



梁淑珍

编译

美国习语故事

天津人民出版社



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内 容 提 要

本书是根据“美国之音”广播节目播出的美国习语故事记录整理而成。所选入的72篇故事内容丰富,题材各异。这些风趣幽默的故事以通俗、生动的语言讲述了当今美国人普遍使用的一个个习语的来历、含义和用法,集知识性和趣味性于一体,使读者在了解、掌握美国常用习语的同时,又能学习地道的英语,从而提高英语口头表达能力。为便于读者更好地理解、记忆美国习语,每篇故事之后都附有生词注解和参考译文。

前 言

无论是考托福、高考、研究生考试,还是平时阅读英语文章,都常常会遇到这样的情况,即一个短语中的各个词都认识,但就是不明白它的意思,这可能就是习语问题。《美国习语故事》的编译就是为广大英语学习者解决这一难题的。

本书所选编的习语故事,内容丰富,题材新颖,全部取自“美国之音”广播节目,讲到的习语都是当今美国人普遍使用的习惯用语。由于作者都是“美国之音”的新闻记者,他们运用通俗的语言、幽默的故事解释每一个习语的来历和用法,集知识性和趣味性为一体,有相当高的可读性。读者在掌握美国习语的同时,又能提高英语表达能力。

为了帮助读者更好地理解、记忆美国习语,每一则故事后面都配了词汇表和参考译文。

美国的 Arlis Quick 女士校订了英文全部内容,天津大学外语系李孟权副教授和天津外语学院林克难副教授审阅了全书内容。

由于编译者的水平有限,译注中错误在所难免,恳切希望读者批评、指正。

编译者

1994.5

Contents 目 录

1	Fall Guy 替死鬼	(1)
2	Paddle One's Own Canoe 专靠自己	(4)
3	Color 颜色	(9)
4	By the Book 照章办事	(14)
5	Guineapig 豚鼠	(17)
6	Stump-speaker 树桩演说家	(20)
7	Cold 寒冷	(23)
8	Minding the Store 照料事务	(26)
9	Fireworks 激情(烟火)	(29)
10	Down-to-earth 平易近人	(32)
11	To Pass the Buck 推卸责任	(35)
12	Whistle 口哨	(38)
13	Goldbrick 逃避工作的人	(41)
14	To Touch All Bases 该做的都做到,使事情圆满完成	(44)
15	Hot 热	(47)
16	Hobson's Choice 进退维谷	(52)
17	Green 绿色	(55)
18	To Face the Music 勇于承担后果	(60)
19	Full Court Press 全场紧逼盯人战术	(63)
20	Get One's Goat 惹某人发火	(66)
21	Bogus 伪造的	(69)

22	Ham Actor	拙劣的表演者	(73)
23	Hang	悬挂	(76)
24	Heart	心脏	(81)
25	Horse (I)	马(一)	(85)
26	Horse (II)	马(二)	(90)
27	An Ace in the Hole	正面朝下的“A”牌	(93)
28	Shoo-in	十拿九稳的取胜者	(97)
29	Chewing Gum	口香糖	(102)
30	Cross	十字形	(106)
31	Keep One's Shirt On	镇静	(111)
32	Inside the Beltway	环行公路以里	(114)
33	The Shoe Is on the Other Foot	位置完全颠倒了	(119)
34	A-OK	一切正常	(123)
35	Dutch Treat	各人自己付钱	(127)
36	Blizzard	暴风雪	(132)
37	Jack-of-all-trades	多面手和博学多才的人	(135)
38	Kick	踢	(138)
39	Bunk	废话	(143)
40	Scofflaw	藐视(或违犯)法令者	(147)
41	Not Worth a Rap	毫无价值	(150)
42	Nose	鼻子	(153)
43	Talk Turkey	直接了当地说	(157)
44	Bell the Cat	为大家的利益承担危险的事	(160)
45	Raise Cain	闹事	(164)
46	Eyes	眼睛	(167)
47	Be in Hot Water	处于困境	(171)

