Universidad de Cuenca

Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa

Categorization and teaching idiomatic expressions through mnemonics

Trabajo de titulación previo a la obtención del Título de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación en Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.

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Resumen

El objetivo principal del siguiente proyecto de titulación es crear un libro ilustrativo con las frases idiomáticas más comunes de la Lengua Inglesa con su equivalente exacto en español. Este libro pretende ayudar a los aprendices del idioma inglés a entender, usar y aplicar las frases idiomáticas dentro de un contexto apropiado, puesto que su uso los hará sonar de una manera más natural; en otras palabras, como un nativo hablante. Las frases idiomáticas para la creación de este libro fueron obtenidas a través de una encuesta, que fue aplicada a un grupo de extranjeros que reside en Cuenca. Para llevar a cabo dicho procedimiento, el investigador trabajó con una lista de cotejo, un cuadro categórico, y una pregunta abierta; dando como resultado una larga lista de frases idiomáticas. Posteriormente de analizar los resultados, fue posible determinar las frases idiomáticas más comunes de la lengua inglesa, las mismas que fueron categorizadas de acuerdo a su forma y significado; basándose en su equivalente en español. Finalmente, imágenes, es decir, ilustraciones que pertenecen a las nemotécnicas desempeñaron un papel importante dentro del libro; recalcando que el mismo debe ser utilizado con la ayuda del maestro.

*Palabras clave***:** Frases idiomáticas.Nemotécnicas.Imágenes visuales

Abstract

The main aim of the following graduation project is to create an illustrative booklet with the most common English idiomatic expressions with their exact equivalent in Spanish. The booklet is intended to help English learners understand, use, and apply idioms in an appropriate context since their use will make learners sound more natural, in other words, more like a native speaker. The idioms used for the creation of the booklet were obtained from a survey that was administered to a group of expats living in Cuenca. To carry out this survey, the researcher worked with a check list, categorization chart, and an open question, resulting in a sizeable list of idioms. After analyzing the results, it was possible for the researcher to determinate the most common English idioms which were later categorized according to their form and meaning based on their equivalents in Spanish. Finally, visual imagery, namely, illustrations that belong to mnemonics take an important role within the booklet, which will be used with the help of teachers at all times.

*Keywords***:** Idiomatic expressions.Mnemonics.Visual imagery

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to all my angels, my grandma, my great aunt, my aunt, my niece, my sister, my best friend and my mom, who have been there for me ever since I was little. They have supported me and motivated me in all possible ways to be a better human being and to make my dreams come true. Also, this project is dedicated to my better self since it is a reminder that everything in life is possible.

Manuel Farfán Mora
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Introduction

The main aim of the following graduation project is to create an illustrative booklet with the most common English idiomatic expressions with their exact equivalent in Spanish. The booklet is intended to help English learners understand, use, and apply idioms in an appropriate context since their use will make learners sound more natural, in other words, more like a native speaker.

This project is developed in six successive chapters. The first chapter encompasses a description of the research and includes the main problem, and the justification and objectives of the study.

The second chapter describes the theoretical framework, which talks about definitions, types and importance of idiomatic expressions, mnemonics and categorization.

The third chapter is the review of the literature in which the researcher discusses all the studies that were found relevant for this project.

The fourth chapter focuses on all the aspects concerning research methodology. Furthermore, in this section the limitations and a description of the booklet are also included.

The fifth chapter presents the results and interpretations of the survey. In addition, it includes a compendium of the most common English idiomatic expressions divided into categories.

Finally, chapter six deals with the conclusions and recommendations, and the end result, namely, the illustrative booklet is included as an appendix.

Chapter 1: Description of the research

1.1 Statement of the Problem

English language literature students and novice teachers may have encountered the need of learning and teaching idiomatic expressions in a diverse way since learners do not always understand their actual meaning. Furthermore, finding an equivalent for English idiomatic expressions in Spanish and dividing them into groups may help students and teachers in the teaching-learning process.

Learners of English who have reached a decent level of the language can easily read, write, listen, and speak without any difficulty. However, when it comes to understanding idiomatic expressions, they might have some problems since they tend to translate idioms literally. Furthermore, idioms may have more to them than only a literal meaning. Hence, it would be beneficial for students to find the equivalents of English idioms in their mother tongue, Spanish, in order to fully understand them.

1.2 Background and Justification

Learners of any language tend to use translation as their main resource to understand the target language, and sometimes, it might work. However, when it comes to idiomatic expressions, often it is not possible to understand them, since idioms do not have a literal meaning. Moreover, idioms are part of the sociolinguistic field of the language, and they require a higher degree of contextual understanding. Sociolinguistics takes an important role in communication; according to Woltfram, "Sociolinguistics has become an increasingly important and popular field of study, as certain cultures around the world expand their communication base and intergroup and interpersonal relations take on escalating significance" (2012, para.3).

Idiomatic expressions belong to the colloquial part of the language, and they have different meaning from the actual literal meaning. For instance, let us consider the example "to be on the same page", which is frequently used in everyday situations by native speakers, and might be difficult for L2 learners to understand since they are not

aware of the figurative (nonliteral) meaning that idioms can have. Moreover, there is always at least one figurative element within an idiom (Zyzik, 2009).

First of all, mnemonics will be the key element of this study since it embraces the use of Image mnemonics (illustrations), Connection mnemonics (categorization), and Expression or Word mnemonics (translanguaging). Also, it is worth mentioning that this technique helps the retention of information in our memory for a longer period of time, and in the same way, it helps the retrieval of this information. Mnemonics has a very high level of effectivity in the learning process, "(…) increasing student comprehension test scores in Language Arts and Science. On average, students who have been trained in mnemonic instruction outperform students without training on comprehension exams" (DeLashmutt, 2007, Effectiveness section, para.1).

Thus, the understanding of idioms cannot be done by translating word by word. Therefore, it might be a good strategy to learn English idioms by finding an exact equivalent for them in Spanish with the help translanguaging.

Furthermore, image mnemonics (illustrations) will be also used in the elaboration of the booklet referred to above since visual material in foreign language has a powerful impact on learners. As we can see in the article, *Use and Importance of Illustration as Materials in Foreign Language Teaching* by Karakaş Ali and Karaca Gülçin:

"(…) visual materials are more universal than written materials as a means of communication. As visuality gains the quality of being a universal language, it is necessary to learn this language. Visual materials may be used in many different fields of education by utilizing supporting role of illustrations" (as cited in İşler, 2003, p. 354).

The use of visual materials, illustrations, will ease the hard work of teachers, motivate students, attract students' attention, and give the message more effectively.

In addition, categorization is the last but not least effective strategy that will be implied in this project since categorization helps organize and classify information in our brains according to a certain criteria, which in this study are form and meaning.

Finally, all kinds of mnemonics can be useful in education. That is why Image mnemonics (illustrations) will be used in this project to create a booklet with illustrations to help learners acquire idiomatic expressions in a more simple and meaningful way.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To create a booklet with illustrations for teaching the most common American English idiomatic expressions to A2/B1 EFL students through mnemonics.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- To determine the most common American English idiomatic expressions through surveys with native English speakers.
- To examine the equivalents of those English idiomatic expressions in Spanish.
- To analyze and categorize idiomatic expressions in four possible groups based on their form and meaning.
- To create the illustrative booklet with both English and Spanish idiomatic expressions.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

Every single language of the world has its own idiomatic expressions which may seem tricky to understand for non-native speakers of those languages since idiomatic expressions do not always have a literal meaning. Actually, most of the time they have an idiomatic meaning rather than a literal one; and this non-literal meaning can only be understood by native speakers of the language.

The majority of these phrases that belong to every single language of the world have more than only a non-literal meaning (idiomatic meaning). Their meanings deal with some cultural, geographical and even dialectal issues of a certain language that are easily understood by native speakers. However, it is not impossible to learn idiomatic expressions, but the learning itself would be a little bit more complex. In addition, some techniques such as, mnemonics, visual imagery and categorization will ease the work of teachers when teaching idioms.

Therefore, a good way to learn these expressions can be through visual materials since sometimes you can get more meaning from a picture rather than just words. As the Chinese saying goes: *A picture is worth a thousand words*. For the same reason, the researcher considers that image mnemonics, namely, illustrations with the help of categorization and exact equivalents might be one of the best ways to learn idiomatic expressions.

2.2 Idiomatic expressions

The word idiom dates back to ancient Greece, and means 'standing apart on its own'. That is, a construction that stands apart from the rest of the language because of this irregularity, and analysis would indicate that idioms are almost all of a colloquial rather than a literary character, belonging to the spoken rather than the written language (Wood, 1986).

Idiomatic expressions are part of informal everyday English that improve speech, and they are words and/or phrases that are commonly used by native speakers of a language.

Idiomatic expression or idiom is an expression, word, or phrase that has a figurative meaning conventionally understood by native speakers. This meaning is different from the literal meaning of the idiom's individual elements. In other words, idioms don't mean exactly what the words say. They have, however, hidden meaning (My English Pages, n.d., para.1).

Additionally, the meaning of idioms by no means can be considered isolated since all the elements of the idiom work together to express a complete idea or thought. Therefore, idioms should be learnt by heart, in other words, from memory. Cristina Cacciari and Sam Glucksberg (1991) make a comparison between an idiom and a word in which they claim that words have a meaning when they are written together. However, the letters that compose those words do not have a real meaning alone. In the same way, words in an idiom only express a thought when considered as a whole. This is a good explanation why students should not translate idioms literally, and the comparison gives us a clearer idea of the complicated world of idioms.

Mastering idiomatic expressions for non-native speakers of the English language will be almost impossible if they do not have a full understanding of the figurative nature of idioms. Some idioms can be easy to understand since the elements of the idiom are comprehensible. However, the majority of idioms are very difficult to understand since their form has nothing to do with their meaning. Nunberg, Sar and Wasow (1994) state that there are two types of idioms: decomposable and non-decomposable idioms.

Decomposable idioms

Nunberg, Sar and Wasow claim, "The more standard, non-compositional approach, which takes them as long words that syntactically and semantically behave as lexical entries, and associates their nonliteral meanings with somewhat arbitrary configurations of words" (as cited in Espinal & Mateau, 2005, p.2).

Non-decomposable idioms

The three aforementioned authors say, "The compositional approach, which focusses on their non-arbitrary internal semantic and syntactic structure and on the

consequences this non-traditional conception entails" (as cited in Espinal and Mateau, 2005, p.2).

However, most of the idioms are metaphors that require a higher degree of understanding, and they have to do with the cultural and sociolinguistic part of any given language. Therefore, the study of idiomatic expressions can be complicated. Sometimes, idioms can be very difficult to understand for non-native speakers since people might try to translate every single element of an idiom word by word. However, idiomatic expressions should be considered as a whole rather than a collection of words, and their meanings can only be understood by analyzing all the elements of the idiom taken as a whole rather than by translating their elements literally.

As it was stated before, idioms have a lot to do with the culture from which they arise. That is why the understanding of idioms for non-native speakers can be problematic. According to Weinreich and Chafe, idioms are complex expressions with figurative meaning that may be considered ambiguous for having two meanings, one literal meaning and one idiomatic (figurative) meaning (as cited in Samuel Borrow and Susan Bell, 1973). In this context, idioms are words or phrases that have a figurative meaning conventionally understood by native speakers. For the purposes of this study, it is the figurative meaning that will be considered.

For example, let us contemplate the following phrases considered as idiomatic expressions.

Chart 1: Phrases considered as idiomatic expressions

List of idioms
The early bird catches the worm
Has the cat got your tongue?
out of the blue
fish out of water
cream of the crop
let the cat out of the bag
behind bars
like a bat out of hell
a bear hug
beauty is only skin deep
get up on the wrong side of the bed
better to be safe than sorry
better late than never
in your birthday suit
the black sheep (of the family)
a blind date

Creating a booklet with illustrations might make the complicated learning of idioms much easier and meaningful to students.

2.2.1 Importance of teaching idioms

The use of idiomatic expressions enhances the development of idiomatic competence which is "the ability to understand and use idioms appropriately and accurately in a variety of sociocultural contexts, in a manner similar to that of native speakers, and with the least amount of mental effort" (Liontas, 2003, p. 299). In other words, using idiomatic expressions properly might make foreign learns sound more like a native speaker, and their regular use can also decrease the mental effort of understanding them.

The same author also proposes five reasons why to teach idiomatic expressions in foreign language classes, and they are summarized and listed below:

1. Idiomatic expressions help learners gain a deeper knowledge of the creative expression of human thought and language development over time.

2. Learners can go beyond the literal meaning of idioms and see the essential role that context plays in the understanding of idiomatic expressions.

3. Using idiomatic expressions enhances learners' mastery of them, facilitating the binding and mapping processes of idiom internalization.

4. Idiomatic expressions give learners the opportunity to examine their own mental images associated with idiomatic phrases.

5. The study of idioms in the classroom can help the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) profession to build a systematic program for the development of idiomatic competence in second language learners (Liontas, 2017).

These reasons provide enough arguments for teaching idiomatic expressions in foreign language classes since all of them focus on students' proficiency in the target language and fluency at the moment of speaking.

2.3 Mnemonics

It is important to know the definition of mnemonics since this word may seem new, but it is not. The etymology of the word *mnemonics* dates back to ancient Greek, and is related to Mnemosyne, the Greek titan that represented memory (Wyzant, 2018). Therefore, it is obvious that mnemonics has to do with memory, and it can be defined as techniques that help improve memory (Saleh & Ahmed, 2018). In other words, mnemonics is any technique that helps people recall things in a better way. Mnemonics is a learning technique that will be a major part of this project since it helps the retention of information in our memory for a long period of time, and in the same way it helps the retrieval of that information.   In the book, *The Metaphysics of Memory by* Sven Bernecker, the author cites Augustine, who states that our memory is considered to be the "belly of the mind" and can be compared to "a large and boundless inner hall," a "storehouse," and a "vast cave" within which "the images of things perceived" are laid away, to be "brought forth when there is need for them" (2009).

Moreover, mnemonics will help students retrieve the meaning of the idioms easily and successfully in order to use them in their lingo in the same way as native speakers of the English language do. There are nine types of mnemonics for a better memory which are: Music Mnemonics, Name Mnemonics, Expression or Word Mnemonic, Model Mnemonics, Ode or Rhyme Mnemonics, Note Organization Mnemonics, Image Mnemonics, Connection Mnemonics, and Spelling Mnemonics (The Learning Center Exchange, n.d.)

2.3.1 Music Mnemonics

As the name states, this type of mnemonics has to do with music, for example, the ABC song, in which the process consists of combining any type of music with the target topic you want to teach.

2.3.2 Name Mnemonics

In a Name Mnemonic, the 1st letter of each word in a list of items is used to make a name of a person or thing. Sometimes, the items can be rearranged to form a more recollectable name mnemonic. Example:

ROY G. BIV for the spectrum colors (Red, Orange, Yellow, Green, Blue, Indigo, Violet)

2.3.3 Expression or Word Mnemonic

This is by far the most popularly used mnemonic. To make an expression or word mnemonic, the first letter of each item in a list is arranged to form a phrase or word. For instance, fanboys (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

2.3.4 Model Mnemonics

Some type of representation is constructed to help with understanding and recalling important information. For instance, graphic organizers, concept maps, etc.

2.3.5 Ode or Rhyme Mnemonics

Some type of representation is constructed to help with understanding and recalling important information. Example:

Columbus sailed the ocean blue

In fourteen hundred ninety-two

2.3.6 Note Organization Mnemonics

The way textbook and lecture notes are organized. Examples: notecards, and outlines.

2.3.7 Connection Mnemonics

In this type of mnemonic, the information to be remembered is connected to something already known. Example: alliteration is a helpful memory aid.

2.3.8 Spelling Mnemonics

In this particular case of mnemonics, the grammar rules are included in a fun and relaxed way, so students can remember the spelling of the words that might seem difficult for them. Example:

Arithmetic: A rat in the house may eat the ice cream

2.3.9 Image Mnemonics

The information in an Image Mnemonic is constructed in the form of a picture that promotes recall of information when you need it. The funnier the Image Mnemonic is, the easier it is to recall the related information. Image Mnemonics will help you learn and remember. For examples, (see Illustration 1).

In this study only one of the nine types of mnemonics will be implied which is Image mnemonics since it is the best way to retrieve information with the help of visual aids, illustrations in this case.

2.4 Categorization

Human beings tend to discriminate things, sounds, colors, images, shapes, ideas, etc. unconsciously, and group them into categories. Furthermore, we do this process of categorization automatically since we do not even know why we do it. As a result, when learning or teaching a new language categorization will take on an essential role since the mental categories that we create in our brains help us remember the new words (Nelson, 2014).

Categorization is a common technique or process used to classify information in a more simple and condense way, and it involves grouping objects into categories according to similarities that they might share.

2.4.1 Importance of categorization

According to the Grand Valley State University, categorization is the basis for the structure and organization of our world since it helps us group things according to some criteria. Furthermore, teaching our students how to categorize does not only mean that you are teaching them a single skill since it also has to do with problem solving, organizing ideas, remembering, integrating, and processing information or ideas. Taking what was stated above about categorization as a starting point, the researcher can determinate three key points about this strategy:

- Categorization helps students form a basis for structuring and organizing their world.

- Categorization strategies can become a system for learning, problem solving and organizing.

- Categorization is a foundation for processing, remembering and integrating new information.

Therefore, categorization is essential in the process of language teaching and learning since it helps classify information in our brains that can be retrieved whenever there is need for it. Moreover, most children learn categorization strategies incidentally through experience and interaction with others, and it involves language learning advancing from simple to more complex structures (n.d.).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

There are a number of studies that have been carried out about idiomatic expressions in different fields, such as how and which idiomatic expressions should be taught. Similarly, a lot of studies have been done about the powerful impact that visual aids, images or illustrations can have on language learners. However, there are only few studies about the use of visual aids to teach idiomatic expressions, which is the ultimate aim of this study, namely, to create an illustrative book divided into categories.

3.2 Relevant Studies

The following studies considered for the basis of this project take an important role since they have to do with foreign language learning, the use of visual aids, and idiomatic expressions. In other words, these studies used in combination help the researcher with techniques and ideas that might or might not be used for future studies.

Kadden ironically declares that:

Idioms are tricky little devils. They travel incognito. Seeing them in print or hearing them doesn't necessarily offer any hints to their true personalities. Taking them apart and analyzing their components is akin to examining an alien from outer space. They just don't volunteer many clues. (as cited in Liontas, 2017, p. 6).

However, the use of idiomatic expressions enhances the development of idiomatic competence which is "the ability to understand and use idioms appropriately and accurately in a variety of sociocultural contexts, in a manner similar to that of native speakers, and with the least amount of mental effort" (Liontas, 2003, p. 299)

Nowadays, there are teachers who may doubt whether to teach idiomatic expressions or not since they tend to be very difficult for foreign language learners, and translating them literally does not help in the least. Actually, the fact of translating will only confuse language learners still more.

Additionally, some teachers feel that idioms are challenging to teach and that they create more problems than they solve (Liontas, 2017). However, the majority of teachers make a big effort to teach these expressions to their students regardless of the struggle that this may imply as idiomatic expressions require a more complex and deeper understanding of the language.

A research study by Higbee and Millard (1981) found that visual imagery can improve memorization skills. Showing a picture or real object while teaching vocabulary words helps students learn and remember new vocabulary in a more natural way. In the same study, the authors further state that visual imagery also improves memory for more complex verbal material such as sayings. The results of this study demonstrate that high-imagery sayings are more easily recalled than low-imagery sayings. In addition to using visual imagery, teachers should try to include humorous experiences in their classroom activities since human beings tend to remember jokes or funny situations rather than serious circumstances.

Vasiljević (2013) conducted an experiment that was designed to explore the applications of student-generated drawings in the teaching of idiomatic expressions. The study analyzed L2 (second language) idiom acquisition under two conditions: a) pictorial support provided by the instructor, and b) pictures generated by the learners themselves. The results show that students are able to effectively remember the meaning of 55% of the target expressions in the learner-generated drawing circumstance and 60% of the phrases for which pictorial support was provided by the teacher. Students under both conditions remembered the meaning of the expressions thanks to the help of drawings, visual aids that were either provided by the teacher or generated by themselves.

In another recent study by Dr. Mohammed Ahmed and Dr. Hassan Saleh, the authors investigate how mnemonics with the help of images can be used to help EFL learners memorize words. They used bizarre images, visual imagery mnemonics to

teach new vocabulary to students. Similarly, the use of visual mnemonics may help students learn English idiomatic expressions, which are a very important part of English culture. The results of the aforementioned study indicate that mnemonics utilizing images are useful tools to help learners remember more words than they would do otherwise.

In the same study, Ahmed and Saleh used three different techniques to teach vocabulary. They used bizarre images plus text, normal images plus text and only text to teach the word *grill to* 3 different groups of students who had the same cultural background. They used a single technique with each group. The results show that students who saw the bizarre images remembered more words than the other two. On the other hand, the students who saw the normal images plus text remembered more words than the group of students who only saw text.

The pictures below were used in the study, and picture 1 helped students the most when learning vocabulary.

Illustration 1: Sample pictures Ahmed and Saleh

Picture 1   **Picture 2**

Finally, creating a booklet with idioms divided in 4 possible categories according to form and meaning can enhance the understanding and learning of idiomatic expressions. However, the booklet itself would not be enough. For that reason, the researcher includes categorization, equivalent, and illustrations to help students and teachers in the process of learning these "bothersome" expressions to undergo a meaningful apprenticeship.

Manuel Farfán Mora

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Research Approach

In the research, the author employed a mainly quantitative approach since this study is intended to rank the most common English idiomatic expressions in order to create a booklet containing them. With the purpose of achieving that, a survey was applied to collect the required data, which was then tabulated to identify the most used idiomatic expressions among English native speakers.

4.2 Participants and setting

The human resource that was considered as participants was a group composed of English native speakers that live in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, and whose name is "YEES" (Young Expats and English Speakers). In this group, there are males and females with ages varying from 18 to 80 years old.

According to the social network Facebook (2018), "this group was created for non-retired people in Cuenca, looking to join in on events, activities or get-togethers with fellow expats or English speakers". Hence, this group was chosen for this graduation project because English speakers have first-hand knowledge about idiomatic expressions. Luckily, the group "YEES" was willing to help the with the research in all possible ways, and they looked forward to answering the survey.

4.3 Instruments

It was deemed necessary for this study to administer a survey to the participants with the aim of compiling the most common English idiomatic expressions to create a corpus. The survey was administered to members of "YEES" to determine the most common English idiomatic expressions, and it had 3 main questions with different purposes. First, question one was a checklist that was intended to rank the most common English idiomatic expressions. Second, question two included a categorization chart that was intended to gather more idioms related to themes such as happiness,

sadness, anger, and calmness. Finally, question 3 was an open question whose purpose was to add more idioms belonging to any of the themes (see Appendix 1).

4.4 Data Collection

The survey was scheduled to be conducted at "San Sebas Café", located in downtown Cuenca since this was the place where the group met every Wednesday. However, the place of the meetings was changed to a different place named "Zaragoza", so the instrument, namely, the survey had to be administered there.

4.5 Process

First of all, the author designed the questions for the survey with the use of the Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms. Second, a session with the "YEES" group in order to administer the survey was set up. Third, the information obtained from the surveys was tabulated. Fourth, the author determined the most common idiomatic expressions in order to create a corpus for analysis. Fifth, all the expressions were categorized with their equivalents. Finally, a group of graphic designers was employed to design the illustrative booklet of the most common English idiomatic expressions with their Spanish equivalents.

4.6 Data Analysis

From the survey, different results were obtained depending on the question. As it was mentioned before, for data collected in question one, a statistical graph and tabulation determined the most common idioms by frequency. Furthermore, for data collected in question two, a categorization chart was used to include all the participants' answers to incorporate them in the booklet. Finally, data collected in question three were disregarded since as the answers did not fall into the category of idiomatic expressions.

4.7 Limitations

The author of this project had to face some limitations while developing this research. First of all, the place where the survey was going to take place changed at the last moment, so another place and time for the survey had to be booked. The first place was "San Sebas Café", but "YEES" changed the meeting point to "Zaragoza". This issue delayed the application of the surveys. Second, the native speakers did not agree on the most common idioms, so it was impossible to fill all the four possible categories already presented. As a result, the categories which were initially "different form and different meaning", and "different meaning and same form" were eliminated. Third, the last question of the survey caused some problems at the moment of the analysis since it was an open question, and there were not enough answers obtained. Moreover, the few answers collected form this question were unusable due to the misconception of the meaning of idiomatic expressions among native speakers.

4.8 Description of the booklet

After reviewing the literature and applying the surveys, the researcher considered that combining image mnemonics or visual mnemonics with categorization into a booklet would result in a favorable tool for language learners when learning English idiomatic expressions. Therefore, the categorization process of all the common idiomatic expressions in English in relation to form and meaning with their exact equivalents in Spanish created four possible categories which are: "same form and same meaning", "same form and different meaning", "different form and same meaning", and "different meaning and different form", that can be explained more or less as the law of signs, being same equal to + and different equal to -.

