

Shmanners 219: Idioms Pt. 2

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Travis: The bridge is always greener in the bird bush!

Teresa: That's nothing.

Travis: I know. It's Shmanners!

[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to Shmanners!

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette...

Travis: ... for ordinary occasions. Hello, my dove.

Teresa: Hello, dear.

Travis: How are you? Tell me all about you, and how you are. This week's episode is all about how Teresa is.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, no.

Travis: No?

Teresa: No, it's not.

Travis: No?

Teresa: No. We're actually coming back for more idioms!

Travis: More idioms!

Teresa: We said we would be!

Travis: Yes, and y'know what? We just enjoyed it so much. And y'know, it's one of those things that, since we did that first episode, which, if you haven't listened to, you should. It's an absolute blast. Since we did that first one, I have not been able to stop clocking idioms. Like, everything we say, every time I'm like, writing something, every time I'm reading something, I'm like, "Wait, why did we start saying..." And it's all these things that like, are so commonplace in the English language, that you don't even register how nonsensical they are.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Until you're thinking about it. It helps, also, having a three year old. Who like, every time you say something, is like, "Wait, what?"

Teresa: What is that?

Travis: "What does that mean?" But before we get into idioms...

Teresa: Wait a second.

Travis: What?

Teresa: If you are also clocking idioms, you listeners, please send them to us! Alex has a whole Gmail folder dedicated to idioms, so... keep sendin' 'em!

Travis: Um, and speaking of Alex – and I'll explain why I'm speaking of Alex in a second, when I get to it – it's MaxFunDrive!

Teresa: Yes it is!

Travis: And I know what you're thinking. Isn't MaxFunDrive usually in March, and aren't we far past March? Well, yes. But, I don't know if you folks

at home know this. A lot's going on in the world, so it got pushed back a little while. So now, we're doing kind of a special edition MaxFunDrive 2020. Why is it special edition, you ask?

Well, first, it is low-key. We are not, uh, gonna give you the hard pitch, the hard sell. This is your opportunity to support the art and artists you love, become a Max Fun member, and get rewards if you are able to. Because we understand that times are tight right now, and there's a lot of uncertainty, and maybe you're not able to become a member, and we totally get that. No pressure.

Teresa: If you are able to become a member, there are lots of different levels. And you can choose whatever you're comfortable with.

Travis: Right. We'll talk about those later on. This is just a quick intro to say... MaxFunDrive is happening. Go check it out. MaximumFun.org/Join. And the reason that I said 'speaking of Alex' is, our ability to bring Alex in and hire and pay her to research for us is because of the support that you've shown over the years, and helped us, uh, be able to pay her for the work that she does.

So, if you appreciate the work that Alex does the way that we do, MaximumFun.org/Join.

Now, let's talk about idioms. Teresa, what's an idiom?

Teresa: We have discussed idioms. This is now number two. So, idioms, if for a quick rewind...

Travis: Uh-huh. [rewind sound]

Teresa: [laughs] So, idioms are an expression that usually means something other than the words actually mean.

Travis: Like, "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." Which really means—

Teresa: Sure. That's a proverbial.

Travis: Yes. But—yes, sure. But it means, y'know, enjoy what you have rather than wishing for something else.

Teresa: Right, because nobody's actually talking about birds. There's the use of metaphor and simile, and anthropologically speaking, and all that kind of stuff. So, there are lots of ways of saying the things we want to say. And when you're not doing it literally, you may be using an idiom.

Travis: So for example, the first one we have here is from Ivy Faybe, who emailed us asking about 'spill the beans.' Right? That's an idiom. "Spill the beans."

Teresa: It is also a, uh, game that our three year old loves to play.
[laughs]

Travis: Love—well, hypothetically loves to play.

Teresa: Okay, so the game, Don't Spill the Beans, first of all... we have been playing it wrong our entire lives.

Travis: Apparently.

Teresa: I actually read the instructions, and you have to go through like, all the beans that you have, and... anyway. Anyway, read the instructions.

Travis: You're trying not to spill the beans.

Teresa: But it's not just about not spilling the beans. It's about not getting any beans back, and you continue to do—anyway. Go and read those instructions. It's fun. But she...

Travis: Just likes spilling them.

Teresa: Likes spilling them. She just wants to spill the beans.

Travis: She just enjoys the spill part. So, what does it mean? What's the meaning of—like, if I say, "Oh, they spilled the beans," what am I saying?

Teresa: It's believed that this phrase originated from ancient Greece.

Travis: But, so the meaning—just in case anyone listening has never heard the phrase "spill the beans" before, it means like, to ruin a surprise, or tell a secret. Let the cat out of the bag. [laughs] Another idiom.

Teresa: [laughs] That has really gross origins. We'll talk about that another time.

Travis: Oh boy. Okay.

