



Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (Oxford Paperback Reference)

By John Simpson

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Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs (Oxford Paperback Reference) By John Simpson

A proverb is a common saying which offers advice or presents a moral in a short or pithy manner. In the past, proverbs had the status of universal truths and were used to prove an argument: the fact that new proverbs are still coming into being shows how these neat expressions are still valued and used. Modern proverbs have many different origins (for example 'garbage in, garbage out' comes from computing, while 'there's no such thing as free lunch' comes from economics), but people still look for a vivid and concrete image to make their point. Now available in paperback, this brand new edition is a valuable updating and revision of the well-loved classic, the Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs, with increased coverage of 1,100 proverbs. Presented in a thoroughly reader-friendly style yet staying true to the scholarly standards that have characterized earlier editions, it offers more detailed annotation and up-to-the-minute citations from around the English-speaking world. New additions include 'another day, another dollar', 'bad things come in threes', 'better to live one day as a tiger than a thousand years as a sheep', and 'there is more than one way to skin a cat', with new illustrative quotations putting proverbs in their historical context. This edition also contains a full thematic index.

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Editorial Review

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If it looks like a proverb and sounds like a proverb, it's a proverb--provided that people use it as they would a proverb. Thus, circulating like a computer virus in Britain and North America and ultimately finding their way into *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* are "If life hands you lemons, make lemonade"; "Garbage in, garbage out"; "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" (attributed to Bert Lance); even "Different strokes for different folks" and nearly 40 other "new" proverbs. The stand-up comic Steven Wright earns a citation with a corollary to "The early bird catches the worm": "The early bird may get the worm, but it's the second mouse that gets the cheese."

Each entry in this update to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (3d ed., 1998) is arranged alphabetically by the first significant word and is followed, as before, by several illustrative quotations, beginning with the proverb's first documented use in written English. Editor Speake discusses the plan of the book in a brief preface, in which she also explains that, wherever possible, examples of usage have been brought up-to-date. (From the first, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* was intended to focus on contemporary usage.) Following her preface is the introduction to the first edition (1982) by her former coeditor, John Simpson. Recommended for high-school, public, and undergraduate libraries. *Harold Cordry*
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Review

`Review from previous edition brilliantly arranged . . . I recommend it without hesitation to all students of the English language and lovers of literature, as well as to pedants, crossword fanatics and those who like to prove people wrong in argument.'

Auberon Waugh, Sunday Telegraph

`much pleasure, earthy or erudite, and sometimes both, lies here in store'

Richard Holmes, The Times

About the Author

Jennifer Speake is a freelance writer. She is the editor of the Oxford Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases (1997) and of the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (1999).

Users Review

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Thomas Rasmussen:

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