Chart 2: 4 Possible categories of idiomatic expressions

Same form and same meaning		Different meaning and same form	
(+)	(+)	(-)	(+)
Same meaning and different form		Different meaning and different form	
(+)	(-)	(-)	(-)

For example, the idiomatic expression in English "by heart" and in Spanish "de memoria" will fit in the category "same meaning different form". Now let us consider the idiomatic expression in English "black sheep" and in Spanish "oveja negra" will fall in the category "same form and same meaning" except for the difference in the ordering of adjectives and nouns in English and Spanish. Another example is the idiom "it is raining cats and dogs". The Spanish equivalent for this idiom would be: "Llueve a cántaros". In both cases, the meaning is not literal since it is impossible to have cats, dogs or "cántaros" falling from the sky in the same way as rain does. Therefore, the meaning is not literal in either of the cases, but they have the same meaning in both languages, which is, it is raining heavily. As a result, the English idiom "it is raining cats and dogs" falls into the category of "different form and same meaning" according to the researcher's categorization.

Illustration 2: Prototype of how the idiomatic expressions are classified

in the booklet

"It's raining cats and dogs"	"Llueve a cántaros"
Different form and same meaning	
(-)　　　　　　(+)	
"It rains heavily"	

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The last example is a prototype of how the idioms were classified in the booklet using all the mnemonics already mentioned which will help students understand and learn idioms easily.

Chapter 5: Results and Interpretations

This survey (see Appendix 1) was conducted on July 4th in the bar "Zaragoza", around 7:00 pm, during the weekly meeting of the group Young Expats and English Speakers (YEES). The survey was administered to 36 male and female members of the group whose age varies from 23 to 68 years old. The results are the following:

5.1 Interpretation of the results of question one

The results obtained from question one of the survey which said "Read the following list of idioms taken from the Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms (Ayto, 2010) and mark whether they are familiar or unfamiliar to you by putting a check in the appropriate column" revealed that native speakers of the English language tend to be familiar or unfamiliar with the same idiomatic expressions. In other words, regardless of their age, sex or place of birth, most of the people who completed the survey use the same idioms in different situations. Likewise, they are unfamiliar or do not use other idiomatic expressions. The chart below shows the percentages of familiarity or unfamiliarity that the participants gave an account of according to question one of the survey.

Chart 3: Percentages of familiarity - Results of the survey

	Idioms	Familiar	Unfamiliar
1.	take into account	100%	
2.	be out of action	100%	
3.	have a lot to answer for	64.2%	35.8%
4.	the apple of someone's eye	100%	
5.	a bad/rotten apple	100%	
6.	cost someone an arm and a leg	100%	
7.	kick someone's ass	100%	
8.	babe in the woods	10.1%	89.9%
9.	cry like a baby	100%	
10.	behind someone's back	100%	

11.	break your back	6.3%	93.7%
12.	bring home the bacon	100%	
13.	bad blood	100%	
14.	go from bad to worse	100%	
15.	leave bad taste in your mouth	100%	
16.	a bag of bones	100%	
17.	someone's bark is worse than their bite	63.3%	36.7%
18.	behind bars	100%	
19.	like a bat out of hell	100%	
20.	a bear hug	100%	
21.	beauty is only skin deep	56.6%	43.4%
22.	get up on the wrong side of the bed	100%	
23.	beggars can't be choosers	72.4%	27.6%
24.	be below the belt	63.3%	36.7%
25.	better to be safe than sorry	56.6%	43.4%
26.	better late than never	100%	
27.	in your birthday suit	100%	
28.	the black sheep (of the family)	100%	
29.	a blind date	100%	
30.	the blind leading the blind	73.4%	26.6%
31.	blood, sweat and tears	54.4%	45,6%
32.	make someone's blood boil	100%	
33.	blood is thicker than water	56.3%	43.7%
34.	blue blood	100%	
35.	out of the blue	100%	
36.	under your breath	73.4%	26.6%
37.	kick the bucket	100%	
38.	have butterflies (in your stomach)	100%	
39.	let bygones be bygones	63.3%	36.7%
40.	answer the call of nature	100%	
41.	carrot-and-stick	53.4%	46.6%
42.	castles in the air		100%

43.	fight like cats and dogs	100%	
44.	has the cat got your tongue?	100%	
45.	a charlie horse	100%	
46.	chickens come home to roost	50%	50%
47.	race against the clock	100%	
48.	live in cloud-cuckoo land		100%
49.	in cold blood	100%	
50.	the cream of the crop	100%	
51.	there's no point crying over spilt milk	100%	
52.	curiosity killed the cat	100%	
53.	be in deep water	13.4%	86.6%
54.	better devil you know (than the devil you don't)	100%	
55.	be all dressed up and/with nowhere to go	100%	
56.	the early bird catches the worm	100%	
57.	your ears must be burning	100%	
58.	an eye for an eye (and a tooth for a tooth)	100%	
59.	make faces	100%	
60.	play with fire	100%	
61.	be a fish out of water	100%	
62.	be fresh as a daisy	6.3%	93.7%
63.	good-for-nothing	100%	
64.	kick the habit	43.3%	56.7%

The graph below shows the exact number of familiar and unfamiliar idioms that the participants knew out of a list of 64 idiomatic expressions which were taken from the Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms.

Illustration 3: Graphic representation of familiarity by item

Results of the survey

1. Read the following list of idioms and mark wether they are familiar or unfamiliar to you by putting a check in the appropriate column.
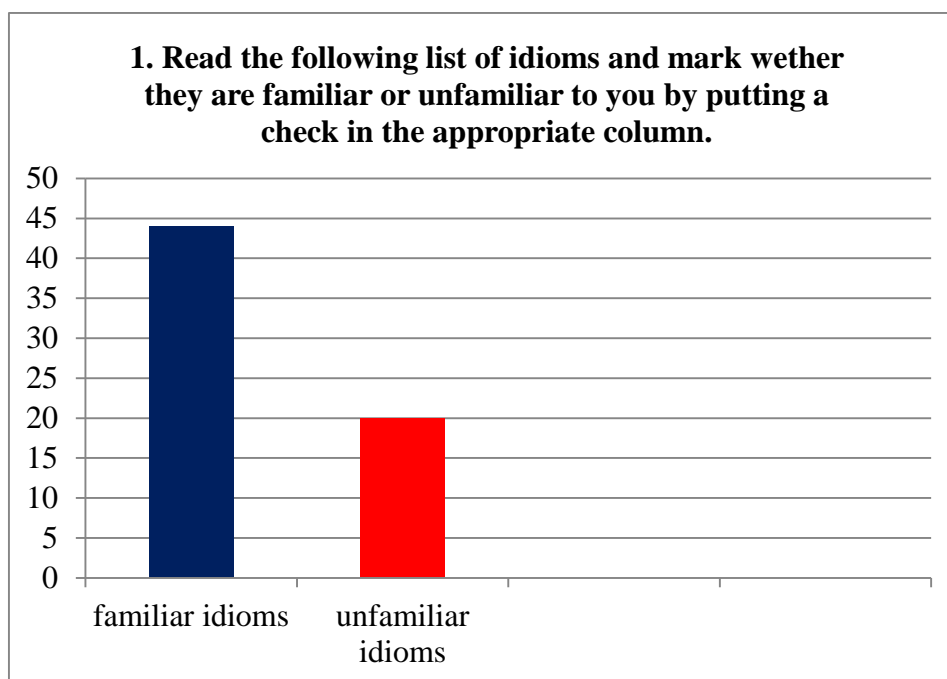
The blue bar blue on the left represents the number of familiar idioms for the participants, numbering 44. The red bar on the right represents the number of unfamiliar idioms which is 20. As a result, the most common English idiomatic expressions out of a list of 64 are 40 in total, and these are the ones that were used in the creation of the illustrative booklet, which is the main aim of this study.

5.2 Interpretation of the results of question two

The results obtained from question two of the survey which was stated as "Write other English idioms related to the following themes that you consider important and are not listed above."

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Chart 4: Categorization chart

anger	*happiness*
sadness	*calmness*

Unexpectedly, the answers for this question were similar since the participants left the spaces blank or they just wrote in only two of the four categories. The chart below shows the top two themes.

Illustration 4: Graphic representation of the answers of the categorization chart
Results of the survey

2.Write other English idioms related to the following themes that you consider important that are not listed above

	anger	happiness	sadness	calmness
		5		3.5
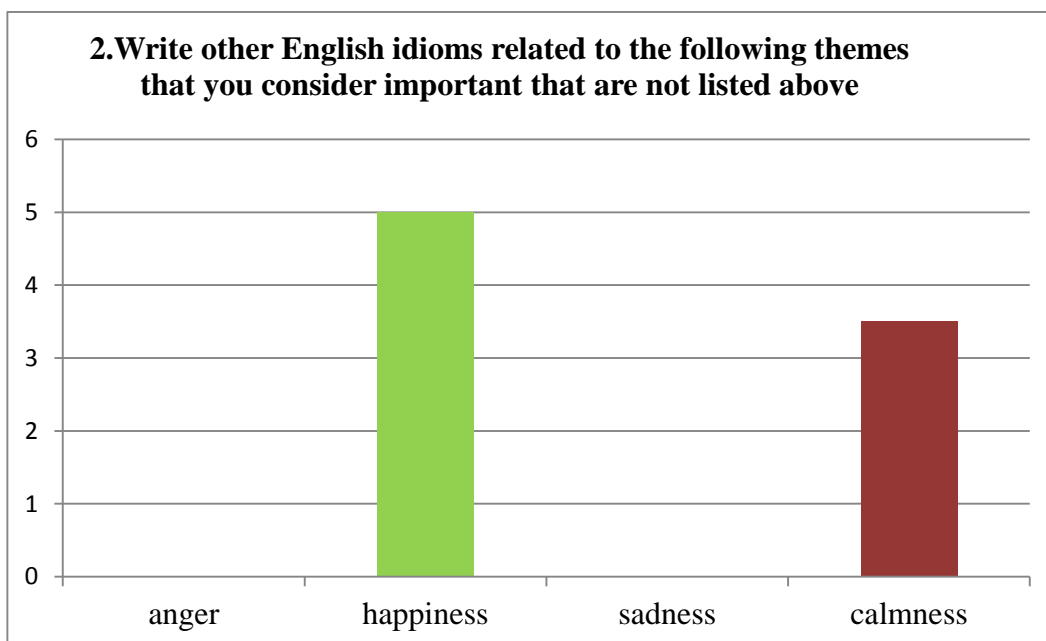
The most appealing categories for the participants were happiness and calmness, and the top answers were *happy as a clam* and *cool as a cucumber* correspondingly.

5.3 Interpretation of the results of question three

Finally, in question three, which was an open question, saying "If you are familiar with any other idioms, please write them below" only few answers were obtained, and the results for this question go from proverbs to even vulgar slang. The top three answers for this question were: beauty is in the eye of the beholder, man cannot live by bread alone, and happy as a pig in sh*t. For the purposes of this study, the results of this question are not going to be considered since they are not idioms and they are very limited.

5.4 Final analysis of the most common idiomatic expressions gathered from the survey.

The chart below represents all the idiomatic expressions obtained from the survey which were used for the creation of the illustrative booklet. Moreover, it includes the Spanish equivalent of those expressions that took on an important role when categorizing them into one of the four possible categories specified in chart 2 (see above).

Chart 5: Compendium of the most common English idiomatic expressions

Results of the survey

	Most common English idiomatic expressions	Spanish equivalent
1.	take into account	tomar en cuenta
2.	be out of action	fuera de servicio
3.	the apple of someone's eye	la niña de los ojos
4.	a bad/rotten apple	una manzana podrida

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5.	cost someone an arm and a leg	costar un ojo de la cara
6.	kick someone's ass	patear traseros
7.	cry like a baby	llorar como un bebe
8.	behind someone's back	a las espaldas de alguien
9.	bring home the bacon	traer el pan a casa
10.	bad blood	mala sangre
11.	go from bad to worse	ir de Guatemala a Guatepeor
12.	leave bad taste in your mouth	dejar un mal sabor de boca
13.	a bag of bones	hueso y pellejo
14.	behind bars	tras la rejas
15.	like a bat out of hell	como alma que lleva el diablo
16.	a bear hug	abrazo de oso
17.	get up on the wrong side of the bed	levantarse con el pie izquierdo
18.	better late than never	más vale tarde que nunca
19.	in your birthday suit	como Dios lo trajo al mundo
20.	the black sheep (of the family)	la oveja negra de la familia
21.	a blind date	una cita a ciegas
22.	make someone's blood boil	hacer hervir la chicha
23.	blue blood	sangre azul
24.	out of the blue	de la nada
25.	kick the bucket	estirar la pata
26.	have butterflies (in your stomach)	sentir mariposas en el estomago
27.	answer the call of nature	responder al llamado de la naturaleza
28.	fight like cats and dogs	pelear como perros y gatos
29.	Has the cat got your tongue?	el ratón te comió la lengua?
30.	a charlie horse	calambre
31.	race against the clock	carrera contra el reloj
32.	in cold blood	a sangre fría
33.	the cream of the crop	la crema y nata
34.	there's no point crying over spilt milk	no llorar sobre la leche derramada
35.	curiosity killed the cat	la curiosidad mató al gato

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36.	better devil you know (than the devil you don't)	más vale malo conocido que bueno por conocer
37.	be all dressed up and/with nowhere to go	vestida y alborotada
38.	the early bird catches the worm	al que madruga, dios le ayuda
39.	your ears must be burning	te queman las orejas
40.	an eye for an eye (and a tooth for a tooth)	ojo por ojo , diente por diente
41.	make faces	hacer muecas
42.	play with fire	jugar con fuego
43.	be a fish out of water	poroto en ceviche
44.	good-for-nothing	bueno para nada
45.	happy as a clam	feliz como una lombriz
46.	cool as a cucumber	fresco como una lechuga

5.5.1 Idiomatic expressions divided into categories

As a final point, the researcher grouped all the idiomatic expressions listed in chart 5 using the four possible categories detailed in chart 2. As a result, only two of the four groups were considered due to the limitations of the study. The aforementioned categories are "same form and same meaning", and "different meaning and same form", which are listed in the following charts.

Chart 6: Idiomatic expressions belonging to same form and same meaning

	Same form and same meaning	
1.	take into account	tomar en cuenta
2.	a bad/rotten apple	una manzana podrida
3.	kick someone's ass	patear traseros
4.	cry like a baby	llorar como un bebe
5.	behind someone's back	a las espaldas de alguien
6.	bad blood	mala sangre
7.	leave bad taste in your mouth	dejar un mal sabor de boca
8.	behind bars	tras la rejas
9.	a bear hug	abrazo de oso
10.	better late than never	más vale tarde que nunca
11.	the black sheep (of the family)	la oveja negra de la familia
12.	a blind date	una cita a ciegas
13.	blue blood	sangre azul
14.	have butterflies (in your stomach)	sentir mariposas en el estomago
15.	answer the call of nature	responder al llamado de la naturaleza
16.	fight like cats and dogs	pelear como perros y gatos
17.	race against the clock	carrera contra el reloj
18.	in cold blood	a sangre fría
19.	there's no point crying over spilt milk	no llorar sobre la leche derramada
20.	curiosity killed the cat	la curiosidad mató al gato
21.	an eye for an eye (and a tooth for a tooth)	ojo por ojo , diente por diente
22.	play with fire	jugar con fuego
23.	good-for-nothing	bueno para nada
24.	your ears must be burning	te queman las orejas

Chart 7: Idiomatic expressions belonging to different form and same meaning

	Same meaning and different form	
1.	be out of action	fuera de servicio
2.	the apple of someone's eye	la niña de los ojos
3.	cost someone an arm and a leg	costar un ojo de la cara
4.	bring home the bacon	traer el pan a casa
5.	go from bad to worse	ir de Guatemala a Guatepeor
6.	a bag of bones	hueso y pellejo
7.	like a bat out of hell	como alma que lleva el diablo
8.	get up on the wrong side of the bed	levantarse con el pie izquierdo
9.	in your birthday suit	como dios lo trajo al mundo
10.	make someone's blood boil	hacer hervir la chicha
11.	out of the blue	de la nada
12.	kick the bucket	estirar la pata
13.	Has the cat got your tongue?	El ratón te comió la lengua?
14.	a charlie horse	Calambre
15.	the cream of the crop	la crema y nata
16.	better devil you know (than the devil you don't)	más vale malo conocido que bueno por conocer
17.	be all dressed up and/with nowhere to go	vestida y alborotada
18.	the early bird catches the worm	al que madruga, dios le ayuda
19.	make faces	hacer muecas
20.	be a fish out of water	poroto en ceviche
21.	happy as a clam	feliz como una lombriz
22.	cool as a cucumber	fresco como una lechuga

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

After accomplishing this project, the researcher concludes that there are hundreds of idiomatic expressions in any language that might even been unknown to native speakers since they are not very common. However, the most common English idiomatic expressions should be taught to improve fluency, understanding, and the mastering of a language.

Moreover, the use of an illustrative booklet in which idioms are represented through amusing illustrations might help teachers and students in the learning process of idioms. According to Dr. Ahmed and Dr. Saleh, images used as a teaching tool have a powerful impact on students since they tend to remember pictorial things better than words only (2018).

Also, it is worth mentioning that one of the best ways to classify idioms is through categorization since it is an innate process that our brains are used to. Lastly, another important technique is the use of equivalents in Spanish since they provide the real meaning of the idioms in the first language.

6.2 Recommendations

One important recommendation would be that it is advisable to have a teacher as a guide when using the booklet since it is not always self-explanatory. Therefore, the explanation of a teacher might be helpful for the interpretation of the idioms involved. The second recommendation would be to consider the categorization presented in the graduation project when using the booklet for teaching idioms. As a final recommendation, it would be helpful for teachers to set aside specific hours of class to teach idioms since they are not usually taught in the classroom nor are they even considered to be included in the syllabi.

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Universidad de Cuenca

Appendices

Appendix 1: Survey Format

"CATEGORIZING AND TEACHING IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS THROUGH MNEMONICS"

I am working on my graduation thesis and this survey will help me collect important data regarding the most commonly used idiomatic expressions among native English speakers. Please complete the following survey. Your help is truly appreciated.

Note: The information provided in this questionnaire will only be used for academic purposes. Try to be as objective and precise as you can.

Length: 10 – 15 min.

Sex: _____

Age:_____

Place of birth:_____

Place of residence:_____

1. **Read the following list of idioms and mark whether they are familiar or unfamiliar to you by putting a check in the appropriate column.**

	Idioms	Familiar	Unfamiliar
1	take into account		
2	be out of action		
3	have a lot to answer for		
4	the apple of someone's eye		
5	a bad/rotten apple		
6	cost someone an arm and a leg		
7	kick someone's ass		
8	babe in the woods		
9	cry like a baby		
10	behind someone's back		
11	break your back		

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12	bring home the bacon		
13	bad blood		
14	go from bad to worse		
15	leave bad taste in your mouth		
16	a bag of bones		
17	someone's bark is worse than their bite		
18	behind bars		
19	like a bat out of hell		
20	a bear hug		
21	beauty is only skin deep		
22	get up on the wrong side of the bed		
23	beggars can't be choosers		
24	be below the belt		
25	better to be safe than sorry		
26	better late than never		
27	in your birthday suit		
28	the black sheep (of the family)		
29	a blind date		
30	the blind leading the blind		
31	blood, sweat and tears		
32	make someone's blood boil		
33	blood is thicker than water		
34	blue blood		
35	out of the blue		
36	under your breath		
37	kick the bucket		
38	have butterflies (in your stomach)		
39	let bygones be bygones		
40	answer the call of nature		
41	carrot-and-stick		
42	castles in the air		
43	fight like cats and dogs		

44	has the cat got your tongue?		
45	a charlie horse		
46	chickens come home to roost		
47	race against the clock		
48	live in cloud-cuckoo land		
49	in cold blood		
50	the cream of the crop		
51	there's no point crying over spilt milk		
52	curiosity killed the cat		
53	be in deep water		
54	better devil you know (than the devil you don't)		
55	be all dressed up and/with nowhere to go		
56	the early bird catches the worm		
57	your ears must be burning		
58	an eye for an eye (and a tooth for a tooth)		
59	make faces		
60	play with fire		
61	be a fish out of water		
62	be fresh as a daisy		
63	good-for-nothing		
64	kick the habit		

2. **Write other English idioms related to the following themes that you consider important that are not listed above.**

anger	happiness
sadness	calmness

3. **If you are familiar with any other idioms, please write them below.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time!

Manuel Farfán Mora

Appendix 2: Picture of the "YEES" group

Appendix 3: Illustrative booklet (final result)
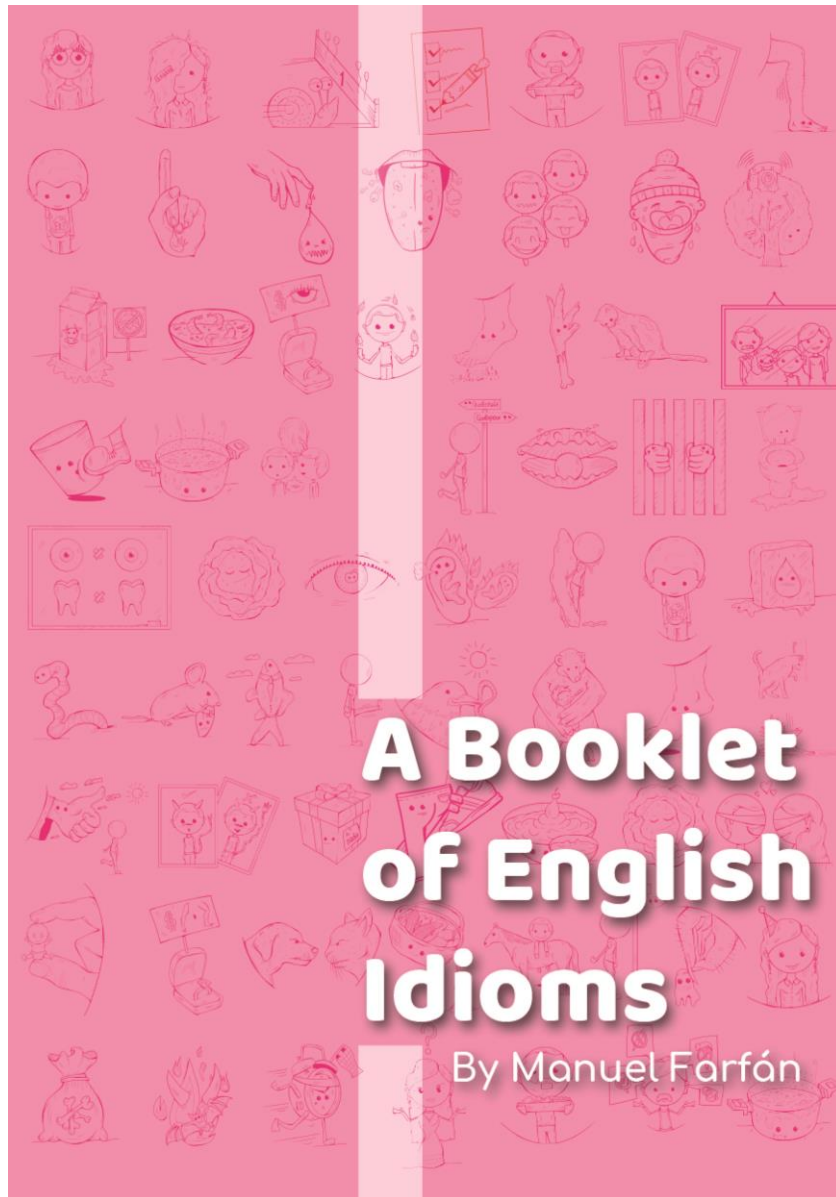
A Booklet
of English
Idioms

By Manuel Farfán

Universidad de Cuenca
Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación
Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa

