ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Speak English Like an American Lesson 20 Idioms and Expressions MCQ Test

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1	A	2	B	3	A	4	C	5	B	6	C	7	B	8	B				

Explanations

1. **Choose the best substitute for the phrase in bold:**

After Nicole lost the election, she started **ranting and raving**.
✓ **A) complaining loudly**
Ranting and raving means complaining or shouting angrily and loudly about something. Nicole is upset about losing, so she shouts and complains: **He was ranting and raving about the parking ticket.**

2. When a stranger approached me on the bus and asked to borrow my cell phone, I was **taken aback**.
✓ **B) surprised**
To be **taken aback** means to be surprised or shocked by something unexpected. A stranger asking to borrow your phone is a surprise. Not **disappointed**, because nothing you hoped for went wrong.

3. When George showed up for work five minutes late, his boss Beth threatened to fire him. Beth is known for **blowing things out of proportion**.
✓ **A) making a big deal out of small things**
Blowing things out of proportion means treating a small problem as if it were very serious. Being five minutes late is small, but Beth threatens to fire George, so she is **making a big deal out of small things**.

4. My apartment is always messy. I need to **get my act together** and start cleaning it once a week.
✓ **C) get organized**
To **get your act together** means to become organized and start doing things properly. The clue is the messy apartment and the plan to clean it every week. Not **start pretending**: the word **act** here is not about acting in a play.

5. **My heart goes out to** all the homeless people lying outside my apartment building in February.
✓ **B) I feel sorry for**
My heart goes out to someone means I feel sympathy for them, or **I feel sorry for** them. The speaker feels sad for the people outside in the cold February weather. Not **I help**: the idiom is about feelings, not actions.

6. I just **found out** yesterday that Amber never washes her hands before making cookies. Ted told me.
✓ **C) learned**
To **find out** means to **learn** or discover a fact. **Ted told me** shows the speaker got the information from Ted. Not **overheard**, because Ted spoke to the speaker directly. The speaker did not secretly hear someone else's conversation.

7. The judge is going to **throw the book at Jim** for robbing several houses.
✓ **B) punish Jim very severely**
To **throw the book at** someone means to punish them as severely as possible, using every law in the book against them. Jim robbed several houses, so the judge will give him a very hard punishment: **The judge threw the book at him and gave him ten years.** Not **read to Jim**: the idiom has nothing to do with a real book.

8. Ted's chemistry homework was much more difficult than Nicole had expected. She just couldn't seem to **get a handle on it**.
✓ **B) understand it**
To **get a handle on** something means to understand it or learn how to deal with it. The homework was more difficult than Nicole expected, so she could not understand it. Not **hold it in her hands**: **handle** here is not meant literally.

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