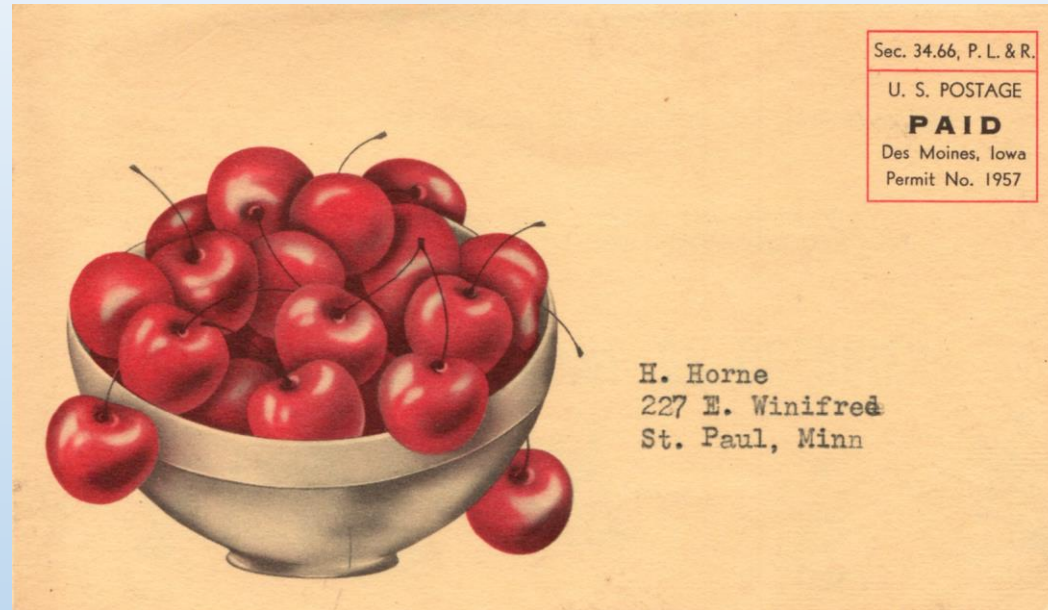


Life is Just a _____



[Bowl of Cherries]

Idioms Illustrated and Explained – Part I Animals (24 phrases)

by Tom Fortunato

idiom (n.)- an expression whose meaning can not be derived from its elements

How many times over the course of a day do you hear these? They're so common in our vernacular that we hardly take the time to recognize them with thousands in the English language alone. A few are presented here using a wide variety of material found mostly in dealer junk boxes. Don't expect to find philatelic rarities, but you will see some interesting items.

Most important is your participation! This presentation is in "fill in the blank" game format. You'll see a partial phrase at the top of each page related to the item shown along with a clue to the idiom's meaning. Just complete the phrase and keep track of your number right and wrong.

PowerPoint users have 5 seconds before a 15 second timeclock counts down then "dings," by which time an answer must be given. PDF users play on the honor system! Clicking the next page reveals the answer along with details of the origins and meaning of the idiom. Ten references were used researching these. Not all agreed, but the majority plausible response appears here.

This is 1 of 7 thematic related parts (# phrases in each). Enjoy them all!

I – Animals (24) II – Food (14) III – Man (18) IV - Sports & Games (9)

V – Nature (25) VI – Music (8) VII - Pot Luck (39)

I- Animals _____ tears

- *fake tears, false grief*



I- Animals crocodile tears

- *fake tears, false grief*



Used first in ancient Rome around 300 AD. Folktales talk of crocks that cried to lure victims.



I- Animals off

- *leave, go away*



I- Animals **bug** off

- *leave, go away*

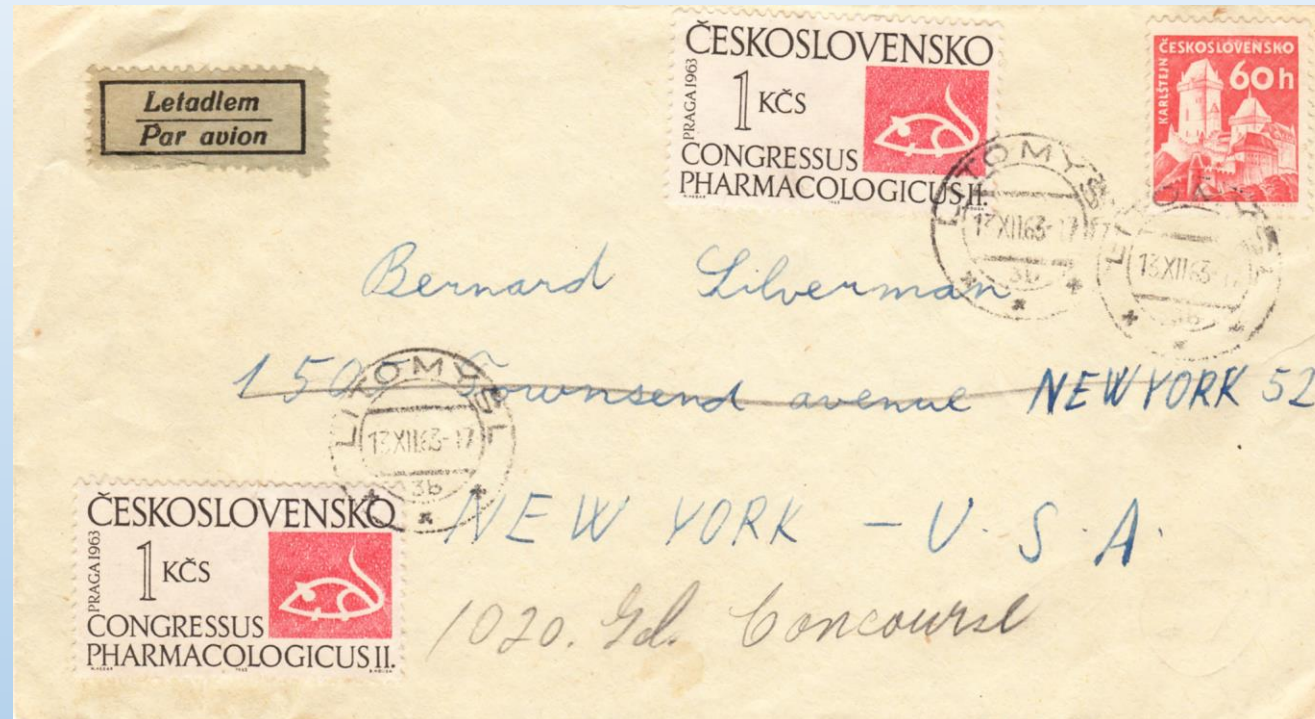


From Britain in the late 1800's, "bugger off," meaning "scram."



