

Shmanners 402: Idioms Part 14

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[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. Hello, dear.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: I almost forgot for a second, that you say dove and I say dear. And I was like, "What?"

Travis: Oh boy. See, this is what happens when we record so late. Oh, it's so late!

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It's 3:19 PM!

Teresa: More like it's just been... a few days since I had my brain pills.

Travis: That's true.

Teresa: Easter Monday! Is that a thing?

Travis: [simultaneously] Easter Monday.

Teresa: I didn't know that was a thing.

Travis: Ugh. Easter Monday?

Teresa: Anyway, the pharmacy was closed, so... now it's open and I'm better now.

Travis: Perfect. Also, speaking of better now, thank you everybody for your support in the MaxFunDrive. It was a great year. Had lots of fun. Um, lots of great support. Thank you to everybody who became a member, who upgraded their membership, who boosted their membership, everybody who helped spread the word, everybody who watched streams, everybody who helped in whatever they can, thank you so much.

Teresa: Yes, indeed! Enjoy those 600 hours of bonus content over this next year.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I'll be giving quizzes.

Travis: Oh boy.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Okay, so... we're back, with another idioms.

Teresa: Yes, indeed! This is our 13th episode of idioms.

Travis: 13th idioms episode? That's amazing!

Teresa: Yeah!

Travis: I love idioms.

Teresa: And this is great because we love that everybody keeps sending them in. Uh, 'cause as long as there's stuff to talk about, we'll talk about it. Send it in.

Travis: I mean, that's true of me in general.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: As long as there's anything I can talk about, I'll talk about it. Okay. Give me that first one. What's that first one?

Teresa: Birds of a feather flock together.

Travis: Okay. So this is... I... this is basically—I'm trying to think of it in, like, a, I've always heard it used this way. But basically it means to me, like... uh, people who act a certain way or like a certain thing or whatever tend to group up.

Teresa: Yeah, totally.

Travis: Right? So you could use it either positively—like, oh, these theater kids have found each other in this whole school. Ah, birds of a feather will flock together. Or you could use it like, why is it always these three—you always see these three ruffians together. Ah, well, birds of a feather.

Teresa: Those miscreants will always find each other.

Travis: Exactly.

Teresa: Um, yes. Mica T. sent this in. Thank you so much. And it goes all the way back to ancient times.

Travis: Wait, really?

Teresa: Yeah. The first mention of like seeking like was recorded in the Book of Ecclesiastes.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: The quote being, "Birds dwell with their kind." So it's a literal natural observation that serves as a handy metaphor. And since Ecclesiastes

was essential to both Hebrew and Christian holy books, the folksy phrase likely entered the public lexicon around the time that literacy rates in Europe began to rise. So once people started actually reading the books instead of having the books read to them, it spread a little further around.

Um, and, you know, the full English saying of "Birds of a feather flock together" was first recorded in 1545.

Travis: I see. Oh, and that was when birds started flocking together.

Teresa: No.

Travis: 'Cause birds read that and they were like, "Oh! That's a good point! Why are we kee—that makes a lot of sense!" 'Cause at that point it was like you'd see penguins and ostriches hanging out together.

Teresa: Nah.

Travis: They were stepping on each other—

Teresa: Mm-mm.

Travis: —and the penguins would be like, "Let's go swimming!" And the ostriches was like, "Dude. I... [sighs] I don't know what to tell you." Can ostriches swim?

Teresa: That's not true.

Travis: Can ostriches swim?

Teresa: I don't think so.

Travis: Okay. But tell me right now, if you were gonna bet money on it...

Teresa: No.

Travis: Say it's a 50/50 shot, do ostriches swim?

Teresa: They got the wrong kind of feathers, dude.

Travis: Okay. You're probably right, but I need to look it up 'cause I'm picturing it, and they got those long, graceful legs. Do... ostriches... you can keep going.

Teresa: Okay, okay. Um, I think that in my experience I have heard it more in the positive, that people who share interests and likes tend to come together, than I have in the negative. But that's just me.

Travis: Yeah. Um, the Cincinnati Zoo—someone from the Cincinnati Zoo tweeted about this. And it's maybe—

Teresa: About birds?

Travis: About ostriches. Ostriches can swim, but it's not common behavior.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay.

Travis: It makes me picture, like, if some other ostriches saw it an ostrich swim and they'd be like, "Weirdo."