A booklet of English Idioms

Autor: **Manuel Francisco Farfán Mora**
Diseño: **El Studio**

Cuenca – Ecuador
2018

Same form and same meaning

take into account
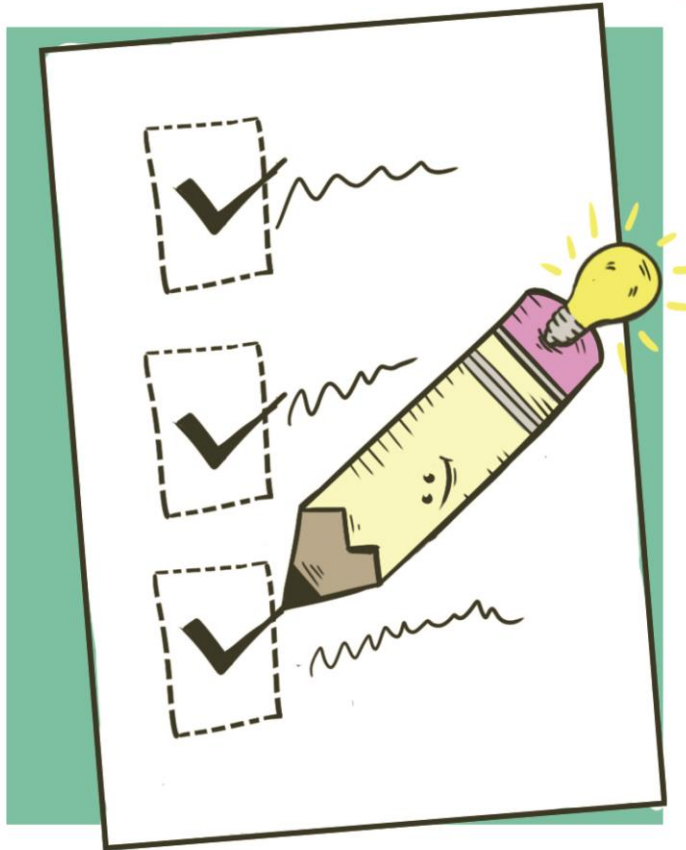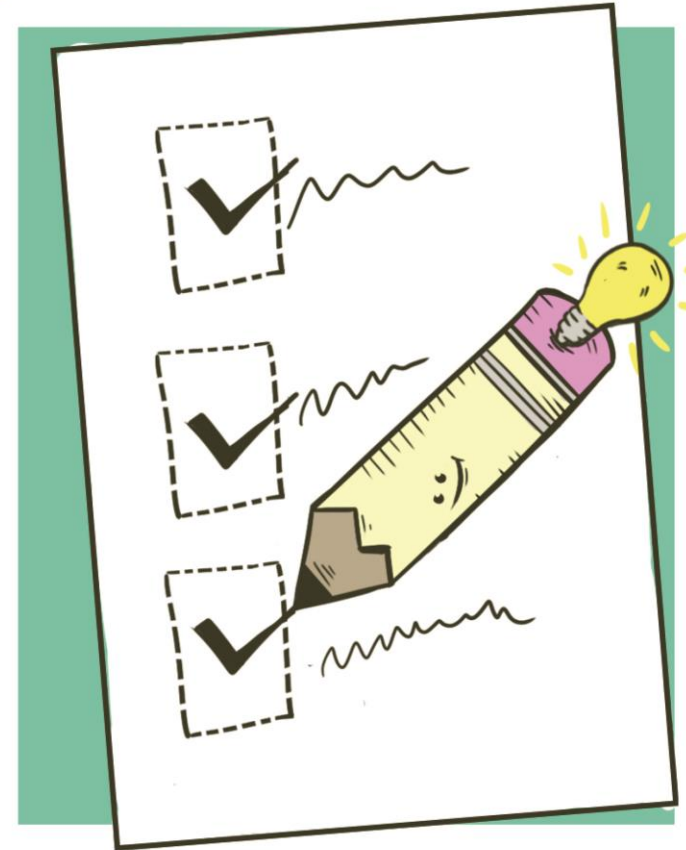
Tomar en cuenta.

a
bad/rotten
apple
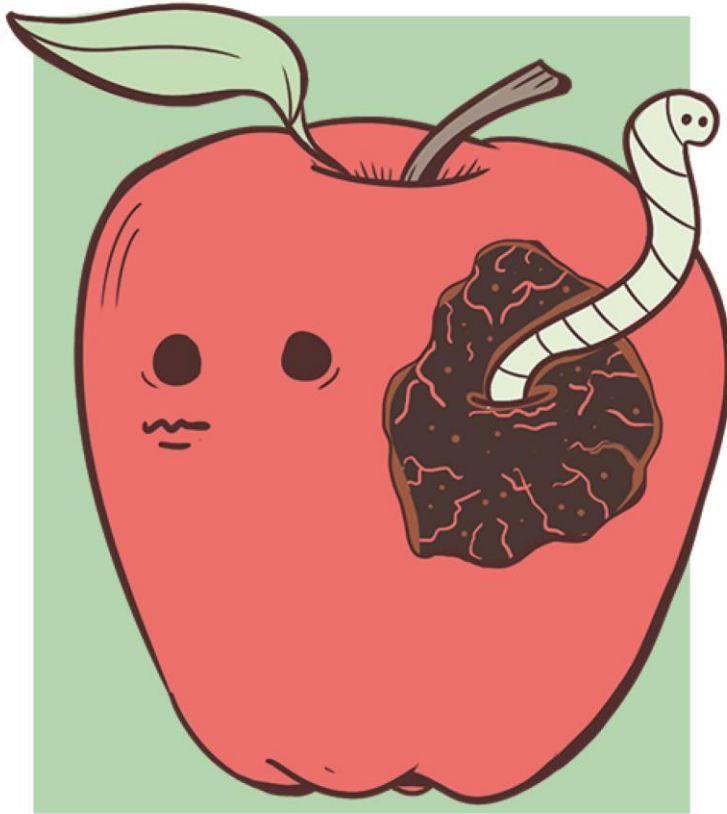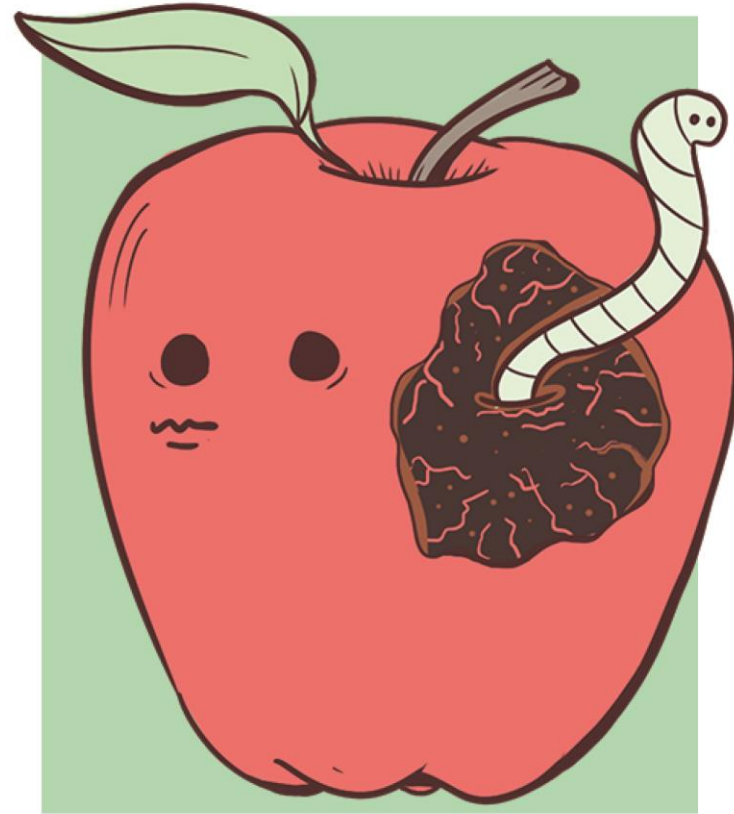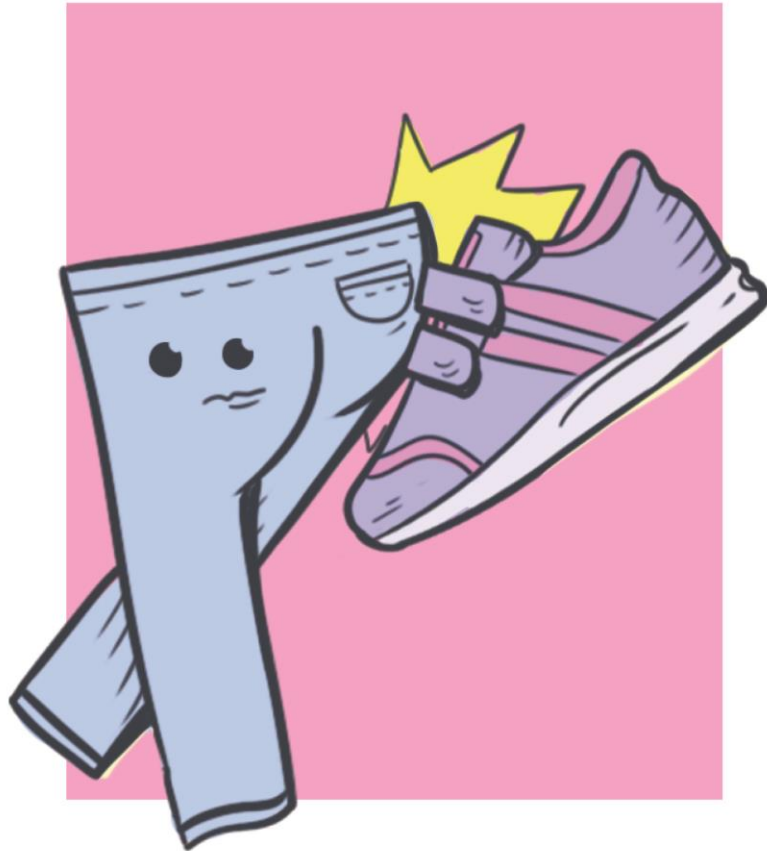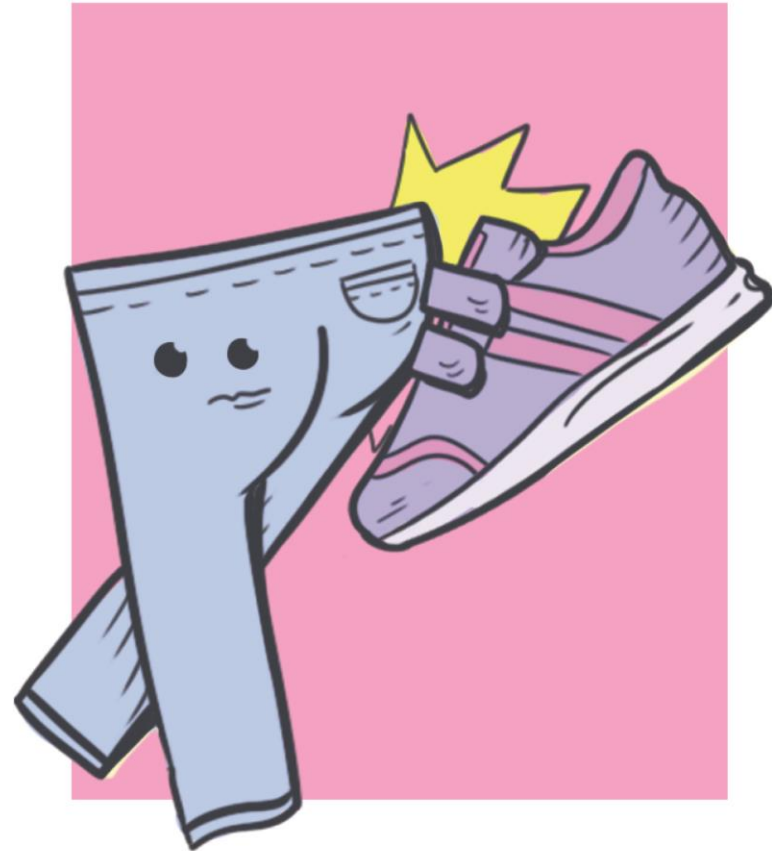
Una
manzana
podrida.

cry
like a
baby

Llorar
como un
bebé.
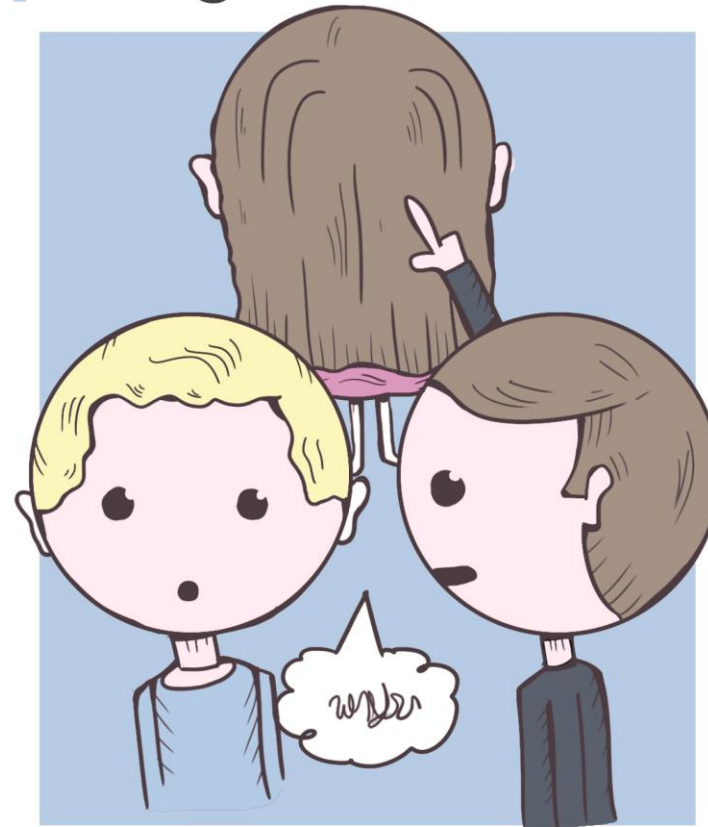
bad blood
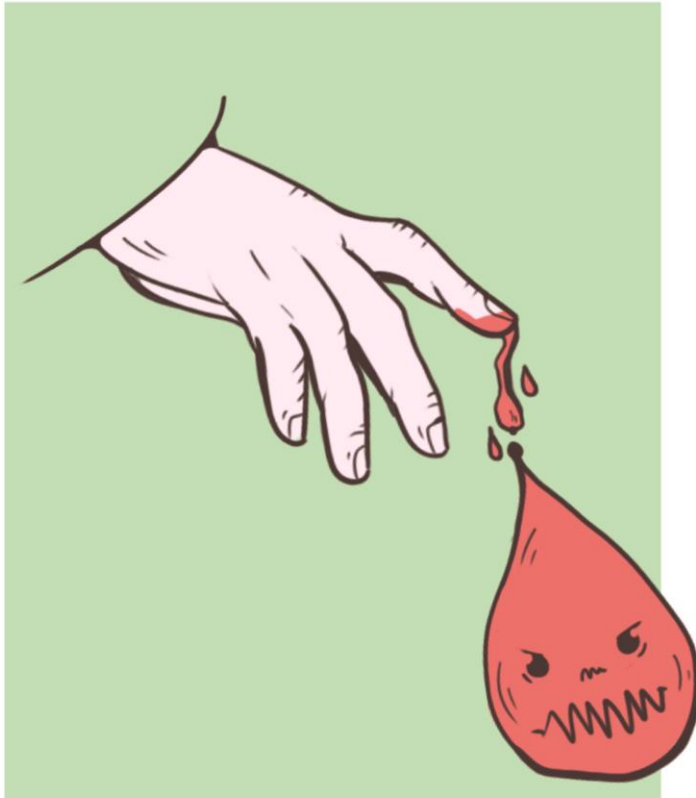
Mala sangre.
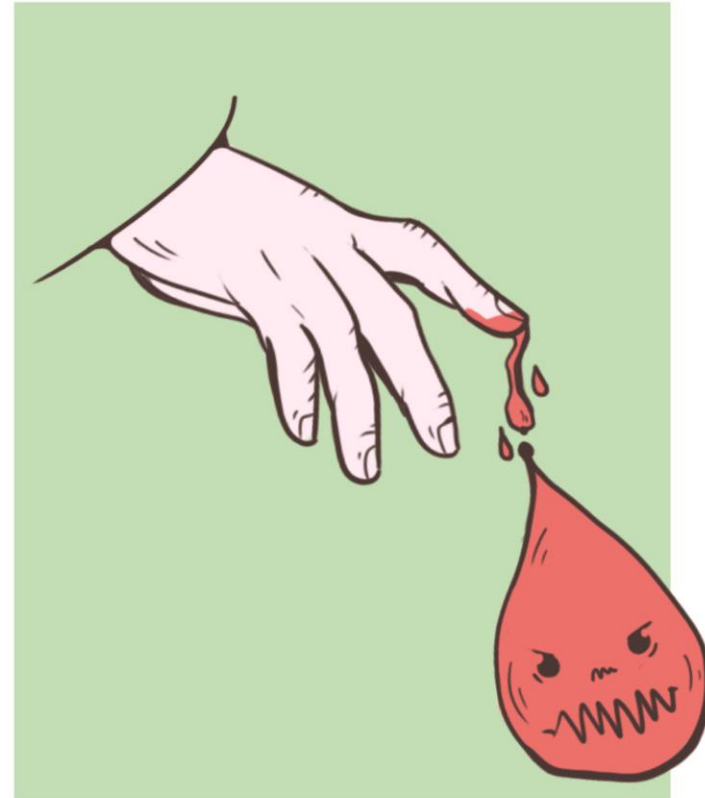
leave bad
taste in
your mouth
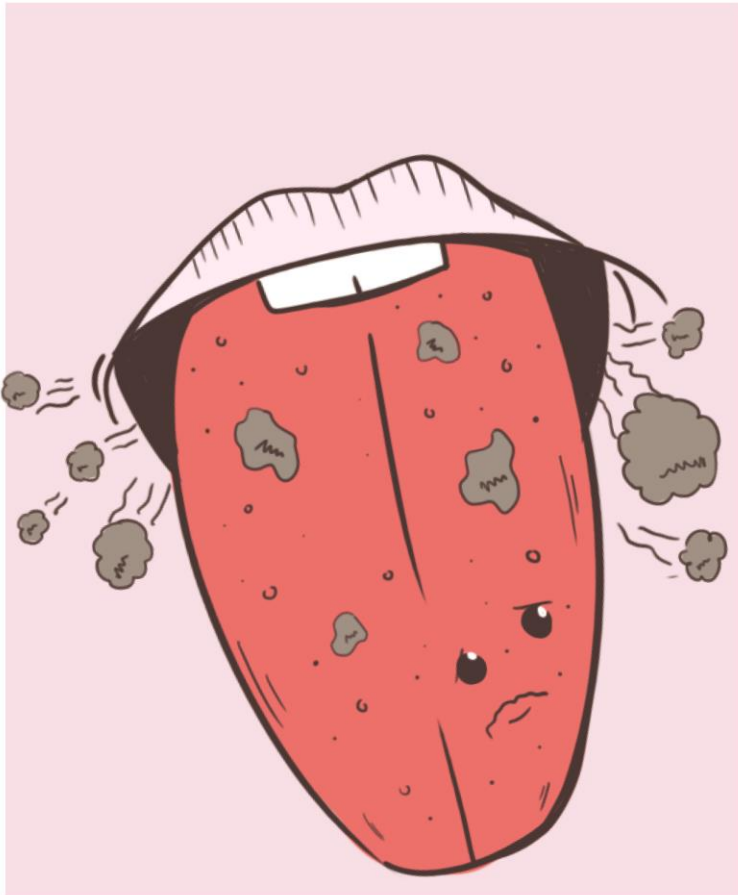
Dejar un
mal sabor
de boca.
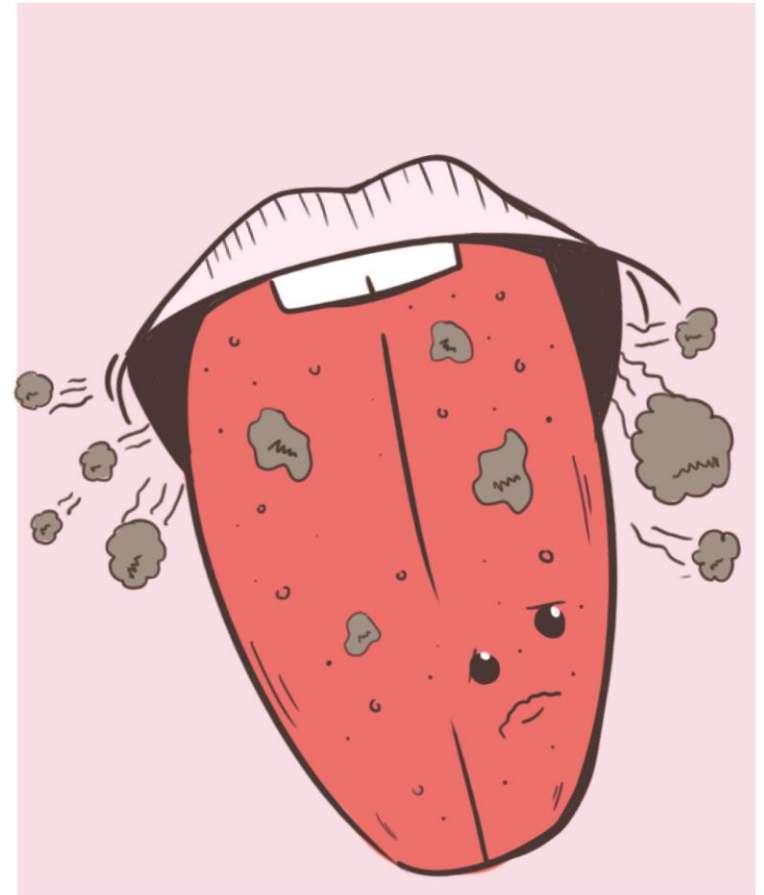
behind bars
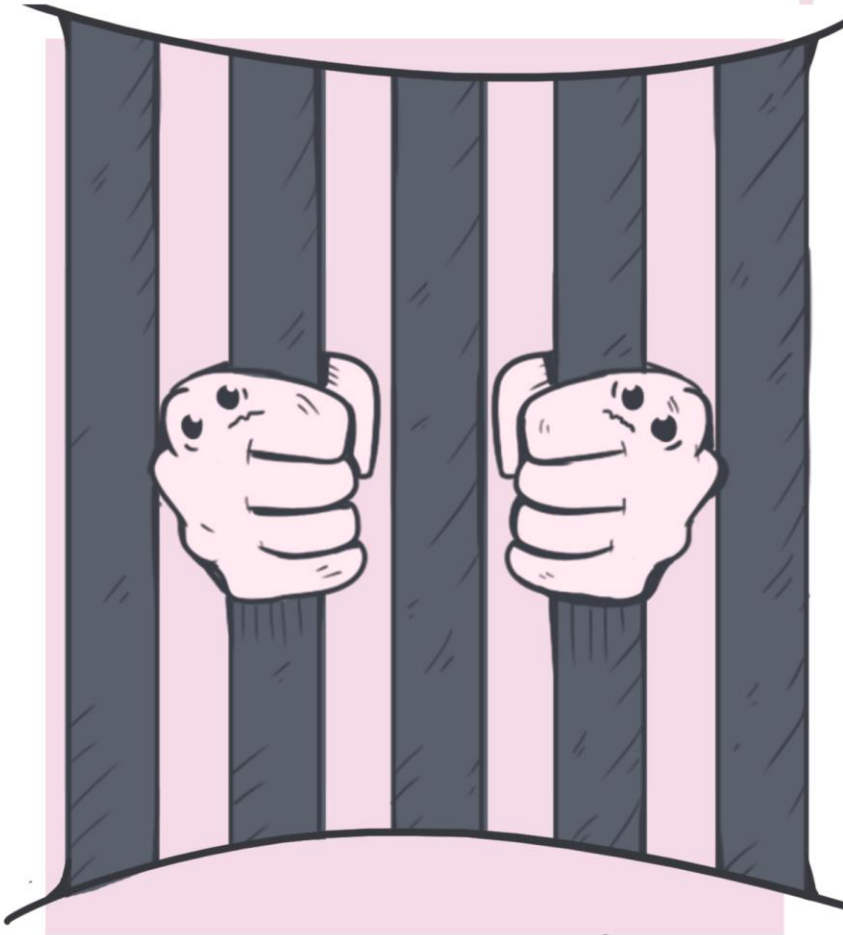
Tras las rejas.

