

IDIOM OF THE WEEK:

canary in a (the) coal mine



A E American English at State

MEANING:

someone/something that is an early warning of danger

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EXAMPLES:

- We have a new strict teacher, and many of us want to ask for extra help. We don't know how she will react, so we sent Jim to ask. He's like a canary in a coal mine.
 - The melting glacier is a canary in the coal mine for global warming.
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HISTORY:

Coal miners used to take canaries into coal mines with them. Canaries were sensitive to dangerous gases in the mines. If the canary died, the miners knew there were dangerous gases and would leave the mine.