Teresa: Anyway. Ancient Greece, uh, is known for voting. That's kind of like, their thing back then. Um, and one way people would do that is by putting white or black beans in a jar. Black for a positive vote—sorry, white bean for a positive vote, black bean for a no vote. Um, and if the jar had been tipped over, the secret of everyone's votes would be visible for all to see before you could count them.

Travis: Oh! Man, that makes sense. Okay.

Teresa: So one should not spill those beans.

Travis: Y'know, it's funny. I'm glad we're doing this episode. I'm glad we're talking about idioms, 'cause this is the kind of thing of like... you grow up your whole life hearing, "Don't spill the beans." And not until just before you said the origin of it did I think, "What does that mean?" Like, that's weird! Don't spill the beans? What a weird thing!

Teresa: You can go through and be like, don't spill anything. Spilling things is usually a mess, right?

Travis: I mean, I—yeah?

Teresa: But beans, specifically, is what my little... little ear perks to.

Travis: Yeah, but even then, it's like, "Oh, you told a secret. You spilled the secret." That's nothing. That doesn't make any sense. Like, "Well, you spilled the beans." What are you talking about? Ah, it has to do with Greek voting! I see!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Another one from Ivy Faybe, 'cream of the crop,' which, if you've never heard it, means like, the best of the best. This is—oh, this over here? This is my best product. This is the cream of the crop.

Teresa: The crème de la crème.

Travis: The crème da la crème.

Teresa: The cream of the cream.

Travis: The cream of the cream. Mm-hmm.

Teresa: Um... farmers, obviously. They love cream.

Travis: Crops, farmers, hand in hand. Did you say they love cream?
[laughs]

Teresa: They do love cream! [laughs]

Travis: What? But I wouldn't—I mean, I guess! But I thought you meant because of the crop part, but you went the cream pa—okay.

Teresa: Well, you can—you pay the most for the cream.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So here's the thing. If you let milk that unhomogenized, unpasteurized milk... if you let it sit, it will separate. And the cream will come to the top.

Travis: Right. That's another, 'the cream rises to the top.' Maybe that's just a saying. Proverb. The cream always rises to the top.

Teresa: Yes. And the cream is the part with the good stuff in it. That's where all the fat and the flavor and the yummy is. So, it's the richest, best part of the milk. And so, the noun, 'cream,' has been used to delineate 'the best' since the 16th century. And the phrase, 'cream of the market' actually was an early form of this expression that has been traced back all the way to 1678.

Travis: Okay! See, once again, this is interesting. 'Cause if—I think maybe I was focused too much on the crop part, and thought about crop as like, vegetables, right? But like, crop is like anything that a farmer harvests, and there are dairy farmers, right? Yeah. Okay.

Teresa: Right. Mm-hmm. Cream of the crop, cream of the market, crème of the crème.

Travis: Crème of the crème. Now, this next one comes from Alex herself, because she wrote it three weeks ago and thought, "Huh." And that phrase is 'willy-nilly,' which is a... [sighs] It's a phrase I use a lot in a series of, 'willy-nilly,' 'higgledy-piggledy.' Y'know, it's just like... it's all over the place. It's haphazard. Oh, you spilled water willy-nilly. You—

Teresa: Sloshed it.

Travis: Right. Or if you were like, planting. Right? You might say like, "You didn't plant them in order, you just kind of threw the seeds willy-nilly."

Teresa: Scattered.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Right. Um, so, let's talk about wiggle—sorry. Willy-nilly. You mentioned higgledy-piggledy.

Travis: Higgledy-piggledy.

Teresa: And that's another show. Um...

Travis: Which I only know from Doug.

Teresa: [laughs] So this means, in old English, the word 'nil' was the opposite of the word 'will.' So, the expression, 'will we, nil we' meant 'with or against your will.'

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So then, when you combine the two words, it meant that you didn't care which way something went. Which means not just an action that you do, but also, a feeling that you have. Right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So you were neutral on a topic.

Travis: Because you just didn't care whether it went.

Teresa: Right, exactly.

Travis: I'm neither for nor against, I'm just willy-nilly.

Teresa: Exactly, exactly. And over time, that evolved to the two words becoming, uh, like, opposite of each other. Will it or won't it. You do or do not, which way does it go, all that stuff.

Travis: Yeah. Will they, won't they.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah. Will they kiss, won't they kiss. Will I put the beans over there, will I not put the beans over there.

Teresa: [laughs] Will you spill the beans everywhere?

Travis: Who knows? Y'know what? Neutral on it. Yeah.

Teresa: All of that is willy-nilly.

Travis: Y'know, I—this reminds me of, uh... oh man, this is—ugh. This is the pettest of peeves. The peeviest of pets.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's a little tiny thing, but there are words that people—like, moot is what this makes me think of, right? Is that people often think of 'moot' as meaning like, "It doesn't matter. The point is unimportant."

Teresa: Ah, yes!

Travis: When actually, the meaning of moot... if someone says, "The point is moot," what they mean is, it could be argued back and forth forever without ever coming to a conclusion. Not that it's not important, but that it is—there is such an even divide on it that there is no answer to this question, so the point is moot.

