

The Illustrated Book of Sayings. Curious Expressions from Around the World

Ella Frances Sanders

We need proverbs because they reflect who we are

From old sayings like 'no pain, no gain' to sports wisdom like 'the best offence is a good defence', there appears to be a proverb for everything and for very

good reason. Proverbs, sayings and idioms touch on all aspects of life and provide a link to truths that go beyond one person or any single moment in time.

Adapted from Mark Peters, <https://www.bbc.com>, November 2016

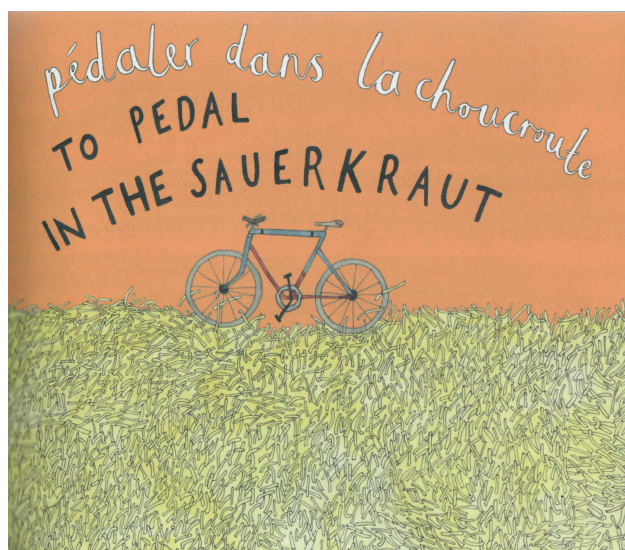
The writer and illustrator Ella Frances Sanders collected fifty-two proverbs and sayings from various countries around the world, partly because she wanted to illustrate the strangest sayings she's heard in her life and partly because proverbs and sayings are part of each and every culture. As Fred Shapiro, editor of *The Yale Book of Quotations*, once said, 'Proverbs show who we are'. Moreover, both Shapiro and Sanders focus on the timelessness of proverbs. It is comforting because it means that we have the possibility to rely on a common background.



■ WARM UP

- 1 What do we mean by 'a saying'?
- 2 Can you think of a common saying in Italian or in your mother tongue? Explain its meaning to the class.

■ READ THE TEXT





■ LET'S WORK ON IT

3 Look at some of the pages from *The Illustrated Book of Sayings* and answer the questions.

- 1 What is 'sauerkraut'? What do you think pedalling in the 'sauerkraut' would be like?
- 2 What is the meaning of the first saying?
- 3 Why do monkeys fall from trees? What is the link with ordinary life?
- 4 What is the meaning of the third saying? Can you find an equivalent in your language?
- 5 What does 'the beard' stand for in the last saying?

■ BEYOND THE WORDS

4 Match the following words with the correct definition (1-3) and example (a-c).

proverb • idiom • adage

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 A group of words established by usage and having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words. | a All good things must come to an end. |
| 2 A brief popular epigram or maxim. | b Adversity and loss make a man wise. |
| 3 A saying often in metaphorical form that typically embodies a common observation. | c To cost an arm and a leg. |

5 Test your knowledge of English proverbs, sayings, idioms and adages. What is the meaning of the following phrases?

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 The English test was a piece of cake.
a <input type="checkbox"/> The English test was easy.
b <input type="checkbox"/> The English test was difficult.
c <input type="checkbox"/> The English test was sweet. | 3 Opportunity did not knock until I built a door.
a <input type="checkbox"/> Create the right opportunity instead of just waiting for it to come.
b <input type="checkbox"/> Learn how to build things and you'll be safe and sound all your life.
c <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity only comes once. |
| 2 A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.
a <input type="checkbox"/> Plan your holidays in advance.
b <input type="checkbox"/> You must begin something if you hope to finish it.
c <input type="checkbox"/> Good times don't last forever. | 4 Among the blind the one-eyed man is king.
a <input type="checkbox"/> The king is always more powerful than his citizens.
b <input type="checkbox"/> An incapable person can gain powerful position if others are even more incapable.
c <input type="checkbox"/> Being blind is not a problem if you can adapt. |