48	Blitzkrieg	闪电战	(174)
49	Indian	印第安人	(178)
50	Grass	青草	(181)
51	Broadway	百老汇大街	(184)
52	Beside Oneself	发狂	(189)
53	Walk a Tightrope	走钢丝	(192)
54	Soft Soap	奉承	(195)
55	Caucus	秘密会议	(198)
56	Batten Down the Hatches	封舱	(202)
57	Behind the Eight-ball	处于不利地位	(206)
58	Take This Medicine	请服此药	(209)
59	Black and White	黑与白	(212)
60	Eureka	我想出了!	(217)
61	White Elephant	无用而累赘的东西	(220)
62	To Clown Around	耍笑	(223)
63	A White Christmas	白雪皑皑的圣诞节	(228)
64	As Easy As Falling Off a Log	极其容易	(231)
65	Kangaroo Court	袋鼠法庭	(234)
66	VOA	美国之音	(237)
67	Land-office Business	抢购热	(241)
68	Turkey	火鸡	(244)
69	Duck Soup	容易做的事情	(247)
70	Eager Beaver	乐于埋头苦干的人	(250)
71	Be As Dead As a Doornail	确已僵死了的	(253)
72	Go for It	豁出去	(256)

1. Fall Guy

A *fall guy* is the person who someone decides will be the loser or victim. The first *fall guys* were men who wrestled for money. At the end of the last century, wrestling was a very popular sport in the United States. Wrestling matches were held not only in big cities, but at country fairs and travelling shows. As the sport became more popular it became less and less of a sport. Many of the contests were fixed. The wrestlers knew before the match which one of them would be the winner. The goal in wrestling is to hold your opponent's shoulders down against the floor. This is called "a fall". Sometimes one of the wrestlers would be paid before the match to take "the fall". He agreed to be the loser—the *fall guy*.

Today a *fall guy* is anyone who is talked or trapped into taking a blame for someone else's crime or wrong doing. There are *fall guys* in many situations, people who publicly take the blame when something goes wrong. A *fall guy* takes the rap for something wrong or illegal. He accepts responsibility and punishment for what someone else did, although the *fall guy* also may have been involved.

The word *rap* has meant "blame" for several hundred years, the expression *to take the rap* first was used about one hundred years ago. Another similar expression is *bum-rap*. A person *receives the bumrap* if he is found guilty of a

crime, but is really innocent. Sometimes a *fall guy* may not know he is the *fall guy* until he gets the *bumrap*. In that case, he may be *framed*. This means false evidence was created to make an innocent person seem guilty. Some word experts say the expression *to frame someone* comes from the way wood must be fitted closely around the painting or photograph to frame it. In the same way evidence must be designed perfectly if it is to *frame* an innocent person to make him seem guilty.

New Words and Expressions

fall guy [美俚] 替死鬼

victim 受害者

wrestle 摔跤

fair 定期集市

contest 竞赛

opponent 对手

shoulder 肩膀

talk sb. into sth. 说服某人做某事

rap [美俚] 罪名

take (receive) the rap 承担刑事责任

take (receive) the bumrap 承担不公平的刑事责任

innocent 清白的

frame [俚] 陷害

替死鬼

“fall guy(摔倒者; 摔角比赛失败者; 替死鬼)”系指由别人事先指定的失败者或牺牲者。最初的“替死鬼”是为挣钱而参加摔角的人。上个世纪末, 摔角是美国一项深受欢迎的体育项目。摔角比赛不仅在大城市举行, 而且还在乡村集市上作巡回表演。随着这项运动越来越受欢迎, 它就越来越不象体育运动了。许多比赛做了手脚, 参赛者事先就知道一场比赛谁将取胜。摔角的目的是将对手摔倒使他双肩着地, 这叫“fall(摔倒; 摔角失败)”。有时, 参赛一方事先收受钱财, 在比赛中故意让人摔倒, 他自愿做失败者——fall guy。

如今, “fall guy”指一个人或被说服或因受骗而去替别人的罪行或过错受过。有各种各样的“fall guy”, 即那些公开为某些失误受过的人。“替死鬼”为错事或违法的事接受“rap(喝斥; 罪名)”。他为别人做的事承担责任、受到惩罚, 尽管他本人也可能参与其事。