Teresa: This is why I love the idea of these idioms, and why it's important to know exactly what they mean, so that you can use them with economy of language, properly, in communicating, well... which is good Shmanners!

Travis: It is good Shmanners! Especially when we talk about these, 'cause uh... what's the—especially if you're thinking about these like, colloquially, of... we—we are more connected now than ever before, right? And there was a time when I was growing up, when we were growing up, right? Where the conversations you would have day to day were with people within, like, a five mile radius of you.

Teresa: Right, because if you weren't going on like, a big trip, or maybe not... I mean, okay. Maybe not when we were growing up.

Travis: When I was eight, we weren't like, surfin' the webs, havin' conversation on the Twitters.

Teresa: I mean, I guess that's true, but you were talking on the telephone, right? Didn't you call your—

Travis: Yeah, but not on a day to day basis! I wasn't like—how many people do you think I knew at eight years old in like, Montana?

Teresa: Oh, fine.

Travis: I'm saying that when we were kids, little kids, right? Under ten.

Teresa: Okay, fine.

Travis: The conversations we were having was with like, our neighborhood. Our people at school. Like... the—like, those were—

Teresa: We called our grandma every day to say hi.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We weren't discussing.

Travis: Your grandma was in Dayton! I know your grandma was! [laughing]

Teresa: Yeah! Well but like, she—you had to get on a car to get there. Couldn't... couldn't just walk.

Travis: [sighs] My point, if I may finish one point, is that now, we have to know... not just what the things we're saying mean to us, but like, what they mean in the broader sense of things.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right? This is a thing we talked about last episode, that there are like, lots of phrases that's like, we use all the time, where it's like, we should not... use those words anymore. Because we, in our immediate, like, families, friends, like... we may not realize the impact of the things we're saying, but like, if you take one step away from your own understanding of things and look at something from a different perspective, you might realize like, "Oh, I should not be saying that thing."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Now, this next one... this is from Colin. And the question... well, I guess the phrase, but I'm going to put a question mark at the end of it, is... 'cut the mustard'?

Teresa: Uh, I have to say that, before all of this research concluded, I thought it was similar to 'cut the cheese'?

Travis: No! No!

Teresa: I did! I did.

Travis: Or break wind?

Teresa: Of break wind.

Travis: To break wind. Speaking of which, by the way, we have a Max Fun bonus episode that is talking about The Fartist.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Le Pétomane.

Teresa: Yes, it's very funny.

Travis: The Fartist. Um, but no. Cut the mustard means like, y'know, meet expectation, live up to standard, like... up to snuff, which we talked about on the last episode.

Teresa: We did. We did, yep.

Travis: I mostly hear it as like, someone saying, "That doesn't cut the mustard. That won't cut the mustard."

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Which, another phrase that I like to use is, "That dog won't hunt."

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: And that is either very posh, or... very, uh, like, very folksy. I don't know. It's one of those two. It's either, [in a posh accent] "That dog won't hunt!" Or, [in a southern accent] "That dog won't hunt." It works in both...

Teresa: I mean, it does kind of work both ways. Write it down.

Travis: That dog won't hunt.

Teresa: Next one.

Travis: That's not gonna do it. Well, I can tell you right now what it means.

Teresa: Well, yeah, but what the origin?

Travis: That's pretty straightforward, don't you think? That dog's not gonna do its job.

Teresa: But where does it come from, pray tell?

Travis: Maybe I made it up. So, it doesn't—it means you didn't meet expectations or the required standard. Where did that come from? Why the mustard, Teresa?

Teresa: Um, so... it is debatable. There are several, uh, perceived origins of this. So, about a hundred years ago, a story by O. Henry...

Travis: Oh, Henry!

Teresa: Uh, uh, mentioned this idiom, 'cut the mustard.' And it's thought that he picked it up in Texas, because, um... it may actually be a reference to the ability of farm hands to cut down and harvest mustard trees.

Travis: Sure. Okay.

Teresa: If you can, then you can. If you can cut the mustard... then... you are one of those people that do it, I guess.

Travis: Okay. The second one on here makes more sense to me.

Teresa: [laughs] Another, that it is a, uh... a... [sighs] A twist on, uh, pass muster. Which seems very close to 'cut the mustard.' 'Pass muster.' This is something that we've seen happen before.

Travis: It sounds like a fun version of it, 'cause 'pass muster' was like, when soldiers were like, inspected, right? And if you approve, you pass inspection, you pass muster. Right? That feels like a fun kind of slang term that soldiers would say like, "Oh, you cut the mustard."

Now, I don't know why it wouldn't be 'pass mustard.' You passed the mustard would be a much funner slang version of it. But...

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: I could see 'muster' becoming 'mustard.'

