

VOA

Words and Idioms

单词与习语趣谈



编著 Dick McCarthy
韦妮
策划 陈光



上海外语教育出版社

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出版说明

《单词与习语趣谈》是一本介绍英语习语的书。习语作为一种约定俗成、简洁有效的语言形式在语言交流中运用十分广泛。我们在阅读英语原版读物或同英语国家人士交流的时候,会碰到各种各样的英语习语。一般在不了解习语来源时,很难从字面上理解其真正的含义。因此,习语成为广大英语学习者阅读和交流的一大障碍。我们出版此书的目的正是希望能够帮助读者扫除这一障碍,正确理解并学会运用地道的英语习语。

本书根据 VOA 的一档节目“Words & Idioms”改编。作者 Dick McCarthy 和韦妮都长期在 VOA 从事广播工作,对中、英文研究有颇深的造诣。

全书共收 103 篇,每一篇都由一个主干词语或就某一内容引申出数个习语,逐个介绍其出典,解释其含义,并附有生动的实例加以说明。

《单词与习语趣谈》主要适合高中生、大学生或同等水平的英语学习者阅读。

本书录音磁带由上海外语音像出版社出版。

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1

VOA Words and Idioms

Life in the fast lane

Go nowhere fast

本 讲学两个以 fast 这个词为主的习惯用语。第一个习惯用语是：**life in the fast lane**。大家都知道 fast 这个词的意思是“快”，那么 lane 这个词是什么意思呢？一定有不少人会说这个词解释为“小路”、“巷子”。对，但是 fast lane 的意思却是“公路上的快车道”。上过高速公路的人都知道最左边的那条车道是快车道，在这条车道上行驶你能超过别的车道上的车辆而遥遥领先，但是你也必须一刻不停地高速前进，否则后面的千军万马就会撞上你。那么 life in the fast lane 是什么意思呢？请看下面这个例子，这段话说的是一个叫 Tom 的年轻人：

Tom is a hotel manager. He works 60 hours a week, but he's always flying to Hong Kong, Tokyo or New York and enjoys life in the fast lane.

一定有不少人已经明白 fast lane 是个比喻，用在这儿并不就指快车道，而是指“紧张忙碌而快节奏的生活方式”。

有些人似乎生来就适应这种快节奏的生活，他们不在乎

繁忙的工作和巨大的压力, Tom 就是这样一个小伙子。但是也有些人却觉得这样的生活尽管充满刺激也能赚大钱, 却也令人精疲力竭, 再看有关 Bill 的一个例子:

Bill used to enjoy life in the fast lane in New York, but his family didn't. Now he's happier living a quiet life in a small town with his wife and two kids.

Bill 原来喜欢纽约那种快速紧张的大都市生活, 但是他家人却受不了了。现在他跟太太还有两个孩子在小城里过着安静、舒适的生活。和 *life in the fast lane* 这个习惯用语意思完全一样的另外一个说法是: *life on a fast track*。fast track 原意也是“快车道”, 当然它也可以用来比喻快速紧张的生活。比方说美国前总统尼克松曾经这样评论纽约市:

"It's a place where you can't slow down — a fast track."

他说: “在纽约那样的地方你可不能松懈, 这是一个马不停蹄的地方。”我想各位不论是不是住在大城市, 都想象得出纽约市那种简直没有喘息余地的生活节奏。

这一讲的第二个习惯用语是: **go nowhere fast**。

nowhere 这个词是由 no 和 where 两个词组成的, 所以 go nowhere 意思当然是“哪儿都不去”。而 fast 这个词的意思是“快”, 那么整个短语似乎是前后矛盾的。哪儿都不去又怎么会快呢? 请看下面的一个例子, 这段话是一位解不出几何题的人说的:

I've been working on this problem all evening and I'm going nowhere fast! Could you help me out? Because I just don't know how to do it.

显然 go nowhere fast 意思是“费了九牛二虎之力去做一件事,却毫无进展”。刚才那个人说:“我一晚上都在绞尽脑汁地解那道几何题,却毫无进展,你帮帮我好吗?因为我实在不知道怎么解这道题。”

再看一个例子,这是在评论一部小说里的人物,他们都背上了家庭历史的包袱。句中有几个生词和词组:burden 解释为“重担”;family history 解释为“家史”。

Those people in the novel are going nowhere fast. They bear burdens of their family history and are never able to solve any of their problems.

这段话讲的是:这本小说里的人物背上了家庭背景的沉重包袱,束手束脚,故步自封,一直没能解决自己面临的问题。

2

VOA Words and Idioms

Wing it

*Take someone under
one's wing*

本 讲学两个以 wing 这个词为主的习惯用语,我想大家都
很熟悉这个词,它的意思是“翅膀”。自古以来,鸟的
翅膀激发了人们许多美丽的幻想,而 wing 这个词也构成了许
多习惯用语,今天要讲的第一个习惯用语是: **wing it**.

请假想一下你的双臂变成了一对翅膀,这样你就能海阔
天空、自由自在地四处飞翔,并且随着风云变幻而改变方向。
那么 wing it 究竟是什么意思呢? wing 这个词在 wing it 这个
习惯用语里不是名词,而是动词。这个短语是用来作比喻的,
并不真是说长着翅膀在飞。看两个例子来体会 wing it 含义
是什么。第一段话是一个专为华盛顿的政客撰写演讲稿的人在
发牢骚,原因是他的上司演讲并不按照他精心撰写的稿子念。

*I don't like my job. No matter how much time I spend on a
speech for my boss, he wings it instead of reading it the
way I wrote it.*

从这个例子可见 wing it 是指“不按照事先准备的讲稿而现场即兴发言”。难怪这位专门为上司准备讲稿的人要抱怨说他不喜欢他的工作,因为不论他花了多少时间准备讲稿,他的上级都不按照他煞费苦心写成的稿子念,而是现场发挥。这位撰稿人觉得自己白费了精力,因为他的上级脱离讲稿,自由发挥。但是对某些人来说,即兴发挥却是一种必要的技能,比方说电视或者广播现场问答节目的主持人就必须能随机应变地就某一专题侃侃而谈,他们得现场采访各行各业知名人士、学术权威,和这些人谈论各种各样的专题。他能拿着事先准备的讲稿照本宣科吗?当然不行。他对节目所讨论的每一个专题都精通在行吗?那也不可能,因为题目范围包罗万象。那么这个节目主持人该如何是好呢?看看下面的例子:

A good talk show host will interview a writer without reading his books. He'll read some reviews so he can wing it when he talks to the writer on his show.

这段话说一个好的现场问答节目主持人在采访一位作家的時候,可能并没有读过他的作品,然而他却会去读一些评论文章,这样在节目中他就能和这位作家海阔天空地进行了。

这一讲第二个以 wing 这个词为主的习惯用语是 **take someone under one's wing**。

它和刚才说的习惯用语 wing it 一样,也是比喻的用法,只是在这个习惯用语里 wing 不再当动词,而是名词。你一定