Teresa: [laughs] Watch—

Travis: What do they do?

Teresa: [simultaneously] Watch your mouth, sir.

Travis: I almost—I know, I almost did, but I didn't! I didn't! "What a weirdo." You know what I mean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And it'd be like, "Well yeah, I mean, we could all swim."

"Yeah, we can all swim! But we don't do it! We don't do it. But look at Gary over there, just swimmin' away."

Teresa: I don't imagine it's very comfortable for them. Like I said, the wrong kind of feathers.

Travis: I guess that's true. They kind of look like—

Teresa: [simultaneously] Hey, here's another—

Travis: —swans.

Teresa: Here's another idiom.

Travis: Big, ugly swans. Okay.

Teresa: Just the necks. Um, "Third time's a charm," submitted by Ann M.

Travis: Okay. I know what this means. And I think I know where it comes from.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Okay. So what it means is like, we've tried it three time and on the third time it'll work, right? Third time's the charm.

Teresa: Sure.

Travis: What I think it comes from... because they talk in, uh—I think it's in... um... Macbeth, right? Where it says something thrice? And, like, they talk about it in the Dresden books about, like, casting. I think it's literally like a charm. You repeat a thing three times to cast a spell.

Teresa: Um... sure. But probably before that.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Um... so, seen in print 1839, but way before that. Um, in print it was mentioned by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, who wrote a letter to R. H. Horne saying "The luck of the third adventure, if proverbial."

So, I mean, it was al—

Travis: Oh, so referencing it.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Okay. 'Cause you can't reference something as being proverbial if it's not already a proverb.

Teresa: Right. 'Cause it is already widely circulation, right?

Um, the number three is a sacred number in a host of religious traditions, all the way from, like, pagans who identify the sacred nature of earth, sea, and sky, to the holy trinity in Christianity, to a lot of different places, right? So three is considered powerful, and also lucky.

Interestingly, we see a similar origin with the superstition of 13 being an unlucky number.

Travis: [gasps] We—I just said! Wait, but I was just—[gasps]

Teresa: You did, I know. Interesting, huh?

Travis: Now, but there is the—so is the 13 sitting down for dinner... I know it's, like, modern, right? In, like, the last 200 years. But that's, like, from early 1900's, early 18—er, late 1800, right? You know, where it's the idea, the superstition that if 13 people sit down for dinner, whoever gets up first will be the next to day. Who—yeah.

Teresa: Yes. But indeed, it doesn't say immediately.

Travis: Well, no, but the next. They'll be the next to die.

Teresa: It's just the—it's just the next one. Whether that's in 20 years...
[laughs quietly]

Travis: But it just means like, "Ah, Derek got up."

Teresa: [simultaneously] Or 30 minutes, 20 minutes.

Travis: "The rest of us are cool."

Teresa: [laughs] Until Derek goes.

Travis: But then when Derek goes down, oh no.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It could be any of us next.

Teresa: We should look into that. Here's another one. "When in Rome, parentheses, (do as the Romans do)."

Travis: Okay. So this is basically like, um, when you are somewhere—uh, like for example say you go to a nude beach, right? This is not something you would normally do. Ah, but here, why not do it? When at the nude beach, why not go nude, right?

So then you would say, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Basically, uh, you are adapting to the customs of the location you're at.

Teresa: Yes. Mel G. sent in this in. And while that is true... the phrase is very old, again. Often attributed to St. Ambrose, who was a massive proponent of Roman Christianity in the 300's.

He's credited with being the first person to attest that, quote, "If you should be in Rome, live in the Roman manner. If you should be elsewhere, live as they do there."

Okay, that's a—I mean, it's a lot longer.

Travis: Yeah, but I mean—

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I do like that that is not only saying "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," but then following that to it's logical conclusion which is, "And then if you're not in Rome and you're somewhere else, do what they do there."

Teresa: So, wait. Definitely your example of, say, the nude beach, right? That is one way of using this phrase. But the other way is attributed to Romans historically were very quick to punish, especially anyone who broke the law. So a misstep in Roman society would quickly make you the victim of everything maybe from, like, a public shaming to, uh, to banishment, or to worse, right? Meaning that you, you know, could be used—the phrase could be used to justify behavior that you wouldn't normally partake in, but also a warning to act accordingly, lest you be punished.

