

英汉对照·英美经典文学丛书

英语成语集锦

赵清顺 编著

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A Collection Of Choice English Idioms

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(典故·成语·谚语)

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内 容 提 要

《英语成语集锦》以英汉对照的形式,汇编了典故、成语和谚语。该书有详文注释、例句及译文,内容丰富,选材有特点。

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前 言

英语成语历史悠久、内容丰富、范围广泛,它是英语词汇宝库中最有价值的、最重要的部分。英语成语包括谚语和典故。

和汉语成语不同,英语成语可以是一个单词,也可以是一个词组,还可以是一个句子。它是一种习惯用法,具有一个特殊的意思。即使你知道这个英语成语中每一个单词的意思,你也很难猜出这个成语的含义。例如: to have forty winks 不是眨四十下眼睛,而是“打个盹儿”; to rain cats and dogs 是“下大雨”; Look out! 不是看外面,而是“当心!”; John Hancock 的意思是亲笔签名。因此,英语成语也是学习英语中最难掌握的一部分。

和汉语相同的是,许多英语成语来自于名著、神话和传说,也来自各行各业和普通人的生活。由于说英语的人多信奉基督教,因此有许多成语来自圣经和圣经故事。可以说,几乎每一个成语背后都有一个有趣的故事。学习这些成语可以帮助你了解英国的历史、文化、风俗和习惯。

典故是成语的一个重要部分。许多英语典故来自希腊和罗马神话故事,也有不少来自寓言故事。为了帮助读者学习英语,特精选了一些脍炙人口的英语典故并配上汉语译文放在本书的第一部分,供大家学习欣赏。

谚语也是英语成语的一个重要部分,它语言简洁、内容丰

富。寥寥数语，道出一个真理，反映一个事实。它是人类数千年智慧的结晶，是广大民众喜闻乐见的言语形式。

本书收集了典故 65 个、成语 553 条和谚语 663 条，可以说是英语成语的精华部分。每个成语都介绍了出处、原来的意思和现在的意思以及十分有趣的背景知识。可以这么说，当你翻开了这本书时，展现在你面前的是一个反映英、美的历史、文化、各个时期风土人情的多彩画面。在你学习语言的同时，又帮你学到了许许多多别的知识。

为了帮助读者学习和使用这些成语，除了对有些生僻的词汇加上汉语注解外，还给了例句和译文。为了便于识别，每个谚语后面都标明是英语谚语，这样，没有标明的就是英语成语了。所有成语和谚语都以字母顺序排列，便于查找。冠词 a, an 和 the 不算在内。

本书还收集了少数至理名言和格言，供大家学习。

由于英语和汉语的差异很大，许多成语和谚语的翻译很难把握，难免有不妥之处，敬请广大读者批评指正。

编者

1998 年 6 月于南湖

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Part One 第一部分
Allusions (典故)

Achilles heel

致命弱点；惟一弱点

The Greek poet Homer has given us many phrases. A famous one is “Achilles heel”, his weak spot.

Achilles, one of the Greek heroes in the *Iliad*, another epic attributed to Homer, was taken by his mother when he was a child and dipped in the River Styx to make him invulnerable. The water washed every part of his body except the heel in his mother's hand.

In the Trojan War, none of the Trojan weapons was able to hurt Achilles. The god Apollo, however, knew of Achilles weak spot and told Paris about it. Paris then shot an arrow at Achilles' heel and killed him.

希腊诗人荷马给我们留下了很多成语，其中著名的一个就是“阿契里斯的脚后跟”。每个人都有自己的“阿契里斯的脚后跟”，即他的弱点。

此成语出自荷马史诗《伊里亚特》。特洛伊战争中的大英雄阿契里斯（Achilles）出生后，母亲为了让他刀枪不入，用手提着他的脚后跟在神河（Styx）中浸洗，结果他的脚踵（zhǒng）没有受到洗礼，脚踵是他身上唯一的致命弱点。

在特洛伊战争中，特洛伊人的任何武器都伤害不了阿契里斯。然而太阳神阿波罗知道阿契里斯的弱点并告诉了帕里斯。帕里斯对准阿契里斯的脚后跟射了一箭，把他杀死了。

apple-pie order

有条不紊

It is said that the housewives of New England loved order, everything in the right place. They cut their apples in even slices and filed their pies with them in a well-organized way, row upon row. This, perhaps, explains why it is generally believed that “apple-pie order ” came out of New England.

这是一条美国成语。据说新英格兰的家庭妇女喜欢整齐，什么东西该放在哪儿就放在哪儿。她们做苹果饼时，总是把苹果片切得很均匀，一排一排，井井有条地放进饼里。这也许解释了此成语原是出自新英格兰的。

apple of discord

不和之源

This idiom comes from Greek mythology.

