

Literal and Nonliteral Language

Name: _____

Date: _____

Score: _____ / 10



Quick Review

Some words and phrases mean exactly what they say (literal). Others paint a picture but do NOT mean what they say (nonliteral / figurative — like “raining cats and dogs”). Use the rest of the sentence to decide.

PRACTICE

For each item, choose the meaning that **BEST** fits the sentence.

1. Read: *It was raining cats and dogs all afternoon.* What does this MEAN?
 - A. It rained on and off many times that afternoon.
 - B. It rained very hard for the whole afternoon.
 - C. It started to rain right after lunch.
 - D. It was the first rainy day in a long time.
2. Read: *My backpack weighs a ton today.* The phrase **weighs a ton** means —
 - A. the backpack is the heaviest one in the class.
 - B. the backpack feels very heavy to carry.
 - C. the backpack is too full to zip closed.
 - D. the backpack is the biggest one the speaker owns.
3. Read: *“Hold your horses!” Dad said as I ran toward the car.* What does the phrase MEAN here?
 - A. Be careful where you step.
 - B. Wait — don't be in such a rush.
 - C. Hold something tightly in your hands.
 - D. Try harder to do something.
4. Read this sentence from a story: *The wind whispered through the trees.* The word **whispered** shows that the wind —
 - A. was strong enough to bend the branches.
 - B. was soft and quiet that day.
 - C. carried a message from far away.
 - D. blew only when no one was looking.



5. Which sentence uses LITERAL language?
- A. The classroom was a zoo before the bell.
 - B. Lisa opened the door and stepped inside.
 - C. His backpack was bursting at the seams.
 - D. Time crawled in the last hour of class.
6. Read: *Grandpa says his little granddaughter is the apple of his eye.* The phrase means she is —
- A. the youngest person in his family.
 - B. very dear and important to him.
 - C. as round and bright as an apple.
 - D. the only one who eats apples with him.
7. Read: *My brother is a real couch potato on weekends.* What does **couch potato** mean?
- A. He likes to snack on the couch.
 - B. He sits and watches TV instead of being active.
 - C. He naps better than anyone in the house.
 - D. He prefers the couch to his own bed.
8. Read: *The stars danced in the night sky.* What does **danced** tell the reader?
- A. The stars looked sharp and steady.
 - B. The stars twinkled and seemed to move.
 - C. The stars were brighter than usual.
 - D. The stars disappeared behind clouds.
9. Which sentence uses NONLITERAL language?
- A. The dog jumped over the small fence.
 - B. Time flew by during our class party.
 - C. We ate red apples for lunch on Friday.
 - D. It was sunny and warm at the park.
10. Read: *When I forgot my line in the play, my face turned as red as a tomato.* The phrase tells you —
- A. the speaker was sick at the moment.
 - B. the speaker's face got very red, probably from embarrassment.
 - C. the speaker had just eaten something red.
 - D. the speaker was standing near a tomato plant.



Answer Keys

- 1 A B C D
- 2 A B C D
- 3 A B C D
- 4 A B C D
- 5 A B C D

- 6 A B C D
- 7 A B C D
- 8 A B C D
- 9 A B C D
- 10 A B C D

Explanations

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 1. B | “Cats and dogs” is about how HARD the rain was, not how often it started or how rare it was. A confuses pattern, C confuses timing, D confuses how unusual it was. |
| 2. B | The speaker is exaggerating how heavy the bag FEELS . A compares to others; C is about being full; D is about size — none captures the meaning of the idiom. |
| 3. B | Dad is telling the child to slow down and wait. A is a different kind of advice; C is the literal misread; D is unrelated advice. |
| 4. B | “Whispered” describes a soft, quiet sound. A is the opposite; C is the literal trap (wind doesn’t really carry words); D is unrelated. |
| 5. B | Lisa really did open a door — that is literal. The other three describe things using figurative phrases (a zoo, bursting, crawling). |
| 6. B | “The apple of his eye” is a nonliteral phrase meaning someone is treasured. A guesses based on “little,” C takes the phrase literally, D is unrelated. |
| 7. B | A couch potato avoids activity, usually by watching TV. A and D pick up parts of the picture but miss the meaning; C is unrelated. |
| 8. B | “Danced” describes the lively twinkle. A is the opposite, C is only about brightness, D is unrelated to the verb. |
| 9. B | Time cannot really fly — “flew” is figurative for “passed quickly.” The other sentences describe events as they really happened. |
| 10. B | Comparing the face to a tomato shows it turned very red — usually from embarrassment in this kind of moment. The others give wrong reasons for the redness. |



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