“rap”的意思是“指责”, 已有几百年历史了。“to take the rap(承担罪名)”这个词组的首次使用, 约是在一百年前。另一个意思相近的词组是“bumrap(错误的指责; 虚构的罪名)”。一个清白无辜的人被控犯有罪行, 那他便是接受了“虚构的罪名”。有时“替死鬼”直到受到“虚构的罪名”的指控才知道自己成了“替死鬼”。在这种情况下, 他可能被人“framed(给…装框子; 陷害)”了。这个词的意思是制造伪证让无辜者看上去有罪。有的语言专家说“to fram someone”这个词组同装框子有关, 为给画或像片装框子必须把木框子紧紧地镶在四周。同样, 要陷害一个无辜的人让他看上去有罪, 捏造证据也必须做得天衣无缝。

2. Paddle One's Own Canoe

The settlers of the New World borrowed many new words from the Indians. Some words sounded as soft as the Spanish moss that grows in the south land, *Shenandoah*, *Missouri*, *Apus* and *Swash*. Other words were as open and rich as the fertile plains of Midwest, *Waukegan*, *Menominee* and *Mackinaw*. These old Indian words are still part of English in America. But there is another word, and an expression that grew from it has spread to other countries. The word is *canoe*, and the expression is *paddle one's own canoe*.

There is something about a canoe that suggests speed and skill. Father Hennepin, the Catholic priest who came to America with La Salle, the French explorer, wrote this about the canoe in the year 1683; "Le Sieur de La Salle has trained his men so well to manage canoes in the most frightening waters, that they are now the most skillful canoe men in America." Or perhaps Father Hennepin had not seen many Indians manage their canoes, the early settlers did though. Many times during the darks of night, Indian warriors moved silently and swiftly across the waters to attack settler villages. These early settlers soon learned the skill of making canoes, and of managing them, too. The bark of the birch tree, knife, needle and some glue were all that was needed to cover a frame of willow branches. The point-

ed edges of the canoes were sewn together with animal gut. Such a featherlike boat could be easily carried by one man to and from his village.

In fact, La Salle and his men often put their goods in their canoes and carried both over land as they searched for the next body of water to explore. This carrying of canoe and goods over the land was described by the word "portage", a word borrowed from Middle English. One does not see birch bark canoes any more. Most are made of plastic aluminium. But they are still speedy, and great skills needed to move them on the water without turning over. Perhaps it is this skill that gave birth to the expression *paddle one's own canoe*. A person who is said to do this is one who succeeds in life without any help from others. He is a self-made man. Much has been written about the canoe. Songs have been sung about it. There is one song written in the 1800's that makes one think of long ago, a lonely Indian paddling his canoe silently along Sunlake, looking perhaps for fish, or for a place to stay in the night. "My wants are small. I care not at all if my debts are paid when due. I have no strength in my way of life. I paddle my own canoe."

New Words and Expressions

moss 苔藓

Shenandoah 圣那多瓦

Missouri 密苏里

Apus 阿波斯

Swash 斯瓦士

Waukegan 沃基根

Menominee 梅诺米尼

Mackinaw 麦基诺

paddle one's own canoe 专靠自己,独立进行

warrior 勇士

birch 白桦

glue 胶水

willow 柳树

sew (sewed, sewn) 缝制

gut 肠子

portage 运输

aluminium [化] 铝

专靠自己

美洲的殖民者借用了许多印第安人的新词语。这些词有的听起来象生长在南方的西班牙苔藓一样柔和,如 Shenandoah(圣那多瓦)、Missouri(密苏里)、Apus(阿波斯)和 Swash(斯瓦士),有的象西部肥沃的平原那样辽阔和富饶,如 Waukegan(沃基根)、Menominee(梅诺米尼)和 Mackinaw(麦基诺)。这些古老的印第安词和词组现在仍然是美国英语的组成部分。但有另外一个词和由此而来的一个词组却传播到了其它国家,这个词就是“canoe(独木舟)”,词组则是“paddle one's own canoe(专靠自己)”。