Teresa: So, according to Michael Quinion, who runs the website World Wide Words... they say, it's much more likely that it's a development of the long-established use of mustard as a superlative, as in, phrases as keen as mustard. Right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, in 19th century America, mustard was used figuratively to mean something that added zest. And proper mustard was something that was the genuine article. So, all of these things are about how great mustard is.

Travis: So mustard was used as, as you said, super—almost like sliced bread, right? Like, where you say, "This is good as sliced bread! The best thing since sliced bread!"

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I will say that this is a phrase, like, my family... I don't know. Maybe this is a common one, but like, in terms of like, sports, right? If you tried to throw a ball and it didn't quite make it, you'd say, "Ooh, not enough mustard."

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Like, didn't put enough mustard on that.

Teresa: I've never heard that.

Travis: Yeah? Maybe that is just a McElroy thing. We have a lot of weird ones.

Teresa: You guys do! What's the—swan to john?

Travis: I swan to John. I swear to John, yeah.

Teresa: That's one. That's one.

Travis: Yeah, I have no idea.

Teresa: What's another one?

Travis: Oh, who knows? Who even—uh, fiddly fartin'. Enough fiddly fartin' around.

Teresa: [laughs] Fiddly fartin'?

Travis: I don't know if that's a real one, or if that's just what my dad said in anger once. Who knows.

Teresa: [laughing] Did your parents call the couch 'the davenport'?

Travis: No.

Teresa: I think that we've talked about this. My grandmother called the couch 'the davenport,' and it turns out that it was like... I do remember talking about this. It's like a... one of those things where, instead of saying 'facial tissue,' you say Kleenex.

Travis: Oh, it was a brand name? Davenport? Yeah, was the designer.

Teresa: It's like a brand name.

Travis: I think that's true. So everyone loved mustard.

Teresa: Everyone loves it!

Travis: So, maybe we do need to—Alex put in here, uh, 'mustard only episode of Shmanners.' Wouldn't mind it! I do like mustard!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Uh, before—

Teresa: One time, my mother gave Christmas presents of mustard to you.

Travis: Oh, I love mustard! Oh. I have a very special place in my heart, mostly because of all the cholesterol there, from like, German food.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Oh, that got you! I broke her, folks!

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: And man, the Germans really figured out mustard.

Teresa: They sure did. A big box of mustard for Christmas. [laughing]

Travis: I love mustard! It wasn't loose mustard! You make it sound like your mom gave me loose mustard in a box!

Teresa: It was several jars of mustard! [laughing]

Travis: It was jars, but it was in containers! It wasn't just like—I wasn't reaching in like Winnie the Pooh, getting out a smackerel of mustard! It was in jars!

Teresa: [laughing uncontrollably]

Travis: I wasn't just scooping mustard out of a box and slathering it on—

Teresa: [laughing]

Travis: You've cracked yourself up with this image of loose mustard in a box!

Teresa: Ooh! Oohoo. We better go to a break.

Travis: Yeah, okay. Folks, uh, I want to tell you about the Maximum Fun Drive. How's it work, you ask? Well, it's simple. You go to MaximumFun.org/Join. You choose a level at which you are comfortable supporting the art and artists you love. And then, you get rewarded for it! It's that simple.

Maybe you're already a Max Fun member. Well, you can go to MaximumFun.org/Join, and you can maybe move up to the next level of support if you want to. If you're able to. If that sounds like something you would be interested in.

Let me tell you about some of the levels. We're gonna tell you about the first three, 'cause I think they're pretty cool.

Teresa: For the... five dollar level...

Travis: For the five dollar level, you get access to bonus content, not just from this year, but from every MaxFunDrive up 'til now. It's over 200 hours of bonus content. Not just audio – there's some video in there. We mentioned the uh, Fartist episode of Shmammers. We also, this year, did an episode all about outdated etiquette. Stuff that was once completely, like, y'know, regular, expected to do this that we don't have to do anymore.

It's very fun. If you're a fan of The Adventure Zone, this year's bonus episode is me, Justin, Griffin, and Dad playing, and it is DMed by Matt Mercer from Critical Role. For My Brother, My Brother, and Me, we did an episode of prank calling. It's so dumb and so wonderful. Like, I was—it's very fun. And stupid.

Teresa: So, I would be interested to maybe find out how many... how much moneys per bonus episode you are... you are, uh, getting for your buck, y'know? Like, bang for your buck? For the five dollars a month, right? Over a year...

Travis: Sixty bucks.

Teresa: Sixty bucks.

Travis: Yeah. You're getting about three and... what? Three and a third hours of content per dollar.

Teresa: And if you think about how like, sometimes a song will cost 99 cents...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's a great deal.

Travis: Sure. I'm a little bit lost in the weeds now, as far as like, the math goes. [laughs] But uh, so then, for ten dollars a month, you get access to all that bonus content, plus you get an enamel pin designed by Megan Lynn Kott. These have been, uh, just—these have been very popular every year since we started doing them. They are show specific.

Teresa: And they're super cute!

