



American Expression E1290 Slow as molasses

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"Slow as molasses" is a vivid and evocative idiom that paints a picture of extreme slowness. It's a colorful way of describing something that moves or progresses at an exceptionally sluggish or lethargic pace. The idiom originates from the physical properties of molasses, a thick and viscous syrup obtained from sugar cane or sugar beet processing.

Molasses is known for its remarkable viscosity, which means it is resistant to flow and pours very slowly. This property makes it a fitting metaphor for describing things that lack speed or efficiency. When we say something is "slow as molasses," we are emphasizing just how glacial, unresponsive, or tedious the process or action is.

The idiom is often used to convey a sense of frustration or impatience. Picture a scenario where you're waiting in a long queue at a government office, and the bureaucracy seems to be moving "slow as molasses." In situations like these, the expression captures the exasperation felt by highlighting the unbearable slowness of the proceedings.

Beyond bureaucratic contexts, "slow as molasses" can apply to various aspects of life. It might describe a person's walking pace when they're drowsy or a project's progress when it's mired in delays and setbacks. It can even be applied to the passage of time when a seemingly endless period stretches before us, as in "the hours dragged on as slow as molasses."

The use of molasses as a point of reference also adds a touch of regional flavor to the idiom. It's particularly popular in American English and reflects a time when molasses was a common household ingredient, especially in the Northeastern United States. This connection to a staple ingredient contributes to the idiom's enduring appeal and cultural resonance.

In a broader sense, "slow as molasses" underscores the universal human experience of grappling with impatience and the desire for things to move swiftly. In our fast-paced modern world, where instant gratification is often expected, encountering sluggishness can be especially frustrating.

However, there can also be value in slowness. Some situations call for careful deliberation and thoroughness, and rushing through them might lead to mistakes or oversights. It's important to recognize when a slow pace is necessary for precision and when it's merely the result of inefficiency or indifference.

In conclusion, "slow as molasses" is a rich and expressive idiom that vividly conveys the concept of extreme slowness by drawing on the familiar image of thick, slow-pouring molasses. It serves as a relatable way to express impatience and frustration when faced with laborious or tedious situations and reminds us that sometimes, a slower pace is not only natural but also necessary for achieving quality and accuracy.

Questions for Discussion

1. Can you recall a specific situation in your life where you experienced something moving as "slow as molasses"? How did it make you feel, and how did you cope with the slowness?
 2. In what areas of your life do you think a slower pace is necessary for better results, as opposed to situations where efficiency and speed are more critical?
 3. How does our modern society's emphasis on speed and instant gratification affect our tolerance for things that move "slow as molasses"? Are there any downsides to this societal expectation?
 4. Are there any cultural or regional variations in idiomatic expressions that convey extreme slowness? How do these expressions reflect the cultural perspectives on time and patience?
 5. Can you think of instances where a slow and deliberate approach is valued, even in a world that often values speed and efficiency? What are the benefits of taking one's time in certain situations?
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