

Interesting

Origin

Stories of

English

# Idioms

《疯狂英语》编辑部制作

## 趣味英语 成语故事

最常用英语成语  
最地道英语表达  
最经典英语故事

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江西文化音像出版社

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# 前言

每当我们提起“草木皆兵”、“滥竽充数”、“逼上梁山”等成语时，我们很容易想起与它们相关的故事，很多汉语成语的意思我们并不是在学校学到的，但却记得很牢，其原因正是这些成语背后那些我们从小就耳熟能详的典故。英语成语也一样，许多看起来似是而非，让人无所适从的英语成语背后都有一段饶有趣味的故事，当你知道这些故事后，你会发现，原来这些看似古怪的成语并不难理解。

每一个成语故事，就是一种生活；每一个成语故事，就是一段历史；每一个成语故事，就是文化的一个侧面。同时，成语故事更是学习地道英语，提高英语口语表达能力的一个捷径。

本书精选了一些常用英语成语背后的来源典故。通过讲述英语成语典故，我们希望帮助英语学习者从有趣生动的阅读中学会常用的英语成语，使读者们也可以通过这些典故了解英语国家的历史文化。

本书按成语故事及典故的来源分为神话传说、童话寓言、圣经故事、文学作品和真人真事五章，每个成语包括三个部分，全部配有磁带：

1. 成语释义：用中英文对成语进行解释。
2. 成语故事：用浅显生动的语言讲述成语的来源故事，并配汉语翻译。
3. 例句：采用实用性强的例句帮助说明成语的含义，加深理解。

书末附有成语索引，方便读者查阅。

**《疯狂英语》编辑部**

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### ACHILLES' HEEL

#### 阿喀琉斯的脚跟



#### 解释

The one and only weakness, but a fatal one; the weakest point.

唯一的致命弱点；最大的弱点



#### 起源

原文

The Greek poet Homer has given us many idiom phrases. A famous one is “Achilles heel.” In Homer’s *Iliad*, Achilles was a central figure and Greek hero in the Trojan War. When he was an infant, Thetis, his mother, held him by the heel and dipped him into the River Styx to make him immortal, deathless like a god. Thetis held Achilles so tightly that his heel remained dry and became the only vulnerable spot on his body. 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’ vulnerable heel and killed him.



## 例句

Knowing that Joe has a bad knee, the other players took advantage of his **Achilles' heel** by forcing him to take jump shots.

对方队员知道乔的膝部不利索，就乘机利用他的这一致命之处，迫使他跳投。

译文

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“阿喀琉斯的脚跟”。在荷马史诗《伊利亚特》里，阿喀琉斯是一个重要的人物，同时还是希腊在特洛伊战争中的英雄。在阿喀琉斯还是婴儿时，他的母亲忒提斯为了让儿子能象神祇一样永生不死，她捏住他的脚跟，把他在冥河里浸了一下。但是阿喀琉斯的脚后跟被她紧紧抓住，因而那一部分没有浸湿，于是脚后跟成了阿喀琉斯浑身上下唯一会受伤的部位。在特洛伊战争中，特洛伊人的所有武器都不能对阿喀琉斯造成伤害。然而，阿波罗神知道阿喀琉斯的弱点，并告诉了帕里斯。后来，帕里斯对准阿喀琉斯的脚后跟射了一支箭，把他杀死了。





# APPLE OF DISCORD

## 不和的苹果



### 解释

The cause of a dispute, argument or rivalry

争端起因；不和之源



### 起源

原文

This is another idiom from the Greek mythology. At the marriage of Thetis and Peleus, all the gods and goddesses were invited with the exception of Eris, or the goddess of Discord. <sup>1)</sup>**Enraged** at her exclusion, the goddess threw a golden apple among the guests, with the inscription, “for the fairest.” Juno, Venus, and Minerva all claimed the apple. Paris, the beautiful shepherd in Mount Ida, was appointed as referee. Each of the three goddesses, in an attempt to <sup>2)</sup>**bias** his decision in her favor, promised him power, glory and beautiful women. Paris gave judgement in favor of Venus and gave her the golden apple. This brought upon him the <sup>3)</sup>**vengeance** of Juno and Minerva, who are said to have caused the fall of Troy.



