

中国成语故事

The Stories Behind Common Chinese Idioms

Legends

传奇篇



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Introduction

The Chinese language has a very long history, and is rich in colorful idioms, which can be used to enhance the language's powers of expression enormously.

Here we present the 24 most common Chinese idioms in four categories: Stirring Deeds, Virtuous Conduct, Wisdom and Legends. Each idiom has a brief explanation, followed by the story, in Chinese and English, of how it arose. The profuse illustrations will help readers to understand the historical background to the idioms.



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内 容 简 介

汉语历史悠久,丰富多彩。在语言表达中,恰当地运用成语可以使语言精炼,富有感染力。

本画册选出常用 24 则成语进行分类: 奋发、美德、机智、传奇共四篇。每个成语的“解释”部分,说明成语的意义和用法。“故事”部分介绍了成语的来源和出处,并配以插图,文图对照,能加深读者对成语含义的理解,以便更准确地加以应用。

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传 奇 篇

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Legends

Contents

To Crow like a Cock and Bark Like a Dog	1	Mao Sui Recommends Himself	16
The Old Man on the Border Loses a Horse	7	Keeping a Seat Vacant	21
Giving One's Life for Righteousness	11	To Collapse Like an Earthen Wall	27

传奇篇

目 录

鸡鸣狗盗	2
塞翁失马	7
舍生取义	12



毛遂自荐	16
虚位以待	22
一败涂地	28



To Crow like a Cock and Bark like a Dog

Explanation:

Even petty abilities can be useful.

Story:

In the Warring States Period the prime minister of the State of Qi, Lord Mengchang, was renowned for his generosity. He supported over 3,000 hangers-on.

Whenever one of these clients came to him with some problem or complaint, Lord Mengchang had a secretary hiding behind a screen and taking down the details. Later, men would be despatched to the complainant's home with comfort and presents.

鸡鸣狗盗

解释：

比喻有一手模仿鸡鸣狗叫的卑微的技能，有时却能解决大问题。

故事：

战国时代，齐国的宰相孟尝君慷慨好客，门下的食客多达三千多人。

孟尝君与食客谈话时，总让人在屏风后作记录，把食客的住处及有何困难等一一记下，随后便派人去看望其亲属并赠送礼物。





秦昭王对孟尝君最为敬慕，派特使迎接孟尝君入秦。孟尝君带着门客千余人来到秦都咸阳。

孟尝君献给秦昭王一件纯白狐狸皮袍子，秦昭王很高兴地把它藏在内库里。

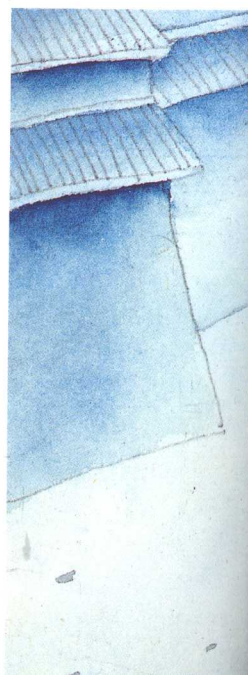
秦昭王听了谗言，把孟尝君软禁起来，孟尝君请秦昭王的宠妃帮忙解救，妃子说：“这不难，但是我要一件白色狐皮袍。”

孟尝君为难了，仅有的一件已经送给秦王了，哪来第二件呢？有个门客

King Zhao of the State of Qin admired Lord Mengchang and invited him to visit his court. Lord Mengchang went there accompanied by some 1,000 of his clients.