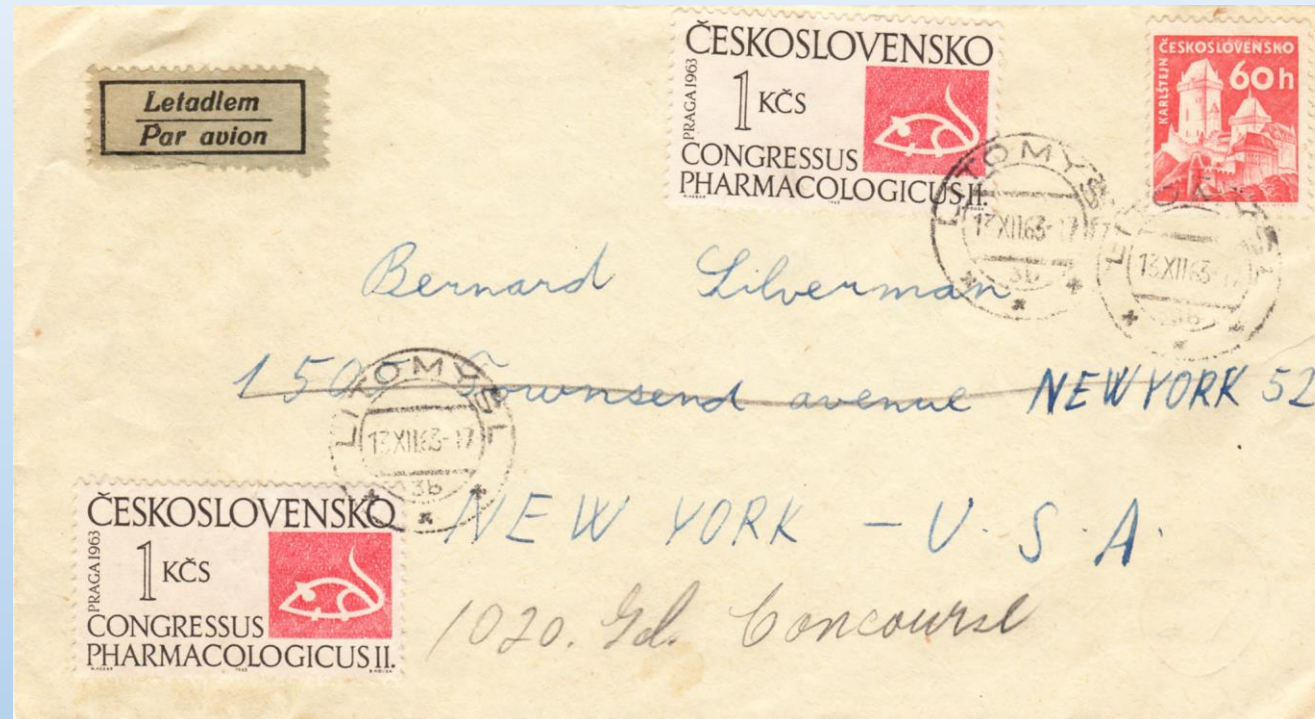
I- Animals race

- *stressful run-around of daily life*



I- Animals **rat** race

- *stressful run-around of daily life*

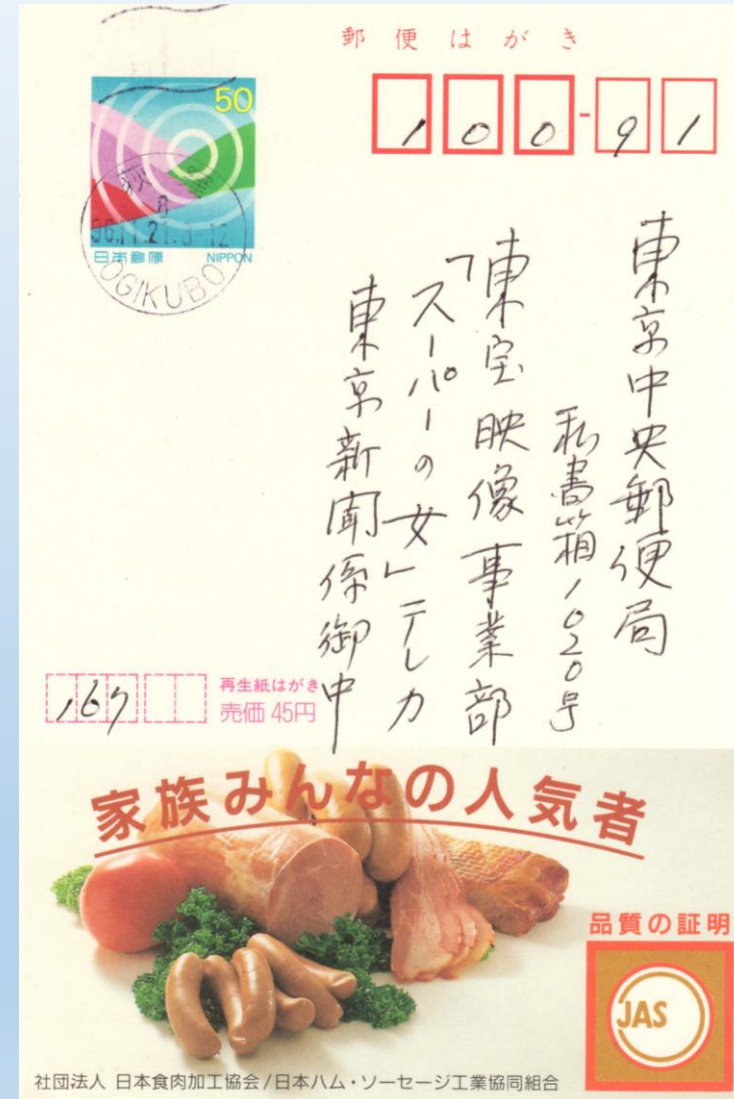


From the French, “ras,” a nautical term meaning tide-race, referring to a strong current.