### 例句

The use of the new car was an **apple of discord** between Joe and his wife.

该由谁来用这辆新车是乔和妻子争吵的原因。

译文

这又是一个来自希腊神话的成语。珀琉斯和忒提斯举行婚礼时，邀请了所有的神祇，只有不和女神厄里斯未在被邀者之列。这位女神对自己被排斥一事大为恼火，她往婚宴上的宾客扔了一个金苹果，上面刻有“献给最美丽的女神”的字样。朱诺、维纳斯和密涅瓦都认为自己该得到这个金苹果。她们指定伊得山的美男子，牧羊人帕里斯作裁判。三位女神都想影响帕里斯的决定，她们分别承诺给他权力、荣耀和美女，希望他作出对自己有利的裁定。最终，帕里斯看中了维纳斯，把金苹果给了她。帕里斯为此遭到了朱诺和密涅瓦的报复，据说，特洛伊的灭亡也由此而起。

注释：1) enraged: a. 愤怒的

2) bias: v. 使有偏见；影响……以致产生偏差

3) vengeance: n. 报复



# BABE IN THE WOODS

## 林中孩子



### 解 释

A person who is inexperienced or innocent in certain things; a naive, trusting person

缺乏经验的人；天真幼稚的人；易上当受骗的人；不谙世故者



### 起 源

原文

This idiom comes from a 16th century English ballad *The Children in the Wood*. The story tells how a rich master of Wayland Hall, Norfolk, left his little son and daughter in the care of his wife's brother; both were to have money, but if the children died first the uncle was to receive the inheritance. Twelve months later, the greedy uncle hired two men to kill the children so that he could inherit their money. One of the men took pity on the children and left them in the woods rather than kill them. They did not survive and a robin redbreast covered them over with leaves. The wicked uncle got all the money. But soon after that, his sons died, his barns were burned down, his cattle died and he finally perished.



### 例句

They are just **babes in the woods** in business matters, so we can't blame them too much for their mistakes.

他们在生意上还缺乏经验，因此，我们不能过多地责怪他们犯的错误。

译文

这个成语源出英国十六世纪民间故事《林中孩子》。传说诺福克郡威兰庄园主颇为富有，他临终前把自己的一双儿女交给妻舅照顾。这两个孩子将会继承他的遗产。但如果两个孩子都死于他们的舅舅之前，舅舅将继承全部遗产。一年后，贪婪的舅舅为了得到遗产，雇用了两个歹徒，要他们杀掉两个孩子。其中一个歹徒于心不忍，没有杀两个孩子，而是把他们留在树林里后离去。两个孩子没能活下来，一只知更鸟用树叶掩埋了他们的尸体。那个歹毒的舅舅得到了所有的遗产。但在不久以后，他的儿子死了，他的粮仓毁于火灾，他的牲畜相继死去，他自己也死了。



# CROSS THE RUBICON

## 跨过卢比肯河



### 解释

To take an irrevocable step; to cross the point of no return; to commit one to a given course of action  
采取不可逆转的行动；破釜沉舟；果断行事



### 起源

原文

Rubicon was a small stream that flowed into the Adriatic and in Roman times marked the boundary between Cisalpine Gaul and ancient Italy. Pompey, Julius Caesar's political enemy, feared that Caesar was getting too powerful and influential. He conspired with the Senate to dismiss Caesar from his post and forbade him to cross the Rubicon. In 49 B.C., after some hesitation, Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon to march against Pompey in defiance of the Senate's orders. It was reported that he ordered his army to burn all the ships and exclaimed, "The die is cast," thus committing himself to conquer or to perish. This act boosted the morale of his men enormously. And finally his troops crushed Pompey's army and took over Rome. Julius Caesar was given a <sup>1)</sup>**mandate** by the people to rule as dictator for life.



