

Let the Cat Out of the Bag | Sherlock

Vocabulary Breakdown

Hollywood English Club

Sherlock Holmes. A case. A moment of accidental honesty. In this scene, the language is sharp, British, and full of social nuance. Perfect for learners who want to sound natural and confident in English.

1. "Indiscreet"

■ Indiscreet means saying or doing something that reveals information that should have stayed private.

✓ The opposite of discreet. An indiscreet comment or action causes social awkwardness or reveals secrets.

▶ *"It was indiscreet of him to mention her salary in front of the whole team."*

2. Sarcasm: "Oh, Brilliant!"

■ Sarcasm is saying the opposite of what you mean, usually in a mocking or ironic tone. "Oh, brilliant!" used sarcastically means the opposite of great.

✓ The British are famous for dry, understated sarcasm. In context, a character says "brilliant" when something has clearly gone wrong.

▶ *"Oh brilliant," she said, staring at the flat tyre. "Just what I needed today."*

3. "Right, No, This Is Charming"

■ This phrase is sarcastic British English meaning this is not charming at all — this is awkward or annoying.

✓ A very British way of expressing displeasure while maintaining a veneer of politeness. "Right" here signals resignation.

▶ *"Right, no, this is charming," he muttered, discovering his umbrella had a hole in it mid-downpour."*

4. "Waltz In"

■ To waltz in means to arrive somewhere casually or confidently, often without being invited or without awareness of the disruption caused.

✓ Usually carries a slightly annoyed tone. The person who waltzes in behaves as if they own the place.

▶ *"He just waltzes in twenty minutes late and acts like nothing happened."*

5. "Large as Bloody Life"

■ "Large as life" means clearly present and very visible — often used with surprise. "Bloody" is a British intensifier.

✓ "Bloody" is a mild British expletive used to add emphasis or frustration. "Large as bloody life" means right there, unmistakably present.

▶ *"I turned the corner and there he was — large as bloody life — standing outside my flat."*

6. "Overreacting"

■ To overreact means to respond to a situation with more emotion or intensity than it deserves.

✓ Common in arguments. Usually said by the person being accused — or by someone trying to calm a situation down.

▶ *"She said I was overreacting, but losing three years of work in a crash is not a small thing."*

7. "Swear to God!"

■ "I swear to God" is used to emphasise that you are telling the truth or expressing strong emotion.

✓ Casual and emphatic. Not meant literally — just a strong way of saying I mean this completely.

▶ *"I swear to God, if that alarm goes off one more time I am throwing the phone out the window."*

8. "Thrill of the Chase"

■ The thrill of the chase is the excitement you feel when pursuing something — even before you catch it.

✓ Often used for romance, competition, or detective work. Some people find the chase more exciting than the outcome.

▶ *"He lost interest once she agreed to go out with him. For him, it was always about the thrill of the chase."*

9. "Imminent"

■ Imminent means about to happen very soon — so soon it feels unavoidable.

✓ Often used for threats, deadlines, or dramatic events. Has a slightly ominous tone.

▶ *"The forecast predicted imminent storms, so the festival was moved indoors."*

10. Idiom Spotlight: "Let the Cat Out of the Bag"

■ To let the cat out of the bag means to accidentally reveal a secret that was supposed to stay hidden.

✓ Possibly from market fraud: a seller would substitute a cat for the promised piglet. Opening the bag revealed the trick.

▶ *"He let the cat out of the bag about the surprise party when he mentioned it to her sister."*

11. Bonus: Idiom vs. Phrase

■ An idiom is a fixed expression whose meaning cannot be guessed from its individual words. A phrase is any group of words used together.

✓ All idioms are phrases. Not all phrases are idioms. "Let the cat out of the bag" is an idiom. "Good morning" is a phrase but not an idiom.

▶ *"Once you understand that an idiom's meaning is not literal, you stop trying to translate it word for word."*

Sherlock: Let the Cat Out of the Bag

Student Worksheet

Part 1: Vocabulary Match

Match each word or phrase with its correct definition. Write the letter on the line.

WORDS / PHRASES	DEFINITIONS
_____ 1. indiscreet	a) To walk in casually or confidently, as if nothing is wrong
_____ 2. waltz in	b) Something is about to happen very soon
_____ 3. large as bloody life	c) The excitement of pursuing something difficult or challenging
_____ 4. overreact	d) Careless about what you say; sharing secrets at the wrong time
_____ 5. imminent	e) A British expression meaning someone appears suddenly in person
_____ 6. the thrill of the chase	f) To accidentally reveal a secret
_____ 7. let the cat out of the bag	g) To respond too strongly or emotionally to a situation

Part 2: Fill in the Blanks

Complete each sentence with a word or phrase from the word bank.

