Frosting on the Cake

Vocabulary:
Figurative Language: Adages and Proverbs

Overview
In this lesson students will:
• Search for and notice the writer’s use of adages and proverbs.
• Unpack the meaning of figurative language at phrase, sentence, and text levels to enhance comprehension.

Teacher Objective
Students will notice and interpret adages and proverbs.

Student Objective
I can determine the meaning of adages and proverbs to improve my comprehension of a story.

Activate and Assess Relevant Knowledge (ARK) ———— 5 min.

Assess students’ understanding of adages and proverbs.

On the board, chart paper, or shared table paper, write the following adage and proverb:

Fish and houseguests stink after three days.
Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.

Explain to students that the English language has all kinds of funny, colorful, and interesting ways of saying things. Other languages do, too. Say: These statements on the board are examples of these sayings. But what do they actually mean?

Have students work with a partner to come up with possible meanings for the two statements. Have them share their responses to see the creative ways students interpreted these common but unclear sayings. After students have shared, confirm that the first sentence is a saying that’s been around a for a long time that refers to not overstaying your welcome as a guest at someone’s home; and the second is a little piece of advice that means don’t put all your resources or hopes in one place or thing.
Provide a brief introduction to the academic vocabulary: figurative language, literal, adage, and proverb.

**Teacher Input/Student Active Participation (TIP/SAP)**

Remind students that idioms, adages, and proverbs are common sayings that have meanings beyond what can be understood by their individual words. Explain that writers use these types of figurative language to express meaning and to make their writing more interesting and visual for the reader. Tell students that sometimes a writer might use idioms, adages, or proverbs to communicate the theme of a story.

Display a blank What’s the Saying Really Saying? chart like the one on SRB page 4 on the board, chart paper, or shared table paper. Fill in the first line and a half as you think aloud.

**THINK ALOUD**

I remember that the title of the story *Frosting on the Cake* is like the saying, “icing on the cake.” In one way, the title is literal, meaning the story really is about putting frosting on a cake. [Write this meaning on the chart.] But it is also connected to this saying. If I say, “That’s the icing on the cake,” I am saying that a good thing has happened along with something that was already really good. [Write this on the chart.] Grandpa has a lot of sayings, and because Anton was able to remember them well, I bet Grandpa used these same sayings quite often.

[Point to the second line on the chart.] Here’s one of Grandpa’s sayings: “The early bird catches the worm.” Why would Anton think of that saying? What does the writer want me to understand? One strategy I can try when I don’t know the meaning of figurative language like this is to look around the phrase for context clues. [Read paragraph 2 aloud.] Let’s see. The first sentence in the paragraph says “It was early in the morning.” And the sentence after says “Anton didn’t need a worm, but he did need…time alone in his grandfather’s bakery.” So I’m thinking that Anton is alone, like the bird would be alone because it would be the first one out, early in the morning, looking for worms. [Write the literal definition on the chart.] I know birds eat worms, so they must feel pretty happy once they catch one! And if the early bird catches the worm, maybe Anton is hoping he’ll be able to catch something—or maybe do something—while he’s alone in the bakery, before anyone else notices. I’m going to read on to see what else I notice in the story.
Student Active Participation (SAP): Guided Practice

Continue to fill in the What’s the Saying Really Saying? chart. Have students use their copy of the chart on SRB page 4 as you guide them to go back to the text to reread the paragraph and use this context to discuss the meaning of each adage or proverb.

Guide students to consider the next example, “The early bird catches the worm.” Have them locate the saying and read its context in paragraph 2. Ask students to share their ideas for the meaning of this saying and support with story evidence related to Anton’s actions and motivation. (Arriving or waking up early will give you more opportunities.) Make sure students understand that it’s all right to have slightly different interpretations and explanations of the saying.

Ask: How did this saying relate to what was going on in the story? (Anton wanted to arrive early so he could successfully accomplish the task of baking the cake before others arrived at the bakery.)

Ask a student to read aloud the next saying. Then have students find the saying in the text. Remind students of the meaning of the content vocabulary word ventured. Say: If we know that ventured means “dared or attempted to do something risky,” what is the literal meaning of this proverb? (If you don’t dare to do something, you won’t gain anything.) Guide students to look for other context clues in the paragraph that confirm this nonliteral meaning of this saying. For example, point out the phrase “he was determined to bake his grandfather a cake.” Ask students how this story evidence helps them think more about the meaning of the saying. (Possible answer: it tells that Anton really wants to do this thing, even though he’s never done it before.) Confirm that students understand the meaning of the saying, and have them write it in their chart as you write in yours.

