Life is Just a ______

[ Bowl of Cherries ]

Idioms Illustrated and Explained – Part V Nature (25 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)
V- Nature in ___ _____

• in trouble
Believed to be British, as mentioned by the Earl of Malmesbury, “We are kept, to use the modern phrase, in hot water,” in a 1765 letter.
V- Nature  nothing new _____ ___ ___

• the same
V- Nature

nothing new **under the sun**

• *the same*

Biblical expression.
V- Nature it’s all water _____ _____

• completed, over with

cachet commemorates the first UN Security Council meeting taking place outside of New York City, on Jan 28-Feb 5, 1972 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
V- Nature  it’s all water over the dam

• completed, over with

Unknown origin, but used by Richard Sale’s 1942 work, *Passing Strange*.

cachet commemorates the first UN Security Council meeting taking place outside of New York City, on Jan 28-Feb 5, 1972 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
V- Nature throw caution

• **take a bold course**

200 rupees paying the international express mail rate, posted 2/2/93, in Bombay, arrived JFK 2/9 at 5:30 AM, signed for by recipient 2/11 at 11:05 AM per USPS form on reverse.
V- Nature throw caution to the wind

• take a bold course

200 rupees paying the international express mail rate, posted 2/2/93, in Bombay, arrived JFK 2/9 at 5:30 AM, signed for by recipient 2/11 at 11:05 AM per USPS form on reverse

Seen in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* of 1677, “Fear of death deliver to the winds.”
V- Nature _______ ___ ____ and a hard place

• in a difficult situation
V- Nature  **between a rock and a hard place**

- *in a difficult situation*

V- Nature ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ and smoke it

• something to think about
Pipe smokers have always been seen as pensive thinkers. Charles Dickens wrote in the 1836 *Pickwick Papers*, “Fill your pipe with that ‘ere reflection.”
V- Nature ____ ____ is clear

- without obstacles
A coastline is a place of unknown dangers. Used in John Palsgrave’s 1530 book on the French language, “The king intends to go to Calais, but we must first clear the coasts.”
V- Nature out of the frying pan and ___ ___ ____

• *from bad to worse*
V- Nature out of the frying pan and into the fire

• from bad to worse

Originally a Latin phrase from around 200 AD, later used by Sir Thomas More in 1528, “Leapt they like a flounder out of the frying-pan and into the fire.”
V- Nature  

bury your head ___ ___ ___

• ignore danger, hide
V- Nature  bury your head in the sand

• *ignore danger, hide*

From the lowly ostrich, mistakenly thought to be hiding when it actually was looking for food to help in its digestion.
V- Nature     clear

• *uncover the truth*
V- Nature clear the air

• *uncover the truth*

Literally the blowing away of clouds after a storm. Written of in 1380 by John Wyclif, “winds of truth should blow away heresies, and clear the airs of holy church, which is now full troubles.”
V- Nature come out smelling ___ ___

• without accusation
V- Nature come out smelling like a rose

• without accusation

20th century American expression of unknown origin.
V- Nature turn over a ___ ___

- change for the better

sunken deluxe proof
V- Nature turn over a new leaf

• change for the better

Actually referring to a leaf of a book, noted in the 1577 *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* by Raphael Holinshed.
V- Nature  gild __ _____

- make the beautiful more so
V- Nature gild the lily

• make the beautiful more so

Paraphrased from Shakespeare’s *King John*. “To gild refined gold, to paint the lily.”
V- Nature       diamond  

• untested potential
V- Nature  diamond in the rough

• untested potential

From John Fletcher’s 1624 A Wife for a Month, “She is very honest, and will be hard to cut as a rough diamond.”
V- Nature playing ___ ___

• tempt danger
George Whetstone wrote in his 1582 book, Hepteameron, “In doing these three things is great danger... to play with fire; to strew with water, and to glue a woman knowledge of our power.
V- Nature

go climb ___

• you’re kidding
V- Nature  go climb a tree

• you’re kidding

Attributed to the Los Angeles Times Sunday Magazine of 1935 and writer Oren Arnold, who mentioned, Americans... were turning to “such puerile phrases” as “go climb a tree.”
V- Nature __________ when we come to it

• worry later
V- Nature  cross that bridge when we come to it

• worry later

Old proverb of ancient and unknown origin.
V- Nature  _____  _____  ______ before the trees

• see the entirety rather than the minutia
V- Nature can’t see the forest before the trees

• see the entirety rather than the minutia

Unknown origin.
V- Nature have your head ___ ___ _____

- absent-minded
V- Nature have your head **in the clouds**

*absent-minded*

Adapted from the American “head in the air,” used around 1900.
V- Nature make hay _______ ______ _______ _______

• *act when given the opportunity*
V- Nature make hay while the sun shines

• act when given the opportunity

Farmers would cut hay on sunny days, as rain would spoil it. Noted by John Heywood in 1546, “When the sun shineth, make hay.”
V- Nature saw

- snore
V- Nature saw logs

• snore

Early 20th century phrase of unknown origin, but used mostly by cartoonists.
V- Nature ___ ___ ________ out of a molehill

• turn a minor issue into a major one
V- Nature  make a mountain out of a molehill

• turn a minor issue into a major one

From early Greek and French expressions, adapted in 1548 by Nicholas Udall in *Paraphrase of Erasmus*, “The Sophistes of Greece could... make an elephant fly and a mountain out of a molehill.”
V- Nature ___ ___ the limit

• unlimited
V- Nature the sky’s the limit

• unlimited

Written of by Cervantes in *Don Quixote* in 1605, “No limits but the sky.”
V- Nature

hitch your wagon __ __ __

• aim high

USPS Postal Buddy card
V- Nature hitch your wagon to a star

• aim high

Originated by Ralph Waldo Emerson in his 1870 essay on Civilization in Society and Solitude.
V- Nature ___ _____ mark

• **maximum achievement**
Those flooded make note of the water’s level. Mentioned in a letter dating to 1814 from the Earl of Dudley, “The high water mark of the English faction is very much below the ebb of French violence.”
This is the end of Part V- Nature. If you liked this presentation, try one of the other parts! See them all and the original exhibit online at:

http://www.rpastamps.org/presentations