

Shakespeare's Interesting Idioms

An idiom is an everyday expression which says something in an interesting way. Idioms have figurative meanings that cannot be worked out by looking in a dictionary. Shakespeare wrote his plays 400 years ago, but his clever use of language means that the imagery he creates in our minds can be just as vivid and interesting today as it was then. Some of the idioms that Shakespeare 'coined' (invented) are listed below; you will probably recognise many of them because we still use them in our everyday language.

The titles of the plays in which the idioms appear are listed in brackets beside them. Some idioms appear in more than one play.

All our yesterdays (*Macbeth*)

All that glisters is not gold (*Merchant of Venice*)

All's well that ends well (*play title*)

As good luck would have it (*Merry Wives of Windsor*)

As merry as the day is long (*Much Ado About Nothing*)

Bated breath (*Merchant of Venice*)

Bear a charmed life (*Mabeth*)

Be-all and the end-all (*Macbeth*)

Neither a borrower nor a lender be (*Hamlet*)

Brave new world (*Tempest*)

Break the ice (*Taming of the Shrew*)

Breathed his last (*Henry VI part 3*)

Cold comfort (*King John*)

Come what come may ("come what may") (*Macbeth*)

Dead as a doornail (*Henry VI part 2*)

A dish fit for the gods (*Julius Caesar*)

Dog will have his day (*Hamlet*)

Eaten me out of house and home (*Henry IV part 2*)

Elbow room (*King John*)

Faint hearted (*Henry IV part 1*)

Forever and a day (*As You Like It*)

For goodness' sake (*Henry VIII*)

Foregone conclusion (*Othello*)



Nicholas

Game Four

Full circle (*King Lear*)

The game is up (*Cymbeline*)

Jealousy is the green-eyed monster
(*Othello*)

Heart of gold (*Henry V*)

'Tis high time (*Comedy of Errors*)

In a pickle (*Tempest*)

In my heart of hearts (*Hamlet*)

In my mind's eye (*Hamlet*)

Kill with kindness (*Taming of the
Shrew*)

Knock knock! Who's there?
(*Macbeth*)

Laid on with a trowel (*As You Like It*)

Laughing stock (*Merry Wives of
Windsor*)

Love is blind (*Merchant of Venice*)

Melted into thin air (*Tempest*)

Not slept one wink (*Cymbeline*)

One fell swoop (*Macbeth*)

Own flesh and blood (*Hamlet*)

Star-crossed lovers (*Romeo and
Juliet*)

Parting is such sweet sorrow (*Romeo
and Juliet*)

Seen better days (*As You Like It*)

A sorry sight (*Macbeth*)

Stony hearted (*Henry IV part 1*)

Such stuff as dreams are made on
(*Tempest*)

Sweets to the sweet (*Hamlet*)

To thine own self be true (*Hamlet*)

Too much of a good thing (*As You
Like It*)



Nicholas