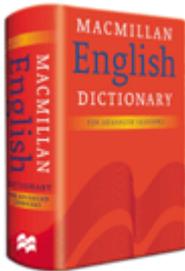


## RESPONSIBILITIES are like WEIGHTS

A metaphor and idiom lesson by Lindsay Clandfield  
Level: Intermediate and above



This is a vocabulary and idiom lesson for intermediate students and above. The aim is to highlight the metaphorical meanings of several words and expressions related to responsibility. The emphasis is on meaning, with activities to incorporate these expressions into use. This lesson was created using the metaphor reference in the **Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners**.

### Stage One

Tell students you are going to mime a sentence and that they must try to guess the exact words to the sentence. Mime the following: YOU ARE CARRYING A HEAVY LOAD. As students call out words, put the correct words on the board. It is quite likely that they will not be able to guess the last word, in which case write it on the board and explain it. Tell the class that in today's lesson they are going to be looking at expressions and idioms that relate to the idea of carrying.

### Stage Two

Distribute the first handout and tell students to do activity one in pairs. When they are finished, they can do activity two. Go through the answers as a class.

Answers:

- A) a forklift / offloading a heavy box
- B) carrying a heavy load / a heavy burden
- C) a saddle (on the back of the horse)
- D) a shoulder
- E) carrying a heavy load / a heavy burden
- F) bearing a cross

Ask students what word from the box means the same as to carry (answer: to bear). Explain that the word shoulder can also be used as a verb (to shoulder) and that it means the same as to carry.

### Stage Three

Direct students' attention to the Metaphor box, or read it to them yourself. Ask them to try to make some sample sentences using the words in the box to talk about responsibilities.

### Stage Four

Put students into groups of three. Write the different jobs on the board from exercise 4. Give the students the task and set a time limit of three minutes. Tell them that they must do this task in English, and to try to incorporate some of the expressions in 2. Circulate and monitor.

### Stage Five

Distribute the second worksheet and direct students' attention to activity 5. Tell them to underline the words or expressions that use the metaphor. Once students have finished, repeat the expressions and drill the pronunciation. Point out that the expression to *get saddled with something* uses the word saddle as a verb (in a passive construction).

Answers:

- "The teacher carries lots of responsibility, because she gives our children their education."
- "The banker doesn't shoulder that much responsibility, he or she just moves money around."
- "A politician? No way! Politicians offload their responsibilities to other people."
- "I think it would be a burden to work as a nurse. Too much responsibility for big and little things. Plus you get saddled with work like cleaning beds."

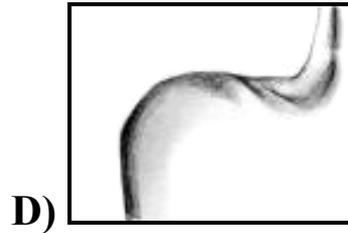
### Stage Six

Ask students to do activity 6 on their own. Check back the answers altogether as a class. Put the students in pairs to ask and answer the three questions of their choosing. Ask the same pairs to discuss the idioms in exercise 8. Conduct a whole class feedback session at the end.

Answers:

a) carry b) burden c) weigh d) off e) offload

# RESPONSIBILITIES are like WEIGHTS



1. Work with a partner. Describe one of the pictures, but don't say which picture it is. Your partner has to guess.

2. Match the words in the box to the pictures. Some of the words can go with more than one picture:

<p><b>a shoulder</b> <b>carrying a heavy load</b> <b>a saddle</b> <b>a heavy burden</b></p>	<p><b>a forklift</b> <b>bearing a cross</b> <b>offloading a box</b></p>
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What words mean the same as "to carry"?

3. Read the information in the metaphor box.

<p><b>Metaphor</b> Having responsibilities is like carrying something. Responsibilities that cause you problems and make you worried are like heavy loads.</p>
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4. Look at these jobs. Work with a partner. Put the jobs in order of most responsibility to least responsibility

<i>teacher</i>	<i>nurse</i>	<i>pilot</i>
<i>banker</i>	<i>doctor</i>	<i>police officer</i>
<i>firefighter</i>	<i>politician</i>	<i>school bus driver</i>

5. Read what some native speakers said about these jobs. Underline the expressions that use the metaphor.

*"The teacher carries lots of responsibility, because she gives our children their education."*

*"The banker doesn't shoulder that much responsibility, he or she just moves money around."*

*"A politician? No way! Politicians offload their responsibilities to other people."*

*"I think it would be a burden to work as a nurse. Too much responsibility for big and little things. Plus you get saddled with work like cleaning beds."*

6. Choose the correct word to complete the questions.

- a) Do you feel you (carry/burden) a lot of responsibilities at home?
- b) Are there any jobs you have to do which are a real (load/burden) to you?
- c) What problems (weigh/weight) on young people's minds these days?
- d) What would take a load (off/on) your mind?
- e) Do you find it difficult to (offload/offloading) work to other people?

7. Work with a partner. Choose three of the questions in 6 and ask them to your partner.

8. Read the idiom box and answer the questions.

### Idiom

Can you explain the underlined idioms in your own words?

"The house was like a millstone around her neck."

"We all have crosses to bear."

Are there any similar expressions in your language?

Does this metaphor for responsibilities exist in your language?