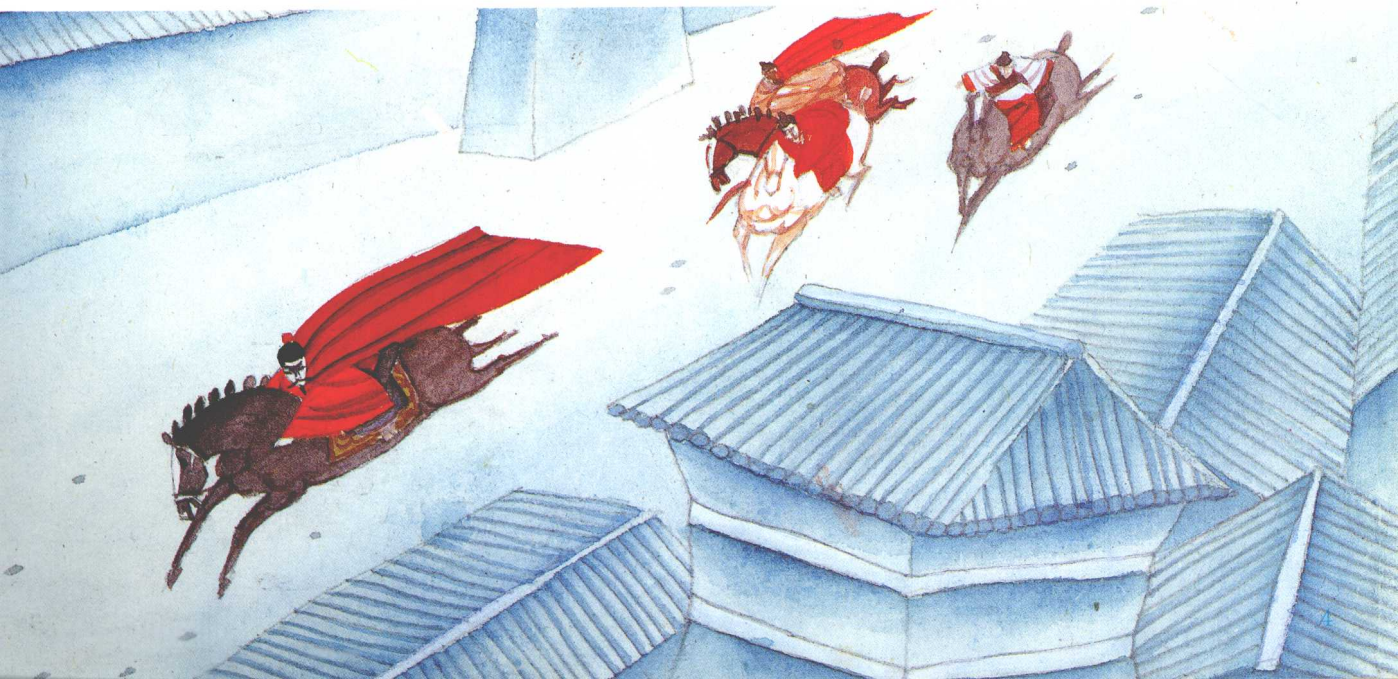
Lord Mengchang presented a magnificent robe made out of pure white fox fur to his host. The king of Qin was delighted with this present and had it stored in his treasury.

However, during his stay Lord Mengchang was the victim of slanderous gossip, as a result of which the king of Qin had him placed under arrest. Lord Mengchang asked the king's favorite concubine



to intercede for him. The concubine promised to do so, but only on condition that he gave her a robe like the one he had presented to the king.

This put Lord Mengchang in a dilemma, as the robe he had presented to the king was the only one he possessed. Then one of his clients said, "Don't worry, My lord, I can manage it." That night he crawled into the treasury through a dog hole, barking like a dog. The guards took no notice of him because they thought he was their own dog, and the client successfully slipped inside and stole the fox-fur robe. He gave it to the king's concubine, and she persuaded the king to release Lord Mengchang and his companions.



They fled from Qin the same night, hoping to cross the border of the state before the trick was discovered. However, when they reached the border pass at the midnight they found the gate firmly shut, and were told that it would not open until dawn. This time another resourceful client suddenly started crowing like a cock.

One by one all the neighborhood cocks started crowing too, and the frontier guards, thinking that it must be daybreak, opened the gate. By the time the trick was discovered and a hunt was launched for the fugitives, Lord Mengchang and his clients had been out of reach.