All the gods and goddess sat around the table to celebrate the marriage of Thetis and Peleus. Discord, who was the troublemaker, threw a golden apple on the table, to be given as a prize to the most beautiful goddess. It was not an east decision to make. How could one choose among Juno, Minerva and Venus? So it was left to Paris to decide. He chose Venus. Juno and Minerva were furious and threatened to settle matters with him. And this brought on the long Trojan War.

此成语出自希腊神话。

男女众神围坐在桌旁庆贺忒提丝和希腊国王的婚礼。不和

之神制造混乱,把一个金苹果扔在桌子上,说是要奖给最美丽的女神。这是件难办的事。如何在天帝之妻朱诺,智慧女神密涅瓦与爱和美的女神维纳斯之间作出选择呢?于是这件事交给了特洛伊的王子帕里斯。帕里斯选中了维纳斯。朱诺和密涅瓦恼羞成怒,威胁要和他算帐。这就导致了旷日持久的特洛伊战争。

就这样,apple of discord 就成了“祸根”。

an ass in a lion's skin

色厉内荏

An ass, having put on a lion's skin, roamed about in the forest, and amused himself by frightening all the foolish animals he met with in his wanderings. At last meeting a fox, he tried to frighten him also, but the fox no sooner heard the sound of his voice, than he explained, "I might possibly have been frightened myself, if I had not heard your bray."

直译: 披着狮皮的驴子。

此成语出自《伍德寓言》。一头驴子披了一张狮子皮在森林中游逛,别的动物见了他都赶快跑开,他很得意。一天,他碰见一只狐狸,想吓唬他一下,就朝狐狸大叫一声,狐狸一听,才知道是头驴,于是就对他说道:“要不是我听见你的叫声,我也可能被你吓一跳呢。”

Augean stables

肮脏腐败的地方

According to Greek mythology, Augeus, King of Elis in Greece, had a stable occupied by three thousand oxen, which

had not been cleaned for thirty years. Hercules cleaned it in one day by turning two rivers through it. Hence to cleanse the Augeus stables is to correct a great abuse, or to remove a nuisance or scandal which seemed irremovable.

希腊神话中说,伊利斯的国王奥格阿斯有一个养有 3 000 头牛的牛厩,30 年没有打扫。海格力斯让两条河改变方向流经牛厩,一天就把它清扫干净了。因此,清除奥格阿斯的牛厩就是清除看似无法除掉的腐败和丑恶的东西。

bell the cat

给猫系铃;为大家冒险

A family of mice could get no food because of its fear of a cat. The mice decided that the best thing to do would be to tie a bell around the cat's neck. That would tell them where the cat was. All agreed that it was a splendid idea, until one wise mouse stepped up and asked, "Who will bell the cat?"

此成语出自英国著名寓言故事。一窝老鼠由于害怕一只猫而不该外出觅食,老鼠家族开会如何对付那只猫。大家一致认为最好的办法就是在猫的脖子上系个铃铛,这样一来,老鼠听见铃响就知道猫在哪里。所有老鼠都认为这是一个绝妙的主意,可是谁敢去呢?

between Scylla and Charybdis

进退维谷;左右为难

In the straits of Messina, between Italy and Sicily, there is a rock on one side anciently called Scylla, and on the other a

dangerous whirlpool called Charybdis. Sailors who gave Scylla a wide berth ran the risk of being drawn into Charybdis and destroyed: in avoiding Scylla, they were in danger of falling into Charybdis. When a dilemma of this kind occurs, one might say, "Take care that in avoiding Scylla, you do not fall into Charybdis."

在意大利和西西里之间的 Messina 海峡,有一个巨大的岩石,古时候叫做 Scylla。它的对面是 Charybdis 大漩涡。水手们通过此处,既要当心撞上岩石,又要担心卷入漩涡,真是进退两难。相同的说法还有 between the devil and the deep sea。

bite the bullet

咬紧牙关

As we all know, people in great pain sometimes tighten their fists, or clench their teeth, or bite down hard on a finger. It seems to ease their pain. Years ago, on the battlefield, one did not find pain-killing drugs. And it is said that during emergency operation, soldiers would bite a bullet, to ease their suffering.

Now it means to do something quickly with no further delay, no matter how painful the action may be.

大家知道,人在疼痛时有时会攥紧拳头,有时会咬紧牙关,或者咬住手指头,似乎这样可以减轻疼痛。早先,在战场上,还没有麻药的时候,据说在进行手术时,战士们往往咬住子弹来忍痛。

现在,它的意思是快速地,毫不犹豫地做某种事情,不管这

种行动多么痛苦。

Blitz

闪电战

The word “blitz” means an attack or campaign. At the beginning of World War II, the powerful German army of Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler moved with great speed and skill through Western Europe. The Germans captured Poland, Belgium, France and other countries in a very short time.

