

Short Story Activity with Animal Idioms

Mexico is home to a wide variety of exciting animals like snakes, lizards, monkeys, and jaguars. The following story is about a child named Mateo who lives on the southwestern coast of Mexico, near a large rainforest called the Lacandon Jungle. Read this story about Mateo and replace each bolded word/phrase with an animal idiom that you learned. (Note: all idioms are included in the book [The Lion's Share: Animal Idioms](#))

"Mateo and the Iguana"

In the summer, Mateo **was restless** _____. He would always ask his mother, "what should I do today?" Usually Mateo went to the park and played soccer with his friends **for a very long time** _____, but on this particular day it was **pouring rain outside** _____. He tried to play with his little sister Jauana, but she was **annoying him** _____. He asked his mother to play her *vihuela*¹ so that they could sing and dance together like they sometimes did, but his mother was **working hard** _____ at her job as an accountant.

Mateo paced his room **slowly** _____ when suddenly he saw something moving in the corner. What could it be? He walked towards it **feeling nervous and excited** _____. When he got closer, he saw that it was an iguana! He was used to seeing iguanas, geckos, and lizards when he was outside--but he had never seen one in the house before!



Spiny tailed iguanas like the one in this picture are native to western Mexico

¹ A Mexican vihuela is a guitar-like instrument that has been popular in Mexico since the 19th century.

Mateo knelt down next to the Iguana. “Why are you here all alone,” he asked, “don’t you want to join the other animals? You’ll find them if you just walk **straight** _____!”

Suddenly, as if they had heard what Mateo said, a few more spiny-tailed iguanas marched in, followed by the most beautiful ocelot that Mateo had ever seen.



Native to Mexico and Central and South America, the ocelot is a medium-sized cat: twice the size of an average house cat, but more than three times smaller than a jaguar.

“**Wait** _____!” cried Mateo. “This is my bedroom, not the rainforest!”

But before he could even finish his sentence, new animals started marching in: a Mexican spider monkey climbed up his bookshelf, a Mexican black kingsnake slithered across his carpet, a jaguar purred from the corner, and some jackrabbits were jumping on to his chair.

“What if mamá came in and saw all this?” thought Mateo to himself, wondering if he should **tell the secret** _____. But pretty soon Mateo stopped worrying, and started playing with the animals: he climbed with the monkeys, slithered with the snakes, ran with the jaguar, and jumped with the jackrabbits.

Mateo ran to the iguana. “Did *you* do all of this?” he asked the iguana.

“We knew that you couldn’t play outside today, so we thought that we would bring *the outside* inside,” explained the iguana.

“Mateo, Mateo, wake up!” Mateo rolled over in bed, and opened his eyes. His mother was standing next to his bed. “Was I just dreaming?” he thought to himself.

“Mamá,” said Mateo, “I want to play in the rainforest today!”

Answer Key

1. Had ants in his pants
2. Until the cows come home
3. Raining cats and dogs
4. Getting his goat
5. Smelled a rat
6. Gets my goat
7. Busy as a bee
8. At a snail's pace
9. With butterflies in his stomach
10. As the crow flies
11. Hold your horses
12. Let the cat out of the bag