

Thinking Critically: *Recognizing Cultural References*

To get and keep the reader's attention, magazine and newspaper writers often use puns, idioms, proverbs, and other words and expressions that people in the same culture recognize. These are called *cultural references*. Recognizing and understanding these references is an important critical thinking skill.

An example is the title of the article that you just read: "Want to Learn a Language? Don't Make It a Mount Everest." It comes from a North American English idiom: "Don't make a mountain out of a molehill" (A molehill is a small pile of dirt). It means: "Don't turn a small or easy job into a difficult one."

6 Recognizing Idioms Below are some more idioms. How many do you know? Match the meaning with the idiom. Write the letters on the lines.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. ____ Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. | a. Don't let other people see your faults. |
| 2. ____ Don't make waves. | b. Don't criticize a gift or an opportunity. |
| 3. ____ Don't make a federal case out of it. | c. Don't talk about unrelated issues; get to the point. |
| 4. ____ Don't stick your neck out. | d. Don't make plans before you have all the necessary information or items. |
| 5. ____ Don't wash your dirty linen in public. | e. Don't bring up that topic. |
| 6. ____ Don't count your chickens before they hatch. | f. Don't exaggerate a situation. |
| 7. ____ Don't beat around the bush. | g. Don't interfere; don't cause problems. |
| 8. ____ Don't go there. | h. Don't take unnecessary chances. |

Freewriting means writing anything that comes to mind without worrying about grammar, spelling, and other writing conventions. It can help you become a more fluent writer.