I- Animals bring home

- *to earn a living*



I- Animals bring home the bacon

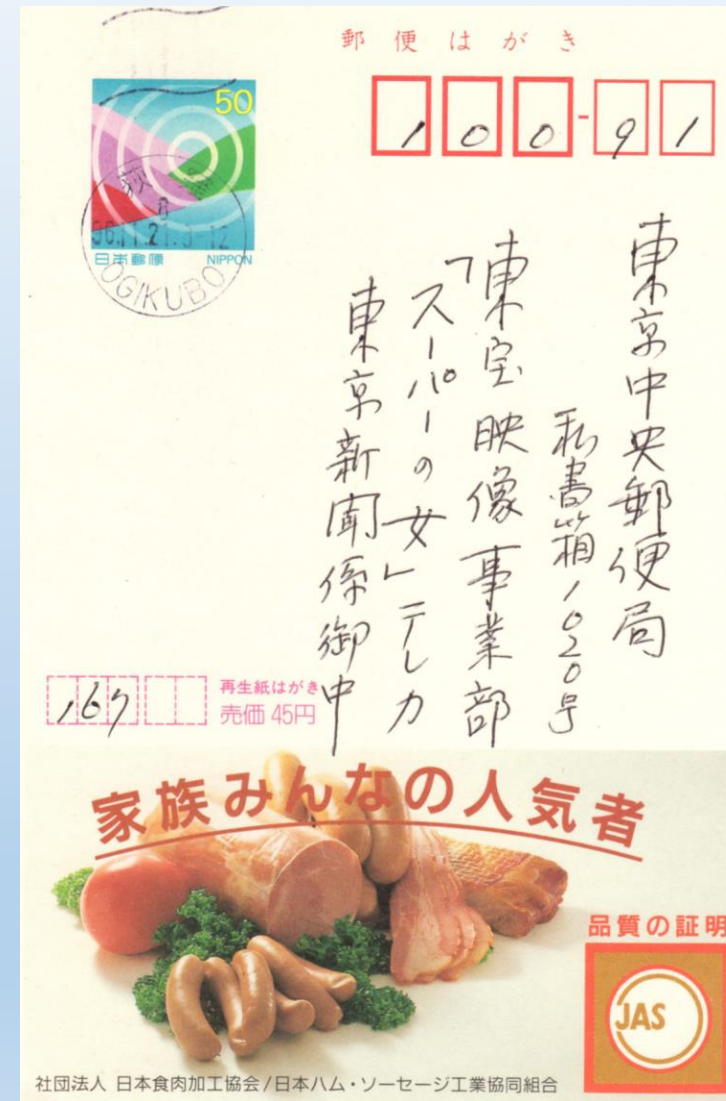
- *to earn a living*

Two theories...

American- At county fair competitions, contestants would attempt to get a greased pig. The winner received the pig.

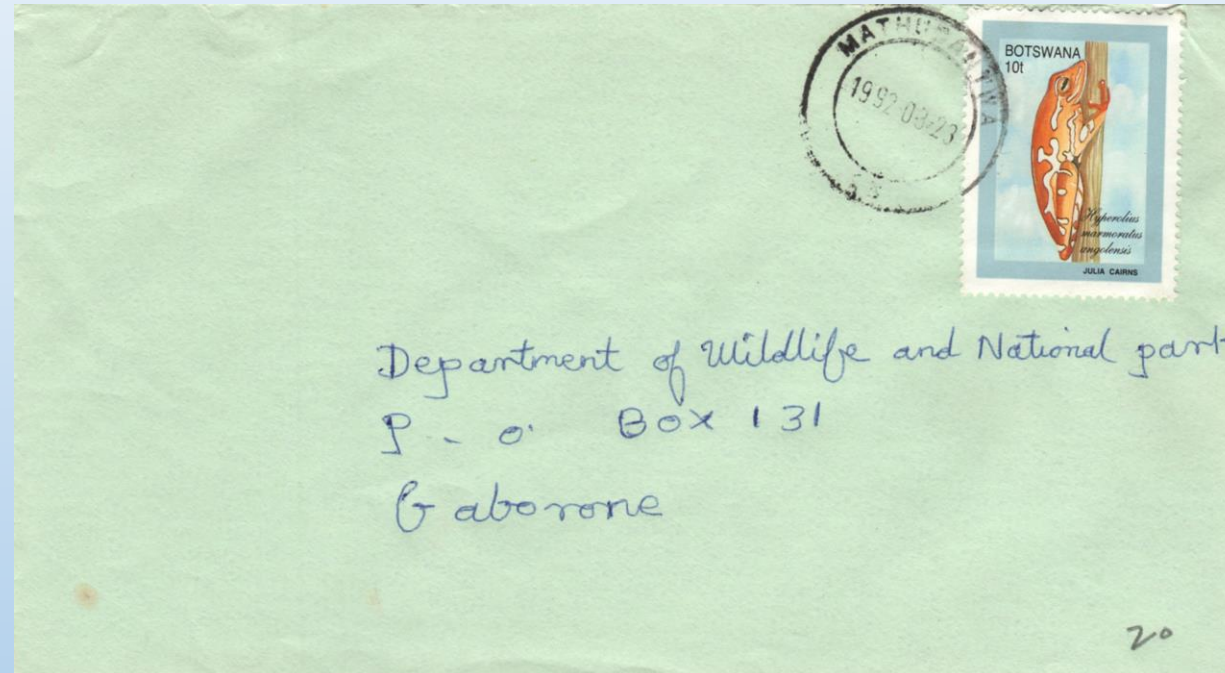
English- In the 1300's, a baron challenged his constituency that if any married couple could go a year and a day without fighting, they would win the prize, a side of bacon.

(Japanese advertising "Echo" postal card)