说：“我有办法。”当天夜里，这个门客模仿狗叫声，从狗洞潜入秦王内库，看守以为是自己养的狗，未加怀疑。于是这个门客盗出了那件白色狐皮袍送给秦王的爱妃，孟尝君也得了自由，并急忙带领门客连夜逃离秦国。

他们逃呀逃呀，半夜来到边界的函谷关。这关口要到鸡叫的时候才许出入，忽然有个门客学起了公鸡叫。一声跟着一声，附近的公鸡全都叫了起来。守关的人开了城门，让孟尝君出了关。等到秦昭王派人追到函谷关时，孟尝君和他的门客已经走远了。



The Old Man on the Border Loses a Horse

Explanation:

Temporary setbacks sometimes may be blessings

Story:

Long ago there lived on the far western border of China an old man and his son who raised horses. One day one of their best horses

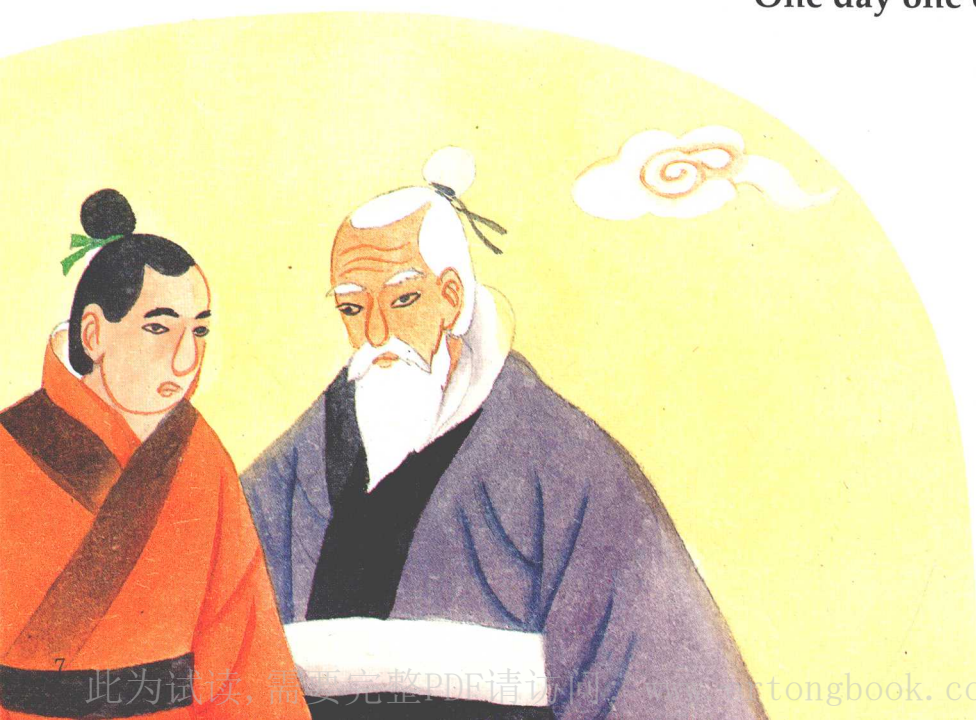
塞翁失马

解释:

比喻虽然受到暂时的损失, 却因此得到了好处。

故事:

从前, 在边塞有父子俩靠放牧马匹为生。这天有匹骏马忽



suddenly ran away. The son pursued it, but failed to catch it. "Never mind," said his father, "it may return some day." After some months the horse did return, and led a large herd of other horses. The son was overjoyed at this unexpected fortune, but his father was not carried away. "Good and bad fortune often follow each other in succession in this world, my son," he said. "Do not be too happy lest you tempt fate."

