

11 Robber Chickens Out



1. Quick Reading

Look at the pictures on page 51.
What is the story about?

Now read quickly to get the main idea.

PEARL RIVER, NY, USA ¹In New York, nothing is surprising anymore. A man went into a bank in a town just north of New York City. He had a plastic bag over his head. ²He approached a teller and handed her a note. ³The teller **took a look at** the note. But she **couldn't make heads or tails of** it. The handwriting was terrible. ⁴She **excused herself** and went to consult with her co-workers. No one could read the note. ⁵Finally, one of the clerks figured out part of it. It said, "I have a gun." ⁶The clerks realized **at last** that the man was trying to **hold up** the bank. But when they looked up, the man with the bag on his head was gone. Apparently, he **lost his nerve** and **ran away**.

⁷Why didn't the teller react to the plastic bag on the man's head? She said only, "I thought maybe he had a skin problem." ⁸Police officers are still trying to **make sense of** the robber's note. "The note says he has a gun, but we have to **spend more time** studying the rest of it," said one officer.

New idioms and expressions

chicken out*	decide not to do something you planned because you're afraid
take a look at someone or something	look at someone or something quickly
cannot make heads or tails of something	not be able to understand something
excuse oneself	ask permission to leave a person or place
at last	finally; after a long time
hold someone or something up*	rob someone or something at gunpoint
lose one's nerve	become afraid and not do something
run away*	leave quickly; escape
make sense of something	understand something
spend time doing something	use time to do something

recycled idiom: figure out

*phrasal verb (see Lexicon and Appendix D)

 **2. Listen**

Cover the story and look only at these pictures. Listen to the story two or three times.



3. Read the Story

Now read the story carefully. Pay special attention to the idioms so that you're ready for Exercise 4.

 **4. Listen and Complete**

Close your book. Listen to the story again. When the tape or your teacher pauses, try to complete the idiom.

5. Tell the Story

Cover the story and look at the pictures above. Tell the story using as many idioms as you can.

- a. First, work with the whole class to retell the story.
- b. Then tell the story to a partner or small group.

6. Answer the Questions

About the story.....

- What happened when the teller took a look at the note?
- What did the clerks realize at last?
- Why did the man run away?
- What are police officers still trying to do?

About you.....

- Tell about a time when you wanted to do something but you lost your nerve.
- What do you like to spend time doing?
- Did you ever visit a foreign country? If so, what was especially difficult to make sense of?

7. Write about Yourself

Complete the sentences, writing something true about yourself.

- Sometimes I can't make sense of _____
_____.
- I usually try to run away from _____
_____.
- Once I wanted to _____, but
I chickened out.

8. Write a Dialogue

Work with a partner. Write a dialogue using at least three idioms from the unit. Act it out for a small group or the class.

9. Take a Dictation



10. Complete the Dialogue

a. A husband and wife are talking. Fill in the blanks with idioms from the box.

- run away
- make sense of
- spend time
- take a look at
- at last
- chicken out



Guess what!* I'm writing a letter to my boss and asking for a raise.

Ah, (1) _____! **Good for you.****
You should have done it months ago.



I know. I always (2) _____.
Oh, honey, where are you going? Don't
(3) _____ yet.

How come?



I want you to (4) _____
my letter—you know, to see if you can
(5) _____ it.

I'm in a hurry.*** I want to get to the
bank and the library before they close.
I can (6) _____
helping you tonight. OK?



OK.

* Guess what!: a way of starting a conversation

** Good for you.: an expression of encouragement

*** be in a hurry: need to go somewhere quickly

recycled idiom: How come?

b. Work with a partner. Role-play the dialogue together.