WORD BANK

imminent • waltzed in • indiscreet • overreacting • let the cat out of the bag • thrill • swear to God

1. The hurricane is _____. Everyone needs to evacuate immediately.
2. She _____ and told everyone about the surprise party by accident.
3. He just _____ an hour late without even apologising.
4. It was _____ of him to discuss his colleague's salary in front of everyone.
5. "I _____ I didn't break it — ask anyone who was there!"
6. Am I _____? I don't think asking for an apology is too much!
7. For her, it's not about winning. She loves the _____ of the competition.

Part 3: The "Over-" Prefix

The prefix **over-** means "too much." Add it to the verbs in the table to make a new word, then write your own sentence using it.

BASE VERB	OVER- WORD	YOUR SENTENCE
think	_____	_____
eat	_____	_____
work	_____	_____
spend	_____	_____
react	_____	_____
sleep	_____	_____

Part 4: Sarcasm Spotter

Read each sentence. Is it genuine or sarcastic? Write G (Genuine) or S (Sarcastic) on the line and explain your choice.

8. "Oh, brilliant! My phone just died right before my interview."

Answer: _____

Why? _____

9. "Brilliant! She just got accepted to Oxford — we're so proud of her!"

Answer: _____

Why? _____

10. "Right, yes, very helpful. Thanks for nothing."

Answer: _____

Why? _____

11. "Oh, charming little village — I'd love to come back here on holiday."

Answer: _____

Why? _____

12. "Oh great, another Monday morning meeting. I've really missed these(!)"

Answer: _____

Why? _____

13. "Great news — the project got approved and we start next week!"

Answer: _____

Why? _____

Part 5: Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer.

14. What does "let the cat out of the bag" mean?
- a) To release a cat from a bag.
 - b) To accidentally reveal a secret.
 - c) To keep a secret safe.
 - d) To tell a lie.
15. Where does the idiom "let the cat out of the bag" originally come from?
- e) A scene from Sherlock Holmes.
 - f) Medieval markets where merchants cheated buyers.
 - g) A 20th century American newspaper.
 - h) A popular nursery rhyme.
16. Which sentence uses "waltz in" correctly?
- i) She waltzed in to the supermarket to buy milk.
 - j) He waltzed in two hours late without apologising, as if nothing had happened.
 - k) They waltzed in the dance competition and won first place.
 - l) I waltzed in a beautiful dress to the party.
17. What is the difference between "soon" and "imminent"?
- m) "Soon" is more urgent than "imminent."
 - n) "Imminent" means something is about to happen at any moment, while "soon" is less specific.
 - o) They mean exactly the same thing.
 - p) "Imminent" is only used for positive events.
18. Why does John say "Oh, brilliant(!)" in a sarcastic way?
- q) Because Sherlock just solved a case.
 - r) Because he genuinely thinks Sherlock is clever.
 - s) Because he has just found out his wife never liked his moustache.
 - t) Because he is excited to see Sherlock again.

Part 6: True or False?

Write T (True) or F (False). If the statement is false, correct it on the line below.

19. "Discreet" and "indiscreet" mean the same thing.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

20. The word "bloody" in British English can express frustration, surprise, or admiration.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

21. The phrase "thrill of the chase" originally comes from hunting.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

22. The idiom "let the cat out of the bag" was first recorded in the 19th century.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

23. In this scene, Sherlock apologises sincerely to John for faking his death.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

24. "Imminent" can be used for small, everyday events like dinner being ready.

Answer: _____

Correction (if false): _____

Part 7: Scene Analysis

Answer in complete sentences.

25. Sherlock says he was worried John would say something "indiscreet." What does this tell us about how Sherlock sees John?

26. John uses sarcasm several times in this scene. Why do you think he expresses his anger through sarcasm rather than shouting?

27. Sherlock says London faces an "imminent terrorist attack" just as John is furious with him. Why is the timing of this revelation clever writing?

Part 8: Creative Writing Challenge

Someone has just let the cat out of the bag about a surprise. Write the conversation that follows (6–8 lines). Maybe it's a surprise party, a secret relationship, or a job resignation. Use at least **FOUR** vocabulary words or phrases from this lesson.

Which words/phrases did you use? List them here:

Bonus: Discussion Questions

Think about these and be ready to share your ideas!

- Have you ever accidentally let the cat out of the bag? What happened?
- Do you agree that some people enjoy "the thrill of the chase" more than actually getting what they want? Can you think of an example from your own life?
- Sherlock is brilliant but completely lacks empathy. Do you think this makes him a good friend or a bad one?
- British English uses words like "bloody" and phrases like "large as life" that Americans don't use. Can you think of expressions in your own language that wouldn't translate well into English?