One day, while taming the new horses, the son fell from a horse and

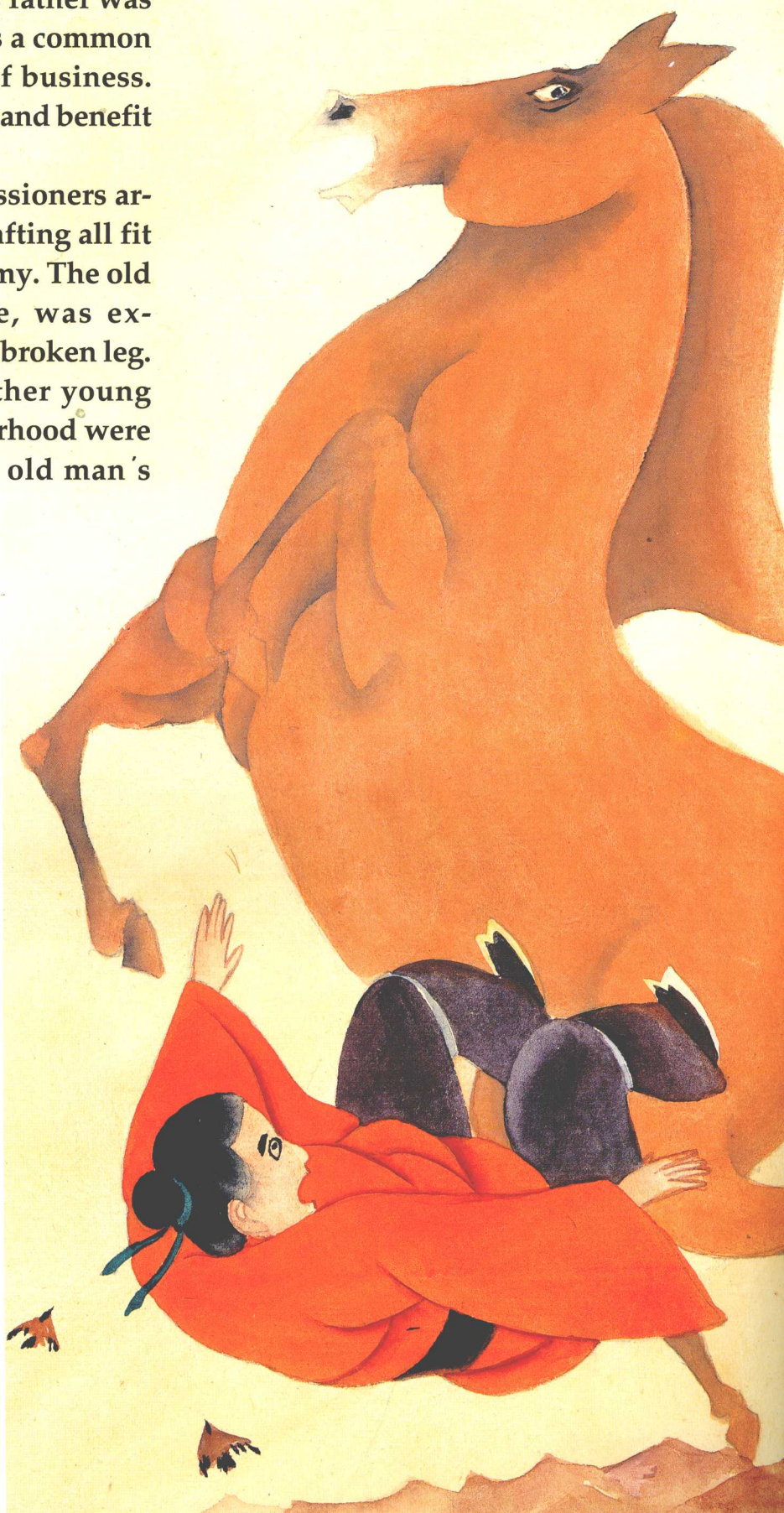
然逃跑了，儿子怎么追也没追回来。父亲安慰儿子说：“我们养马人，失掉马匹是常有的事。也许它还会回来呢！”

过了一段日子，那匹失去的骏马竟带回来一大群马。儿子高兴极了，父亲倒没有太大的惊喜。他对儿子说：“这件事确实意外。不过，世事祸福无常，很难预料。你要小心乐极生悲啊！”



broke a leg. Again, his father was not dismayed. "This is a common accident in our line of business. Let it be a lesson to you and benefit from it," he said.

At this time commissioners arrived in the district drafting all fit young men into the army. The old man's son of course, was exempted because, of his broken leg. Thus, when all the other young men from the neighborhood were killed in the war, the old man's son survived.



有一天，儿子在驯马时，一个不小心，竟从马上掉了下来，把一条腿摔断了。父亲又说：“驯马的人，难免会被摔着。如果你能吸取教训，日后会有益处。”

