All the colours of the rainbow

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

INTERMEDIATE | B1-B2

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

1 Match each colour idiom with its meaning.

1 out of the blue	____	a become extremely angry
2 once in a blue moon	____	b give permission for something to begin
3 green with envy	____	c unexpectedly and without warning
4 see red	____	d in debt or losing money
5 in the red	____	e very rarely
6 give the green light	____	f a harmless untruth told to avoid hurting someone
7 a white lie	____	g extremely jealous
8 black and white	____	h clearly written, printed or defined

2 Complete the colour idioms.

black | blue | light | moon | red | see | white | with

1 arrive out of the _____

2 happen once in a blue _____

3 be green _____ envy

4 _____ red with anger

5 finish the month in the _____

6 give the green _____

7 tell a _____ lie

8 put the agreement in _____ and white

3 Choose the most suitable idiom.

1 A surprise call came *out of the blue / in the red*.

2 We visit that remote village *once in a blue moon / black and white*.

3 He was *green with envy / given the green light* when she won.

4 The unfair decision made her *see red / tell a white lie*.

5 The business owes money and is *in the red / out of the blue*.

6 The council approved the plan and *gave it the green light / saw red*.

7 Saying you like a gift may be *a white lie / the red*.

8 Written rules are there *in black and white / once in a blue moon*.

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4 Complete the office story with idioms from the box.

a white lie | black and white | give the green light | green with envy | in the red | once in a blue moon | out of the blue | see red

The manager called **1** _____ with unexpected news. The company had been **2** _____ for three months, but a new contract could help. Such an opportunity came only **3** _____. The directors agreed to **4** _____ to the project and put every condition in **5** _____. One rival was **6** _____. Another employee nearly began to **7** _____ when his idea received no credit. To avoid an argument, a colleague told **8** _____ about why the meeting had ended early.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

When colour is not literal

Colour idioms cannot usually be understood word by word. A person who is 'in the red' is not physically coloured red, and news arriving 'out of the blue' does not come from the sky. Context reveals the intended meaning. Such expressions can make language lively, but they may confuse learners or international audiences. In formal safety instructions, a direct phrase is often clearer than a colourful idiom.

1 Can colour idioms be read literally? _____

2 Is a person 'in the red' physically red? _____

3 What reveals an idiom's intended meaning? _____

4 What can idioms add to language? _____

5 Who may find them confusing? _____

6 Where may direct language be more suitable? _____

6 Rewrite using the colour idiom in capitals.

1 The email arrived completely unexpectedly. **BLUE** ___

2 The organisation currently owes money. **RED** _____

3 The board authorised the project. **GREEN** _____

4 The rule is clearly stated in writing. **BLACK** _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a **100-120 word** short story using at least five colour idioms naturally. Make each meaning clear from context.

[ ] Use at least five target idioms. [ ] Keep literal and idiomatic meanings distinct. [ ] Build a coherent sequence.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Colour idioms

1 **c** 2 **e** 3 **g** 4 **a** 5 **d** 6 **b** 7 **f** 8 **h**

2 Complete the idioms

1 **blue** 2 **moon** 3 **with** 4 **see** 5 **red** 6 **light** 7 **white** 8 **black**

3 Suitable idioms

1 **out of the blue** 2 **once in a blue moon** 3 **green with envy** 4 **see red**
5 **in the red** 6 **gave it the green light** 7 **a white lie** 8 **in black and white**

4 Office story

1 **out of the blue** 2 **in the red** 3 **once in a blue moon** 4 **give the green light** 5 **black and white** 6 **green with envy** 7 **see red** 8 **a white lie**

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 No. 2 No. 3 Context. 4 Liveliness. 5 Learners or international audiences. 6 Formal safety instructions.

6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 The email arrived **out of the blue**. 2 The organisation is **in the red**.
3 The board gave the project the **green light**. 4 The rule is there in **black and white**.

Over to you: Answers will vary. Check idiomatic accuracy, context and narrative cohesion.