

Working on idioms!

5 Read the extract from a newspaper and try to explain the idioms in bold.



The new Environment Minister, Tony Lord, is proving himself to be 1) **a breath of fresh air** in a department whose policies have proved stale and unconvincing up to now. Yesterday, he 2) **was put on the spot** by the environmental group Earth SOS when he was challenged to respond to Earth SOS's latest report which has 3) **brought to light** the extent of the pollution in the River Flay.

The previous Minister, Lord Garter, commissioned the Environmental Ministry to produce a special report on the River Flay last month. Based on the evidence in the report, he gave both the river and the large NFC Pharmaceuticals factory, which is situated on the river, 4) **a clean bill of health**. Lord Garter reported that the environment around the factory is now 5) "as clean as a whistle" and the water in the river is "safe enough to drink".

Earth SOS's report must have come as 6) **a rude awakening** to Mr Lord since it shows that pollution in and around the river is still far above the levels permitted by law. The report refers to plantations of small trees around the NFC factory 7) **burnt to a crisp** by sulphur emission, and 8) **pitch-black** sediment at the bottom of the river which is the product of industrial waste. The report also notes that the previous minister is now a director of NFC Pharmaceuticals.

Mr Lord announced that the Ministry would no longer 9) **bury its head in the sand** and pretend there was no problem with the River Flay and that he personally would lead a new enquiry into pollution there. He invited Earth SOS to take part. He said there was nothing to be gained by having his Ministry and environmental groups constantly 10) **at loggerheads** with each other, and concluded by saying that everyone wants a cleaner and safer environment in which to live.

6 Match the items with the idioms from Ex. 5.

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| a to put sb in a difficult position, especially by a sudden question | e in strong disagreement |
| b to burn sth completely | f very clean |
| c to ignore trouble by pretending it doesn't exist | g a sudden understanding/awareness of sth unpleasant |
| d a statement that sth/sb is in satisfactory condition/health | h black/very dark |
| | i to make known |
| | j sb/sth refreshingly new and different |

7 Rewrite the following sentences using the words in bold. Do not change these words in any way.

- 1 Before the General inspected their barracks, the soldiers made sure that they were very clean.
whistle
- 2 My sister and I have strongly disagreed for years – you name it, we argue about it.
loggerheads
- 3 Terry's romantic dinner was ruined when the roast in the oven caught fire.
burnt
- 4 When the lights went out, it was very dark.
black
- 5 Scarlet Snake's new record was different and exciting so everyone wanted to buy it.
fresh

8 Fill in the gaps with phrases from the list:

clean bill of health, brought to light, put on the spot, rude awakening, burying their heads in the sand

- 1 Joseph was when his mother demanded an explanation for his low school marks.
- 2 Environmental groups concerned about the issue have accused the government of
- 3 After all his aches and pains, he was relieved to be given a
- 4 We had rather a to the cost of phone calls when we had our first bill.
- 5 Residents were appalled when Cubbley Council's mismanagement of local funds was