“canoe”这个词使人联想到速度和技巧。和法国探险家拉·萨尔一起来到美洲的天主教僧侣汉尼拼圣父在 1683 年写道:“拉·萨尔把他的人训练得那么好,能划着独木舟顶狂风,战恶浪,他们是美洲技术最娴熟的水手。”大概汉尼拼圣父没有目睹过印第安人划独木舟的情景,然而早期的殖民者却看见过。多少个漆黑的夜晚,印第安勇士们悄悄地、迅速地划着独木舟穿过河流,去进攻殖民者的村庄。殖民者也很快地学会了制作和划动独木舟的技术。独木舟用柳树枝扎成,用刀子、针和胶水把桦树皮包在架子上,用动物肠子把尖尖的边缝合在一起。这样的象羽毛似的小船,一个人就能轻松地扛着它往返于村庄。

事实上,当拉·萨尔和他手下的人寻找另一片水域进行勘探时,时常把物品放在独木舟里,一起带着穿越陆地。人们借用了中世纪英语中“portage(运输)”这个词来描绘既带物品又带独木舟跨越陆地的情景。如今,人们再也看不到用桦树皮制造的独木舟了,而多数是由塑料或铝制成。这种独木舟的速度更快,划动它们需有超常的技术才不至于翻船。可能就是由于这种技术才产生了词组“paddle one's own canoe(专靠自己)”。据说一个“paddle his own canoe(专靠自己)”的人是一个生活中没有依赖、自强不息的人,他的成功靠的就是个人奋斗。

关于“canoe”,人们不断地写它,唱它,有一首在十九世纪八十年代创作的歌曲使旧影重现:一位孤独的印第安青年静静地划着他的独木

舟，沿着太阳湖，或是在寻找鱼群，或是在寻找过夜的地方……。“我的需求很小，当债务到期时，我根本不在乎是否已还清，我生活中没有任何人可以依赖，我专靠自己。”

3. Color

Many everyday expressions in English are made from colors. We say we are *in the pink* when we are in good health. It is easy to understand how this expression was born. When my face has a nice fresh pink color, it is a sign my health is good. If I look pale and gray, I may need a doctor.

"Red" is a hotter color than "pink". And the Americans use it to express heat. In English the small hot peppers found in many Mexican foods are called "redhots" for their color and their fiery taste. We say that fast fiery music is "redhot", especially the kind called "Dixieland jazz".

"Blue" is a cooler color. The traditional blue music of American blacks is the opposite of redhot music. It is slow, sad and soulful. Duke Ellington and his orchestra recorded a famous song, Mood Indigo about the deep blue color "indigo". In the words of the song, "You ain't been blue till you had that mood indigo. To be blue, of course, is to be sad."

While the color "green" is natural for trees it is an unnatural color for humans. When someone does not feel well, someone who is sea-sick, for example, we say he looks green. When someone is angry, because he does not have what someone else has, we say he is *green with envy*. Some people are *green with envy* because someone else has

more dollars, or *green backs*. Dollars are called *green backs* because that's the color of the back side of the money.

The color "black" is often used in expressions. People describe a day in which everything goes wrong as *a black day*. A *blacklist* is illegal now. But at one time, some employers shared *blacklists* of people who should not be given work.

In some cases, colors just describe situation. A *black-out* in World War II was when all lights were turned off to make it difficult for bomber planes to find their targets at night. A *brownout* is an American expression for reduced electrical power which makes the electric lights dim. American women use the French word for "red" as the name of the colored cosmetic which they sometimes use to brighten their cheeks. It is just called *rouge*. They use it especially when they are going out for the evening, or as Americans say to *paint the town red*. A person's skin may become "yellow" as a result of diseases that attack the liver. *Yellow fever* is one. In the past, ships carrying *yellow fever* victims raised the flag called the *Yellow Jack*. In the United States, an activist organization of older people calls itself the *Gray Panthers*. The name comes from the gray hair of its members and from the panther, a fierce animal of the cat family.

New Words and Expressions

in the pink 非常健康