Hitler described his aggressive plan with the German word “blitzkrieg”. Blitzkrieg means war that is fought as quickly as lightning strikes.

Military experts around the world soon began to use the word blitzkrieg to describe any fast moving, powerful attack by strong forces.

Political leaders and business companies also used the word “blitz” in their campaign and advertising.

Adolf Hitler failed with his blitzkrieg to defeat the Western alliance. But the word itself has become part of the English language.

“闪电战”指一次攻击或一次战役。

在第二次世界大战初期，强大的德国在纳粹头子阿道夫·希特勒的统帅下，以迅雷不及掩耳之势横扫西欧。德国人在很短的时间里就占领了波兰、比利时、法国和其它一些国家。

希特勒在形容他的侵略计划时，用了一个德国单词，意思是像闪电一样地进行战争。不久，全世界的军事专家也开始使用这

个词儿,来描述强大军队发起的任何迅猛进攻。

政治领袖和公司也把“闪电战”用于竞选和广告。

阿道夫·希特勒没有用“闪电战”击败西方同盟国,但这个单词却被英语吸收了。

borrowed plumes

借来的衣裳

Jupiter determined, it is said, to create a sovereign over the birds; and made proclamation that on a certain day they should all present themselves before him, when he would himself choose the most beautiful among them to be king. The jackdaw, knowing his own ugliness, searched through the woods and fields, and collected the feathers which had fallen from the wings of his companions, and stuck them in all parts of his body, hoping thereby to make himself the most beautiful of all. When the appointed day arrived, and the birds had assembled before Jupiter,^① the jackdaw also made his appearance in his many-feathered finery. On Jupiter proposing to make him king, on account of the beauty of the plumage, the birds indignantly protested, and each plucking from him his own feathers, the jackdaw was again nothing but a jackdaw.

此成语出自《伊索寓言》。天神朱皮特决定立一个君主,来统治鸟类。于是出了一个公告,规定某天所有的鸟都得到他的面前来,由他在鸟类中选择最美的一只为众禽之王,寒鸦自知很丑,

① 注:Jupiter 是罗马神话中的主神,在希腊神话中叫 Zeus

找遍了森林和田野,收集到许多他的同伴身上掉下来的羽毛,满满地插在自己身上,希望有了这身羽毛,能成为鸟类中最美的一只。到了规定的那一天,众鸟都聚集在朱皮特的面前。寒鸦也穿着杂羽凑成的艳羽出现了。朱皮特见他的羽毛很美,便打算立寒鸦为王。别的鸟很愤怒地抗议,并从寒鸦的身上收回了自己的羽毛。于是,寒鸦又成了黑灰色。

break the ice

砸破坚冰

This phrase is river-born. Winter often leaves a small river with so much solid ice that some boats can not get through. The crews of such boats in times past chopped through the ice with hand axes to get the boat moving. Later, the thick ice was broken up by power machines. And that is how the expression, "to break the ice", got started. It meant to make your first move, to do something for the first time; it was not possible until the ice was broken.

这个用语与河流有关。冬天,小河上常结着厚厚的一层冰,使一些船无法行驶。过去,船上的水手用手斧破冰,给船开出一条水路。后来改用动力机器将厚厚的冰层砸破。于是就产生了砸破坚冰这个说法。它的意思是迈出第一步,或初次做某事,要不砸破坚冰,就会一事无成。

bury the hatchet

讲和,休战

To bury the hatchet is to make peace. The hatchet was a

weapon used by American Indians. When tribes of these people who had been at war, made peace, it was a custom among them that their leaders should sit down together and all smoke in turn from the same pipe, called the 'pipe of peace'. They then used to bury their hatchets and other weapons of the war.

此成语源于印地安人讲和的风俗，意思是讲和。战斧是印地安人打仗用的武器。当交战的印地安人要讲和时，双方的头领们就坐下来轮流用一个烟袋抽烟，这个烟袋被叫做“和平的烟袋”。然后就把他们的战斧和别的作战武器一块埋掉。

a catch-22 situation

无法摆脱的困境

A catch-22 situation is an impossible situation; one in which the solution or success depends on mutually dependent factors: A depends on B; B in turn, is dependent on A; so it is an interlocking situation in which there is no way out; the term comes from a postwar American novel titled Catch-22 by Joseph Heller.

这个成语出自战后美国作家约瑟夫·海勒的小说《第二十二条军规》。讲的是一种不可能的情景：一个问题的解决或成功都依赖于其他相关的因素；A 依靠 B，B 又反过来依靠 A。因此它是一种各种因素相互依存的连锁性绝境。