Travis: Okay. Do as the Romans do.

Teresa: Interesting.

Travis: Or else.

Teresa: Or else! Here's another one.

Travis: Please.

Teresa: "Give up the ghost."

Travis: Okay! So, this is when something's been—oh, I was about to say "On its last leg," which is another idiom.

Teresa: [laughs] It's another one.

Travis: When something has been, uh, struggling for a while, like if you have a car that is, uh, breaking down, but you're able to keep kind of squeezing a couple more miles out of it, one more trip. And then when it won't work anymore after being on the edge for so long, it finally gives up the ghost.

It's not when something suddenly breaks, right? It's when something has been kind of struggling for a while and finally stops working.

Teresa: Or additionally, stopping doing something because you know it won't work. Right?

Travis: I guess, yeah. If you use it as like, "Let's just give up the ghost on this," yeah?

Teresa: Yes, yes.

Travis: Okay, I guess.

Teresa: Because, like that car that you said, after it, quote, "gives up the ghost," you don't use it anymore because you know it won't work.

Travis: Yeah. But I think in both circumstances it would be associated with, like, "Listen, we've been struggling with this for a while." Right? Whether figuratively or literally, right?

And it might be, like, a problem at work that you—and it's like, "You know what? We've been stuck on this one solution for a while and it's not working. I think we just need to give up the ghost."

Teresa: Um, Ann S. suggested this one. And it can also mean to pass away, right?

Travis: I mean, sure. You can give up your ghost.

Teresa: Sure. And, I mean, that's... that's probably one of the original ways that it was used.

Travis: Though I do like that image of, like, living is just tightly clinging to your ghost.

Teresa: [laughs] And then—

Travis: Just like, "No! This is mine!"

Teresa: Then you give it up.

Travis: Then at the end you're like, "Okay. Guh. Fine. Whoa!"

Teresa: Um, and this didn't set out to be a big biblical episode, but it does continue to arise.

Travis: Well, I don't know if you know this, um, that book has been very influential on American culture for reasons.

Teresa: [laughs] Uh, and give up the ghost comes specifically from the King James version of the bible. It is the description of how Jesus died in that particular edition. The exact phrasing is from Mark, chapter 13, verse 37, is "And Jesus cried—"

Travis: Wait. 13:37?

Teresa: 15:37. Is that what I said?

Travis: Okay. I thought it was 13. 'Cause 1337 is leet. Right? That's leet in gamer speak. So, I mean, [crosstalk]—

Teresa: Oh. Whoa.

Travis: I was gonna say, whoaaa.

Teresa: No. 15.

Travis: It's all connected. It's like the Da Vinci Code.

Teresa: [laughs] "And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost."

Travis: Okay. "[quietly] Wahh!" [laughs quietly]

Teresa: I mean, we always mention the print...

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: The print kind of thing. Okay. Um... are you ready?

Travis: Yeah. Always.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: But first, how about a word—

Teresa: Ah, you got me! [laughs]

Travis: How about a word from another Max Fun show?

[theme music plays]

[music plays]

Speaker 1: Thanks to everyone who contributed during this year's MaxFunDrive. We truly couldn't do what we do without you. With the drive in the rear view, it's time for another proud tradition: our annual charity pin sale!

This year, the proceeds for the pin sale will support Vote Riders, a nonprofit dedicated to expanding ballot access nationwide. Members at \$10 a month or more can purchase MaxFunDrive pins featuring shows from across the network, and all members are able to buy our network pin design, exclusive to this charity sale.

The sale is live now, and it ends Friday, April 12th. For more info, head to Maximumfun.org/pinsale. And thanks again for your support!

[music and ad end]

Griffin: From the twisted minds that brought you The Adventure Zone: Balance, and Amnesty, and Graduation, and Ethersea, and Steeplechase, and Outre Space, and all the other ones, the McElroy brothers and Dad are proud to reveal a bold vision for the future of actual play podcasting.

It's, um... it's called The Adventure Zone Versus Dracula?

[music plays]

Justin: Yeah, we're gonna kill Dracula's a—[crow caw].

Travis: Well, we're gonna attempt—we haven't recorded all of it yet. We will attempt to kill Dracula's a—[crow caw].

Justin: The Adventure Zone Versus Dracula.