a bear hug | Abrazo de oso.
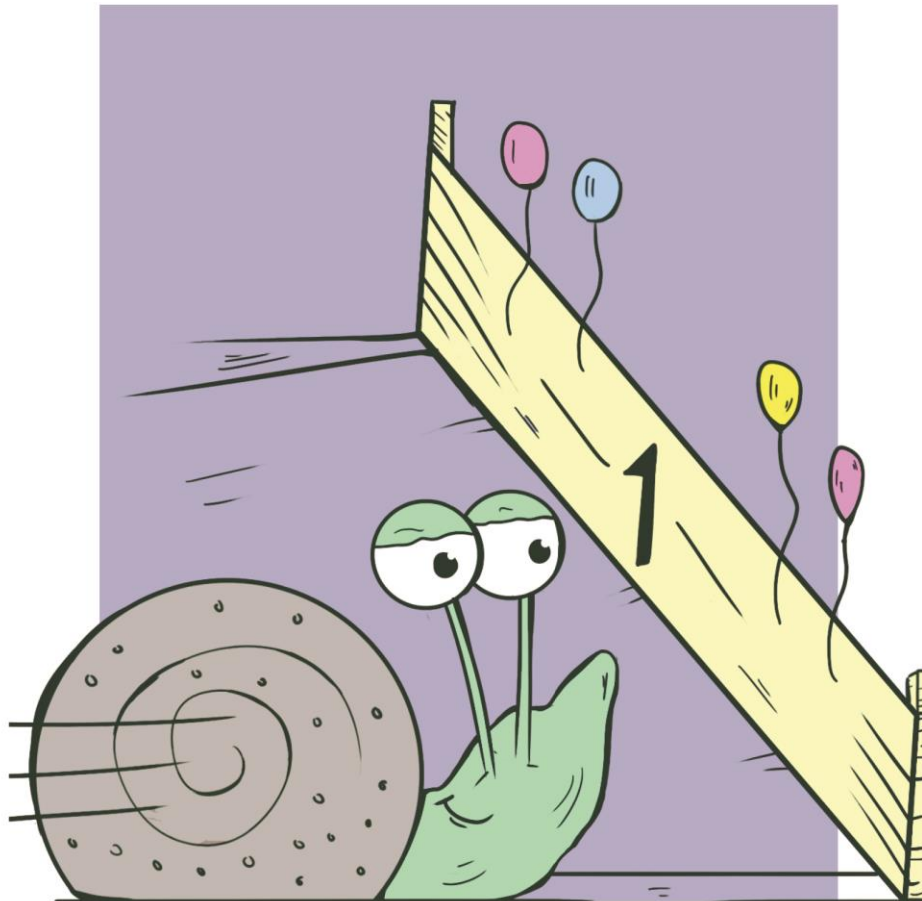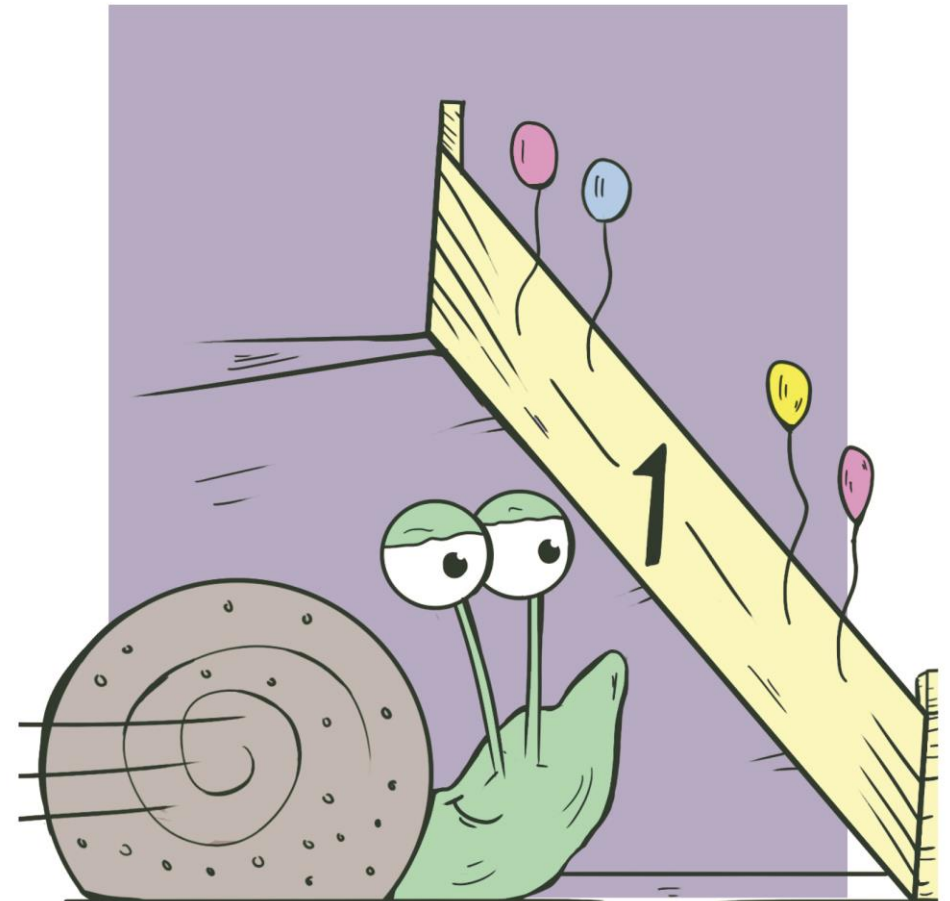
the black sheep (of the family)
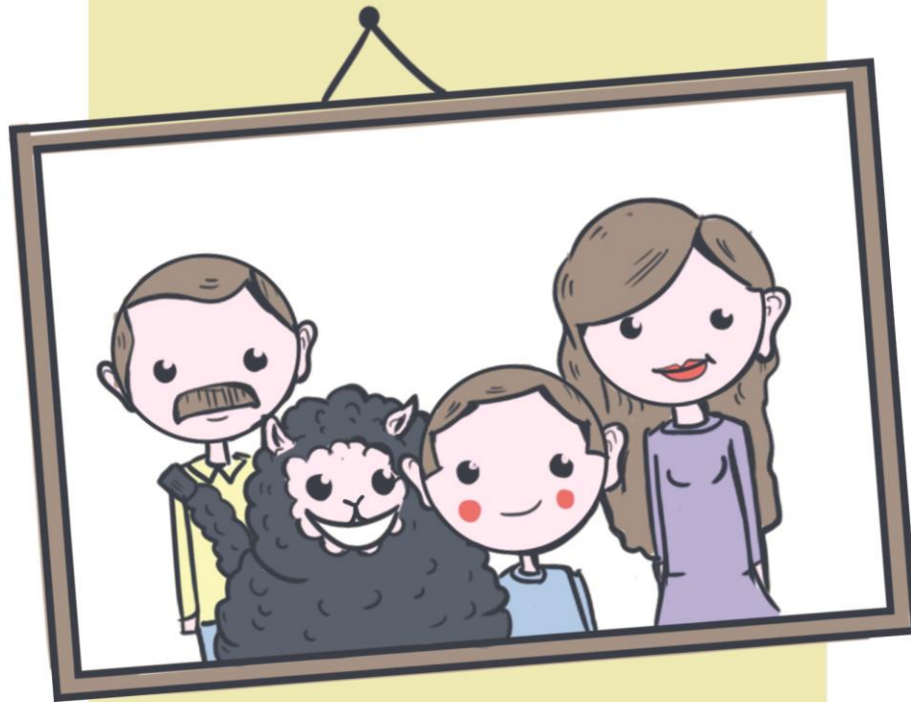
La oveja negra de la familia.
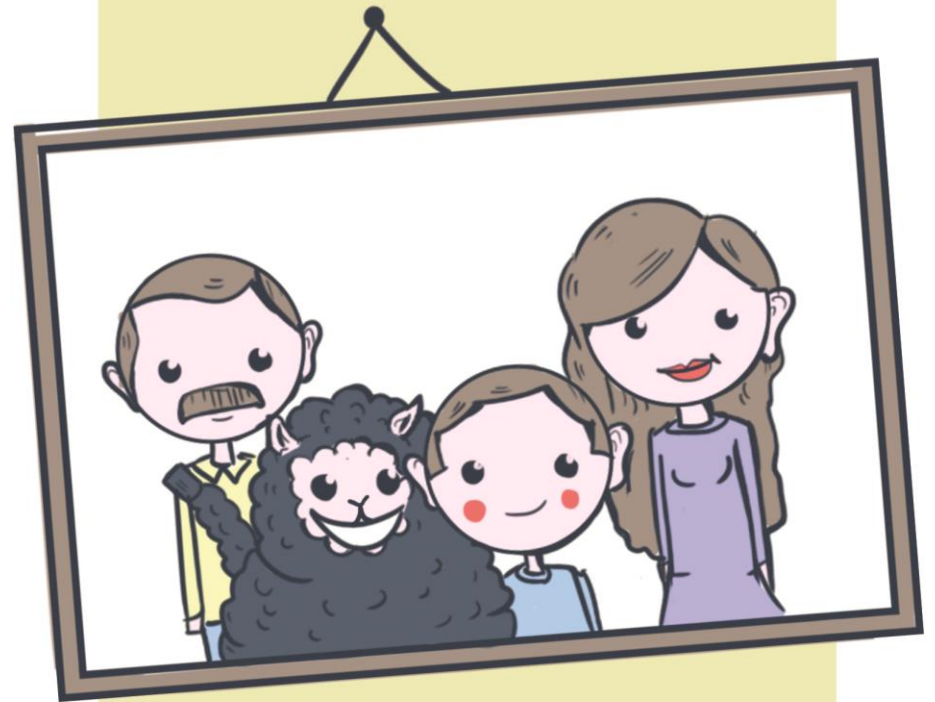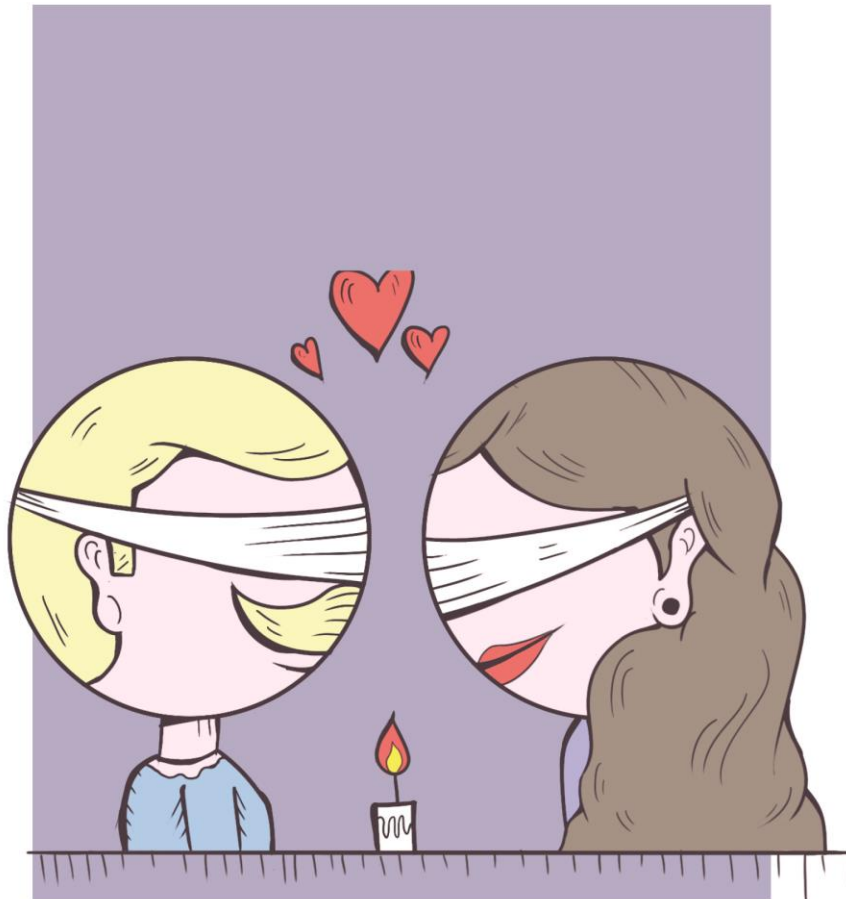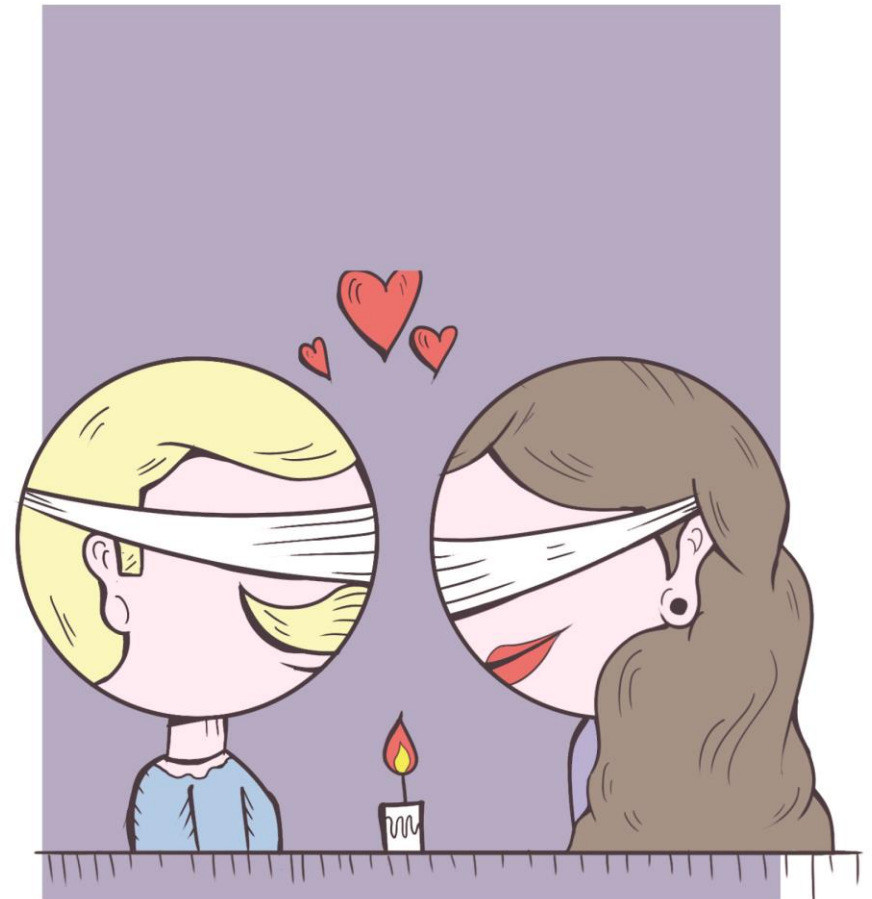
blue
blood
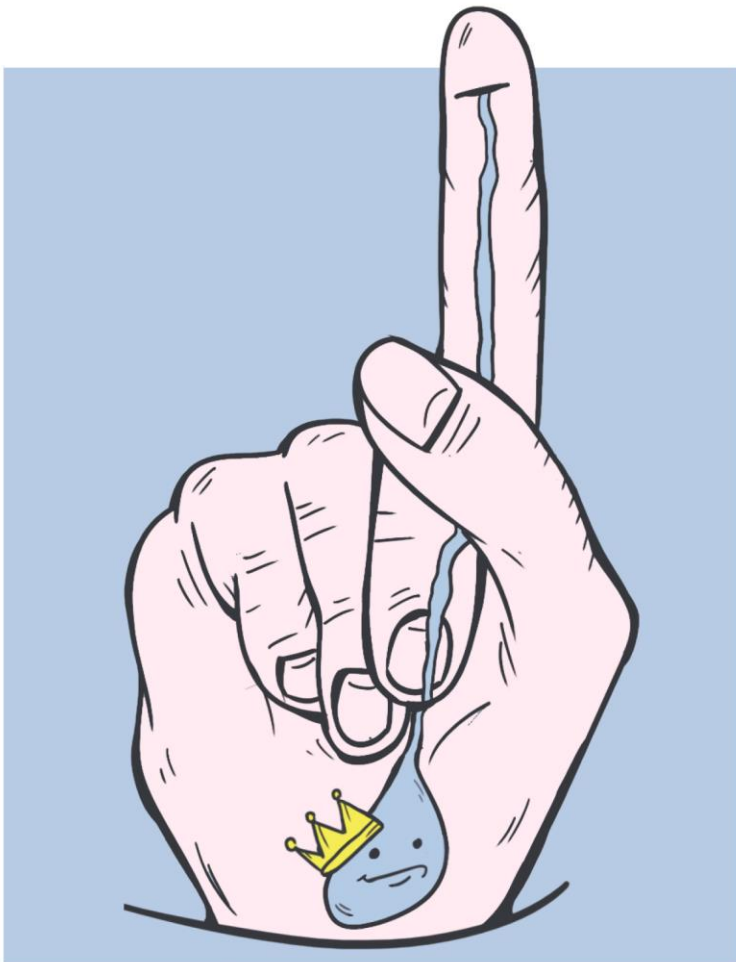
Sangre
azul.
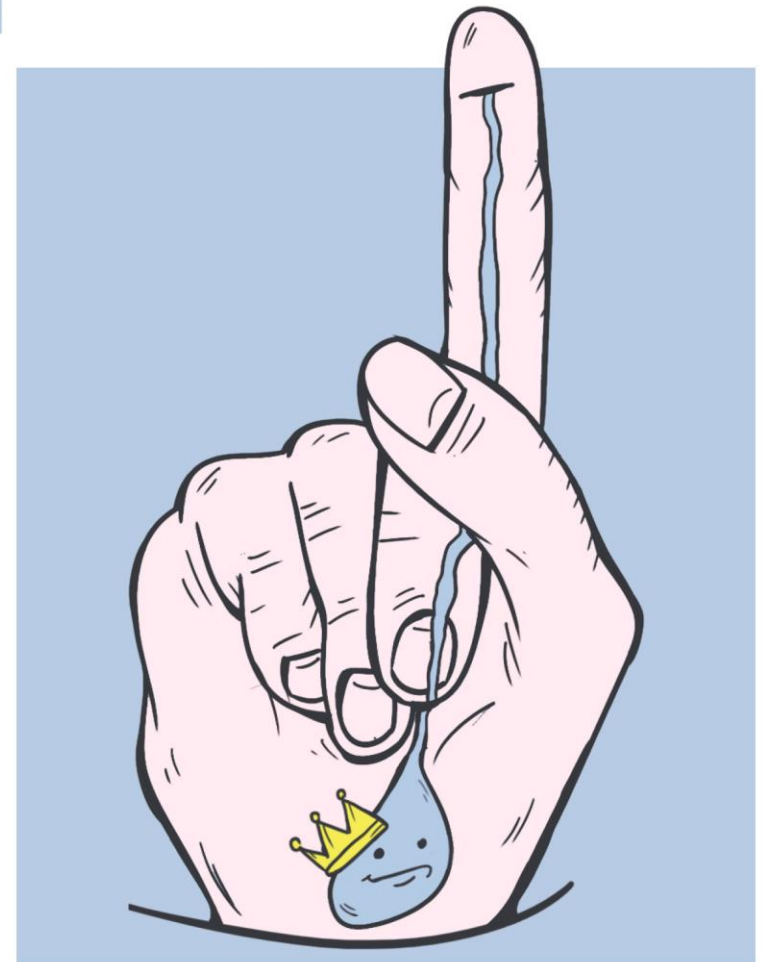
have butterflies
(in your
stomach)

Sentir
mariposas
en el estómago.

answer the call of nature
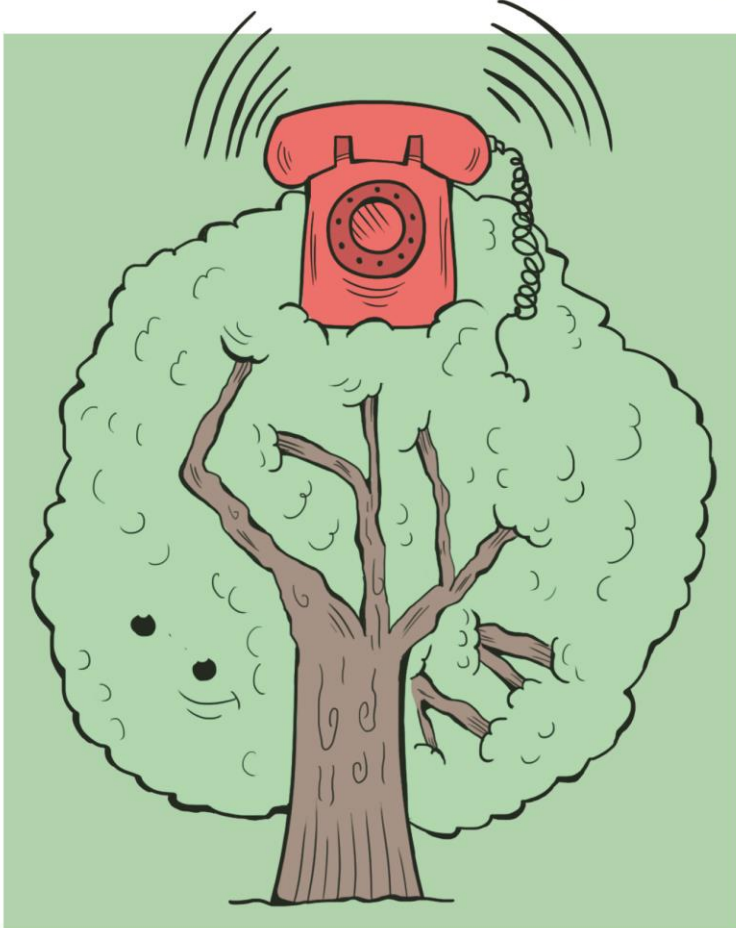
Responder al llamado de la naturaleza.
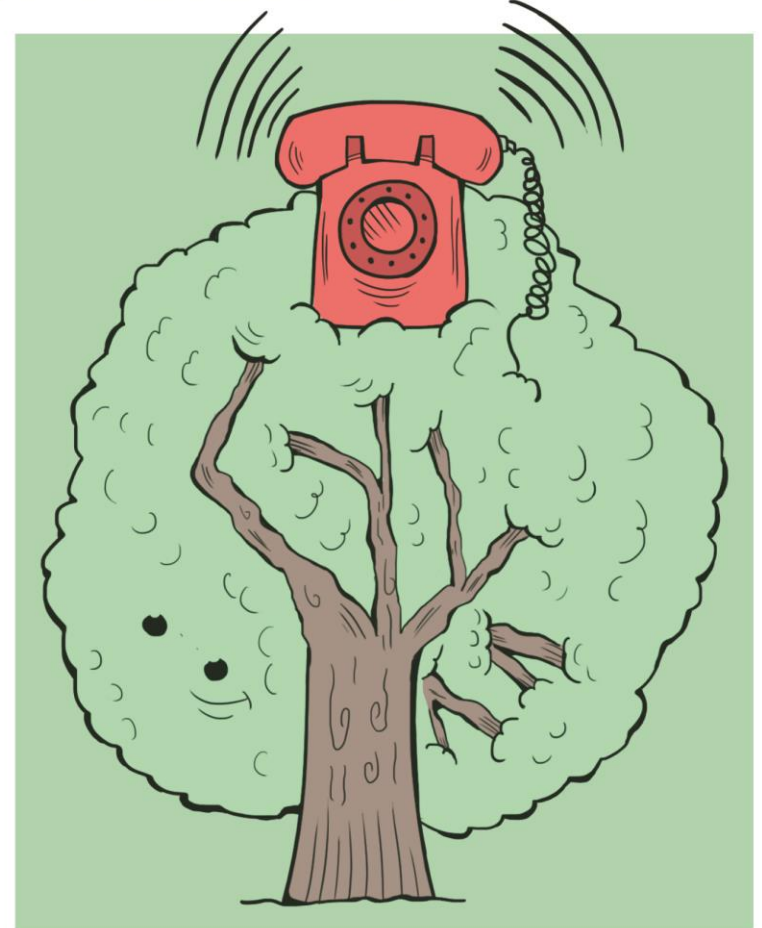
fight like cats and dogs
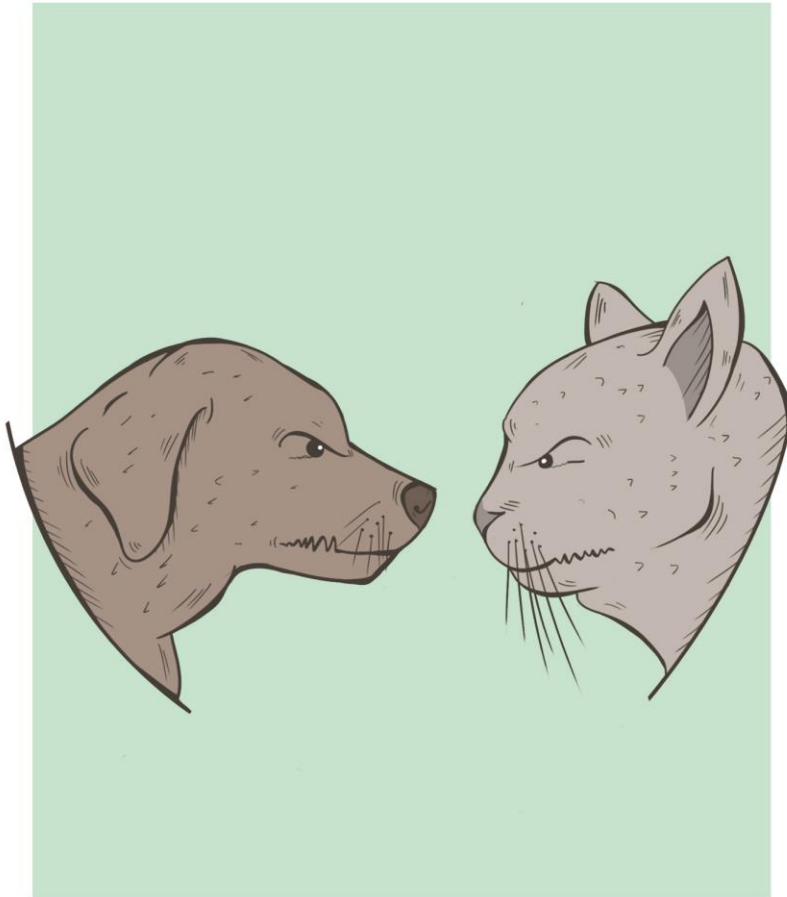
Pelear como perros y gatos.
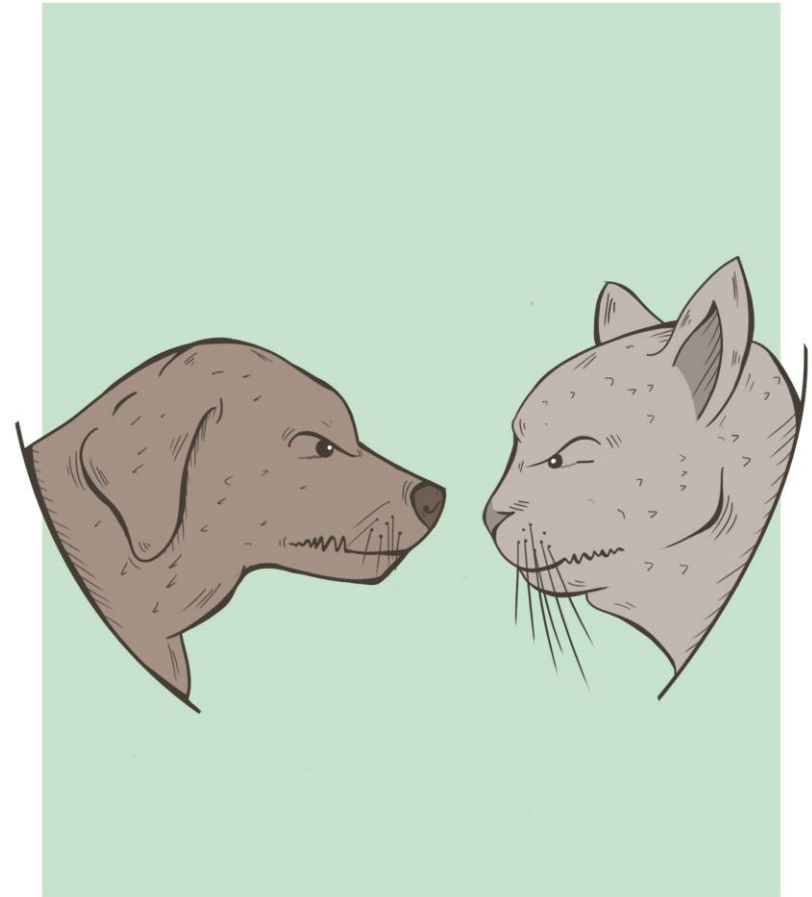
race against the clock
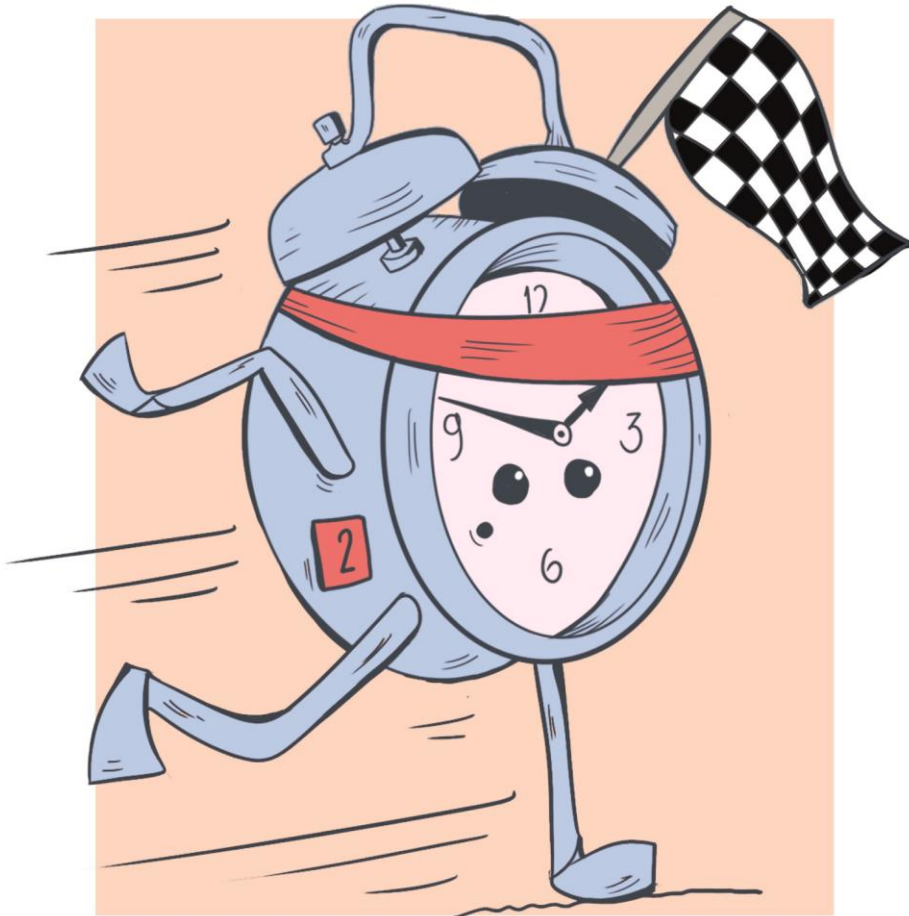
Carrera contra el reloj.
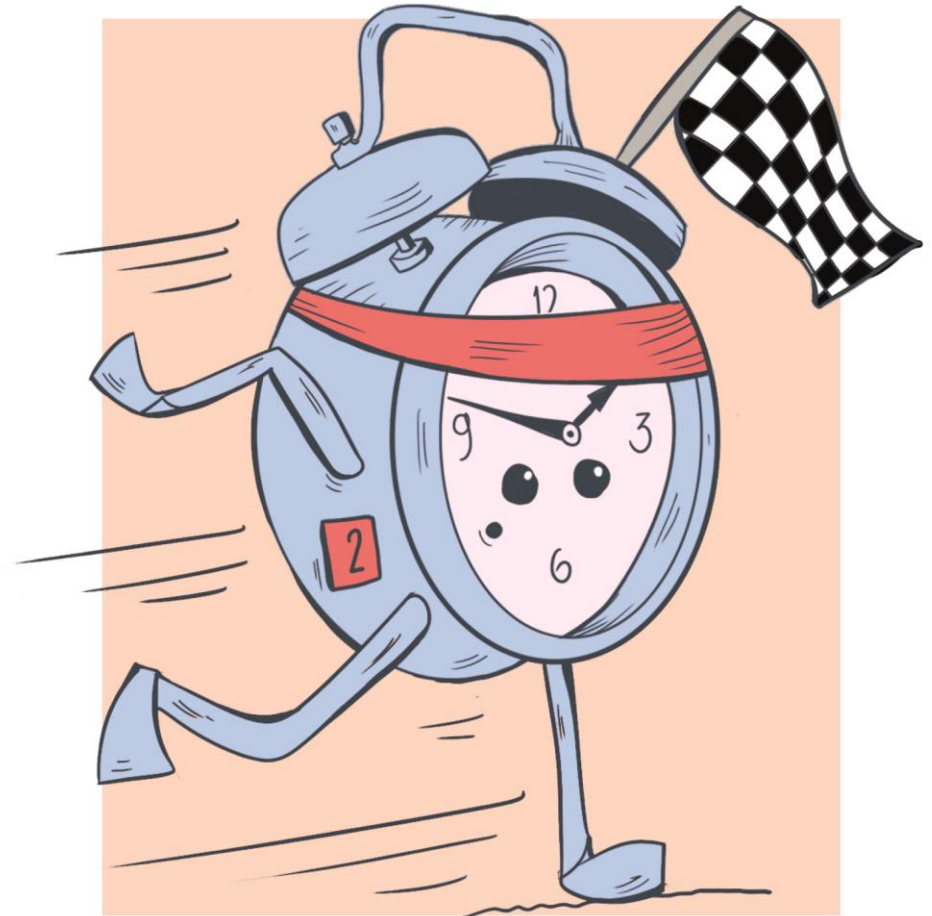
in cold blood

