



American Expression E0828 Thick as thieves

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The idiom "thick as thieves" is an expression used to describe a close and intimate relationship between two or more individuals who are involved in secretive or sometimes illegal activities together. It suggests a strong bond and camaraderie between these individuals, often implying that they share deep trust and loyalty towards one another.

The phrase draws its origin from the world of crime and law enforcement, where thieves or criminals working together in a group were said to be "thick" or close with one another. This closeness is believed to stem from the need to rely on one another for mutual support and protection in their illicit endeavors.

In modern usage, "thick as thieves" is not restricted to criminal activities but rather used to describe any close friendship or partnership where individuals share a strong bond and are inseparable. It can be applied in both positive and negative contexts, depending on the nature of the relationship and the activities involved.

In a positive sense, the idiom can describe a genuine and unbreakable friendship where individuals trust and support each other wholeheartedly. It implies that they share common interests, values, and experiences, forming a deep connection that withstands the test of time and challenges.

Conversely, "thick as thieves" can also describe a group of individuals engaged in deceitful or harmful activities. In this negative sense, the phrase suggests that these individuals are conspiring together and maintaining a united front to carry out their actions covertly.

The idiom has been frequently used in literature, films, and popular culture to depict characters who share strong bonds of friendship or partnership. These characters are often depicted as inseparable and always having each other's backs, even in the face of adversity.

It is essential to note that while "thick as thieves" can describe close friendships, not all close friendships involve illegal or dishonest activities. In most cases, the phrase is used figuratively to emphasize the depth of a connection between individuals, rather than implying any illegal conduct.

The phrase also underscores the concept of loyalty and trust in relationships. People who are "thick as thieves" are expected to be fiercely loyal and protect one another's interests, often at great personal sacrifice.

However, the idiom can also be used humorously or sarcastically to describe individuals who are so similar in their behavior or personalities that they seem like partners in crime, even in harmless or mundane situations.

In conclusion, "thick as thieves" is a vivid idiom used to describe a close and intimate relationship between two or more individuals. It originated from the world of crime and has been adapted to describe both positive and negative contexts. The phrase underscores the idea of strong bonds, trust, and loyalty among individuals who share common interests and experiences. Whether used to depict genuine friendship or to describe individuals engaged in illicit activities, the idiom captures the depth of connection and camaraderie between these individuals. As with any idiom, it is essential to consider the context in which it is used to fully understand its intended meaning.

Questions for Discussion

1. In what situations have you encountered or observed individuals who are "thick as thieves"? How does this level of closeness and loyalty impact their interactions and decision-making as a group?
2. The idiom "thick as thieves" can be applied to both positive and negative contexts. Can you think of examples from literature, films, or real life where this phrase has been used to depict close friendships or partnerships, whether positive or negative? How does the portrayal of such relationships contribute to the overall narrative or perception of the characters involved?
3. Loyalty and trust are key elements in relationships described as "thick as thieves." What are some factors that contribute to building and maintaining such strong bonds of trust between individuals? How do these elements differ between positive and negative contexts?
4. Discuss the ethical implications of being "thick as thieves" in the negative sense, where individuals engage in deceitful or harmful activities together. What are the potential consequences of such close alliances, and how can these situations be addressed in a responsible and ethical manner?
5. Reflect on your own experiences of close friendships or partnerships. Have you ever been "thick as thieves" with someone, and if so, how did this level of connection impact your relationship? How did the trust and loyalty you shared contribute to your shared experiences and mutual support?