

Summary

Rob thinks there's an English expression that applies to him but he's in for a surprise when he finds that it also has a negative meaning. Feifei is on hand to set him straight. Discover the true meaning of 'a bright spark' in this episode of The English We Speak.

Transcript

Feifei

Hello, this The English We Speak. I'm Feifei.

Rob

And hello, I'm Rob.

Feifei

Hey, Rob. You know we've got a 'bright spark' in our office?

Rob

A bright spark? Oh yes – by that you mean someone intelligent...

Feifei

Well...

Rob

Someone full of energy...

Feifei

I didn't exactly...

Rob

Someone with clever ideas. Feifei, there's no need to waste everyone's time. Just say my name! Rob is the bright spark in the office.

Feifei

Erm... Rob, that is just one definition of 'a bright spark'. A bright spark can describe someone who is clever, intelligent with lots of energy. But this isn't the definition that applies to you Rob!

Rob

So come on, Feifei. When else would you describe someone as 'a bright spark'?

Feifei

Well, it can be used sarcastically and humorously to describe someone who thinks they are intelligent but actually does something stupid. A bit like this...

Examples

Which bright spark suggested we go for a walk on the wettest day of the year?!

Come on, own up – who's the bright spark who turned the power off and caused everything in the freezer to melt?

Are you the bright spark who told the other team our game plan? I think you owe us an apology.

Feifei

This is The English We Speak from BBC Learning English. And we've discovered that 'a bright spark' can either be a very smart person or someone who has done something stupid. So I'm sorry to say, Rob, you are the second kind of bright spark!

Rob

Oh really. Why is that?

Feifei

You left the window open last night and this morning I found all my documents and scripts blown all over the floor.

Rob

Are you sure? A bright spark like me would never do something like that.

Feifei

Rob, it's exactly what a bright spark like you might do – and it means I've lost the last page of this script.

Rob

Oh really! I think I can remember what it said. Something like - 'Sorry, Rob. You are wise and clever and the brightest spark I have ever known'.

Feifei

I don't think so, Rob. Which bright spark would write something as cringey as that?

Rob

Err... Time to go I think.

Feifei

Good idea. Bye.

Rob

Bye.