A sangre fría.
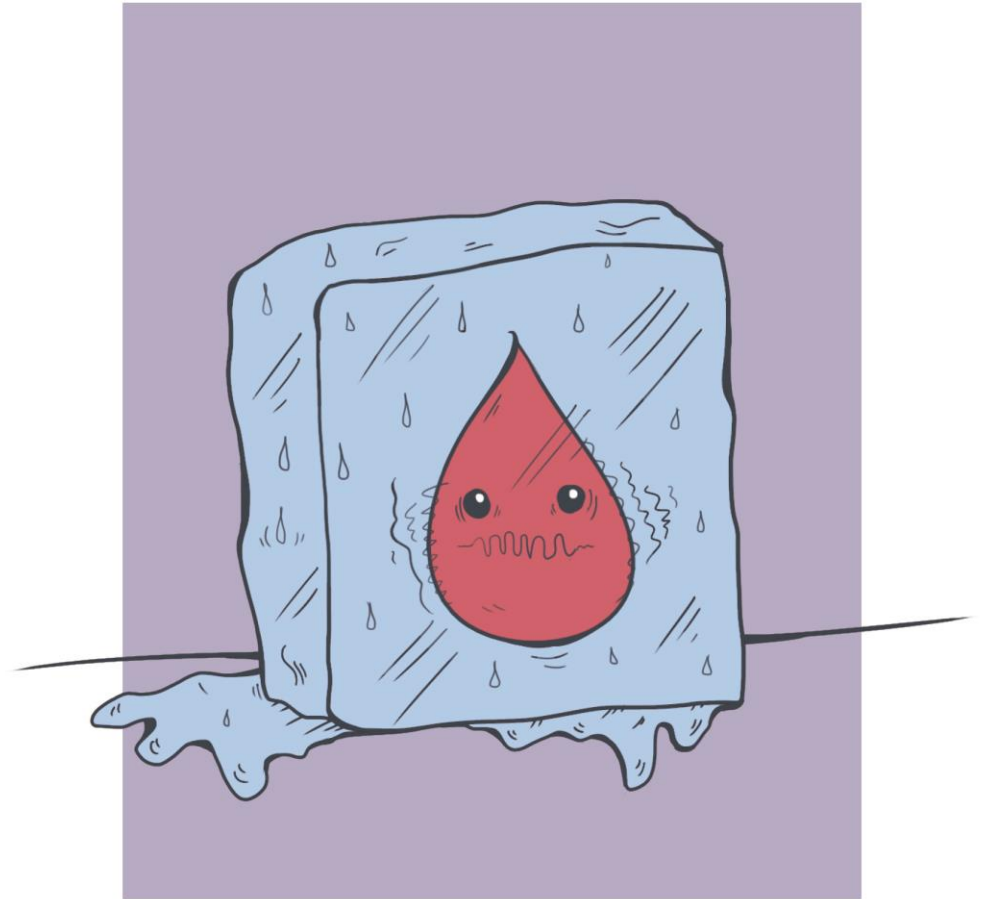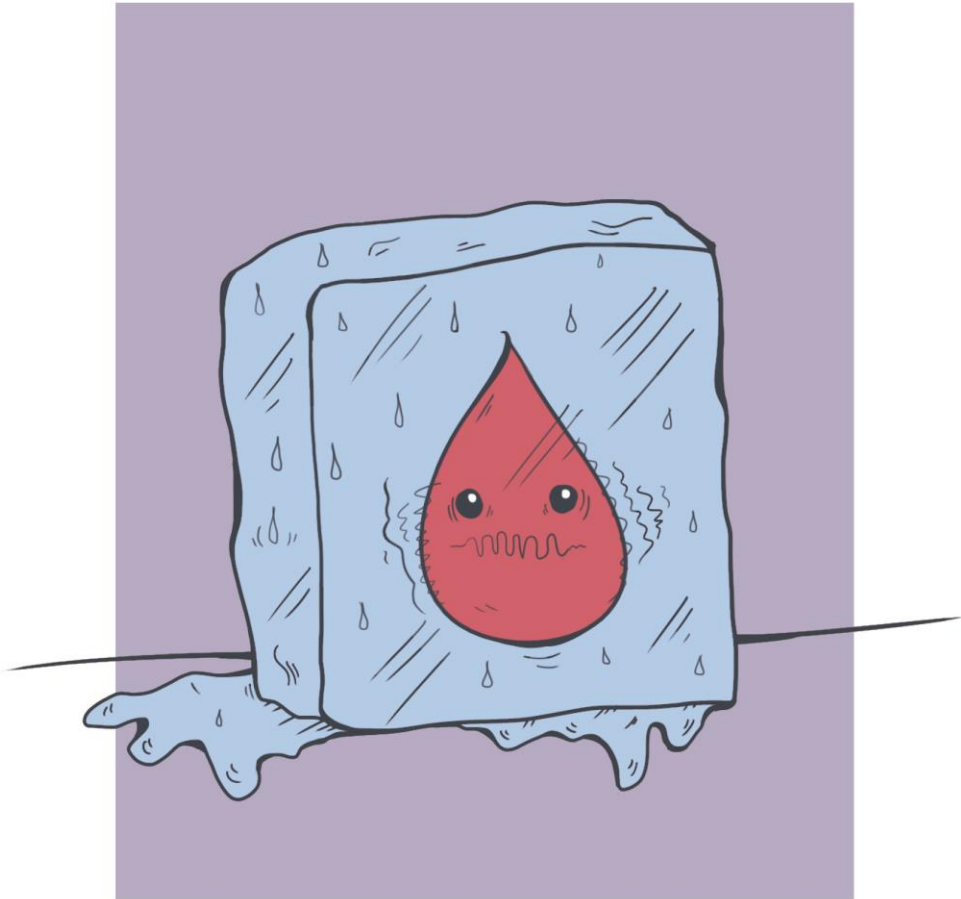
there's no point crying over spilt milk

No llorar sobre la leche derramada.
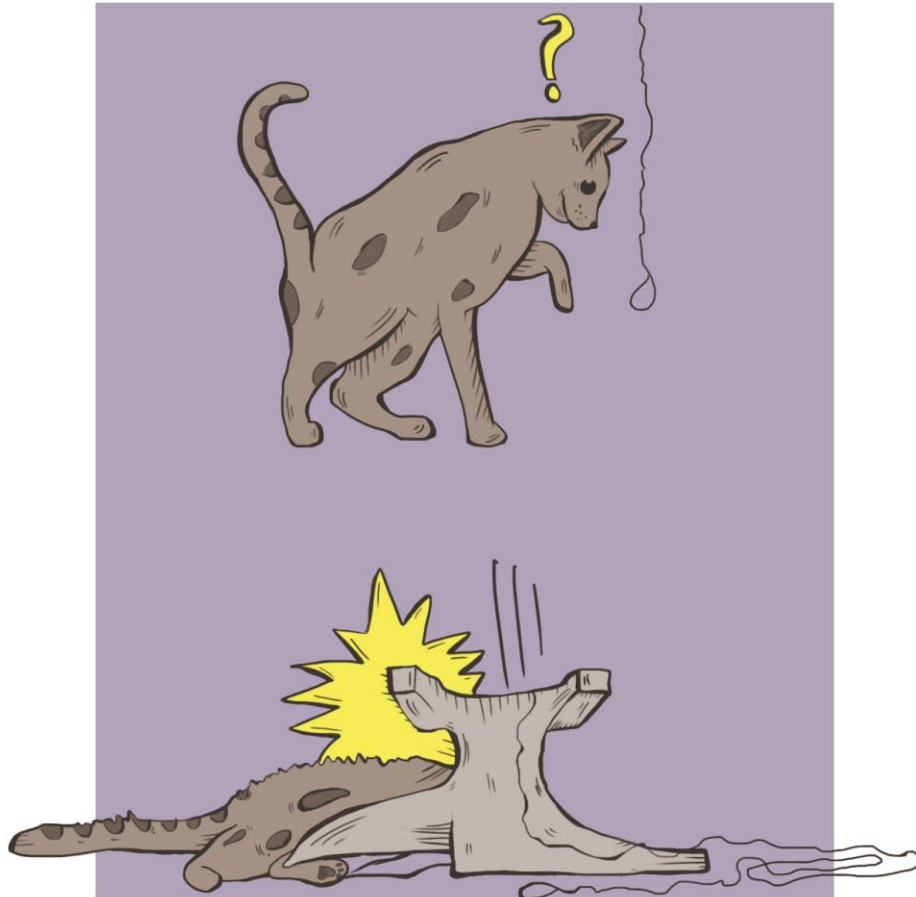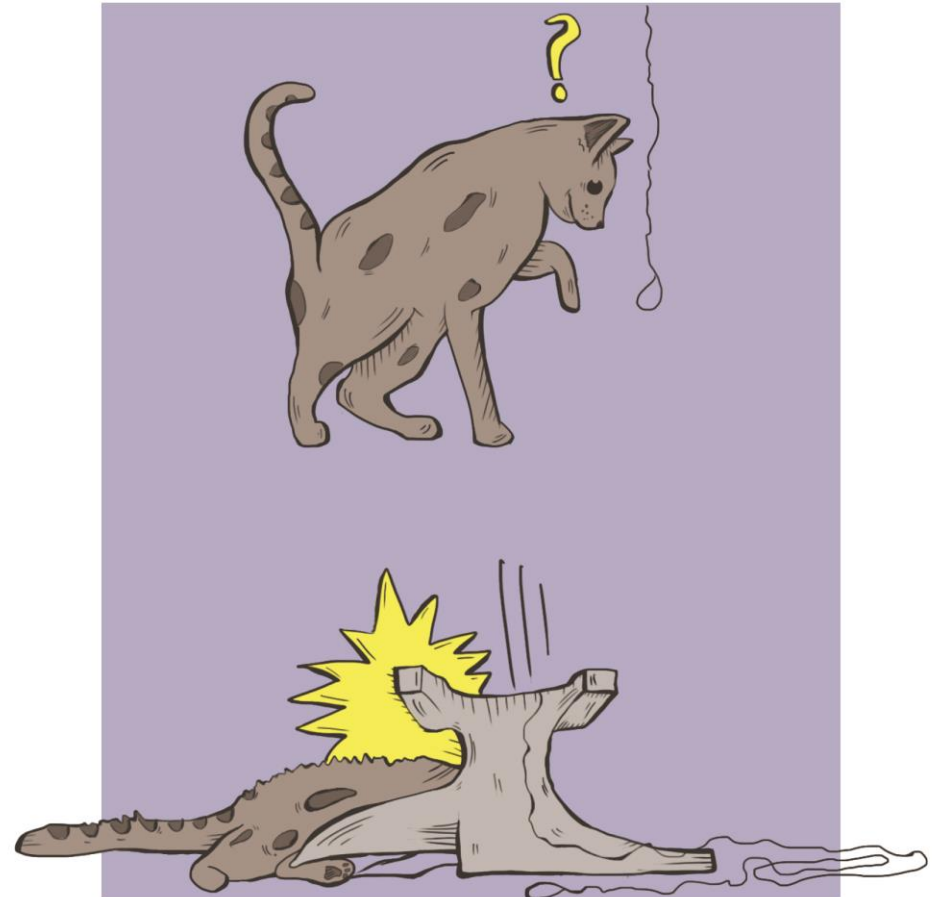
an eye for an eye (and a tooth for a tooth)
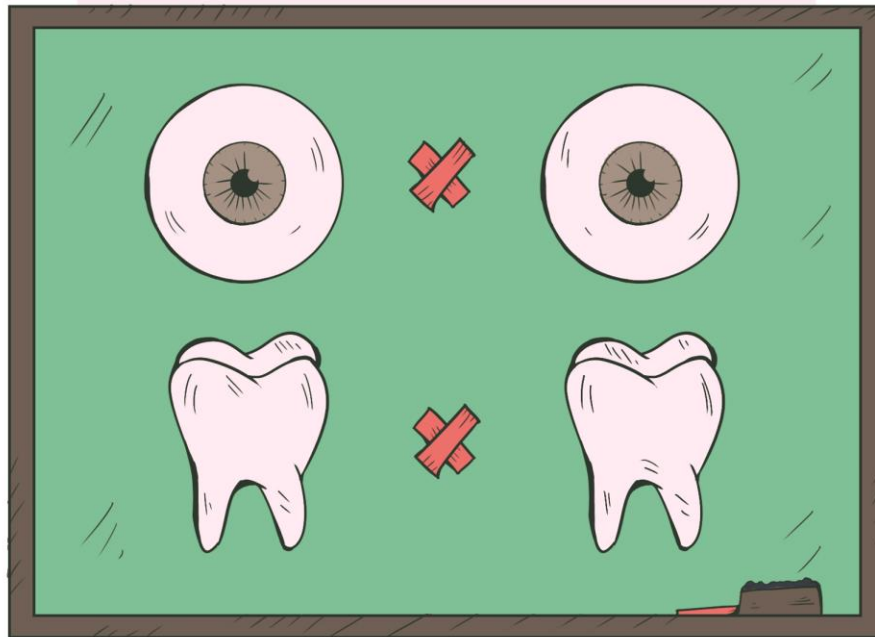
Ojo por ojo , diente por diente.
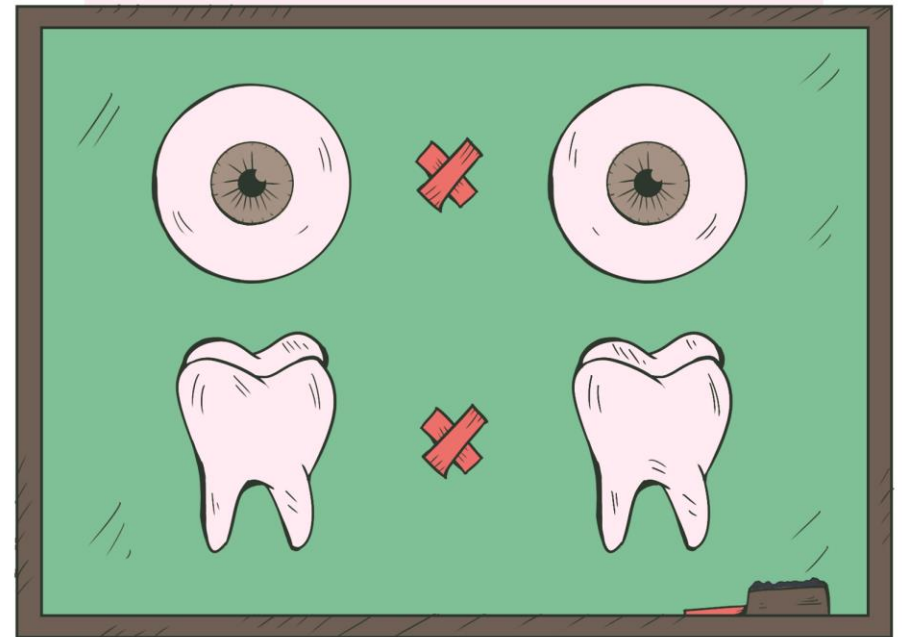
play with fire