Griffin: Yes. A season I will be running using the D&D 5th Edition rule set, and there's two episodes out for you to listen to right now! We hope you will join us. Same bat time, same bat channel, for more fun.

Clint: Bats. I see what you did there.

[music and ad end]

Travis: Okay. Now I'm ready.

Teresa: Now you're ready.

Travis: Now I'm really ready.

Teresa: This is one that I have not heard. Dun dun dun!

Travis: You've never heard this?

Teresa: Never heard this one.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: "Salad days."

Travis: Oh yeah! It's when everything is going right and it's the best of times, and you're like, "These are the salad days."

Usually I think I've heard it in, uh, like a retrospective form of, like, looking back at "Those were the salad days. Everything was going well, everything was going smoothly."

Teresa: Huh. Amanda suggested this one. And like you said, it can refer to the good old days, or perhaps the youthful peak.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Um, and this is attributed to William Shakespeare.

Travis: That guy?

Teresa: He used the phrase in 1606 in Antony and Cleopatra.

Travis: Oh, that's probably why we don't recognize it. Not a widely known one.

Teresa: Hm!

Travis: Not a widely known one of the 37!

Teresa: In the speech at the end of Act I, Cleopatra is expressing her regret of her youthful romantic dalliances with Julius Caesar. To express this she said, "My salad days, when I was green in judgment, cold in blood, to say as I said then."

Travis: Okay. I guess that kind of makes sense. I've always been confused by it. Because, like, salad is not normally evocative of, like, rich and, uh, decadent times. Right? Like if you said champagne days I would get that, right? Or if you said, like, filet mignon days, I would get that.

Teresa: Okay, well, I think that you have something here, because Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage says, "Whether the point is that youth, like salad, is raw, or that salad is highly flavored, and youth loves high flavors, or that innocent herbs are youth's food, as milk is babes' and meat

is men's, few of those who use the phrase could, perhaps, tell us. If so, it is fitter for parrots than for human speech."

Travis: Yes, I agree with this. Also knowing it come from Shakespeare, I can also give it an angle of without refrigeration and stuff, probably lettuce and fresh vegetables were probably quick to wilt, you know what I mean?

Teresa: Yeah, you gotta eat 'em while they're there.

Travis: And the difference being like meat—yeah, meat spoils too, but meat is, like, already pretty brown in color, right?

Teresa: One can preserve meat a little better as well. Salt it or whatever.

Travis: But if you think about, like, tomatoes, carrots, like, these bright, alive, vibrant colors that very quickly brown and wilt and stuff, I could see that, maybe? Yeah.

Teresa: Maybe. Maybe. Uh, here's one. "Put a sock in it." Another one from Mel G.

Travis: Now, this is "Be quiet. Stop talking." Right? Like, very easily, like, either somebody is running their mouth or they're—running their mouth, huh—or they're, um... I don't know. They are kind of critiquing somebody or they're being sassy and you say, "Ah, put a sock in it."

Teresa: I thought for sure that this had something more to do with the kind of, like, violence of socking someone. Like, hitting someone.

Travis: Oh, really?

Teresa: Maybe "Put a sock in it" means, like, "I'm gonna put my fist in your mouth to stop ya," something like that?

Travis: That—hey. I understand why you would think that, and I don't want—

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: —I don't—let's start with affirmations.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: I understand. "Sock it to me," yeah, "I'm gonna sock you," absolutely. Now, when it comes to the imagery of putting it in their mouth, "I'm gonna put my fist inside your mouth" is a wild leap.

Teresa: [laughs] Well, if you punch somebody, they're probably gonna stop talking about with they were talking about.

Travis: Yeah, but I would put—I would never say, "Oh, you better watch out or I'm gonna put a fist in your mouth."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: They would be like, "What do you mean?"

Teresa: That just means I'm gonna hit you?

Travis: But I also, to be fair, wouldn't say like, "I'm gonna put a fist on your face in a—in a strong and fast manner."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "I'm gonna use a lot of words to describe punching."

Teresa: So, the theory is that this phrase actually comes from slang during the first World War, and many assumed that it was because people would stuff socks into the horns of their early gramophones to quiet the music. Kind of like a mute you would put in a trumpet, right?

Travis: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Teresa: And so putting a sock in it came to mean "quiet down" or "be quieter," right?