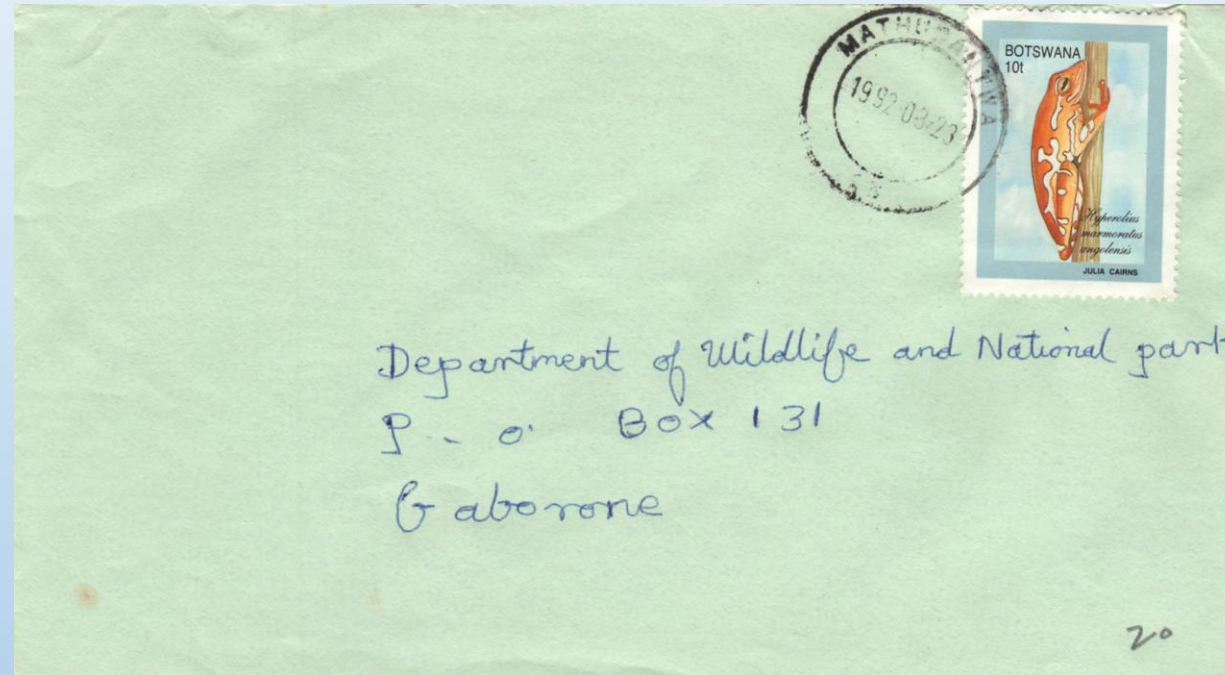
I- Animals _____ in your throat

- *left without words, speechless*



I- Animals **frog** in your throat

- *left without words, speechless*



In the Middle Ages, frogs were often eaten, and speech is difficult while eating.



I- Animals throw a _____ into the works

- *to interfere with something in progress*



Swiss military stamp



I- Animals throw a **monkey wrench** into the works

- *to interfere with something in progress*



Swiss military stamp

An American inventor named Monk created a unique wrench in 1856, the sliding jaw of which reminded people of a monkey.



I- Animals busy _____

- *a work-aholic*



I- Animals busy as a bee

- *a work-aholic*



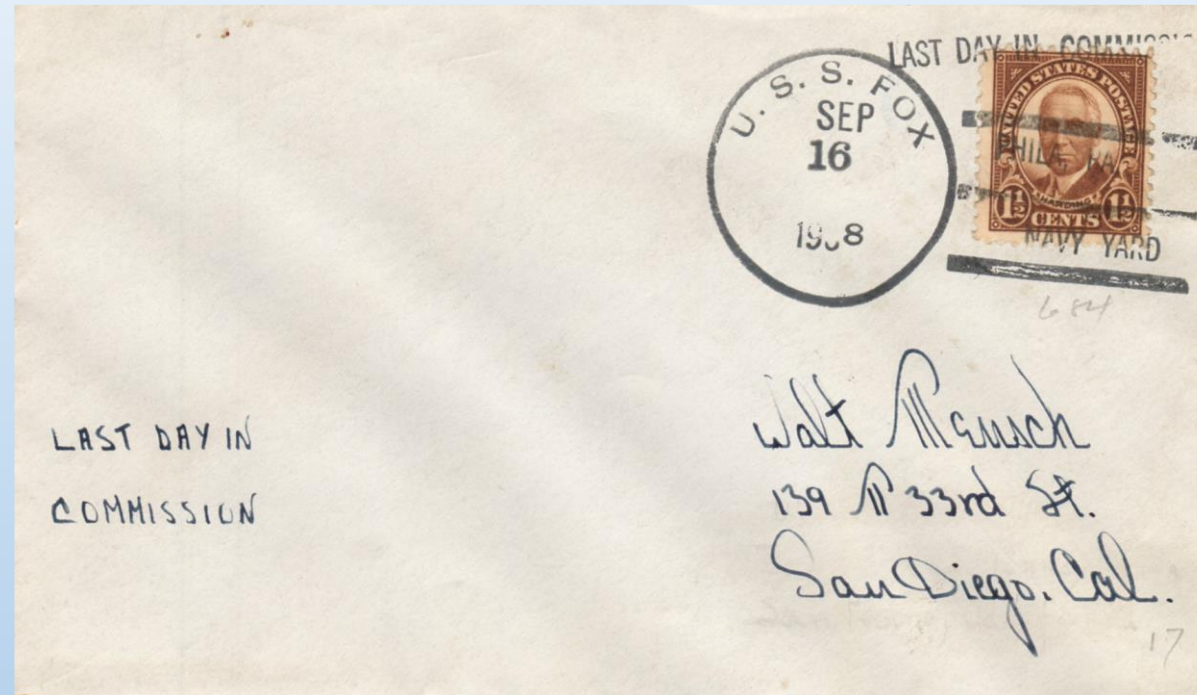
Variant of “busy as a beaver” (17th century) due to their hard working nature.



I- Animals crazy

- *smart, resourceful*

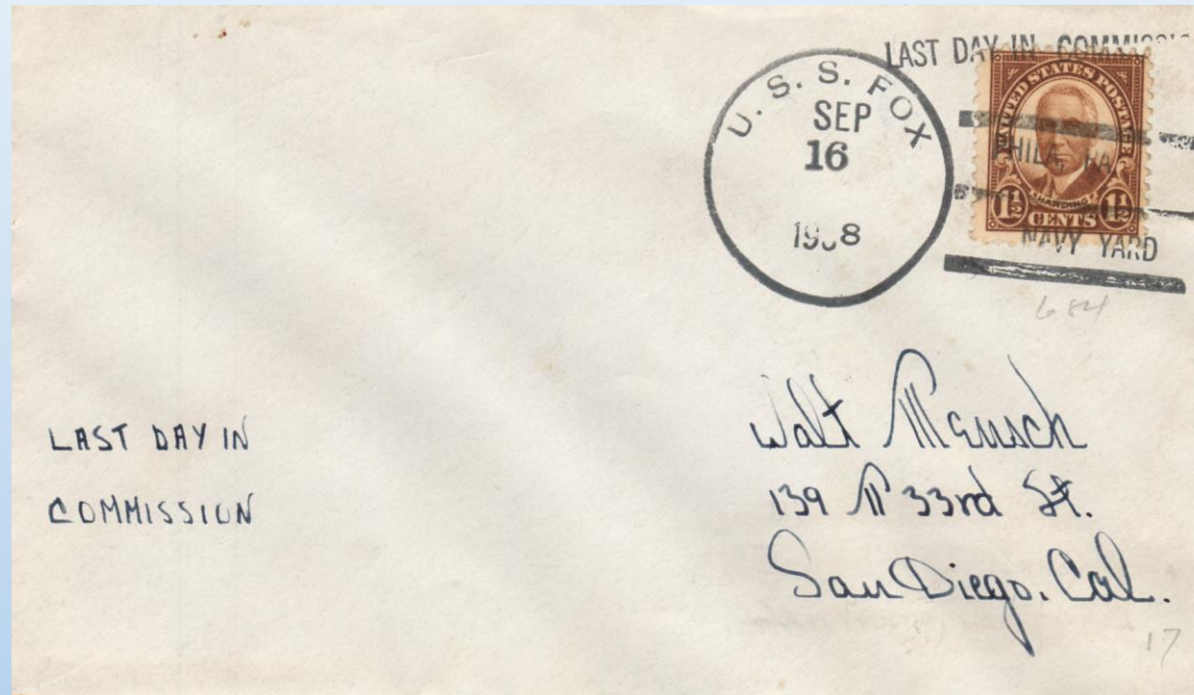
(Second decommissioning for destroyer USS Fox (DD-234), September 16, 1938 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Recommissioned in 1939, scrapped in 1946.)