Jugar con fuego.
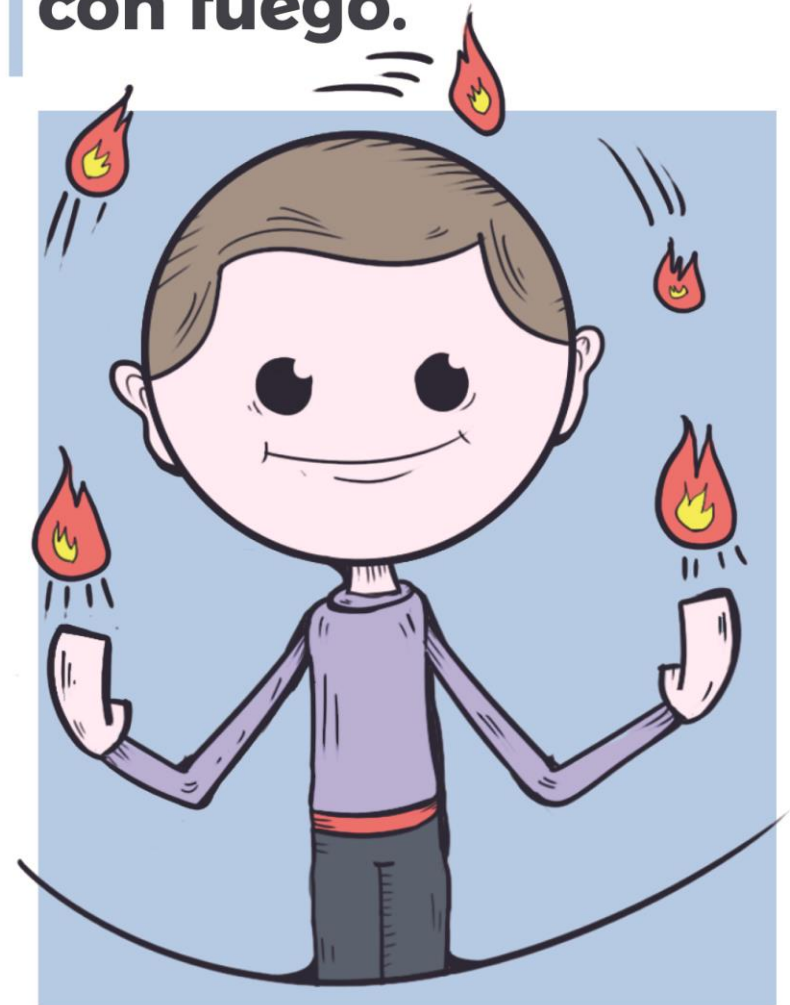
your ears must be burning
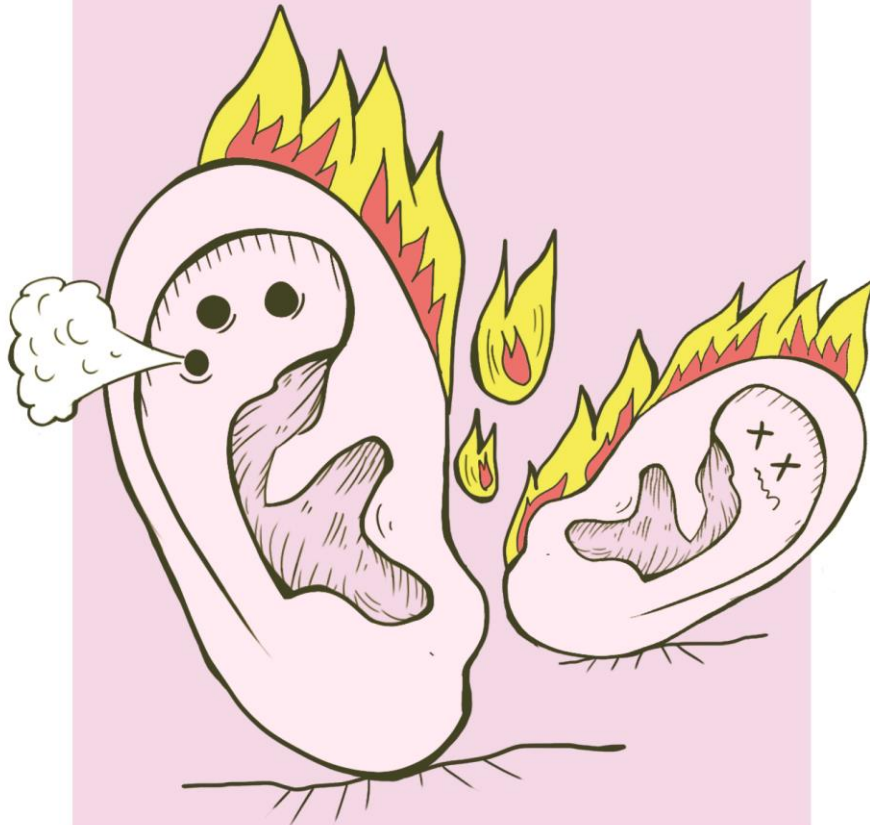
Te queman las orejas.
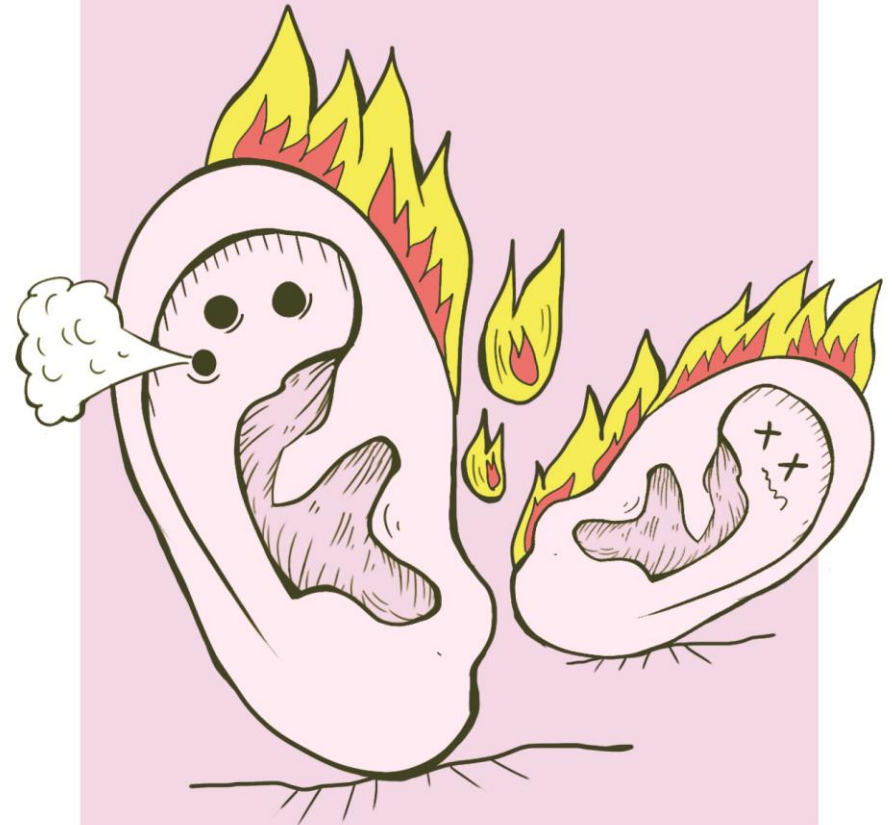
Same meaning and different form

be out of action

Fuera de servicio.
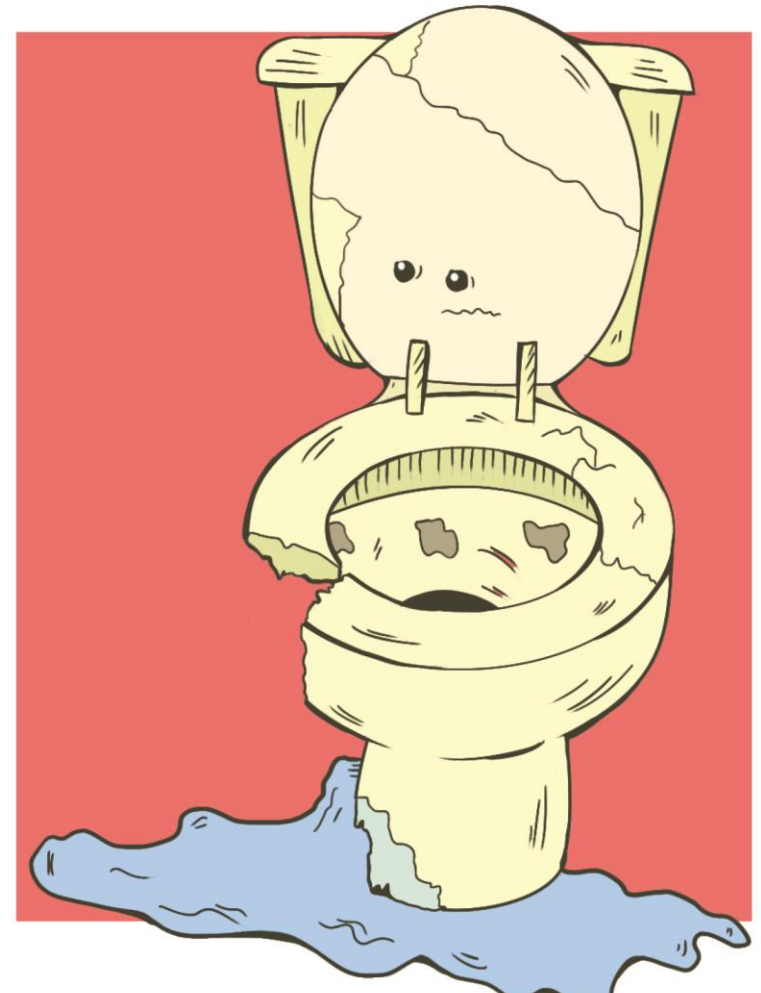
the apple of someone's eye
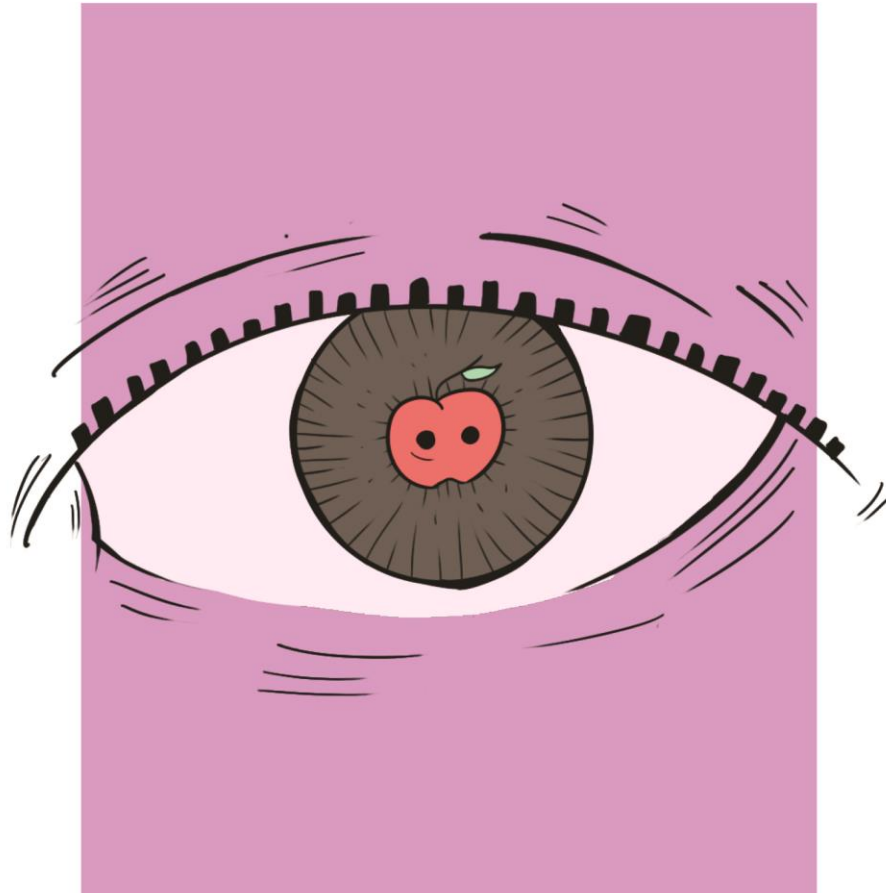
La niña de los ojos.
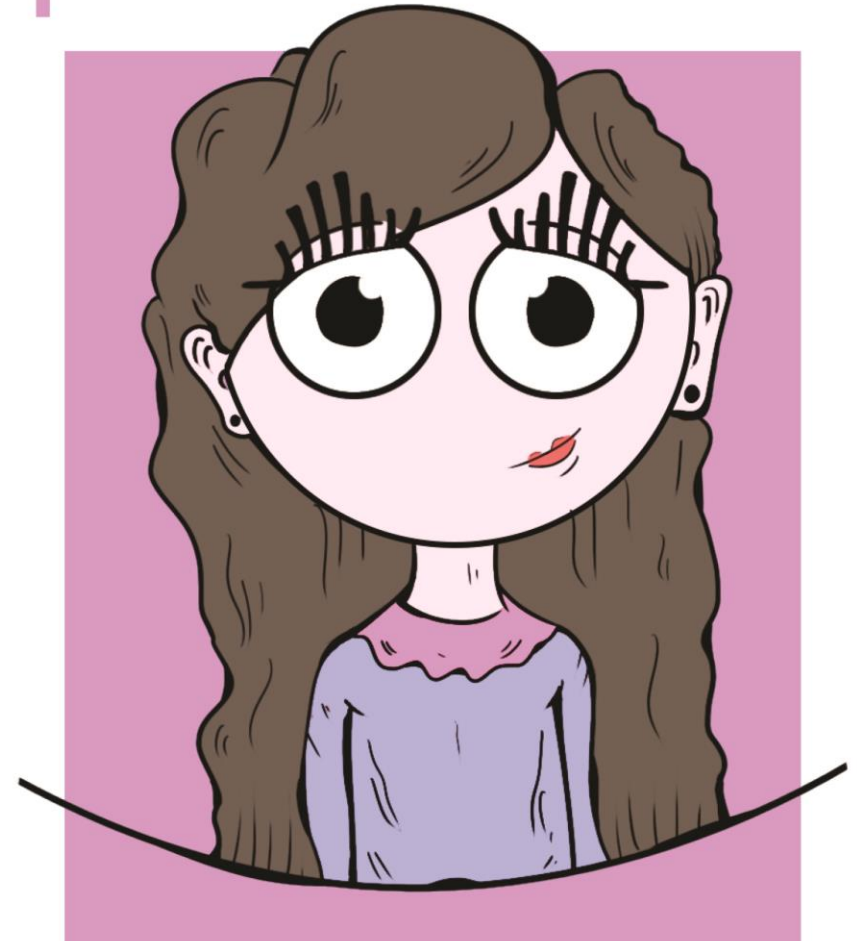
cost someone an arm and a leg
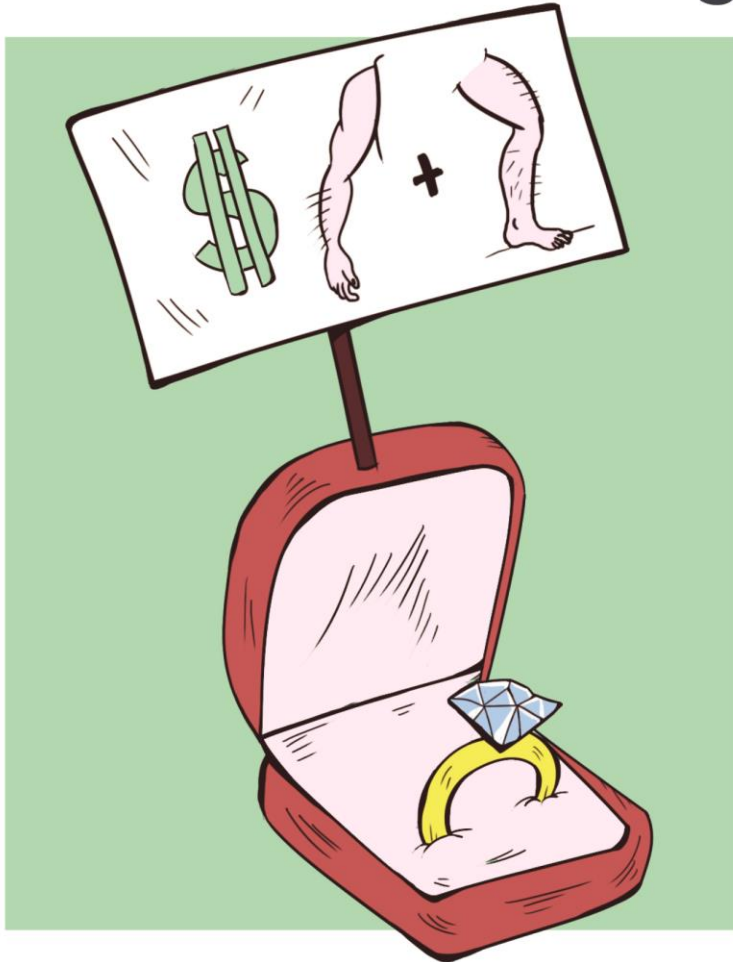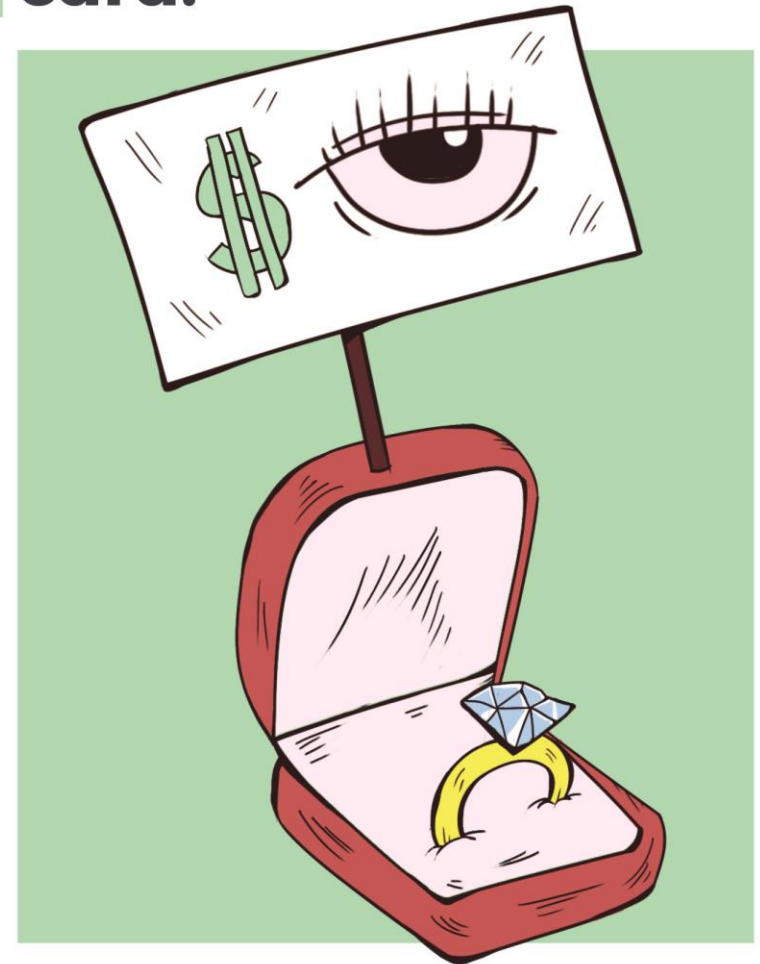
Costar un ojo de la cara.

bring home
the bacon

Traer el pan
a casa.

a bag of bones
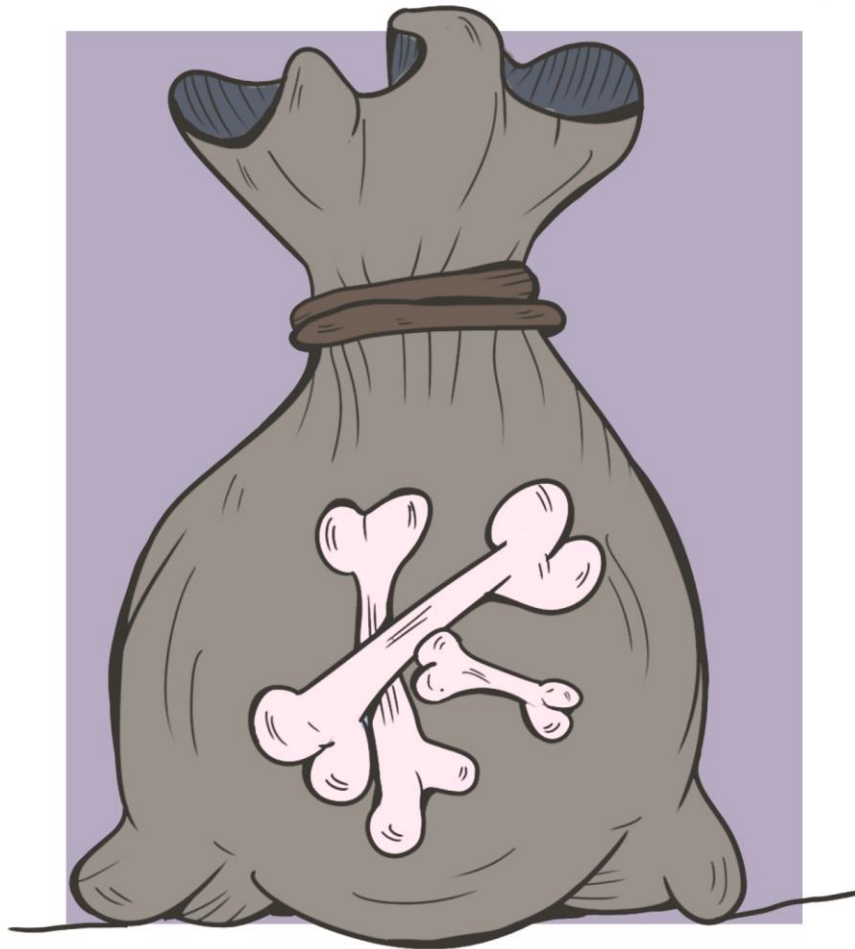
Hueso y pellejo.
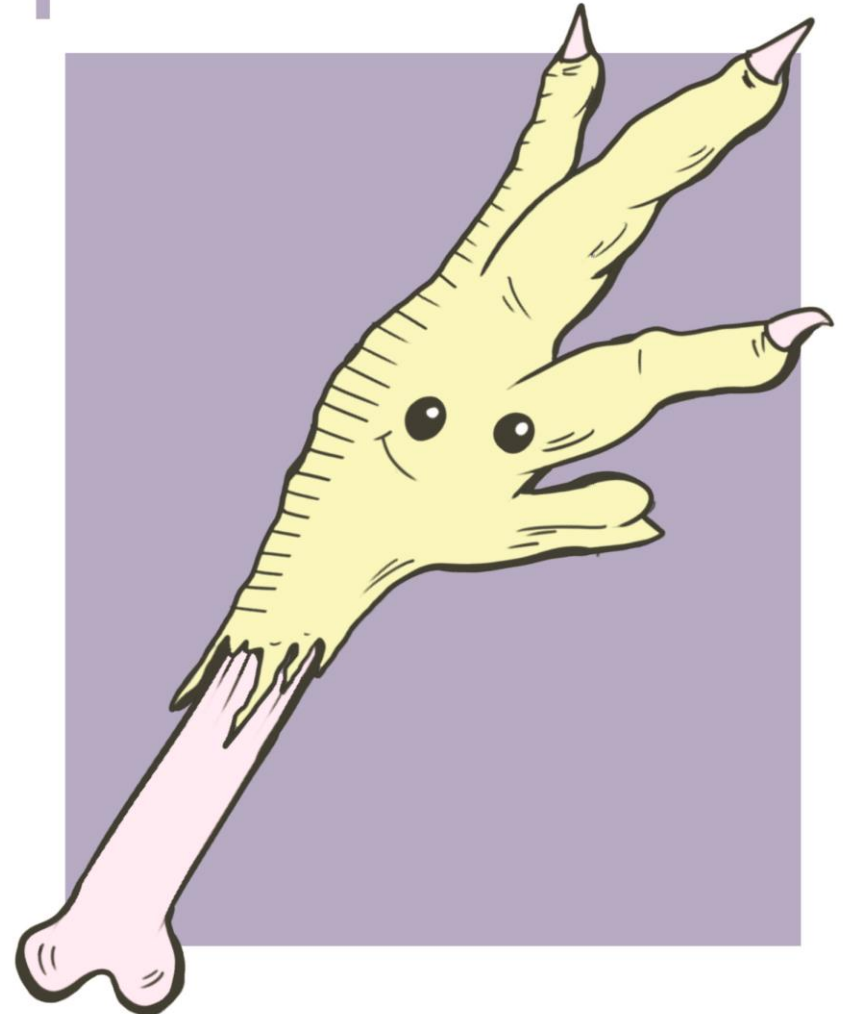
like a bat out of hell
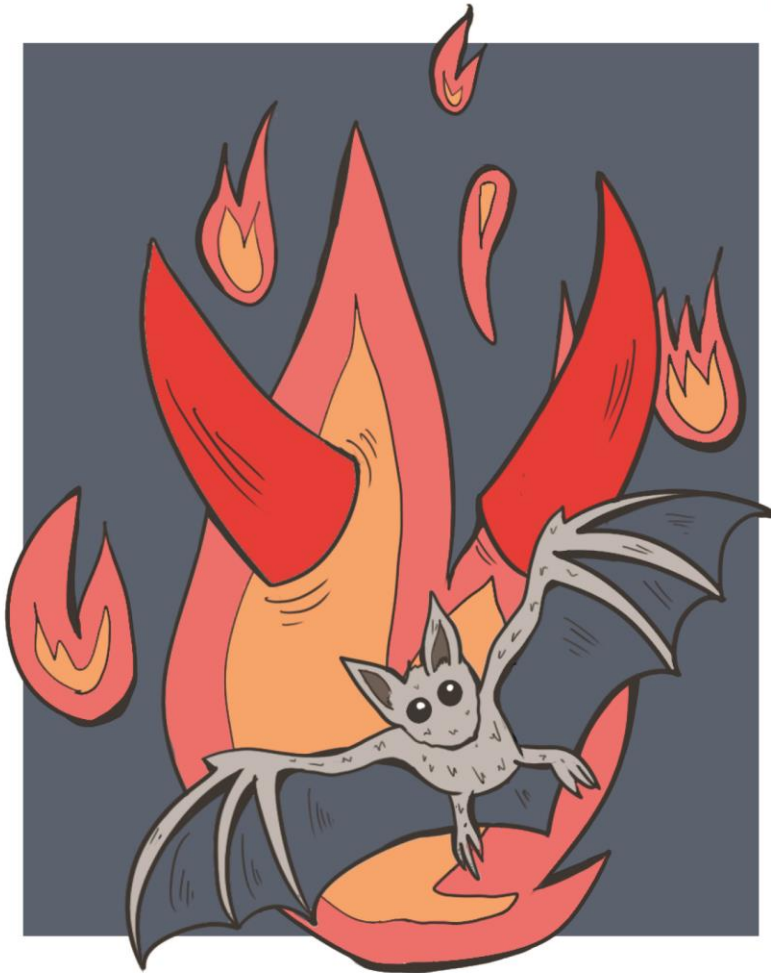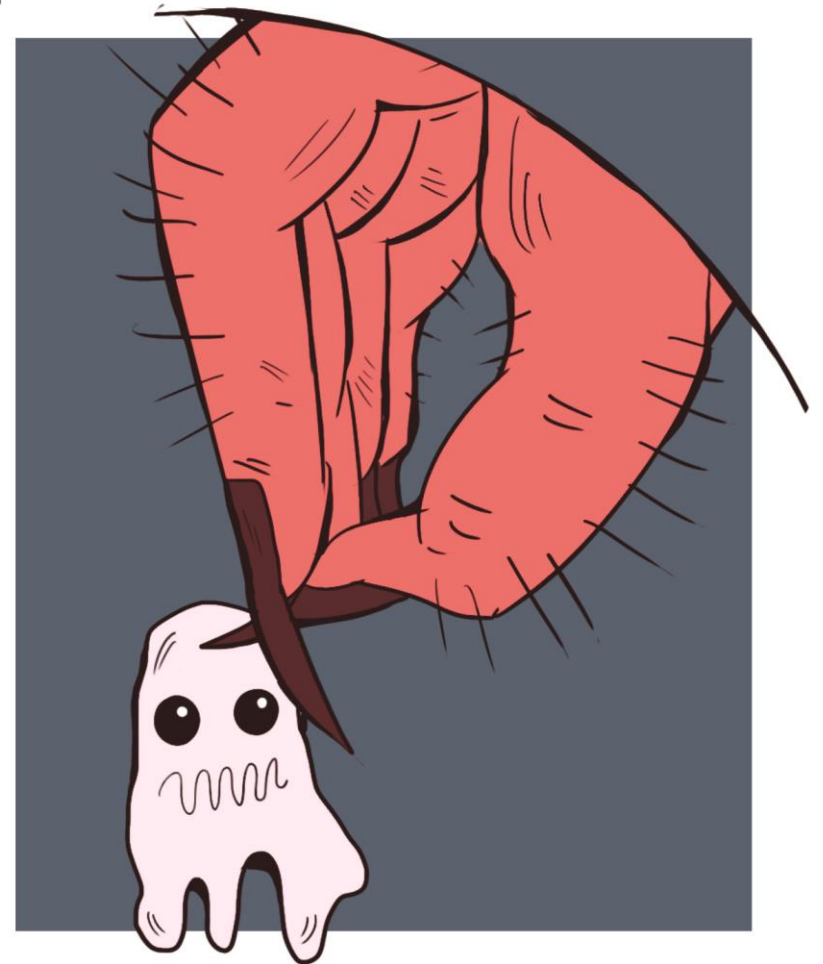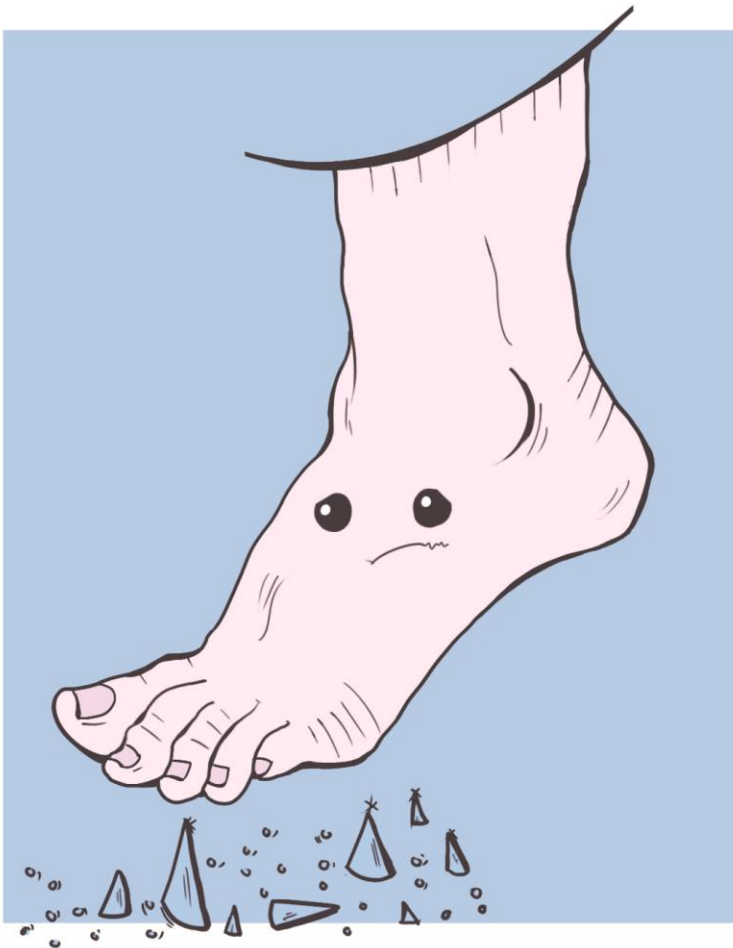
Como alma que lleva el diablo.
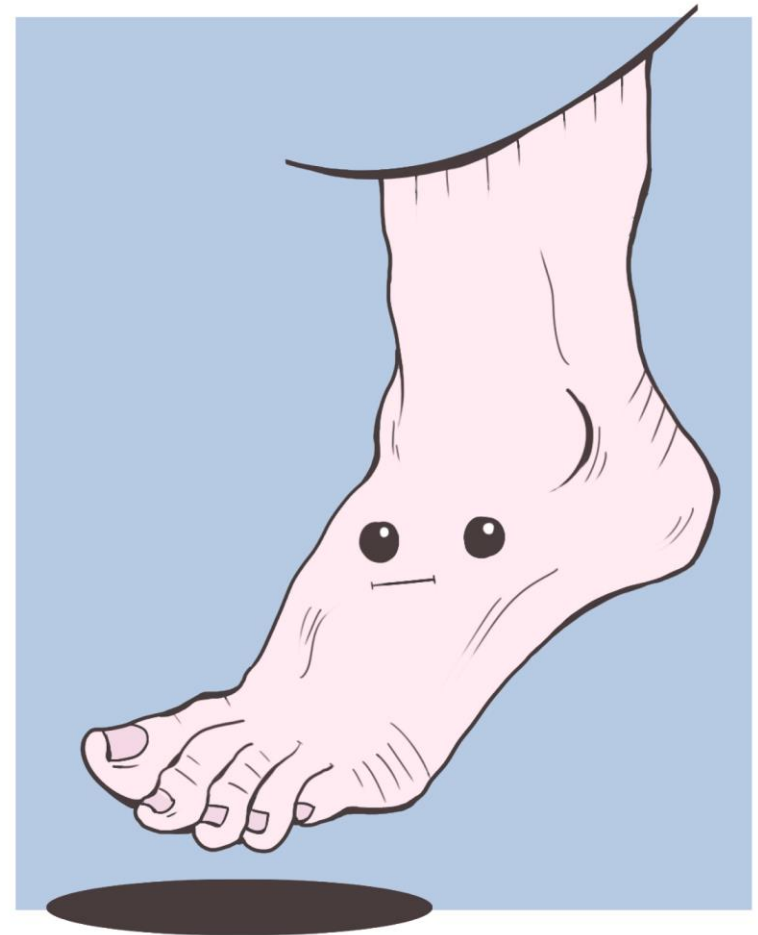
in your
birthday suit

