

CLASSIC STORIES  
OF  
CHINA

# Idiom Stories

Compiled by Wu Min



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

CLASSIC STORIES  
OF  
CHINA

# Idiom Stories

Compiled by Wu Min



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

CLASSIC STORIES  
OF  
CHINA

# Idiom Stories



ISBN 978-7-5085-1773-5



9 787508 517735 >

Price: 53.00 RMB

CLASSIC STORIES  
OF  
CHINA

---

# Idiom



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

## 图书在版编目 ( CIP ) 数据

中国成语故事：英文 / 伍民编；

王国振，汉定，吴晓芳译．—北京：五洲传播出版社，2010.1  
(中国经典故事系列)

ISBN 978-7-5085-1773-5

I. ①中… II. ①伍…②王…③汉…④吴… III.

①汉语—成语—故事—英文 IV. ①H136.3

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2010) 第009535号

出 版 人：荆孝敏

编 者：伍 民

翻 译：王国振 汉 定 吴晓芳

责任编辑：王 莉

设计指导：缪 惟

设计制作：吴俊宏

插 图：李思东

## 中国成语故事

出版发行：五洲传播出版社

社 址：北京市海淀区莲花池东路北小马厂6号

邮政编码：100038

发行电话：010-82001477

制版单位：北京锦绣圣艺文化发展有限公司

印 刷：北京彩和坊印刷有限公司

开 本：787x1092 1/32

印 张：5.25

版 次：2011年1月第1版 2011年1月第1次印刷

书 号：ISBN 978-7-5085-1773-5

定 价：53.00元



# Preface

The term *idiom* refers to a set phrase formed through long-term usage. Chinese idioms have a fixed structure and parlance, with specific meaning. Most are composed of four characters, although some have three characters and a few consist of more than four. Some idioms are divided into two parts with a comma in the middle.

The Chinese idiomatic tradition boasts many rich contents, generally including its origin, literary quotation and historical fact. The splendid historical segments form the



most vivid and interesting part of the idiom as a whole. Chinese idiom stories have inherited and passed on the abundant historic treasury of the Chinese nation that has been accumulated over several thousand years, mirroring the politics, military affairs, culture, folk customs, prevailing moral practices, ideals and interests of ancient China. Through these stories, people can gain an understanding of China's long history and achieve an insight into the profound historical origins of Chinese culture.

Compared with common Chinese words and expressions, the Chinese idioms, representing an important part of the Chinese language, feature salient strong points, i.e. they are concise, comprehensive, vivid and forceful, and have a precise structure. All languages have their own idioms. But the Chinese language boasts a larger number of idioms with a longer history, wider application, more outstanding status and more distinctive national culture. Even today, these idioms still play a significant role in the daily

linguistic communication of the people. No matter whether Chinese or foreigner, anyone who intends to master the Chinese language and understand Chinese culture has to set store by the learning of Chinese idioms.

This book presents some 40 of the most common and enlightening idiom stories and offers them to the general reader with a combination of both fine illustrations and well laid-out texts, with a view to helping our friends from overseas cultivate their interest in learning about and understanding Chinese culture.

May this book be your good teacher and helpful friend in learning Chinese and practicing eloquence!



# CONTENTS

The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea	12
Help the Crops Grow by Pulling Them Upward	15
A Hundred Shots, A Hundred Bull's-Eyes	18
Seeing Is Believing	22
Spoil the Half-finished Cloth	26
Never Ashamed to Consult One's Inferiors	30



How Can You Catch Tiger Cubs Without Entering the Tiger's Lair	33
Every Bush and Tree Look Like an Enemy	37
Beat the Grass and Startle the Snake	41
Great Minds Mature Slowly	44
Shake Up the Pillow and Have a Good Sleep	48
Learn From Others at the Expense of One's Own Ability	53
Fear of Disturbance in the Rear	57
A Youth to be Regarded With Respect	60
Swallow a Date Whole	63
Last Touch Added to a Drawing	66
Adding Feet to a Drawing of a Snake	70
Flashy But Without Substance	75



A Treasure Worth Several Cities	79
Official Jiang Uses Up His Literary Talent	83
A Hair on Nine Bulls	87
A Dagger Heart Behind a Honey Mouth	91
Make Up the Number	95
An Old Horse Knows the Way	98
Extreme Joy Begets Sorrow	102
Green Willows and Red Flowers	106
Wind and Rain Throughout the Town	110
Falling After Sun Shan	113
Vomit Heart, Shed Blood	116
Cast a Brick to Invite a Jade	119
Breaking the Pot, Sinking the Boat	123
The Guizhou Donkey Exhausts Its Tricks	127



Repeated Commands	131
Practice Makes Perfect	136
Water Falls, Stones Appear	140
Renounce the Pay for the Sword	143
Return the Jade Intact to the State Zhao	146
Quench Thirsty by Longing for Plums	151
Lament Before the Vast Sea	155
Have a Finished Bamboo in the Mind	159
A Whole Heart	163



# 八仙过海

The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea



Idiom Stories

# The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea



Legend has it that the Eight Immortals came across the boundless East China Sea with its turbulent waves on the way to attend the Peach Party hosted by the Queen Mother of the West. However, they were glad at the chance to demonstrate their special skills.

Lu Dongbin said, "Since the East China Sea has immortal mountains and beautiful scenery, how about going there to take a look for ourselves? And it is forbidden to take a boat!"

All agreed with great pleasure and





prepared to cross the sea. Han Zhongli hurled his palm-leaf fan into the waters and lay on his back with the chest and abdomen exposed, floating forwards through the waves; He Xiangu cast a water lily into the sea, which at once emitted a powerful red glow, and she stood upon it to float across the waves; Tieguai Li threw his crutch into the sea and used it as a raft; Han Xiangzi cast out a decorated basket and piloted it as though it were a ship; and Lu Dongbin, Lan Caihe, Zhang Guolao and Cao Guojiu together threw their personal magic instruments into the sea which immediately turned into sampans. Thus all of them successfully crossed the stormy East China Sea. The idiom "The Eight Immortals Cross the Sea" originates from this legend.

The story comes from *Journey to the East*. It is used to symbolize the completion of a difficult task through one's own special method or skills.

# 拔苗助长

Help the Crops Grow by Pulling Them Upward



# Help the Crops Grow by Pulling Them Upward



An ancient Chinese man called Mencius once told this story:

There was a farmer from the Song State growing a stretch of crops. He was convinced that his crops grew more slowly than those of his neighbors. He went to look at his field every day, wishing that his crops would grow faster.

Though many days passed, it seemed that the seedlings hadn't grown higher. He strode around the field impatiently and pondered, "I must get an idea to help them grow faster."