I- Animals crazy like a fox

- *smart, resourceful*

(Second decommissioning for destroyer USS Fox (DD-234), September 16, 1938 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Recommissioned in 1939, scrapped in 1946.)

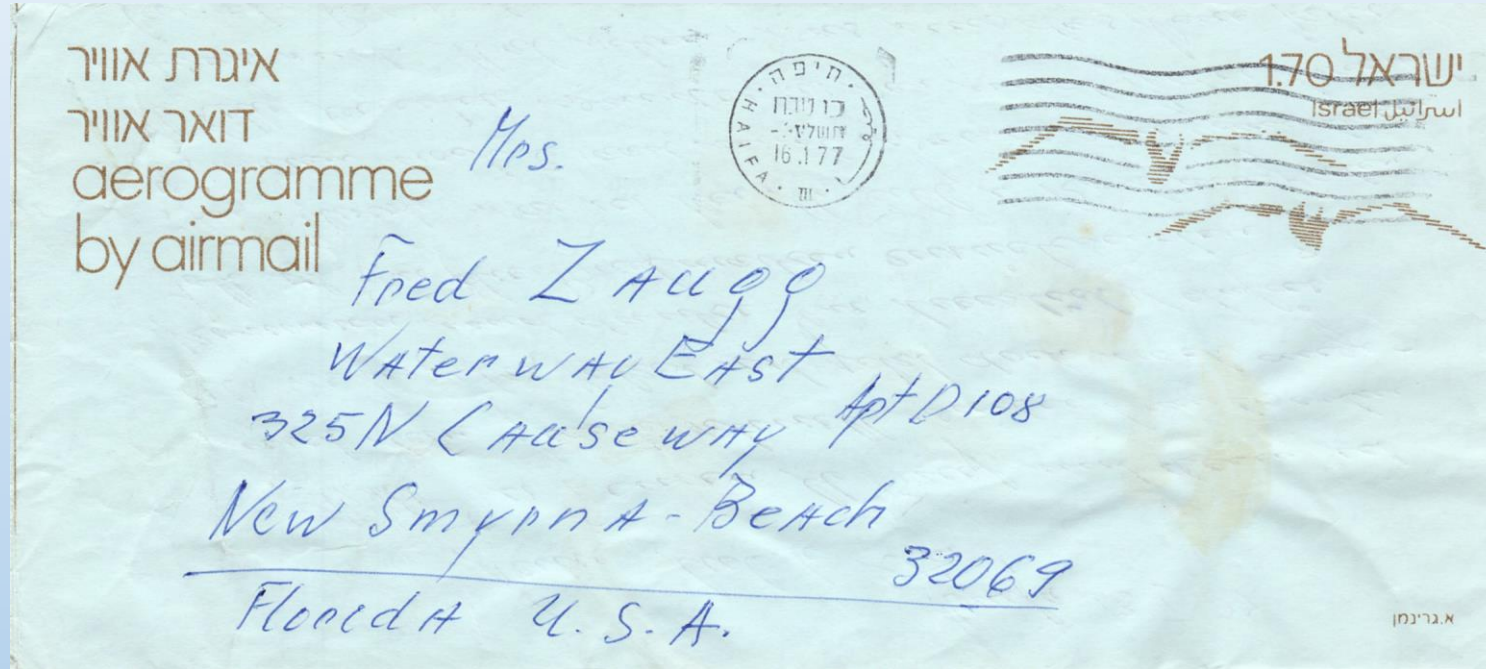


First noted in Trinity College Homilies dating to the 13th century.