Como dios lo
trajo al mundo.
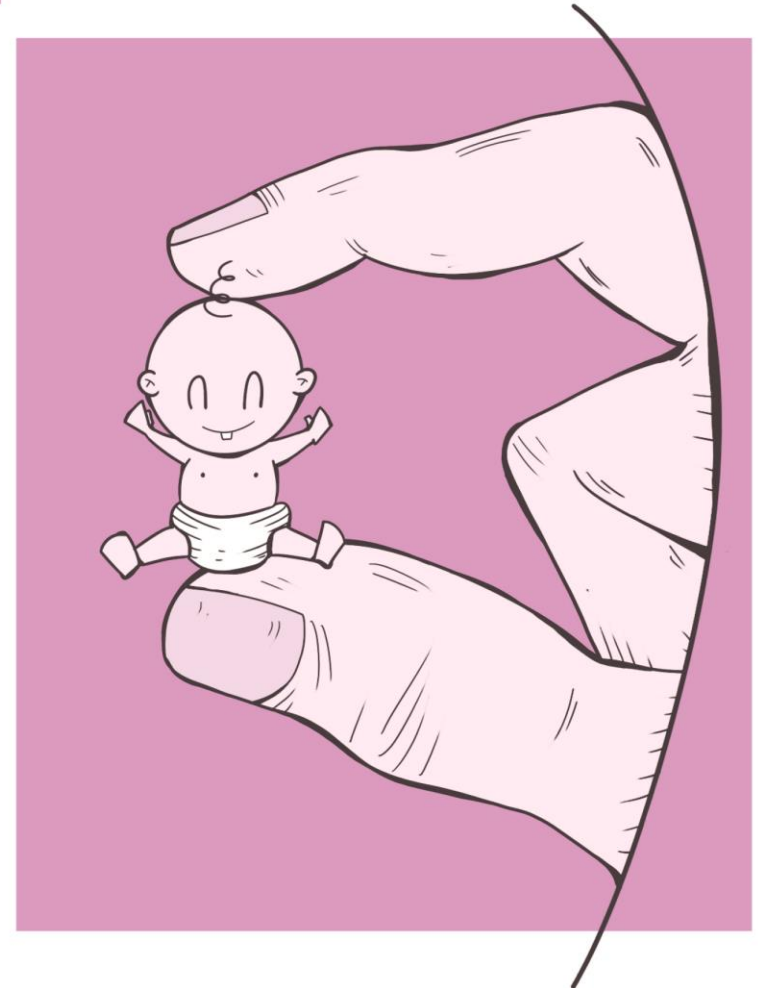
make someone's blood boil
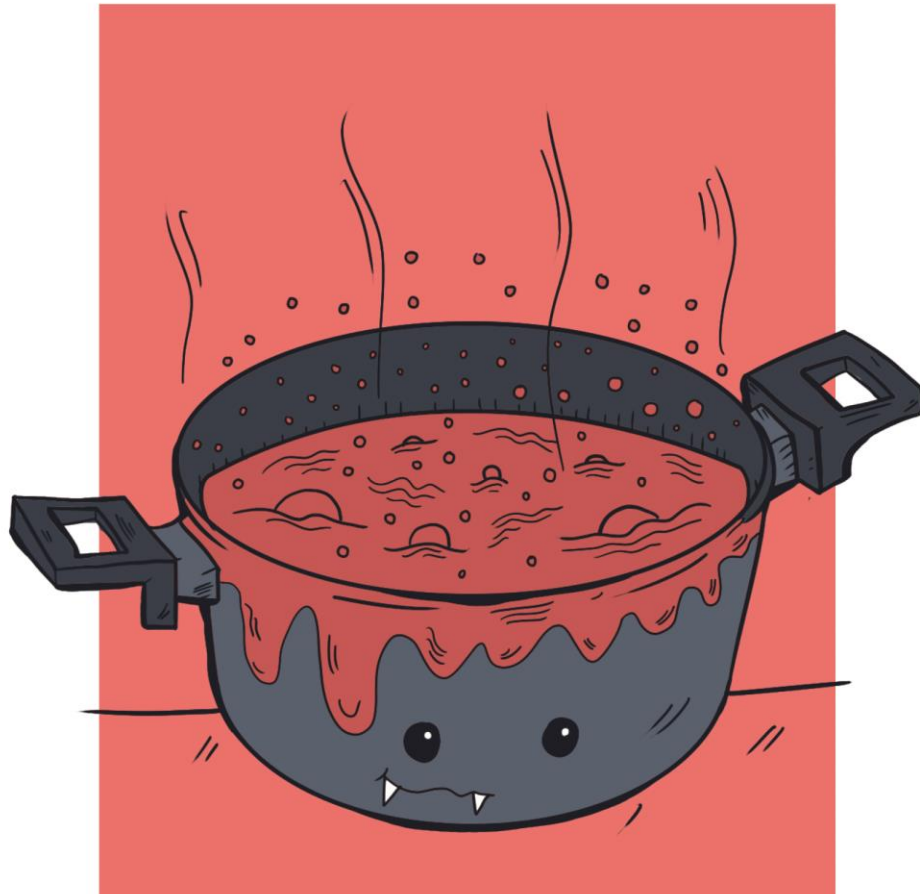
Hacer hervir la chicha.
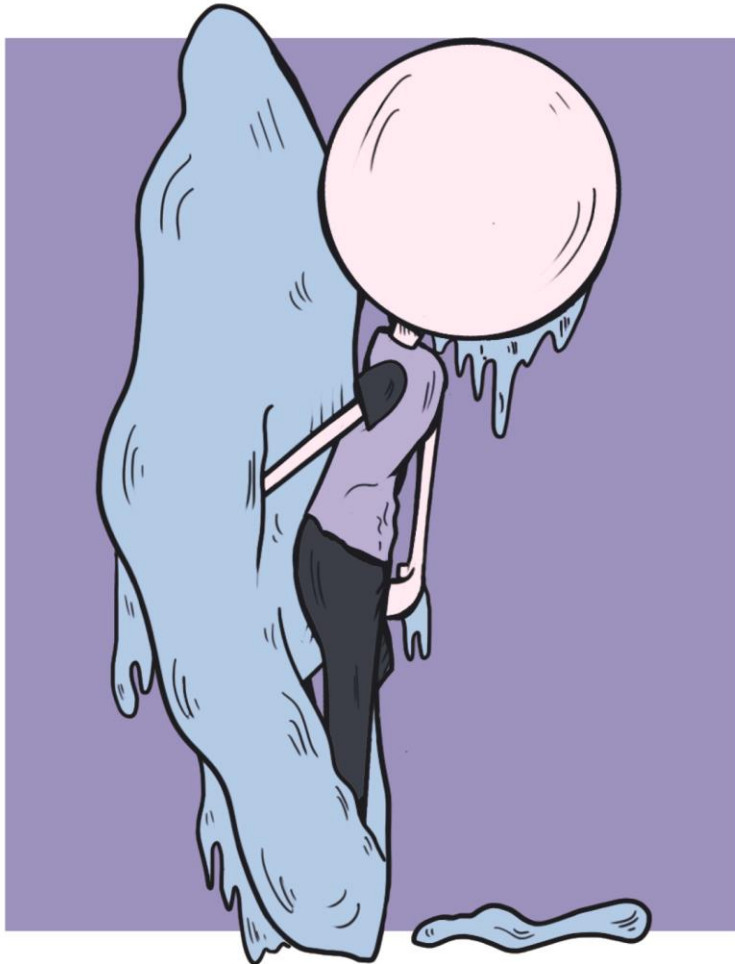
out of the blue | De la nada.

kick the bucket | Estirar la pata.
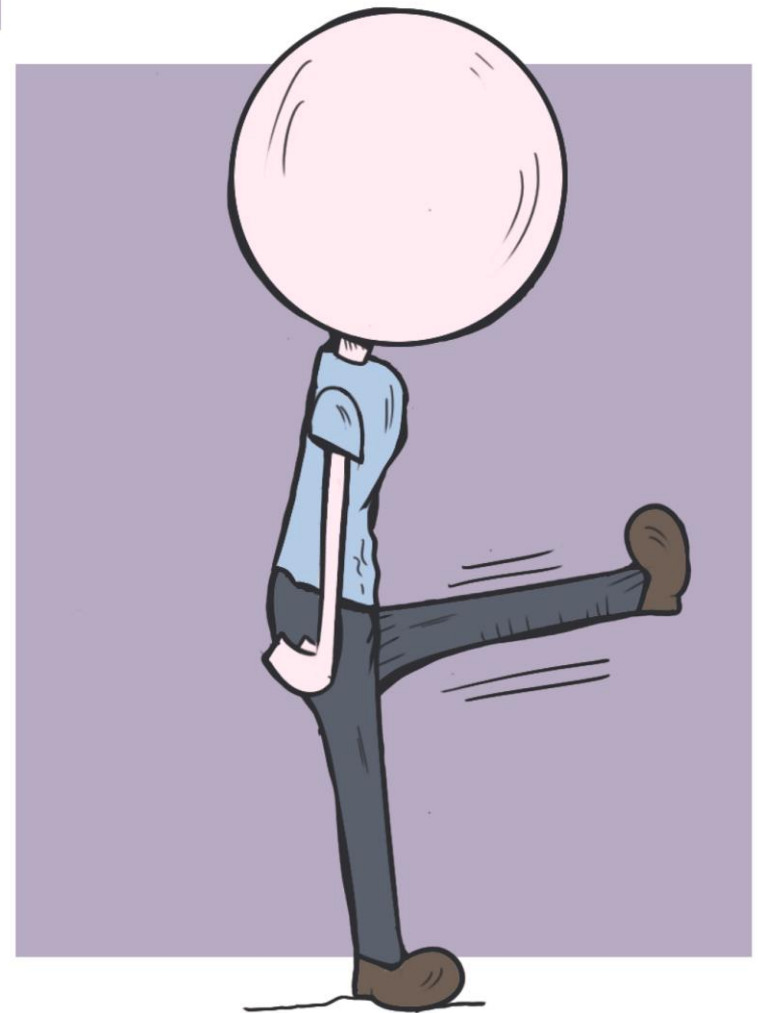
Has the cat got your tongue?
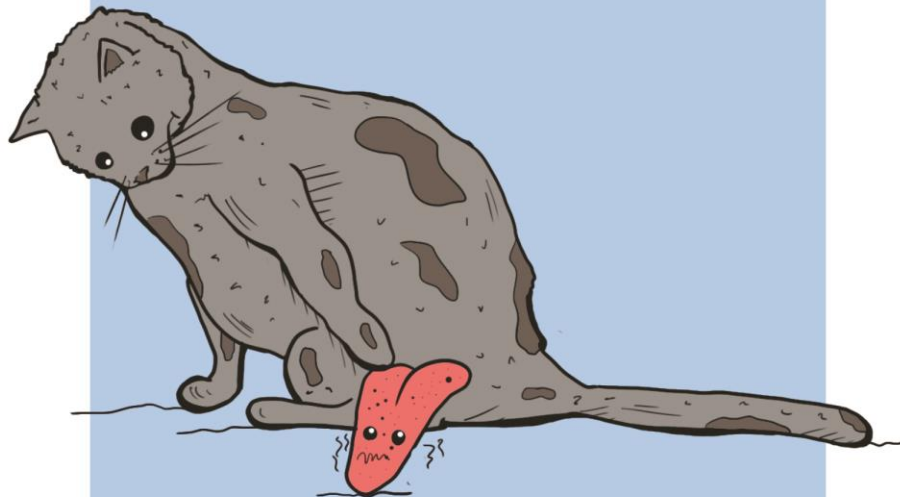
El ratón te comió la lengua.
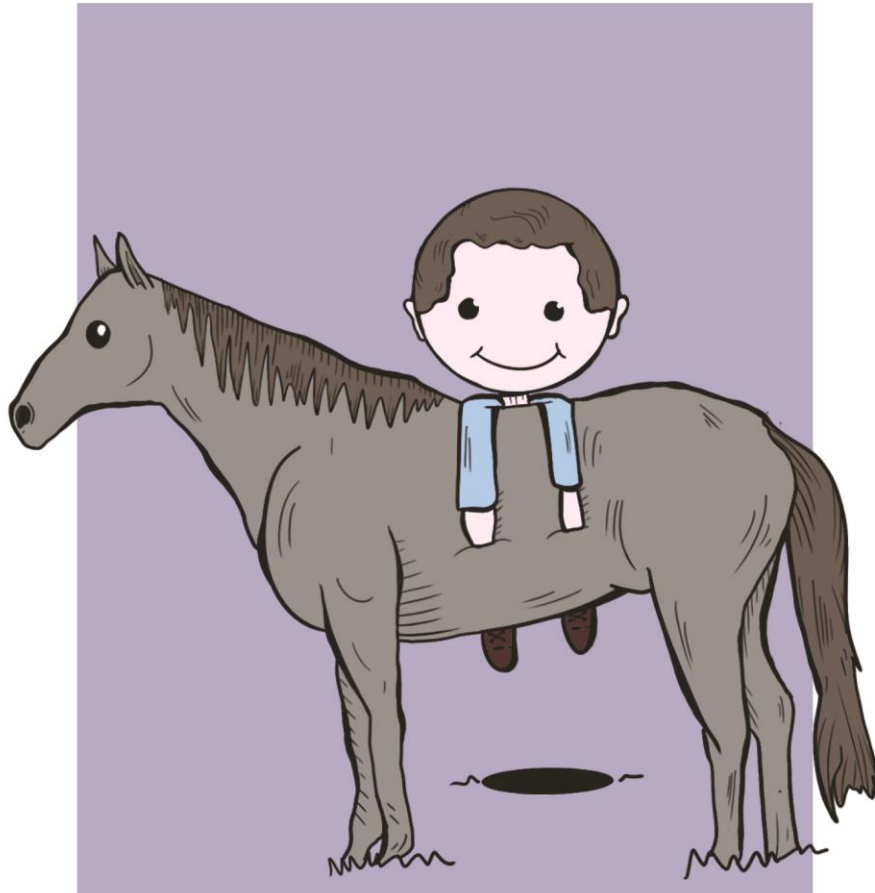
a charlie horse | Calambre.
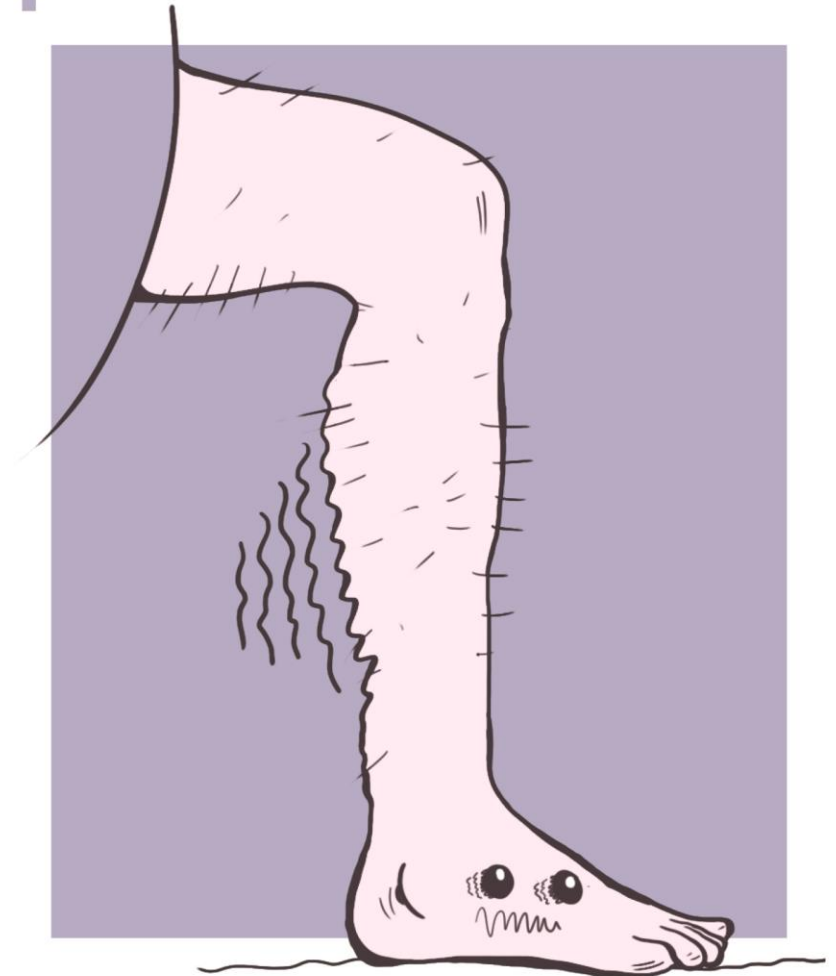
the cream of the crop
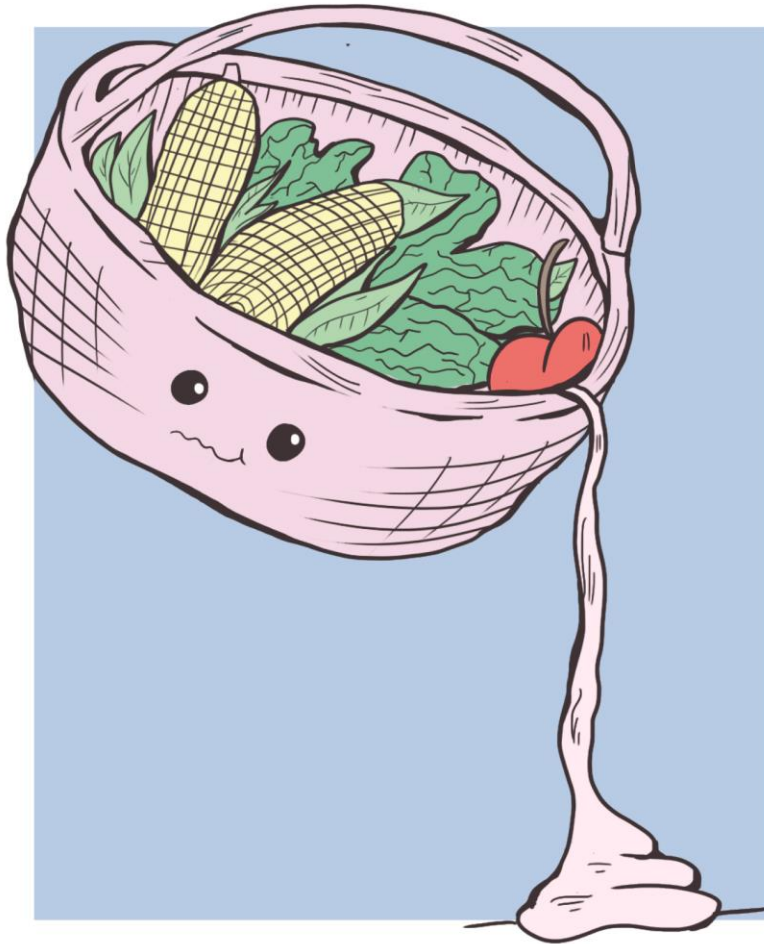
La crema y nata.
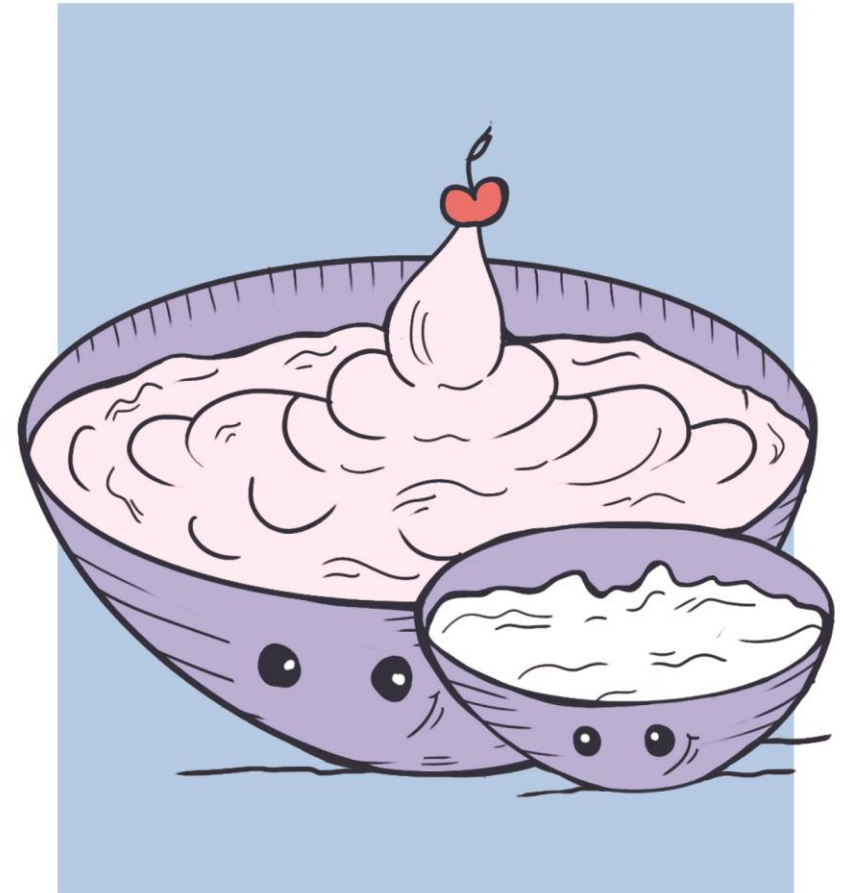
better devil you know (than the devil you don't)