Travis: So cute. And you can pick out... that was a very good kind of Midwestern accent. They're sooper cyoot!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Um, you can uh, pick which show you love. Get that one. And you also get a membership card in there as well, that shows you are a Max Fun member. And then, for \$20 a month, you get the bonus content, you get the enamel pin, the membership card, and you also get a Max Fun game pack that includes Max Fun themed playing cards, as well as a set of dice and a Max Fun branded dice bag. It's all really cool.

And there's other levels in there, but y'know, there's tons of ways that you can support shows, even if you aren't able to give financially. You can go on your various social media accounts, talk about the drive, share links, and even if you don't want to share links to the drive, because as we said, it's an uncertain time, you can just say like, "Hey, listen to the show. I think you'd really like it."

Teresa: And if you choose to do this, if you want to tweet at us, @ShmattersCast, let us know that you have chosen to support, or that you are sharing the show, or that you just love our podcast! We will thank you personally.

Travis: We have recently—a lot of people have been tweeting about how much they enjoyed, and how much the trans historical figures episode meant to them, and that means a lot to us. We put a lot of work into that one, and y'know, we put a lot of work into every episode, and people have been talking recently about the show, and... it just means the world to us, and support doesn't always come in the form of dollars and cents. Sometimes it just comes in the form of your time and your support and your appreciation, and that means the world to us.

And that is the thing... I think we went back and forth for a while about like, whether it was appropriate to do a MaxFunDrive at all. Right? Because we know it is uncertain times. But the thing that means the most to me during MaxFunDrive is an opportunity for me, as a creator, to say to everyone, like, hey, thanks for supporting our shows. Thank you for saying, like, "Hey, this show means a lot to me," and that doesn't just mean money.

So I'm really glad we're doing the MaxFunDrive so that I have a chance to say thank you to everybody. Thank you for listening. Thank you for listening now, if you're hearing this.

So, if you are interested in becoming a member, you can go to MaximumFun.org/Join. Maybe consider upgrading your membership, if you are able to. Uh, but if not, just, y'know... go talk about the shows, and we really appreciate it.

You can find out more of the levels, see all the other levels, the higher ups, at MaximumFun.org/Join.

Now, this next one... this is a very British one. And normally, we would not use this foul language. But it is part of the idiom, and it won't make sense if

we don't say it. So this is from Beege, who is from Hull, UK. "The dog's bollocks." And that is... it means testicles. The dog's testicles.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And it's like—it's great. [laughs] It's a great thing.

Teresa: A shining beacon of excellence.

Travis: There's a great Eddie Izzard bit about dog's bollocks, which is like, "That dress, my Queen... is the dog's bollocks." What is it—why? Why is it? Why is that a compliment?

Teresa: Um, so probably from post-World War II things, uh, meaning like, um... a lot of these happened. Like, the bee's knees, the cat's pajamas, something belonging to a thing.

Travis: Sure...

Teresa: And these all kind of have the same... meaning. Right? The—

Travis: That is great.

Teresa: That something is great. Um, so, the phrase in England at the time was, you stand out like a dog's bollocks. Right? Meaning that you were outstanding.

Travis: [laughs]

Teresa: It is possible that the phrase morphed into... the dog's bollocks.

Travis: I think that is so funny and wonderful. And listen, I'm watching you—Teresa is very uncomfortable right now, because she's unsure whether we are traipsing into uncomfortable territory of language that we don't normally discuss in this episode.

But the five year old in me, maybe even the seven year old in me, is laughing so hard at the idea of complimenting someone by saying 'you stand out...' [laughs] "You stand out in a similar fashion to how obvious the testicles of a dog is." And you're like, "Ah, thank you so much. That means the world to me."

Teresa: I think that in this world of Bob Barker 'spay and neuter your pets,' I have very rarely seen an intact dog.

Travis: Well, every time I think about it, I think about, it's like, usually used as like, a visual joke in a TV show or movie or whatever. For example, uh—and it is puerile. But in Van Wilder, there is a running joke about a dog's swollen genitals. And it is a visual joke used over and over again in the movie, and that's what it makes me think of.

But let's move onto maybe, perhaps, safer...

Teresa: I'm ready. I'm ready.

Travis: The cat's pajamas. Or, the cat's pajamas. Or, the cohhht's pohjohhhmas.

Teresa: [laughs] Not that third one.

Travis: It might be!

Teresa: Like we said, it's very similar. It's uh, y'know, top quality. That's cool, that's awesome.

Travis: Bebe has been watching a lot of Peppa Pig, and so, she will say like, "Uh, for lunch, can I have turkey and [in a British accent] tomatoes?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And I love it very much.

Teresa: Uh, probably from the 1920s jazz era, um, where people like flappers, or... y'know...

Travis: Cool cats.

Teresa: The cool people were known as 'cats.' And pajamas, uh, were relatively new fashion, especially for women. It became kind of like, cool to wear pajamas. I think that that also cycled through this year or last year, where there were like, designer loungewear pajamas that you really weren't supposed to wear to bed, but you were supposed to kind of like, wear them around.