正在这时，其他年轻人全被抓去打仗，全都战死在沙场。儿子因腿骨折，免去了从军，因而保存了性命。对他来说，可算是因祸而得福了。

在汉语里“塞翁失马，安知非福”，用得比较普遍。





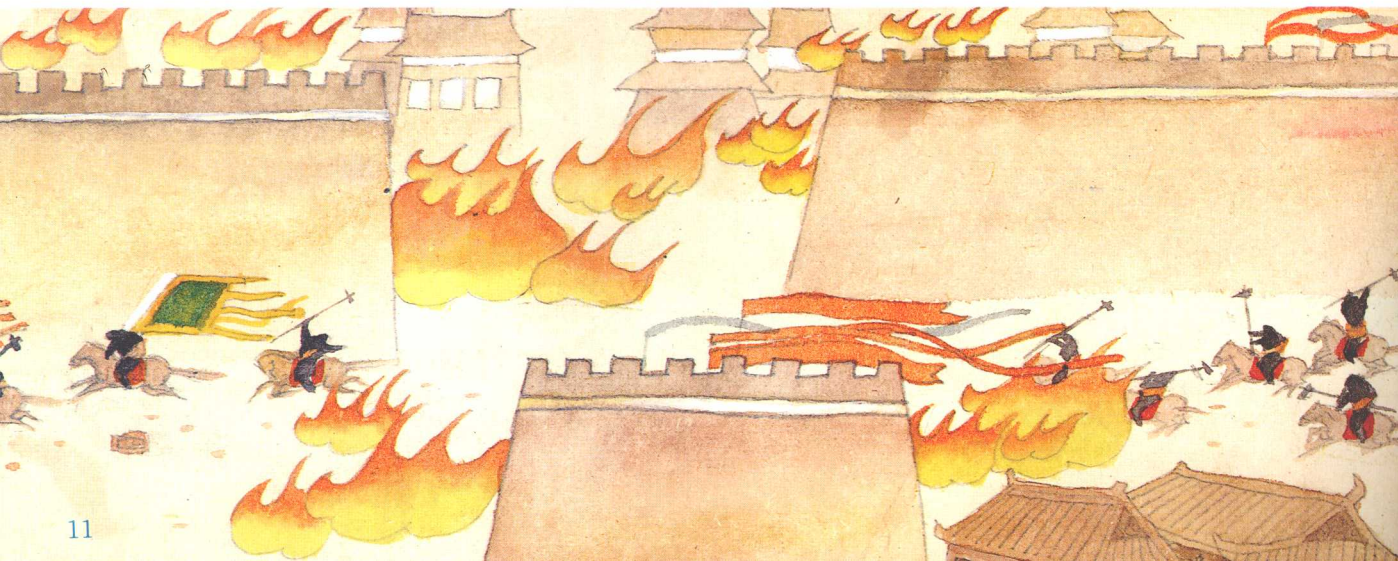
Giving One's Life for Righteousness

Explanation:

To sacrifice oneself for a just cause.

Story:

In the Spring and Autumn Period there lived a martial hero named Yu Rang. When his patron, Zhi Bo, was killed by Zhao Xiangzi, Yu Rang swore to avenge Zhi Bo. He disguised himself as a servant and sneaked into the household of Zhao Xiangzi, however his identity was discovered before he had a chance to assassinate Zhao. His intended victim, Zhao Xiangzi, was moved by Yu Rang's loyalty to his late master and set him free, despite Yu Rang's admission that he would still try to kill him.





舍生取义

解释：

为正义事业而牺牲生命。

故事：

春秋时，晋国有个勇士名叫豫让，投靠在智伯门下，很受重用。后来，智伯被赵襄子杀害。豫让躲了起来，下决心要为智伯报仇。过了几个月，豫让装扮成仆役混进赵府，伺机刺杀赵襄子。结果在茅厕里被发现，赵襄子见豫让为主人报仇就放了他。豫让说：“你虽然放了我，但我还会刺杀你的！”



Returning home, Yu Rang cut off his eyebrows and beard, and swallowed burning charcoal to hoarsen his throat, in order to escape recognition both in appearance and voice. Some of his friends suggested, "Would it not be easier if you pretended to switch allegiance to Zhao Xiangzi and then killed him?" Indignantly, Yu Rang replied, "How could a righteous man do such a thing?"

One day Yu Rang hid under a bridge on a route that he knew Zhao Xiangxi was to take. But when Zhao's carriage drew near the bridge the horses began to neigh in fear. A search soon found Yu Rang under the bridge, and he was hauled out by Zhao Xiangzi's men. Zhao said to him: "I admire your devotion to your late master, but this time I really cannot pardon you." Yu Rang replied, "I thank your Excellency for your kindness."