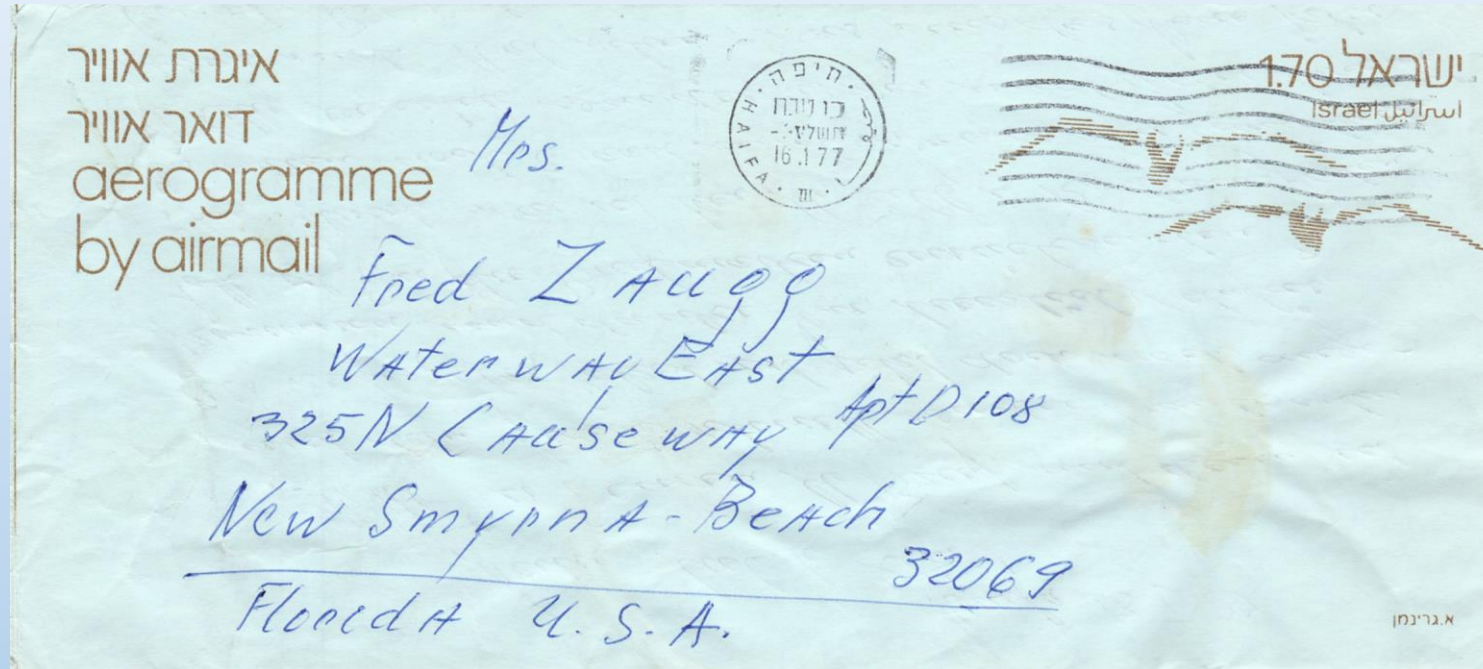
I- Animals _____ flock together

- *people of common interests unite*



I- Animals **birds of a feather** flock together

- *people of common interests unite*



Dates back to the Bible, noting species fly amidst their own.



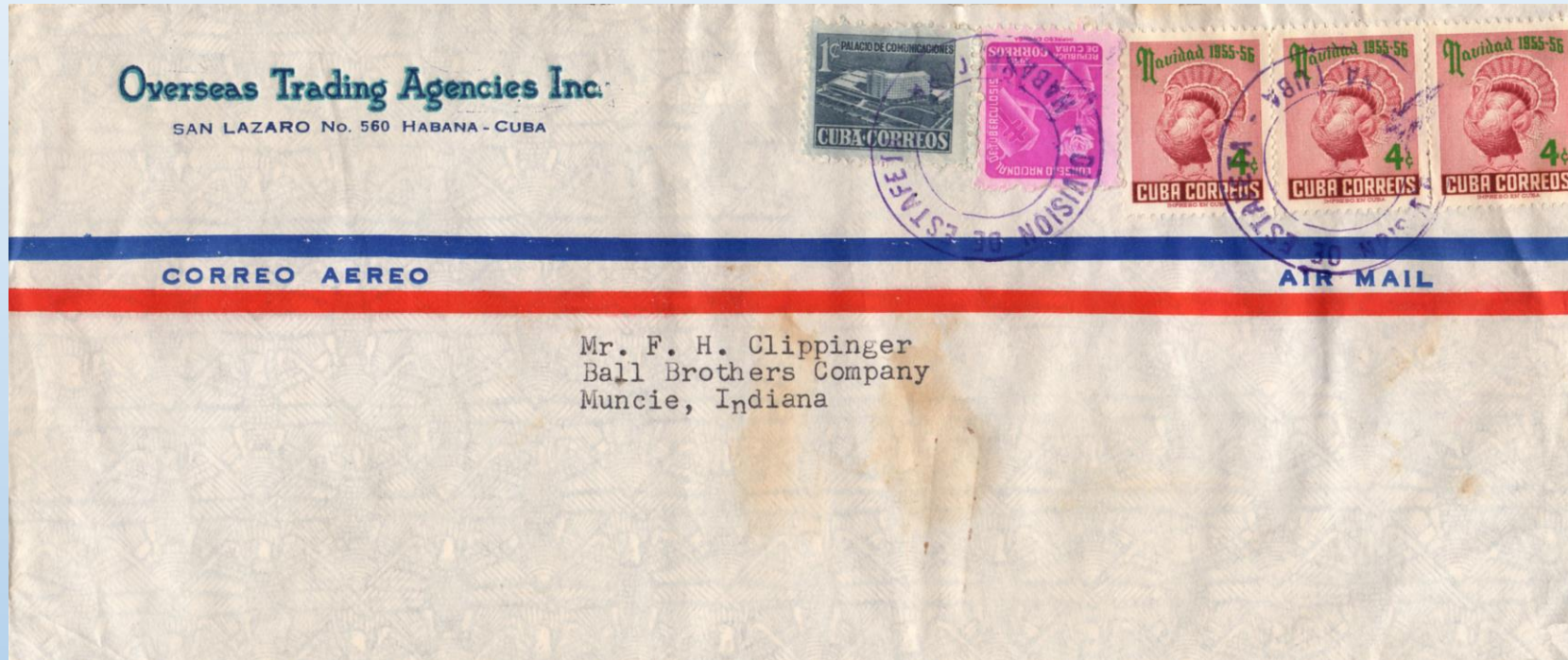
I- Animals go cold _____

- *suddenly go without*



I- Animals go cold turkey

- *suddenly go without*



20th century American expression of unknown origin.



I- Animals get your _____

- *annoy or make angry*



I- Animals get your **goat**

- *annoy or make angry*



American expression from 1900. Goats were kept with race horses to calm them. If a goat was taken away, it would upset the horse.

1
5
1
4
1
3
1
2
1
1
1
0
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1

I- Animals sitting _____

- *defenseless or open to attack*

Postimerkkejä / Frimärken 5 x 2,30 mk



Vesilintuja
Sjöfåglar

Hinta/Pris
11,50 mk

booklet cover



I- Animals sitting duck

- *defenseless or open to attack*



booklet cover

From a 1944 Reader's Digest title, *Why Tankers are no Longer Sitting Ducks*.



I- Animals as the _____

- *shortest distance between points*



I- Animals as the crow flies

- *shortest distance between points*



Seen first in a letter by Robert Southly from 1800.



I- Animals _____ or cut bait

- *make a decision*



I- Animals **fish** or cut bait

- *make a decision*



From the 1876 Congressional Record, attributed to Rep. Joseph Cannon of Illinois.



I- Animals going to the _____

- *coming to a bad end*



I- Animals going to the dogs

- *coming to a bad end*

Thought to have originated from Thomas Cooper's Latin work, *Thaesaus*, of 1565, referring to food not worthy of serving to dogs.