Travis: That feels like a 2020 thing. Like, here's some stuff to lounge around in. Feels like a 2020 thing. This also, if we're looking at the 1920s, this also feels like a time when people were sitting around, trying to be clever. Like, putting a lot of work into being clever. People being—y'know, the—

Teresa: Oh, yeah.

Travis: Like, it feels like there were probably people just sitting around, trying to come up with new slang, of just like, "Uh, I don't know, it's the porcupine's... mm... pot pie. Is that anything?"

Teresa: Everybody wanted to be an influencer.

Travis: Right. Yes! Just like 2020.

Teresa: Just like 2020.

Travis: Everybody wanted to be an influencer. Everybody wanted to be known for like, their wit and creativity. Everybody wanted to be the next Great Gatsby. I guarantee, there were people just like, trying to come up with like, "Is this anything? Is this a cool thing to say? Does this make sense, if I say—" And cat's pajamas, it has a lot of like, those fun 'ah' sounds in it. That feels like a thing. It's got a good rhythm to it. People can't see me dancing at home, but maybe they can hear it. The rhythm of 'cat's pajamas'.

Teresa: I just have to say... stop trying to make fetch happen.

Travis: Okay. Now, the next phrase, 'stabbed in the back,' which means betrayed.

Teresa: I think that's obvious. It's obvious, right? I mean, anyone—any of the like, the English-speaking world knows about Julius Caesar being stabbed in the back by his friends.

Travis: Yes. Et tu, Brute?

Teresa: Everybody who thought... they thought that they were friends. They weren't friends anymore. He was stabbed in the back, and that's what it means.

Travis: Yeah. Makes sense. Alright, listen. We're gonna talk about more idioms, but first... we got a quick thank you note for some sponsors.

[theme music plays]

Travis: You work hard, so you're worth it. You deserve premium products that mirror your premium lifestyle. Native deodorant is designed to block odor better. It's made better, with ingredients you've heard of, like coconut oil, shea butter, and tapioca starch. It's also vegan and never tested on animals.

And not only that – they smell great! I am a huge fan of the cucumber and mint, and y'know, Teresa loves the rose. She loves the lavender. The vanilla. They're all incredible! These things smell great, they feel great, they don't feel heavy. Y'know, they don't feel like, all clumpy under your arms. I'm a big fan. They're absolutely great.

So check 'them out, 'cause they have rotating seasonal scents. It's great. And it's risk free to try! Every product comes with free shipping within the US, plus free 30-day returns and exchanges. Make the switch to Native today by going to NativeDeo.com/ShmanPod. Or use promo code

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I have a couple medications that I take. There's medications that Teresa takes, and it can be really hard, even for just myself, keeping track of those, and making sure that I haven't forgotten them. Let alone, how hard it can be if you have to manage someone else's medication regimen. Y'know, you have a lot of stuff going on in your own life, and the pressure of worrying about that you might miss a dosage for someone you love that you're taking care of... that's a lot of pressure.

So let me recommend to you Hero. Hero is your medicine cabinet, reinvented. The Hero pill dispenser sorts all daily medications and delivers them all with the push of a button. And more than that, if medication isn't taken, the Hero app will send a notification to you, a family member, or caregiver so a dose is never missed.

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Don't forget – that's HeroHealth.com/Shmanners.

[theme music plays]

Travis: Okay, now, this is one that I use. There's a lot of hat-related idioms.

Teresa: You like the hat-related ones.

Travis: I do! It's got a good energy to it. There's one that I used that, for a long time, I thought I'd made up. Or I thought my family had made up. But

I think we did not, and it is like, 'throw your hat over the fence.' And it's like, I am committing to this action, because once your hat is over the fence, you're gonna have to go over the fence to get it.

So it's kind of saying like, "Y'know what? I'm gonna throw my hat over the fence and say, I will figure this out."

Teresa: It's very similar to 'throw your hat in the ring.'

Travis: Right. So that's the phrase. 'Throw your hat in the ring.'

Teresa: That's the one that we have. Because in that way, you um, are going to take up the challenge, right?

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Or you're going to—you're gonna put your foot in the door.
[laughs] Another one.

Travis: That one, though, I get! That one's clear to me, right? Because that's like, you're a salesman. You're gonna put a foot in the door so that they can't close the door so you can keep going with your pitch, right?

Teresa: Right. You're gonna throw your hat in the ring so you have to get up and go get it.

Travis: Right.

Teresa: Um, and—

Travis: But your hat in the ring—what—

Teresa: Boxing. Boxing.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Let's talk about boxing.

Travis: Let's talk about boxing.

Teresa: There's a whole like, boxing...

Travis: The beautiful dance.

Teresa: ... language.

Travis: The punchathon, as it's called.