Travis: Yeah, and that makes sense. 'Cause, like, when I think of that phrase, it is very, like, 1920's, 30's, 40's. "Yeah, put a sock [unintelligible]." Right? Like, I don't think of that as kids now. Like, if I was on the playground and I heard a seven-year-old say to another seven-year-old "Hey, put a sock in it!"

I would laugh my face off.

Teresa: To be fair, I don't know a lot of the slang that these kids are using these days anyway. [laughs]

Travis: I'll tell you, it ain't "Put a sock in it!" I'll tell you that much!

Teresa: What's with all this rizz and skibidi? I don't know. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. They would say, "Put a skibidi in it!"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: "Hey, go skibidi yourself, you rizzlord!"

Teresa: "Put that down your skibidi and choke on it." [laughs]

Travis: Yeah. "Put a rizz in your skibidi."

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. Uh, "Clean as a whistle," by Trace D. Or Tracy D.? I'm not sure.

Travis: I mean, it's—like, it's right there in it, but it's just like, usually as one also might say sparkling clean? Zestfully clean?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: That—but it is, like, cleaner than clean, right? It is like, oh my god, so clean. One might also say you could eat off of it.

Teresa: Yes. But this comes from a very literal thing. Back in the olden days, whistles themselves were carved from reeds or pieces of wood, and it

should have a very piercing, clear tone, right? But when it came to these original whistles, that piercing, clear tone took a lot of mastery to carve into your actual whistle.

So, like, something like a small piece of debris or a few drops of moisture could easily change the sound of your whistle to make it, you know, not as clear. So "Clean as a whistle" has to do with it getting that desired sound from being immaculately clear and clean.

Travis: What's interesting is I am now... the more I think about it, it's like my brain can't quite associate it with a specific imagery or scene or something, but picturing someone, like, cleaning the barrel of a gun, cleaning an instrument, cleaning even, like, glassware, something where it's like you are cleaning an item, even one where you're cleaning the inside of an item, right? And then saying, "Clean as a whistle."

Right? That it's not just like, oh, this room is clean as a whistle.

Teresa: Unless it was completely bare, right? That's when I would associate it.

Travis: Yeah. Maybe?

Teresa: With clean as a whistle. Like, if it was empty of furniture, and rugs, and lamps, and all that kind of stuff then I might describe a room as clean as a whistle.

Travis: But, see, I would think of it as, like, for example if I was cleaning some of the tubing on, like, my aquarium filter, right? And I got it all the way clean, I would describe that as clean as a whistle. And so I think it makes sense that it is, like, associated with "I'm cleaning something out."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Alright, yeah, makes sense.

Teresa: Yep, yep. Here's one.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: "Screwed the pooch."

Travis: Such a weird one.

Teresa: I know, right? I like the sound of it because of the—

Travis: Ooh and ooh?

Teresa: The assonance, is that what it's called?

Travis: The assonance, yes.

Teresa: This was submitted by Eva M. But it still is quite evocative, right? Screw the pooch?

Travis: Yeah. It's usually like you did something that ruined the plan, I think?

Teresa: Yeah. Messed up!

Travis: Yeah, but not just messed up like "Oh, you tripped!" But like, you kind of got in your own way, or, uh, you fumbled the ball on that one. Or you—you did something in such a way that made it all go wrong.

Like, say you were trying to do a presentation at work and you inadvertently made a joke in it that you were like, "Oh, this is gonna kill," and it ended up, like, offending the boss?

Teresa: "This is gonna kill," that's another one.

Travis: Yeah. You ended up offending the boss and you're like, "Ugh. I really screwed the pooch on that one."

Teresa: Yes. Which I must assure our audience—

Travis: I don't like saying it.

Teresa: —that this does not entail any harming of animals. It's a euphemistic version of the original expression, which was...

Travis: Ooh. There's some censoring going on. [crosstalk]

Teresa: Censoring going on. Of "Breed the dog and sell the pups," but a lot more, you know, slangtastic.

Travis: Yeah, I understand.

Teresa: Um, and that was the more vulgar of the original phrase, which was "Feed the dog."

Travis: Okay. What's it mean?

Teresa: It was popular in the 1910's, and it meant to say that you were being lazy or loafing around, because dogs were often referred to to signal laziness. And since it was an undesirable quality, "feed the dog" became "breed the dog," which... the phrase got slangified in World War II. And so now it means referring to blundering or making a public and humiliating mistake.