I- Animals in the belfry

- *crazy, weird, nuts*



I- Animals **bats** in the belfry

- *crazy, weird, nuts*

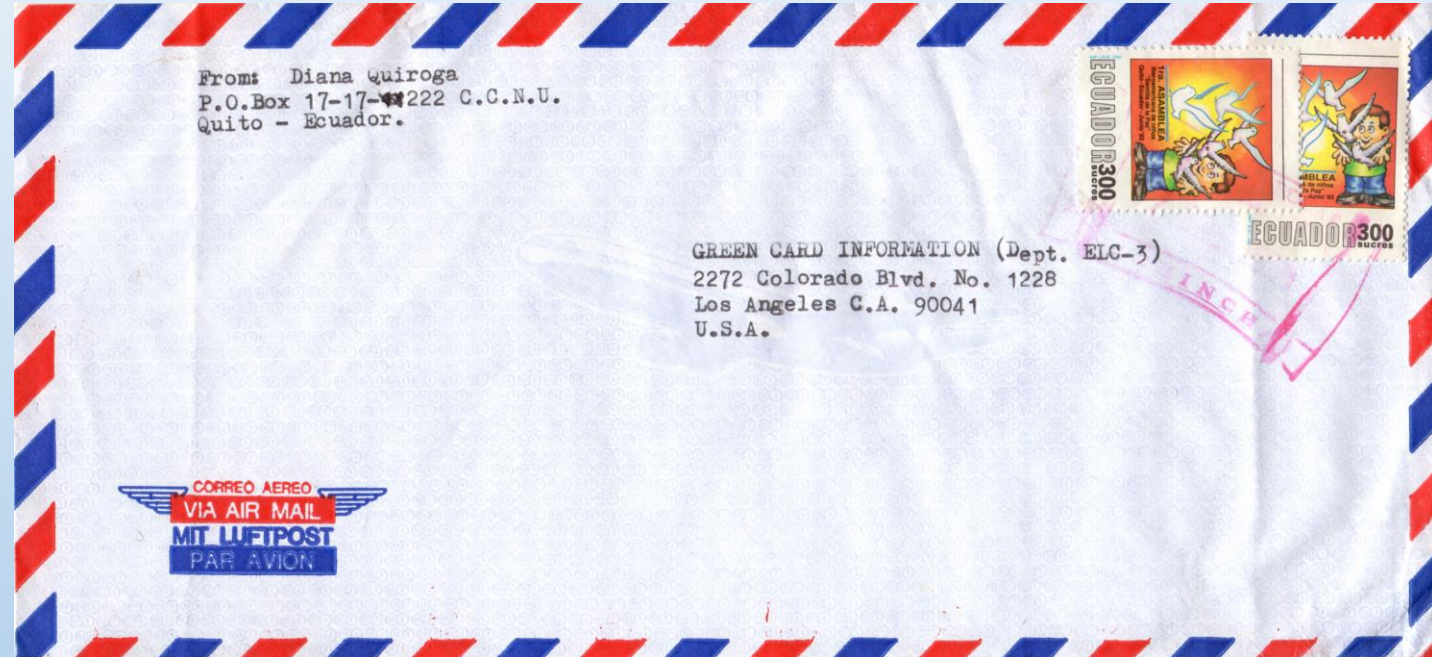


Bats live in secluded places, including bell towers, typically the highest place in older towns. An American expression used by R. D. Saunders in *Colonel Todhunter*.



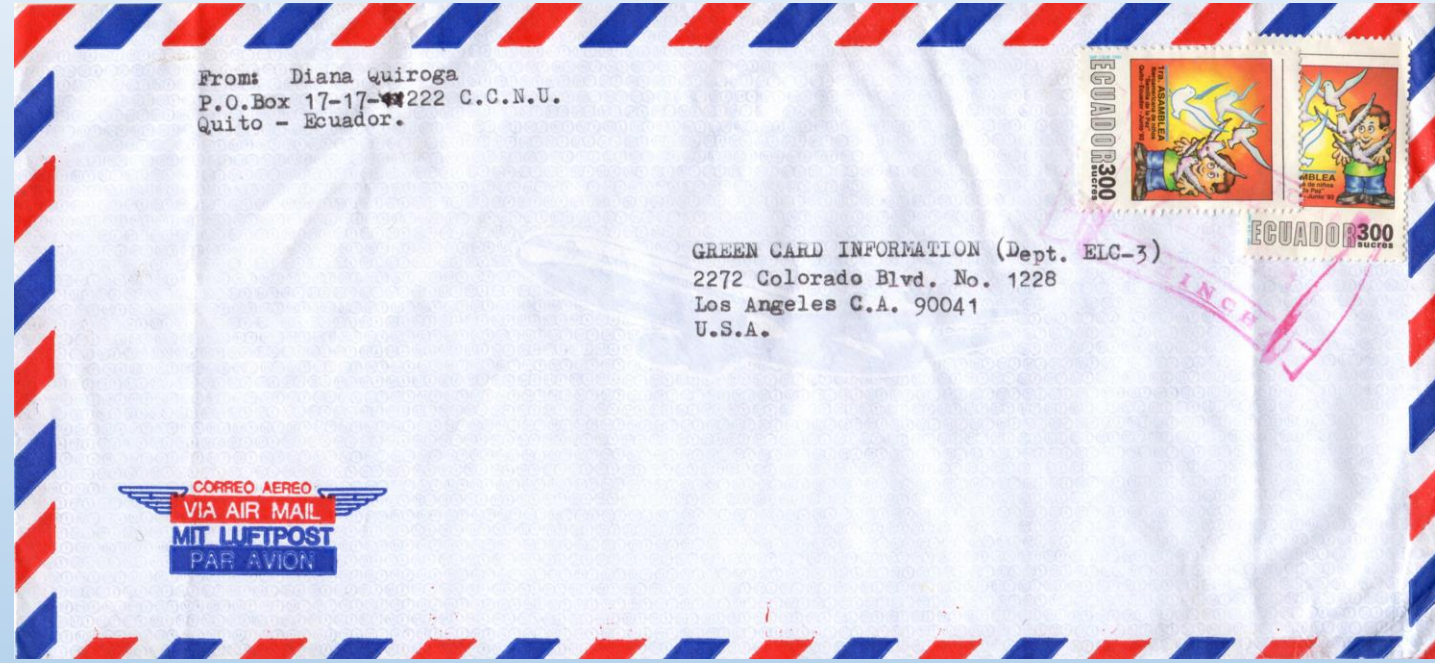
I- Animals _____ is worth 2 in the bush

- *a guarantee is more than a promise*



I- Animals a bird in the hand is worth 2 in the bush

- *a guarantee is more than a promise*



Ancient Greek proverb, also used in Aesop's Fables. Hunters probably originated it, referring to the conclusion of a day's gaming.