Más vale malo conocido que bueno por conocer.

be all dressed up and/with nowhere to go
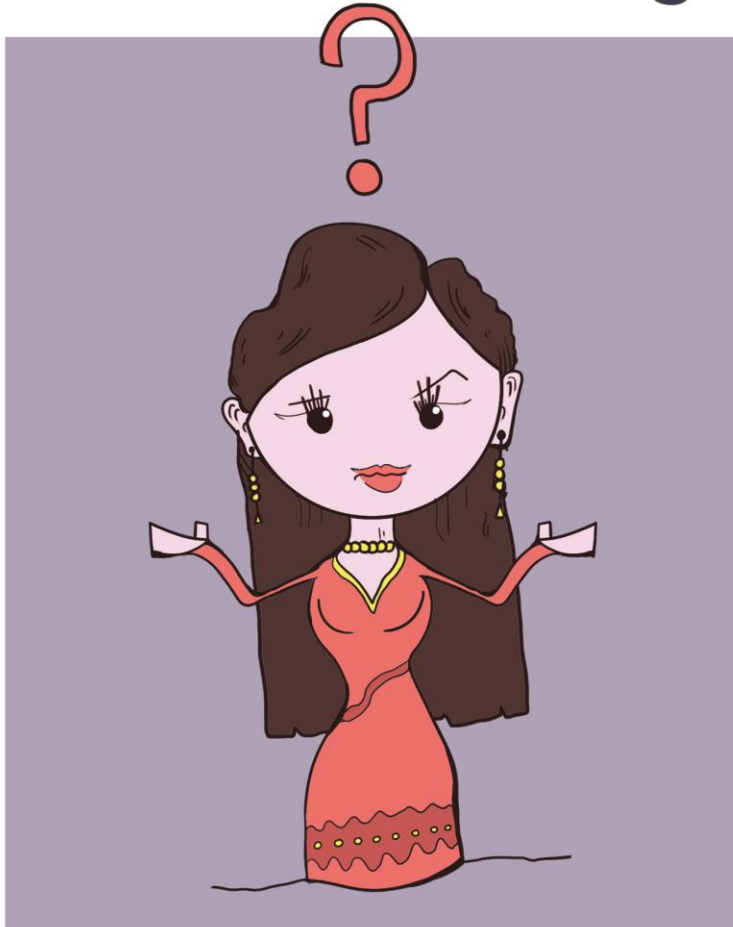
Vestida y alborotada.

the early bird catches the worm
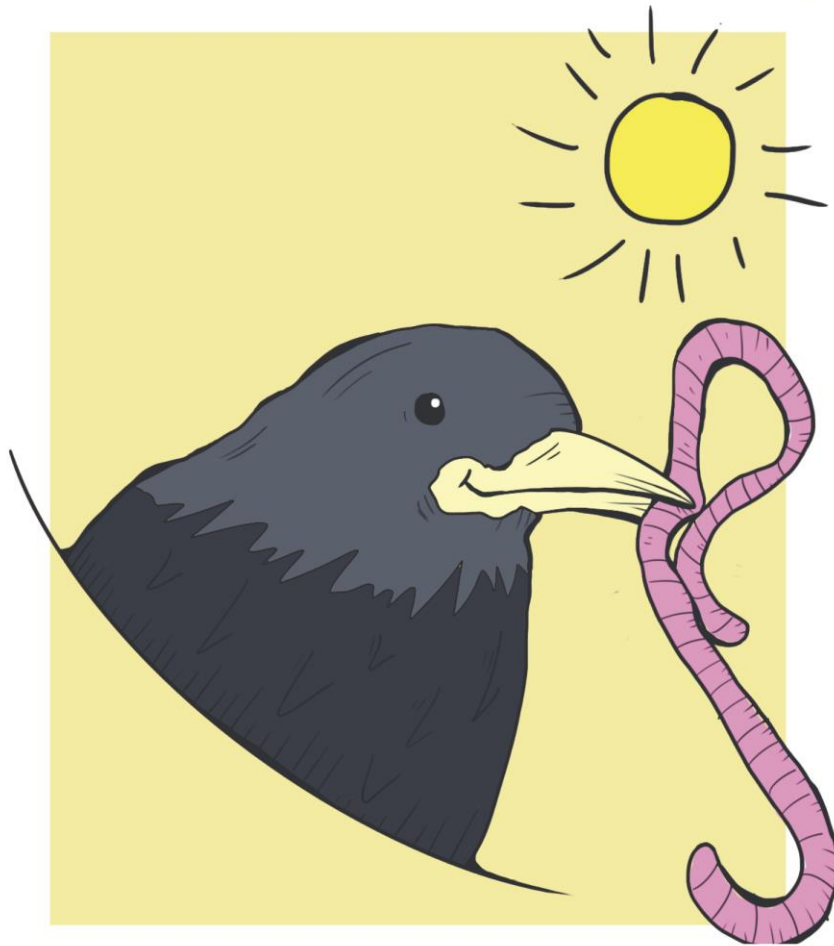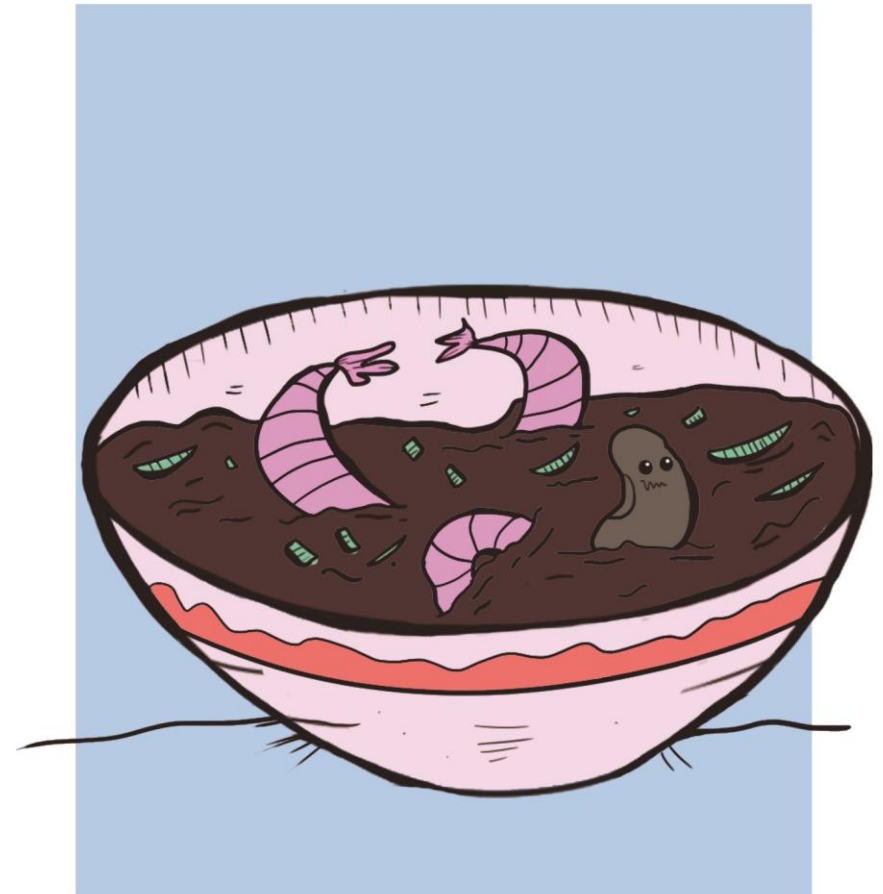
Al que madruga, dios le ayuda.
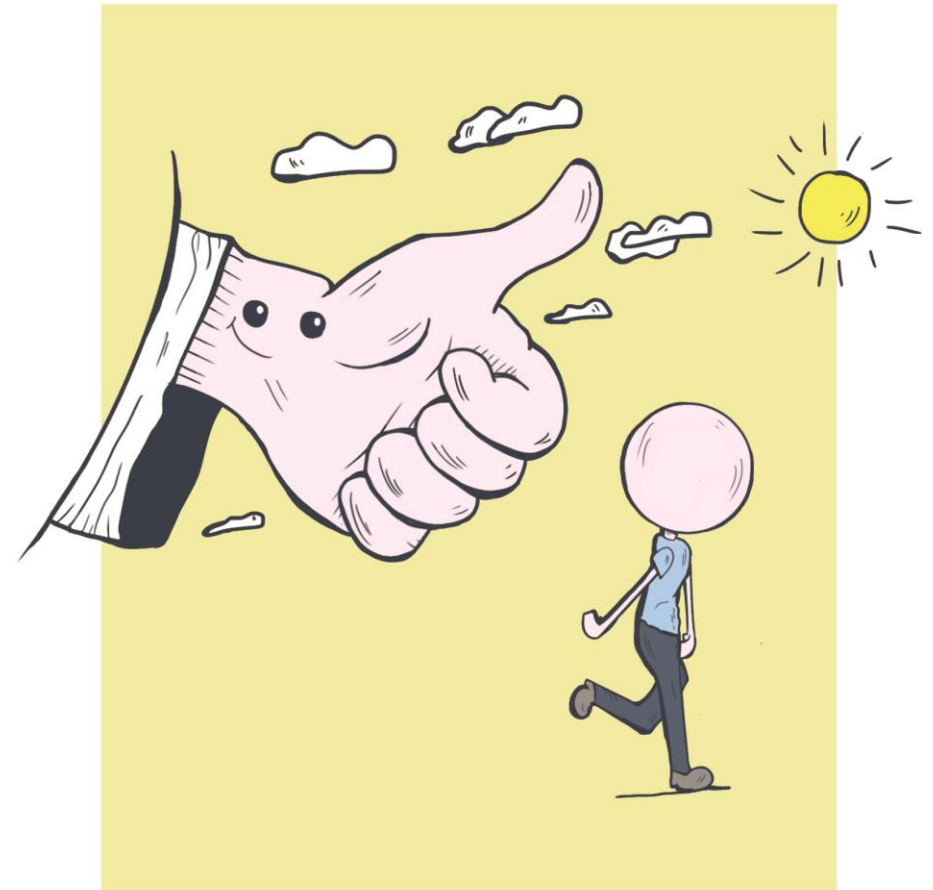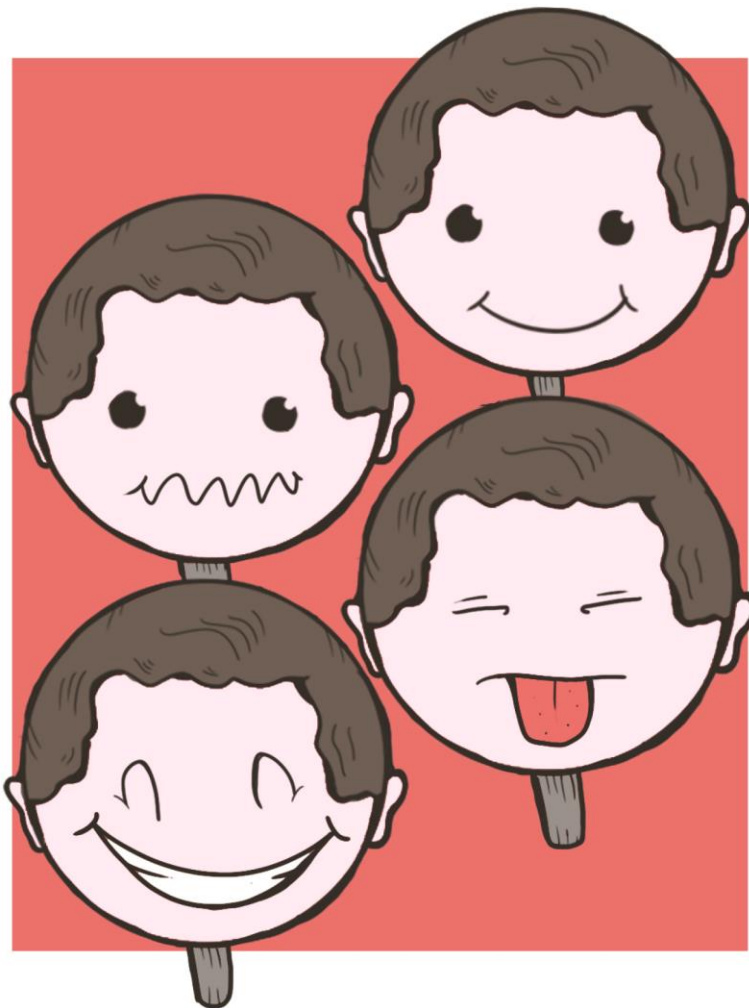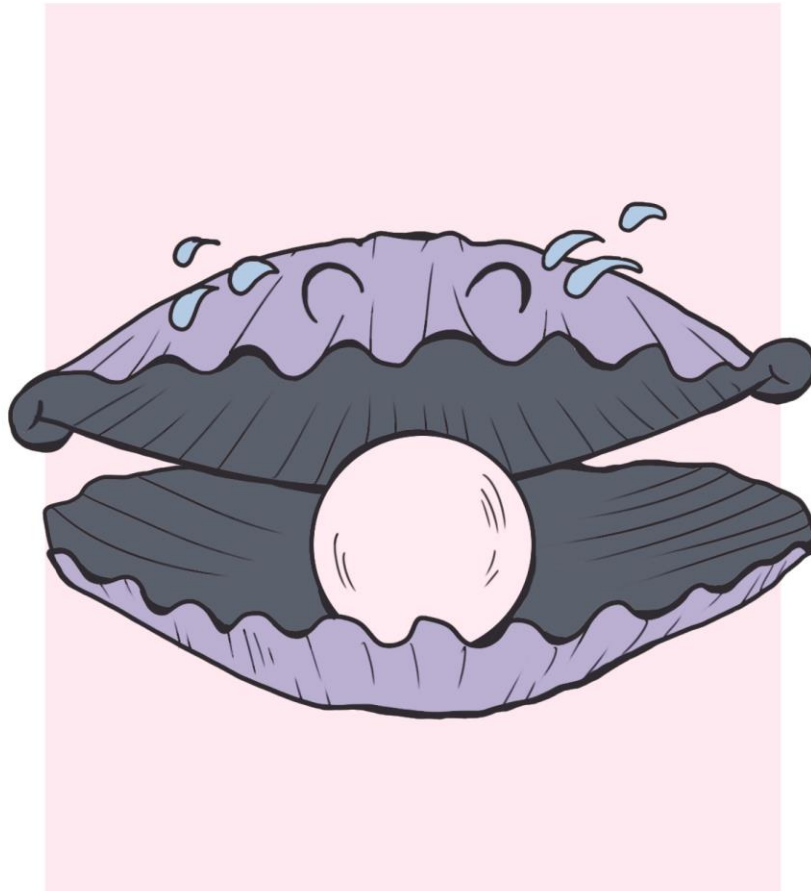
make faces | Hacer muecas.
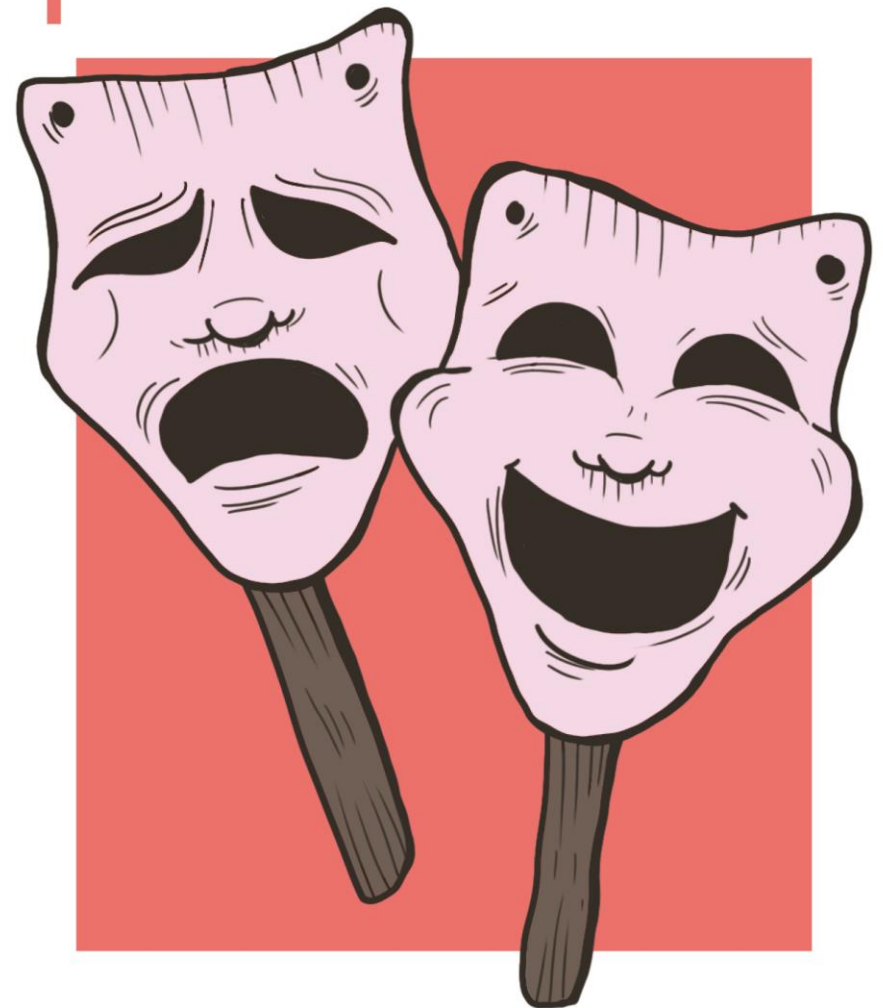
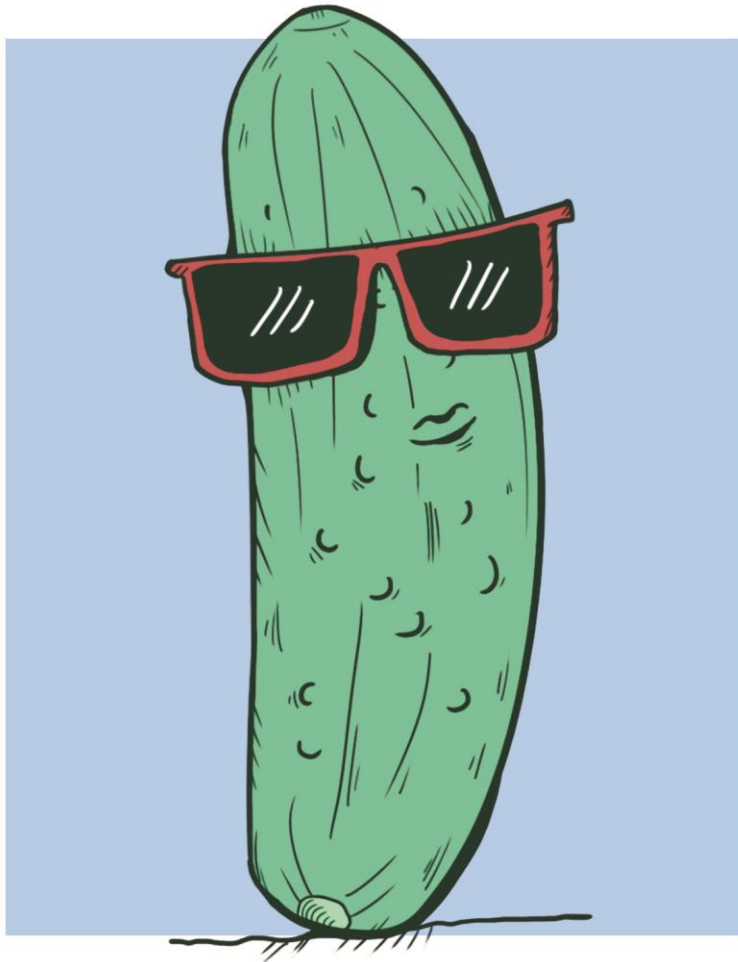**be a fish out of water**
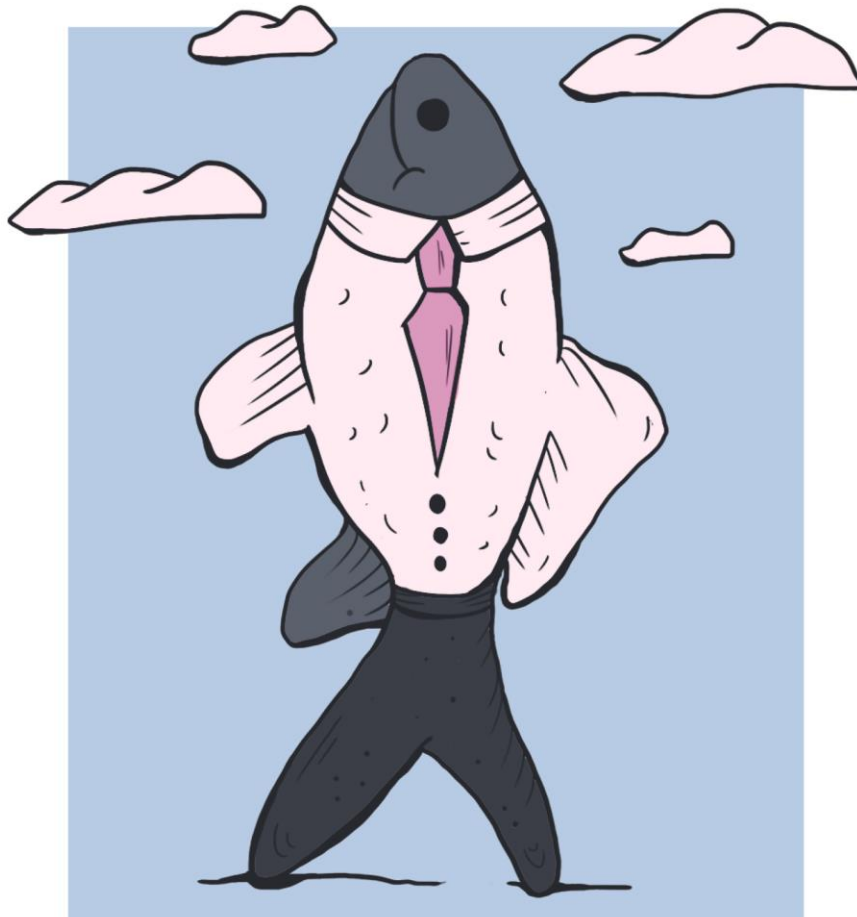
Poroto en ceviche.

happy as a clam

Feliz como una lombriz.

cool as a
cucumber

Fresco como
una lechuga.