Travis: So, wait. It was before "breed the dog and sell the pups."

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So...

Teresa: Screw the pooch specifically, though, wasn't until around 1979, 1960's, in there, right? Um, it became very popularized with the book-turned-movie *The Right Stuff*, which was based on the Mercury 7 space program. So, according to Tom Wolfe, screwing the pooch was 1960's NASA jargon, and it was included in this to make it more authentic.

Travis: Okay. Okay.

Teresa: Though, that's hotly contested.

Travis: [gasps]

Teresa: Because radio DJ Jack May, also known as Candied Yam Jackson? Never heard of that.

Travis: I like that, though.

Teresa: [laughs quietly] Claimed publicly that it was him who turned the "breed the dog" into "screw the pooch." Um, and he claims he started using the phrase in the spring of 1950 after he got into a friendly argument with his roommate, who was Jon Rollings, a NASA engineer.

Travis: Ohhh! Turtles all the way down!

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: Okay. I guess I'm still trying to make sense how the phrase "breed the dog and sell the pups" was used?

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: Was that like you would say, like, "Oh, you really bred the dog and sold the pups on that one." Or was it like, "Well, you know what they say, breed the dog and sell the pups."

Teresa: Um, I mean, I think... I think that it's more that, like, you really went all the way down this bad path.

Travis: Got it, okay. Yes, okay. Okay. Now I got it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: You've spread this in the world kind of deal.

Teresa: [laughs] exactly.

Travis: Okay, okay.

Teresa: Um, and this is the part of idioms now where we go through things that maybe your grandpa always said and you never heard anyone else say in your whole life.

Travis: Like when your grandpa is like, "I want to order an apple pie here." And we're like, "Grandpa, we're at Taco Bell." And he's like, "I don't care where we are. I would like an apple pie, please." And you're like, "Grandpa, they don't have apple pie at Taco Bell." And he's like, "I know. Funny, huh?" And you're like, "It's pretty funny." That happens.

Teresa: Did it?

Travis: Yeah. My Papa was sitting in the back of the car this one time. We were going through a drive through and we were at Taco Bell and he was like, "Uh, apple pie?" And my mom was like, "No, dad, what? No." And he's like, "I just want an apple pie please?"

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: And in the back he was leaning over to me and Justin and Griffin going, "I know they don't have it." And it was very, very, very funny to me.

Teresa: Okay. Oh, man. Your poor mom.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: Um, here's one from Cameron. "Hello! My fiancé—"

Travis: Hello!

Teresa: [laughs quietly] "My fiancé will not stop saying 'It's a horse apiece.' I have never heard anyone else say this and I am convinced that they made it up. Please help? Is this nonsense?"

Travis: That—okay. It's ringing a very small bell for me. I'm trying to—"It's a horse apiece." I don't know what it means, though, but I swear I've heard it before.

Teresa: It's very reminiscent of "Six of one, half-dozen of the other," right? It means that two things are basically of the same value.

Travis: Oh, okay.

Teresa: It dates back to the 1800's, and actually has nothing to do with horses.

Travis: Oh?

Teresa: It comes from an old dice game called Horse, and in this game if two players each lose a turn it was said that they were at a horse apiece, because both had had the same result.

Travis: But if two players both skip a turn how can you tell? [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs] I mean, I guess lose your turn.

Travis: Yeah, but... then it—doesn't it just... keep going for there? Or do they sit quietly for the length of time the turn would take?

Teresa: I mean, it was [crosstalk]—

Travis: And think about what they've done.

Teresa: —describing the event of both of you losing turns.

Travis: Okay, you lose your turn and I lose my turn. Your turn! [laughs quietly]

Teresa: [laughs quietly] I don't think it has to happen in succession.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I don't think we have to both lose a turn, one and then the other.

Travis: I honestly can't imagine a scenario in which that happens.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Unless I was playing and I played lose a turn on you and myself, somehow? Like, just to speed things along.

Teresa: Uno Reverse. The Uno Reverse.

Travis: But you can't—but you've lost a turn! So I get to go again. But it's—anyways. This doesn't matter.

Teresa: Okay. Uh, Rachel C wrote in several delicious idioms. Here we go. Um, these are Latin idioms.

Travis: Ooh-la-la!