Continue guiding students through the chart, going back to the story to confirm or adjust their thinking against context, checking their understanding as you encourage them to share their ideas.

Remember that while students may be familiar with these sayings, they might not understand what they really mean. Also make it clear that an adage or proverb can have different meanings in different places or cultures. Accept all appropriate contributions.

If time allows, ask students to use these sayings in a sentence. Students who are familiar with the adages and proverbs from other cultures may also be invited to share. Explain that sayings from other cultures often sound funny to us, and American sayings often sound funny to people from other cultures.
Student Active Participation (SAP): Independent Practice  10 min.

Have students complete **Connecting Adages and Proverbs with Character and Theme** on SRB page 5.

Explain to students that thinking about the underlying meaning of the adage or proverb can help readers understand the characters in a story, and it can also help them make connections to a story and understand its theme. Have students use the discussions they just had and the details from SRB page 4 to help them complete the activity on SRB page 5. Tell students they will work independently to identify how each of Grandpa’s sayings helps the reader understand the character and theme. Then they will choose one adage or proverb and tell how it connects to their own lives.

**Teaching for the Stretch**  7 min.

Use questioning to help students think critically about the importance of understanding adages and proverbs.

- Why might an author choose to use adages and proverbs in a story?
- Why is it helpful to understand a few common sayings when you are spending time in another country or culture? What could be difficult about it?
- Share an adage or proverb that is important to you and explain why it is meaningful.

**Additional Activities**  10 min.

Students demonstrate how to understand the nonliteral meaning of proverbs and adages.

On the board, chart paper, or shared table paper, write the following proverbs and adages. Have students work with a partner to define unknown words and discuss the lesson in each proverb or adage.

- Actions speak louder than words.
- All good things must come to an end.
- If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.
- A picture is worth a thousand words.
- Don’t count your chickens before they hatch.
- The squeaky wheel gets the grease.
- Two wrongs don’t make a right.
Identify Student Success (ISS) 3 min.

Assess students’ understanding of the learning objective.

Review the lesson objective with students. (I can determine the meaning of adages and proverbs to improve my comprehension of a story.)

Prompt students to consider the title Frosting on the Cake. Ask: Based on your understanding of proverbs and adages now, do you think the title works for this story? Why or why not?

SRB Answer Key

Frosting on the Cake

Date:

What’s the Saying Really Saying?

Directions: Go back to the text to find the adages and proverbs. Complete the chart to better understand the adages and proverbs in the story.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paragraph</th>
<th>Adage/Proverb</th>
<th>The literal meaning of the saying</th>
<th>What the saying is actually saying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>title</td>
<td>Frosting on the Cake</td>
<td>The sweet topping that is often spread across the top and sides of a cake.</td>
<td>Something good that happens on top of something that is already good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The early bird catches the worm.</td>
<td>If a bird is early, it will be the one to catch a worm.</td>
<td>Arriving early or working hard early will give you more opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nothing ventured, nothing gained.</td>
<td>If you never try anything, you never gain anything.</td>
<td>You have to take risks and try new things if you want to grow and receive something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.</td>
<td>If you are going to make an omelet, you have to crack the eggs open first.</td>
<td>If you are going to do or make something wonderful, you may have to make a mess, cause trouble, break rules, or make mistakes while doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>It’s not that you can’t do it, you just can’t do it – yet!</td>
<td>You may not be able to do something now, but you might be able to do it in the future.</td>
<td>Don’t give up. If you keep trying, working hard, and learning, you will succeed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>When the going gets tough, the tough get going.</td>
<td>When things get hard, strong people persevere.</td>
<td>The toughest, strongest people do not give up when things get hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The best gifts come from the heart.</td>
<td>The most special presents come from a blood-pumping organ.</td>
<td>The best presents come from a place of love and thoughtfulness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Connecting Adages and Proverbs with Character and Theme

Directions: Complete the sentence frames to explain how the adage or proverb reveals something about the characters. Look back at the details you wrote on the chart on page 4. Choose one adage or proverb and write how it connects to your life.

The early bird catches the worm.
What does this saying show about what is important to Grandpa? This saying shows that Grandpa thinks it’s important that people get up early so they can accomplish a lot and have good opportunities.

Nothing ventured, nothing gained.
After the experience baking a cake for Grandpa, do you think Anton was glad that he ventured to make the cake? Why or why not? I think he was glad. He took a risk and even though things didn’t go very well, he made Grandpa happy in the end.

You can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.
How does this saying connect with Anton’s actions in the story? I can make a connection to the proverb because . . .
Notes: