



Cliches: Over 1500 Phrases Explored and Explained

Betty Kirkpatrick

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Betty Kirkpatrick has compiled an exhaustive dictionary--a must for writers, crossword puzzle buffs, and anyone who is intrigued by language.

Sample entries from *Cliches*

Let the cat out of the bag is an idiom cliché meaning to reveal a secret. In origin it refers allegedly to a fairground trick by which traders sold unwary buyers a cat in a bag, assuring them it was a pig. The buyers did not realize their mistake until they let the cat out of the bag, by which time it was too late.

Bite the bullet is an idiom cliché meaning to steel oneself to accept something distressing. In origin it probably refers to the days before anesthesia, when soldiers wounded in battle were given a lead bullet to bite on to brace themselves against the pain of surgery.

Fly off the handle is an idiom cliché meaning to lose one's temper. Originally American, the expression has its origin in an ax or hammer, the handle of which becomes loosened and flies off after it has struck a blow.

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