Teresa: Um, it was normally so crowded with people around it, uh, that if you wanted to enter into the fight, it was useless to shout about it, because there were just too many people. So to make your intentions known, you would quite literally throw your hat in the ring, allowing you to get in the ring for you to fight in order to retrieve it.

Travis: Okay. So, as long as we're talking about boxing...

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Let's jump ahead a little bit to 'throw in the towel,' meaning 'to quit.' And mostly, when I hear 'throw in the towel,' I think of it in terms, not just about quitting, but like... I have tried really hard, I have come up against great resistance, I've tried to find a solution, and I can't. I'm giving up.

Teresa: Something about 'throw in the towel' makes me picture, like you've mopped the sweat off of your brow. And now you are finished, so you no longer need the sweaty towel. You throw it.

Travis: Right. Yes. Like, more—like, wave the white flag kind of deal. That deal of like, I have fought, and I am surrendering. And it comes from boxing, right? Like, I—

Teresa: Right.

Travis: This—this—I think—okay. I'm gonna read it.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Because it's believed to have come from the boxing world, where the coach or a teammate would literally throw a towel in the ring in order to signal that the fighter had been, uh, defeated. And this very much, like you were talking before, about it being so crowded, um, that you would not be able to hear the yells of like, the coach or something, saying like, "Hey, stop stop stop." You needed a visible signal.

And not just ringing the bell, 'cause ringing the bell was what the official would do. But this is like... my boxer is losing, and is unable to—maybe they're unconscious, or they're in danger or whatever, so I'm gonna throw in the towel and say like, this is done, stop it, stop it, stop it.

Teresa: Makes sense.

Travis: I think of, there's a line in a Bob's Burgers song, too, about uh... [sings] "You have the towel, but don't throw it in. If you do, then you cannot win. That's how rules work."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's just a great line.

Teresa: That is a great line. Another boxing one! Let's do 'bring home the bacon.'

Travis: Wait, this is a boxing one?

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: [gasps] Okay! So bring home the bacon is like, earn a living.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: Which I just assume is like, bacon was expensive. I made enough money that I could go buy bacon and bring it home. It's not that?

Teresa: So it probably started in, um, Essex, England, in the 1100s. So it was customary for the church to award a side of bacon to newly married couples.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Because for that reason, it was expensive. It was a luxury gift. Right? Um, and that had been going on a long time, but it... it's kind of a diagonal journey to the way we use it today.

Um, it wasn't used in the US until around 1906, when Joe Gans fought Oliver Nelson in the World Lightweight Championship boxing match.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: So, Gans' mother sent him a telegram right before that told him to bring home the bacon in regard to the fight.

Travis: Okay!

Teresa: So when Joe Gans won, which made him, by the way, the first native born African American to win a world boxing title...

Travis: Nice.

Teresa: He wrote back to his mom, saying that he had not only the bacon, but the gravy. And sports writers loved this so much that the phrase spread into general usage.

Travis: I love, so much, when we talk about an idiom's history, and you can pinpoint the first time it was used. It just, to me, shows the influence of like... someone can create a famous, like, saying or idiom, right? Just by

saying it once, and not just like, "Oh, it was a slang term that caught on." But like, this person said, "Bring home the bacon," and everybody went, "Oh, that's great. I love that." And it became a thing.

Now, here's one that I asked about. 'Blowing smoke,' right? And usually, I would hear this, uh, as someone denying it. Like, "I'm not blowing smoke. I'm not exaggerating, or I'm not trying to like, distract you." Of like, for example, I most often, I would say, I either use it or hear it used when you're like, complimenting someone. Of like, "No, I'm not blowing smoke." Of like, "I'm not just trying to distract you by buttering you up and saying nice things."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Right? And what it—I kind of—I honestly, until I read, uh, the history of it, the origin of it, I had no idea what it was connected to.

Teresa: This makes sense in a quite literal fashion. It comes from street magicians, uh, quite literally releasing smoke in the air to cover up their sleight of hand tricks. So that's the kind of thing where like, y'know... look over here! Is that distraction, or what is it called when you...

Travis: Misdirection.

Teresa: Misdirection! Exactly. So this was cover for them to slide a card, or release a bird, or perform some—

Travis: Do magic stuff, y'know?

Teresa: —thing. Yeah.

Travis: Okay. Now, before we wrap up... let's talk about 'call it a day.'

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay. And this is like, y'know, to stop working, finish a project, wrap it up... which, once again, 'wrap it up.' Maybe that's about food? I don't know.

Teresa: That's another one. I don't know.

Travis: Wrap it up. We're gonna call it a day. Oh, y'know what? Let's not start a new project. Let's call it a day.

Teresa: So, this phrase first popped up in 1838 when a worker was leaving for home before he finished everything. So originally, the phrase would've been 'calling it a half day.'

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: In other words, call the work that I did today a half day's worth of work. You get it?

Travis: Okay. We're gonna call it a day.

Teresa: We're gonna call it a half day, even though I was here all day, 'cause I didn't get much done. Right? So only pay me for a half day, no matter how much time I did.

