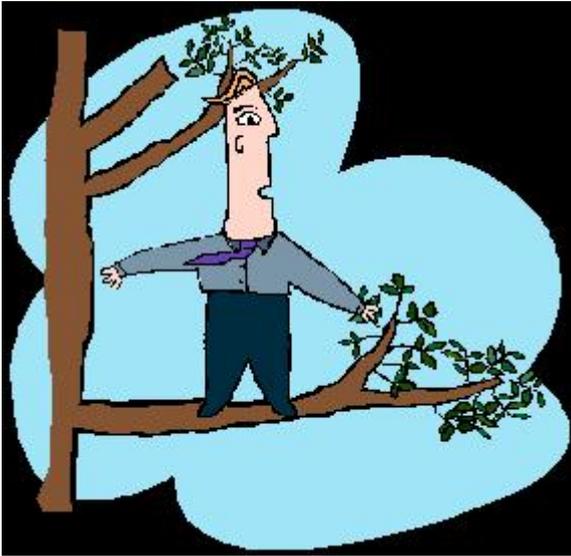


Out on a limb



It's a brand new year, which makes it the perfect time for an old feature to return. Old, of course, doesn't mean of little value. So, welcome back Out on a limb. The feature explaining the origins of common phrases, to the wonderment and delight of all.

No skin off my back



Ouchies!

Surprisingly, this phrase hasn't been around for too long. First used in the early twentieth century, its variations

include “no skin off my nose” and “no skin off my teeth.” Of course, “no skin off my back” is the most common version in America, and it comes from the age-old punishment of flogging.

A form of discipline often employed on ships in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, flogging was brutal. The condemned would suffer a fixed number of lashes with a whip, often made of wet leather straps fastened to a handle. Just a few strokes were sufficient to remove skin from a person’s back and leave permanent scars.

So, today, when we say that something is “no skin off my back,” we mean that doing it won’t harm or inconvenience us.

What’s the skinny



As much truth as I can

This is a shortened version of the skinny naked truth which comes from WW2. Skinny in this case meaning resembling skin and being redundant with naked. This phrase literally is asking for the naked, unobscured truth.

Alternatively, skinny is sometimes inside information. Hence, what’s the skinny literally asks what is the inside

information. This definition may derive from the skinny naked truth.

There is an unsupported theory around WW2 again, that the phrase stems from the fact that many orders were on onion skin thin paper. Thus, “what’s the skinny” referred to getting the straight information. This theory doesn’t seem to have even an onion skin level of support, though.

By the skin of my teeth



Even my teeth hurt

By the skin of one’s teeth means just barely, by a narrow margin, just in time. The phrase is in the book of Job in the Old Testament of the Bible. Job is a character in the Bible who undergoes an abundance of suffering due to a challenge that Satan has made to God.

Satan tries to break Job’s righteousness by bringing suffering upon him. Job laments his status through much of the book. It includes the phrase, “My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.”

What exactly the phrase “escaped with the skin of my teeth”

meant in Ancient Hebrew is unknown. Most assume that skin refers to the enamel, though this is only a guess.

Skin in the game



Skins vs. um...

The expression to have skin in the game means to have incurred monetary risk by being involved in achieving a goal. It's common in business, finance, gambling, and politics.

Despite its relatively recent usage as shown, its origin is still unclear.

The expression has been attributed to Warren Buffett since in Buffett's first fund he raised \$105,000 from 11 doctors, himself placing a token sum of \$100.00 as his "skin in the game". This has been discounted as the origin.

Another source that may have inspired its existence is Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, but still, there is no clear evidence of it.

In William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, the

antagonist, Shylock, stipulates that the protagonist, Antonio, must promise a pound of his own flesh as collateral, to be exacted by Shylock in the event that Antonio's friend Bassanio defaults on the loan to which Antonio is guarantor.

So, yeah, let's just go with no one really knows about that last one. And that's the skinny for Out on a limb.

Whether the feature (or its companion, Miss Communication) will make other appearances this year, well, time will tell. In any event, I'm sure it's no skin off your back.