Teresa: "Fides Punica" translate to "Punic trust."

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Refers to the Carthaginians during the Punic Wars, who were a longstanding enemy of the Romans. Therefore, Fides Punica refers to the greatest treachery or faithlessness.

Travis: Hmm, okay. Never heard that one.

Teresa: "Rem acu ti—tetigisti." I think. Literally means "To touch the matter with a needle," or "Hit the nail on the head."

Travis: Or put a fine point on it.

Teresa: Oh!

Travis: Yeah?

Teresa: Yeah. Here's one. Um, "Nuces relenquere." Meaning "To relinquish the nuts."

Travis: Excuse me? 'Scusi?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: One more?

Teresa: Uh, it's a common childhood game in ancient Rome, which used nuts like one would play marbles.

Travis: Oh, okay. Alright.

Teresa: And it also means to cast of childish things, right? 'Cause it's a game.

Travis: Ohhh. Give up your nuts.

Teresa: Yes. Here's some from August.

"My Tennessee dad used to say. I don't think I've heard these outside of my family and was wondering if they had any history or if my dad just kind of dad just kind of made 'em up."

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: "There ain't no gettin' the lid back on that can of worms."

Travis: Um... the thing is is once you get to can of worms it's hard for me to be like, yeah, that's common, or not. 'Cause, like, open up another can of worms is like, you're opening something you can't, like, close again, right? Once it's open we gotta dive into it, we gotta deal with it.

Teresa: Yeah, the worms are everywhere.

Travis: The worms are everywhere. So there ain't no lid get—is I think just another iteration of "open up another can of worms." Right?

Teresa: I think so. Yes. Probably. I mean, because, like, once you open the can of worms you have a whole other problem that leads to other problems, right? You've opened it, and then the worms are everywhere. Then, I mean, you couldn't put a lid back on it. I think it's just an elaboration on that, probably.

Travis: Well, it's also two different—it's like a bookend of—you can either say "Let's not get into that can of worms" or "Let's not open up that can of worms" before the thing happens, but once a big, like, this is gonna be a big discussion topic is introduced, then you'd say, "Well, there's no getting the lid back on that can of worms." Right? Once is before the event and the other one's after.

Teresa: How about, "Slicker than owl poop," not using poop, but the alliterative.

Travis: Yeah, no. Slicker than blank—well, slicker than animal feces of different kind. I've heard all those, yeah.

Teresa: Yes, all kinds. Um, but here's the thing, right?

Travis: I don't think it's usually owl, though. Slicker than...

Teresa: I mean, any kind of avian poop is quite liquidy, right? But owl, I thought, pellets were not liquidy.

Travis: Well, they leave—isn't it bolls or something that they call—where it's like the chunks of stuff?

Teresa: Yeah, the pellets things.

Travis: Slicker than... I'm trying to think of what I have heard, right? And maybe it is, like, pigeon I've heard?

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: But it's also hard because "Finer than frog's hair" gets stuck in my head, because frog's hair is so fine it doesn't exist, right? It's finer than fro—"How are you doing?"

"Finer than frog's hair."

Teresa: So slick has a very interesting etymology. Um, it was originally—

Travis: I think I've just heard "Slicker than feces." I don't think I often hear—yeah.

Teresa: It was originally a British phrase that meant someone arrogant or potentially a con man, but in the 1930's slick started actually being used for a synonym for smooth and glossy and shiny, so those were nice things, right?

Travis: I don't necessarily think those are two different things, though.

Teresa: Oh yeah?

Travis: Right? Because you could very much talk about slick as, like, a veneer, right? Of I'm not saying that they're not—I think that they are connected, right?

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Where it's just like, if someone is a con man, right? Then they usually have a slick suit. They have slick hair, right? Like, this thing of...

Teresa: They appear smooth and shiny.

Travis: Exactly. Right? And so, like, I've always connected—like, I've never thought of those as two separate concepts. It'd be like, "Oh, that's slick." Right? It's like, it's cool, right? That's very impressive. But also—like, it's a cool trick is usually how I would use. Like, "Oh, that's slick." Right? That's a cool trick.

Not like, "Oh, you've learned math. Slick." Right?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: It would be like—it would usually be, like, related to something performatively impressive?