I- Animals get on a _____

- *acting in a superior way*



I- Animals get on a high horse

- *acting in a superior way*



Ceremonial parades featured men of higher rank on taller horses. Noted in a Scottish proverb by James Kelly in 1721.



I- Animals taking the _____

- *controlling a difficult situation*



I- Animals taking the bull by the horns

- *controlling a difficult situation*



A risky bullfighting tactic is sometimes effective.



I- Animals

fat

- *rich person*



I- Animals

fat **cat**

- *rich person*

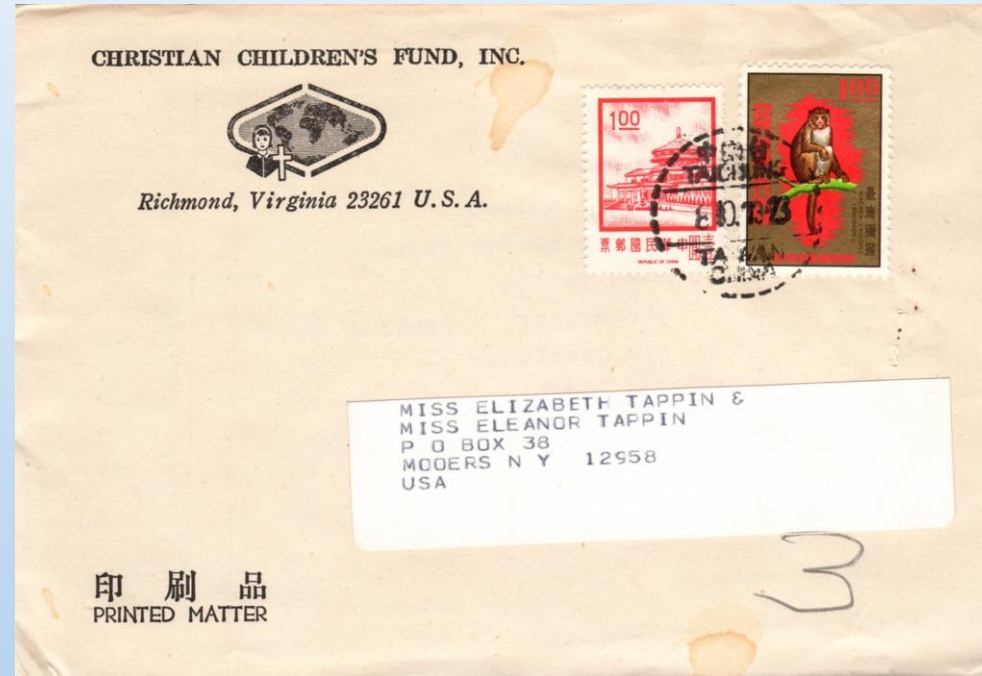


Per H. L. Mencken, an American expression used first in the 1920's referring to influential political campaign contributors.



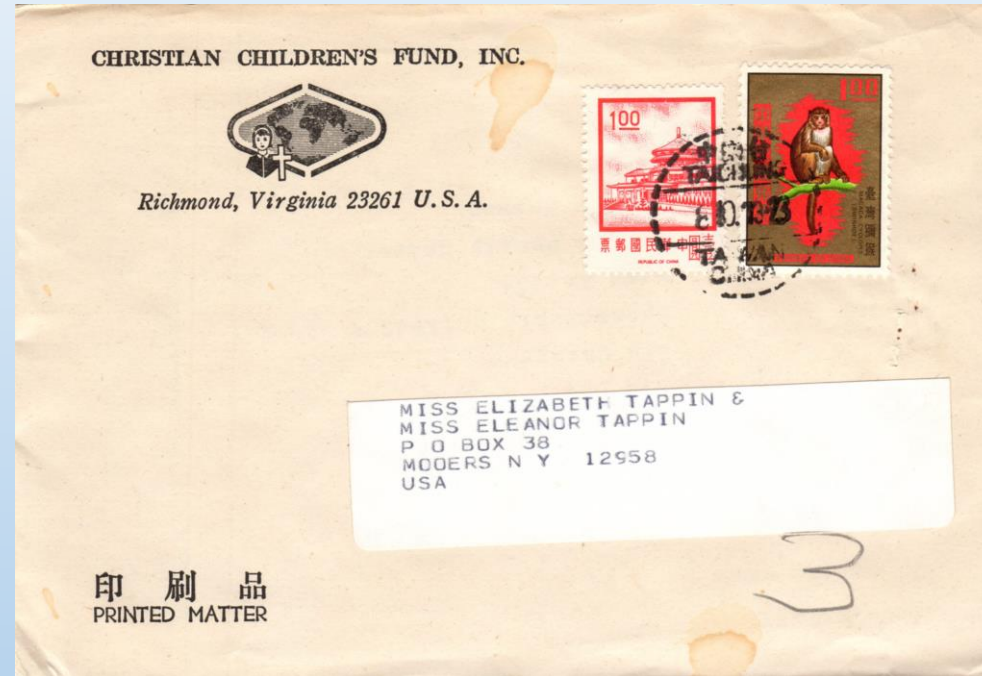
I- Animals _____ business

- *mischievous activities*



I- Animals **monkey** business

- *mischievous activities*



Used first by the Brooklyn Standard Union in 1904 on Russian-English foreign relations.



I- Animals sick _____

- *miserably ill*



I- Animals sick **as a dog**

- *miserably ill*



The Bible: Proverbs 26:11, "As a dog returns to his own vomit, a fool returns to his folly."



I- Animals _____ with honey than vinegar

- *use agreeable rather than disagreeable measures*



I- Animals catch more flies with honey than vinegar

- *use agreeable rather than disagreeable measures*



From the 17th century, Thomas Fuller wrote, “More flies are taken by a drop of honey than a ton of vinegar.”



I- Animals _____ of the family

- *an outcast from a group*



I- Animals **black sheep** of the family

- *an outcast from a group*



To shepherds, wool from black sheep is less desirable than white. In 1816 Sir Walter Scott wrote in *Old Mortality*, “The curates... know best the black sheep of the flock.”



This is the end of Part I- Animals.

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<http://www.rpastamps.org/presentations>