

A question from Amadu Sidi in Niger:

What is the meaning of 'to be born with a silver spoon in the mouth'?

Martin Parrott answers:

It means to be born with lots of advantages that other people don't have, and to be born, really, into a very rich family. And the origin of this expression is from silver being such a precious metal, and of course babies need to be fed with spoons. And we often give spoons to babies as a present, or we give it to the parents of babies as a present – special spoons for feeding babies and I suppose some children would have been given silver spoons, which were a very precious metal.

It means, to have lots of advantages. I don't think anybody would ever say 'I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth'. It is sometimes used a little bit enviously of somebody when they have had an easy life because they were born with those advantages.

Are there other similar expressions?

Similar? No I think that's the expression that we use and I think that if we said anything else, it wouldn't be an expression – it would be saying something original.

There are related expressions: I mean we talk about people who have 'blue blood', which is a little bit different, because nobody has blue blood, but if we use the expression 'to have blue blood', we're referring not only to somebody having all these advantages, but to being royal. They belong to the family of the kings or queens. I think it was believed at one time that kings and queens were almost a different species from the rest of human beings and people thought if they cut themselves and blood came out, the blood that came out would be blue.

Jammy

We have a very colloquial adjective that we use. We describe people as being jammy. It's not quite the same thing. If you're jammy, you're really, really lucky. And this is a word that I don't think you'd write, but it's a word that we use between friends to describe people who're just very, very lucky.