Teresa: Hmm, okay. Now, what about the different types of poops? So we say, like, bull poop, horse poop, dog poop, right? Do these hold different connotations for you? For example, um, Alexx said that if you think about—if she thinks about it, bull poop is like, bad information, right?

Travis: Yeah, a lie.

Teresa: A lie. Dog poop is like something broken. But maybe horse poop is something unreasonably mean or cruel.

Travis: Yeah. I agree. Like, if I said—if something bad happened to me or something I would be like, "This is horse poop. What I'm dealing with right now? This is horse poop."

But if someone lied to me I'd be like, "You're talking bull poop. You're talking bull poop."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And if someone said, "Hey, do you wanna buy this car?" And it was all broken up, I would be like, "That car is dog poop."

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I could see that.

Teresa: Before I—before she wrote that to me I was like, "No, it all seems kind of the same." But I think you are correct that they do have different connotations. And I don't know why, like, bird poop or owl poop or, like you said, pigeon poop feels slicker. I mean, I guess—

Travis: 'Cause when it hits it spreads out, baby. That's slick.

Teresa: But if one were to step in... poop...

Travis: That's why I think I've always just heard "Slicker than... " that.

Teresa: Just—just—

Travis: Not with an animal in there. Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. Hmm.

Travis: Can I also just say, this conversation is making me think it's a shame that we don't teach profanity in public schools.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Because there's a lot going on here.

Teresa: There is a lot going on.

Travis: Um... and the fact that our children have to learn that at home...

Teresa: I know.

Travis: I know.

Teresa: Um, Alexx is asking now specifically if people would like to send in how they view the world of other poops, like has anyone heard a lie called out as elephant poop, or is zebra poop is a thing, or whatever. Um, so—

Travis: Am I the only person who says bull corn? Am I the only person who says horse apples and bull corn?

Teresa: Maybe.

Travis: "This is bull corn!"

Teresa: Send those in.

Travis: "You know what? This is horse apples! I'm dealing with this? This is horse apples!"

Am I the only one who says that?

Teresa: I don't know.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Send those in to Alexx at shmannerscast@gmail.com.

Travis: 'Cause she reads every one. Also, we want to tell you about our new—well, it's ours as a McElroy product—a streaming show called Clubhouse. Me, Justin, and Griffin host it every week on Tuesdays at noon Eastern Time over at bit.ly/mcelroyyoutube, or you can search for McElroy Family on YouTube. We just did an episode with Ron Funches as the guest. It was super fun and I think you'll like it. It's still up there.

Um, we also are still doing our video game streams there as well every other Tuesday, so check that out. Just search for McElroy Family Clubhouse or go to the McElroy Family YouTube.

We also have new merch over at the merch store, 'cause it's a new month! We've got a TAZ Vs Dracula poster by Zachary Sterling. We've got a Rest In Peace Miggie Mackerel sticker, which you'll know from Clubhouse.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: We've got a wombat pin with dangling cubes of poop... fittingly. Designed by Tricia Swinyer. That's from a conversation Griffin and Rachel had on Wonderful.

Teresa: Because wombats are wonderful.

Travis: And they poop squares—er, cubes, excuse me. Not just flat—it's not, like, flat. That would be weird.

Teresa: Like Cheez-Its.

Travis: Yeah, it's not weird—

Teresa: [laughs loudly]

Travis: I guess it's weird that they're cubes, too. But less weird than them being two-dimensional. 10% of all proceeds this month will go to the Palestine Children's Relief Fund. Um, we also want to thank our editor, Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. As we said, thank you to our researcher, Alexx, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to you for listening. We could make this show without you, but why? That'd be weird!

Teresa: We wouldn't. I mean, we wouldn't.

Travis: It'd be so weird and lonely, talking to the void! What else, Teresa?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also, thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

As always, these idioms are completely submission based. I mean, except for the ones that we write down ourselves.

Travis: Or that I think of in the moment, 'cause I don't like writing things down, 'cause then I can be tracked. I don't leave a paper trail!

Teresa: So please—

Travis: I'm off the grid!

Teresa: —continue to submit your idioms and your questions.

Travis: I might be the least off the grid person.

Teresa: [laughs] And your topic suggestions. Uh, and that email is, again, shmannerscast@gmail.com. Say hi to Alexx, because she reads every single one.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required!

Travis: You've been listening to Shmanners...

Teresa: Manners, Shmanners. Get it?

[theme music plays]

[chord]

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