### 例句

Once the matter is taken up to the court, both the employer and the employees **have crossed the Rubicon**. It is hard to predict how things are going to turn out.

这事一旦交到法庭手里，那劳资双方都没有后退的余地，很难说最后会有什么结果。

### 译文

在古罗马时期，卢比肯河是一条流入亚得里亚海的小河，也是高卢与古意大利的界河。庞培是裘利斯·凯撒的政敌，他担心凯撒的权势和影响日益增长。于是，庞培与元老院密谋撤销凯撒的职务，并禁止他跨过卢比肯河。在经过一段时间的犹豫后，凯撒在公元前49年，违反元老院的命令，率大军渡过卢比肯河。据说，他在大军渡河后，下令烧掉所有的战船，说：“骰子已经掷出去了。”以示背水一战的必胜信心。此举使其军队士气大振，最终战胜了庞培的军队，夺取了罗马。裘利斯·凯撒随后被人民拥戴为终生独裁者。

注释：1) mandate: v. 支持



# HALCYON DAYS

## 翠鸟时光



### 解释

Days of tranquility or peace; calm season; quiet, a happy period

和平或安静的日子；平静的季节；平静幸福的时期



### 起源

原文

This term comes from the ancient Greek mythology, the story of Halcyon and Ceyx. Ceyx was the king of Thessaly and Halcyon was his Queen. In the days after Ceyx sailed off to Ionia, Halcyon went everyday to the temple to pray for his safe return and stood on the seashore, searching the horizon looking for the first hint of Ceyx's return. Ceyx died in a sea storm on his way home. When Halcyon heard the bad news, she was overcome with grief and threw herself into the sea. The gods who had been watching were touched by her sincerity and turned both Halcyon and Ceyx into sea birds that would live, love and raise their families on the water. In the seven days before and the seven days after the shortest day of the <sup>1)</sup>winter solstice, it was believed by the ancients that the sea is always windless and calm because the Halcyon was supposed to build its nest on the sea and breed during this period.



### 例句

Those were the **halcyon days** of Athens when she produced her finest poetry and drama, architecture and sculpture.

那是雅典的太平盛世。雅典最优秀的诗歌、戏剧、建筑和雕刻均产生于这一时期。

译文

这则成语源自古希腊神话中海尔赛妮与刻宇克斯的故事。刻宇克斯是色萨利的国王，海尔赛妮是他的王后。在刻宇克斯出海前往伊奥尼亚的日子里，海尔赛妮每天都到庙宇祈祷，盼望丈夫安全归来。她还每天守候在海边，寻找着刻宇克斯的踪影。刻宇克斯在回家的路上遭遇风暴，不幸遇难。当海尔赛妮听到这个消息后，她悲痛欲绝，投海自尽。一直在观望的众神为俩人的真挚情感所感动。于是，众神把海尔赛妮和刻宇克斯双双变成翠鸟，让他们从此在海上生活、相亲相爱，并建立家庭。古人相信，冬至的前后七天这段时期，由于这正是翠鸟筑巢产卵的时候，大海总是风平浪静的。

注 释：1) winter solstice: 冬至





# HANG BY A THREAD

## 用一根细线悬挂



### 解释

To be in an uncertain or dangerous or unsafe position;  
to depend on something very small to save you

处于十分不确定或十分危险的境地；千钧一发；岌岌可危



### 起源

原文

There's a myth that tells of a king in the 5th century B.C. who grew tired of being told how wonderful he was by a flatterer named Damocles. The king threw a magnificent banquet for Damocles, who was having a grand time until he looked at the ceiling. He was shocked to see a large sharp sword hanging by a single, thin thread, and pointing straight down at his head! He did not dare to move and the banquet was a tantalizing torment to him. He quickly learned his lesson: power and happiness are not secure, and usually depend on the will or favor of someone else.