

## Grade 8 -- Informational Flapjacks or Pancakes? Understanding Our Language

"Nice sneakers!" Chances are you won't hear that if you live in our nation's Midwest. In Nebraska, athletic shoes are often referred to as tennis shoes, which is rather odd considering that the majority of the wearers are not on the tennis court. The words we use are part of our vernacular, language associated with a geographic region. That is why at breakfast this morning you may have eaten a pancake, a flapjack, a griddle cake, or maybe even a silver dollar. All of those are perfectly appropriate terms for your short-stack smothered in syrup. While synonyms such as soda, cola, or pop are easily deciphered, some colorful phrases create more confusion.

Idioms are phrases we use in everyday language which are not meant to be taken literally. When someone asks if the cat's got your tongue, it has nothing to do with a feline. Instead it refers to someone who isn't speaking up. Whereas your teacher may understand her directions to proceed to the gym "as the crow flies," you may be left standing with a confused look on your face. Imagine the confusion for an English language learner. Not only must one learn the dictionary definitions, but one must also become familiar with the many idioms used on a daily basis, and that's no "piece of cake."

Linguists who study the language have an interesting job. One of those is to add and subtract words from our language based on usage. Couch potato can now be found in many dictionaries, but you'll have a hard time locating vinyl record. Dictionaries are basically descriptive, not prescriptive. That means the goal is to observe how words are being used and define them based on current usage. If dictionaries were prescriptive, definitions wouldn't evolve. Linguists would prescribe how the word should be used and we would follow suit, but that's not how it works. Technology is a perfect example of the prescriptive process. Technology has spawned hundreds of new terms like spam, blog, podcast, and instant messaging. As words are created to fill a need in a society, lexicographers work to accurately define them. It's a continuous cycle.

But the change doesn't end with new words. Old words often take on new meanings. A generation ago people "zipped" their lips or their jacket; but, today it is common practice to "zip" a document before sending it electronically. The language also morphs with the addition of slang terms that quickly become part of conversation. Many of these terms will eventually become dictionary entries. Remember the first time you discovered that "ain't" was actually in the dictionary? Unfortunately, most of us failed to notice the notation immediately following its entry that described it as slang or colloquial. Just because it is in the dictionary doesn't mean it is considered standard or formal English used by schools and businesses.

Like a fully developed character in a great novel, our language is dynamic and not static. Don't be surprised if twenty years down the road a young person looks at you in a state of confusion when you tell them to just "chill" for a while.

1) Using context clues, which is the synonym for **deciphered** in "While synonyms such as soda, cola, or pop are easily deciphered, some colorful phrases create more confusion."? (LA.8.1.5.a)

- a) encoded
- b) interpreted
- c) read
- d) written

2) What does the word **prescribe** mean in this passage? (LA.8.1.5.c)

- a) to enforce rules
- b) to order the use of medicine
- c) to make a prescriptive claim
- d) to claim a right by virtue of long use and enjoyment

3) Which context clue strategy do you use to understand the meaning of the word **vernacular** in this sentence, "The words we use are part of our vernacular, language associated with a geographic region."? (LA.8.1.5.c)

- a) annotation
- b) example
- c) restatement
- d) sidebar

4) What is the author's purpose? (LA.8.1.6.a)

- a) inform the reader of what an idiom is
- b) entertain the reader about the language
- c) persuade the reader that language is always changing
- d) persuade the reader that people in certain geographic regions speak better English than others

5) The phrase "cat's got your tongue" is an example of which literary device? (LA.8.1.6.c)

- a) adage
- b) idiom
- c) imagery
- d) metaphor

6) What is the main idea of the passage? (LA.8.1.6.d)

- a) Idioms are phrases we use in everyday language.
- b) Linguists who study the language have interesting jobs.
- c) Our language changes and doesn't stay the same.
- d) Our language doesn't change; it stays the same.

7) Which organizational pattern does the passage fit? (LA.8.1.6.d)

- a) sequence
- b) cause/effect
- c) proposition/support
- d) illustration/explanation

# C4L Reading - Item Writing Tally Sheet

## Grade 8 - Informational

Enter Passage Name Here: **Flapjacks or Pancakes**

Gr8 Vocabulary	DOK Level	DOK 1	DOK 2	DOK 3	Item Total
<b>LA 8.1.5 Vocabulary: Students will build literary, general academic, and content specific grade level vocabulary.</b>					
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.5.a</b> <i>Determine meaning of words through structural analysis, using knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Anglo-Saxon roots, prefixes, and suffixes to understand complex words, including words in science, mathematics, and social studies</i>	1, 2		1		1
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.5.c</b> <i>Select a context clue strategy to determine meaning of unknown word appropriate to text (e.g., restatement, example, gloss, annotations, sidebar)</i>	2		1		2
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.5.d</b> <i>Analyze semantic relationships (e.g., figurative language, connotations, subtle distinctions)</i>	2,3				
Gr8 Comprehension	DOK Level	DOK 1	DOK 2	DOK 3	Item Total
<b>LA 8.1.6 Comprehension: Students will extract and construct meaning using prior knowledge, applying text information, and monitoring comprehension while reading grade level text.</b>					
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.6.a</b> <i>Analyze the meaning, reliability, and validity of the text considering author's purpose, perspective, and information from additional sources</i>	3			1	1
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.6.c</b> <i>Analyze author's use of literary devices (e.g., foreshadowing, personification, idiom, oxymoron, hyperbole, flashback, suspense, symbolism, irony, transitional devices)</i>	2, 3				1
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.6.d</b> <i>Summarize, analyze, and synthesize informational text using main idea and supporting details</i>	2, 3			1	1
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.6.e</b> <i>Apply knowledge of organizational patterns found in informational text (e.g., sequence, description, cause and effect, compare / contrast, fact / opinion, proposition / support)</i>	2				1
<b style="color: red;">LA 8.1.6.f</b> <i>Analyze and evaluate information from text features (e.g., index, annotations, maps, charts, tables, graphs, headings, subheadings, lists)</i>	2, 3				

<p><b>LA 8.1.6.g</b>  <i>Analyze and make inferences based on the characteristics of narrative and informational genres</i></p>	<p>2, 3</p>				
<p><b>LA 8.1.6.j</b>  <i>Generate and/or answer literal, inferential, critical, and interpretive questions, analyzing and synthesizing prior knowledge, information from the text and additional sources, to support answers</i></p>	<p>1, 2, 3</p>				