
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Vocabulary

Phrases from Shakespeare



BBC
LEARNING
ENGLISH

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Vocabulary with me Neil.

Finn

And me, Finn. In this programme we're talking about phrases from Shakespeare.

Neil

They're phrases that were either invented by Shakespeare or used by him in his plays and that we still use a lot today. We'll give you plenty of examples of these and we'll teach you what they mean.

Finn

We'll have a quiz; and we'll also bring you a top tip for learning vocabulary.

Neil

Let's start with Danny. He's talking about cooking, and entertaining friends.

Finn

And while you listen, think about this question: Does Danny think it's easy to find special ingredients for recipes?

Danny

For some people food is **the be-all and end-all** and I have friends who, whenever I visit, produce **a dish fit for the gods!** But in my opinion, cooking is **not for the faint-hearted**. I really hate spending **forever and a day** in the kitchen. Dinner parties usually mean trying to track down some special ingredient, which ends up being **a wild-goose chase**. It's pretty much **a foregone conclusion** that my chosen recipe won't work out as I hope. So I just throw a party once a year to repay all my friends **in one fell swoop**. Fortunately, every one of them **has a heart of gold**, so they understand!

Neil

That was Danny. And we asked you: Does Danny think it's easy to find special ingredients for recipes?

Finn

And the answer is no, because usually it's **a wild-goose chase**.

Neil

Now a **wild-goose chase** is used in Romeo and Juliet. This means a situation where you waste time chasing after something that you can't get.

Finn

So Danny clearly has had bad experiences of trying to find ingredients and not succeeding.

Neil

Exactly. Well, there are four more Shakespearean phrases in our first clip. Listen out for them!

CLIP 1

For some people food is **the be-all and end-all** and I have friends who, whenever I visit, produce **a dish fit for the gods!** But in my opinion, cooking is **not for the faint-hearted**. I really hate spending **forever and a day** in the kitchen.

Finn

So food is **the be-all and end-all**. That's the beginning and ending of everything, which means it's the most important thing.

Neil

And that's why they always produce **a dish fit for the gods**. Clearly if something is suitable for the gods, it is the best possible.

Finn

But cooking is **not for the faint-hearted**, Danny says. **The faint-hearted** are people who lack courage or determination and he thinks people like that shouldn't cook. This phrase shows how difficult Danny finds cooking.

Neil

And he hates spending a long time in the kitchen.

Finn

He does. **Forever and a day** is a very long time! Right, there are three more phrases coming up in our next clip.

CLIP 2

It's pretty much **a foregone conclusion** that my chosen recipe won't work out as I hope. So I throw a party once a year to repay all my friends **in one fell swoop**. Fortunately, every one of them has **a heart of gold**, so they understand!

Neil

Now, if something is **a foregone conclusion**, it's a result that is certain to happen. He thinks it's certain that his recipe won't work out.

Finn

And that's why he entertains his friends **in one fell swoop**. Now if you deal with things **in one fell swoop**, that means you deal with them all together and suddenly, like a bird sweeping down through the air to attack something.

Neil

Yes, he doesn't want to cook for people more often than necessary! But fortunately his friends understand how he feels, don't they?

Finn

They do. They each **have a heart of gold**. Now that means they are very kind and caring.

IDENT

6 Minute Vocabulary from BBC Learning English.

Finn

And it's quiz time! Today you have to change the last three or four words of each sentence to use a phrase from Shakespeare from the programme. So number one: Some successful people don't go to university. It's really not **the most important thing**. Which phrase from Shakespeare can replace **the most important thing**?

Neil

It's really not **the be-all and end-all**.

Finn

Right. Number two. We got stuck in bad traffic so the journey took **a very long time**. So what can replace **a very long time**?

Neil

The journey took **forever and a day**.

Finn

Correct! And number three: Everyone thinks Clare is the nicest person. She's always **been very kind**. What can replace **very kind**?

Neil

She's always **had a heart of gold**.

Finn

She has. That's excellent! And that is the end of the quiz. Well done if you got them all right.

Neil

But before we go, here's today's top tip. English is very rich in phrases and idioms like the ones in this programme. Using them makes your English sound much more like that of a native speaker. Use an idioms dictionary and try learning five idioms a day. Then try working them into your conversations too.

Finn

There's more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Vocabulary.

Both

Bye!

Vocabulary points to take away:

be the be-all and end-all

be the most important thing

For some people, social networking is the be-all and end-all of their lives.

a dish fit for the gods

the best possible food you can serve

You don't need to make a dish fit for the gods. It's just a relaxed supper.

be not for the faint-hearted

be not suitable for people who lack courage or determination

Mountain-climbing is not for the faint-hearted.

forever and a day

a very long time

This homework's going to take me forever and a day.

be a foregone conclusion

be a result that is certain to happen

I'm sure our team win the match. It's almost a foregone conclusion.

in one fell swoop

all at once and suddenly

Let's call a meeting and deal with all these points in one fell swoop.

have a heart of gold

be very kind and caring

Alice always thinks of other people. She has a heart of gold.