one's behaviour for the better  
(2) to read something attentively  
(3) to remain vigilant (4) to be careful
21. *Black sheep*  
(1) a costly item (2) a dark shiny object  
(3) an unworthy person in a family or group  
(4) a funny man
22. *Oily tongue*  
(1) flattery (2) hungry person  
(3) strong critic (4) rich food
23. *Lion's share*  
(1) no share at all (2) greater share of a thing  
(3) miserly (4) very small item
24. *To bury the hatchet*  
(1) to dispute over small things  
(2) to destroy  
(3) to make up a quarrel (4) to repair a costly furniture
25. *Heart and soul*  
(1) very seriously and sincerely  
(2) honestly  
(3) wearily (4) very casually
26. *To clear the air*  
(1) to work hard (2) to wash properly  
(3) to remove tension (4) to create confusion
27. *To chew the cud*  
(1) to be very annoyed (2) to think deeply  
(3) to eat humble food  
(4) to start doing something new
28. *No axe to grind*  
(1) a bad situation (2) to rebuke  
(3) to act selflessly (4) to confuse others
29. *A good samaritan*  
(1) a genuinely helpful person  
(2) an honest politician  
(3) a clever person (4) a priest
30. *To steal a march*  
(1) to outshine (2) to start early  
(3) to command an army (4) to overtake
31. *Gift of the gab*  
(1) lucky (2) a big surprise  
(3) to have a talent for speaking  
(4) an honest person

32. *Pillar to post*  
 (1) driven from one place to another  
 (2) very tiresome journey  
 (3) main supports of a building  
 (4) clumsy looking objects
33. *To have cold feet*  
 (1) to feel very cold (2) to pay much attention to  
 (3) to lose confidence  
 (4) to pour water on something
34. When I saw him in the morning, he looked like a *duck in a thunderstorm*.  
 (1) entrapped (2) distressed  
 (3) indomitable (4) peaceful
35. He *burnt his fingers* by interfering in his neighbour's affair.  
 (1) got himself into trouble (2) burnt himself  
 (3) got himself insulted (4) got rebuked
36. He is *not worth his salt* if he fails at this juncture.  
 (1) very strange (2) very proud of himself  
 (3) quite depressed (4) quite worthless
37. Mr Gupta, who is one of the trustees of a big charity is suspected of *feathering his own nest*.  
 (1) being lazy in doing his work  
 (2) being too generous  
 (3) neglecting his job (4) making money unfairly
38. Let us admit that we could not *heap coals of fire on his head*.  
 (1) incite him to fight (2) agitate him  
 (3) make him feel sorry by returning good for evil  
 (4) put him to shame
39. For the first week, the apprentice felt *like a fish out of water*:  
 (1) frustrated (2) homeless  
 (3) disappointed (4) uncomfortable
40. His friends failed to see why he should *ride the high horse* just because he had won an election.  
 (1) become abnormal (2) appear arrogant  
 (3) indulge in dreams (4) hate others
41. The cooperation and *esprit de corps* between the soldiers and the officers was directly responsible for their victory.  
 (1) bravery (2) loyalty  
 (3) subordination (4) unity
42. It is evident from the minister's statement that *heads will roll*.  
 (1) transfers will take place (2) people will die  
 (3) dismissals will occur  
 (4) heads of department will have to repent
43. I saw him *make a wry face*  
 (1) abuse (2) feel sick  
 (3) cry with pain (4) show disappointment
44. Harp on  
 (1) To comment (2) To criticise  
 (3) To keep on talking (4) To keep on insulting
45. Will o' the wisp  
 (1) Anything which eludes or deceives  
 (2) To act in a childish way  
 (3) To act in a foolish way  
 (4) To have desires unbacked by efforts
46. A tall order  
 (1) A task difficult to perform  
 (2) A big problem  
 (3) A royal summons (4) A big demand
47. All and sundry  
 (1) Greater share (2) All of a sudden  
 (3) Completion of work  
 (4) Everyone without distinction
48. Dog in the manger  
 (1) An undersized bull almost the shape of a dog  
 (2) A dog that has no kennel of its own  
 (3) A person who puts himself in difficulties on account of other people  
 (4) A person who prevents others from enjoying something useless to himself
49. Spick and span  
 (1) Neat and clean (2) Outspoken  
 (3) A ready-made thing (4) Garrulous
50. The pros and cons  
 (1) For and against a thing (2) Foul and fair  
 (3) Good and evil (4) Former and latter

## Hints & SOLUTIONS

1. (3) It means to get suspicious about some dealings.  
 2. (2) It means to always be upright and honest.  
 3. (1) Gets means to chatter, gift of the gab means ability to talk or talent for speaking.  
 4. (4) To fall flat means failing miserably or not being able to create the effect or achieve the result one wanted to and, thus, meet cold reception.  
 5. (2) This means the most important and efficient person working for you.  
 6. (2) 'Blues' refer to bad moods, melancholy, low spirit, ill temper.  
 7. (2) Seeing eye to eye means approving of each other or agreeing with each other.  
 8. (1) This means to talk about one's profession in a dry, boring way.  
 9. (2) Bad - blood refers to the element of animosity in a person and, thus, ill - feeling.
10. (3) This means to express openly one's desires or emotions.  
 11. (4)  
 12. (4)  
 13. (1) This means to stay consistent about one's beliefs, opinions, decisions or cause or in other words remain faithful to one's cause.
14. (1) 15. (1) 16. (2) 17. (3) 18. (3)  
 19. (3) 20. (1) 21. (3) 22. (1) 23. (2)  
 24. (3) 25. (1) 26. (3) 27. (2) 28. (3)  
 29. (1) 30. (1) 31. (3) 32. (1) 33. (3)  
 34. (2) 35. (1) 36. (4) 37. (4) 38. (4)  
 39. (2) 40. (2) 41. (4) 42. (3) 44. (3)  
 45. (1) 46. (1) 47. (4) 48. (4) 49. (1)  
 50. (1)