Travis: Okay. Okay, sure.

Teresa: Um, and so, it also was like, you can say goodbye this way to other employees who were leaving before the work day was over.

Travis: So like, technically, if you were using it appropriately, you wouldn't actually use it at the end of the work day. It wouldn't be like, okay, well, I'm working nine to five, so at five o'clock you wouldn't say, "I'm calling it a day." Right? You would say like, "Well, I was supposed to be here nine to five, but it's three o'clock, and everything's done. I don't have anything left to do, so I'm gonna call it a day."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: “And head home.”

Teresa: That’s one way. Or, uh... you could also use it in the opposite way of, “I didn’t get hardly anything done today from nine to five, so I’m gonna call it a half day, even though I was here nine to five. I only got half a day’s work done.”

Travis: Okay. Okay. Got it.

Teresa: What’s the word for those words that like, are spelled the same, but mean opposites?

Travis: Uhhh... well, so, there’s a word, ‘contronym.’

Teresa: Contronym! Yeah!

Travis: A contronym is a word that you can use, uh, to mean its own opposite. Like, fast. He ran fast, or it stuck fast. Right? That kind of deal.

Teresa: This phrase feels very contranymative.

Travis: Gotcha. Um, so, there’s also, uh, as part of this series of idioms, there’s some idioms we should not use anymore. Um, for example—and listen, some of you listening, maybe these are like, “Yeah, obviously. Obviously don’t use those anymore.” But for some people listening, the thing about idioms, and one of the things that we’re finding more and more as we talk about them, is that they are so commonplace that, sometimes, you don’t even think about the fact that you’re using them.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: For example, calling a meeting a ‘powwow.’ Right? “Let’s have a powwow.” That’s not—that word belongs to indigenous people. It was an incredibly important celebration that was often exploited when Native Americans were forced under reservations. It is not, like, a fun thi—“Oh, let’s have a little powwow.” No! Don’t do this!

Teresa: Another word belonging to indigenous people is 'the big kahuna.' It's offensive to indigenous Hawaiians, because 'kahuna' is used to refer to a priest or a shaman, and uh, why would you put someone like, if you're saying your boss is the big kahuna... they're not a priest or a shaman, so... don't use it.

Travis: Y'know, as long as we're doing that? Totem pole. Don't use 'well on the totem pole.' Ehh... no. Uh, especially since, unless I'm mistaking it, most people use that wrong, too. Because I remember learning about totem poles, and learning that the bottom, like, figure on the totem pole was often the most important, because it supported all of everything else, and it was usually oftentimes most respected.

And so, saying 'the low man on the totem pole' also just doesn't make any sense. So don't use that anymore.

Also, 'uppity.' I think 'uppity' might be one that people use without thinking about it a lot, because it sounds like, oh, y'know, that is—you're calling someone snobby. But actually, it was originally used to describe black people who "didn't know their place." So—

Teresa: Quote, "didn't know their place."

Travis: Yes. Quote, "didn't know their place." It was used as a very huge insult. Don't—no. Uppity is not good. Don't do it anymore.

Um, and y'know what? There's plenty more that we can talk about not using, and we will in future idiom episodes.

Um, if you have suggestions for idioms you would like to hear us discuss and go into, or ones that you're like, "Hey, don't use these anymore," uh, you can email us. ShmannersCast@gmail.com.

Um, we have Twitter. It's @ShmannersCast. But if you send suggestions for idioms or topics there, we will probably not see them, and they might get lost in the shuffle. So emailing topics and idioms is a way better call.

Also, one last time – I'm gonna remind everybody that it's MaxFunDrive, it's gonna be going on for a couple weeks. But, if you would like to become a Max Fun member, if you are able to, don't wait. Go to MaximumFun.org/Join. When you do, you will list what shows you listen to, and your support will go to the art and artists that you love. And you'll get rewarded for it. It's super cool. MaximumFun.org/Join.

Let's see, what else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brental Floss" Black for our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art. Again, @ShmannersCast. Tweet at us, and we'll thank you!

Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners, which is a great place to join to get and give excellent advice from other fans of the show.

Travis: So, I think that is gonna do it for us. Though, I want to say thank you to Alex, without whom, we would not be able to do this. Thank you, Alex. And thank you to everybody who has supported Shmanners in the past and made us able to pay Alex to help us out! Because y'know, I don't know if folks know this – we've got two kids.

Teresa: And you should pay people for the work they do for you.

Travis: Yes, that too. But I won't pay our kids for—

Teresa: No, they don't do any work for us.

Travis: Oh, we're talking about Al—okay, great.

Teresa: I have just managed to teach Bebe how to fold a washcloth. She has a lot of work to do.

Travis: That's fair.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Alright, and that's gonna do it for us jo—mm? 'That's gonna do it for us jokes' is what I started to say? Ugh.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That's gonna do it for us, folks. Join us again next time.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners.

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners! Get it!

[theme music plays]

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