



# ENGLISH PROVERB AND RHETORIC

Proverb is a kind of brief and popular word with persuasive meaning in it. It is a component of national culture, especially an important constituent of human language. There are thousands upon thousands of English proverbs in English language.

They are always concise—comprehensive—compact, vivid, with profound meaning and beautiful rhyme in them by using various rhetorical methods such as simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, antithesis, paradox, rhyme etc. They always give the readers a deep impression as well as a good enjoyment of art. English proverb covers huge varieties of areas.

It is a precious key for us to know more about society—geography—customs history and culture. Thus, understanding and mastering English proverb can not only enrich our linguistic knowledge, but also help to express ourselves more effectively and colorfully, as well as beautify and sprinkle our daily life.

This article sets out from proverb' definition, Covers its functions and linguistic characteristics, aims at provoking people's awareness to enrich their linguistic knowledge and improve their expression ability through master the English proverbs. English proverb has a high quality of art, it is worthwhile for us to learn it and do some research on it.

English proverbs involve various fields: Some illustrate Philosophy of

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Life, such as Life is long if it is full. Some are about study and work, such as If you lie upon roses when young, you lie upon thorns when old. Some teach you how to be a human being, such as Better die standing than live kneeling. Some are related to life and economy, such as All work and no play make jack a dull boy.

**Characteristics of English Proverbs**

**Colloquialism**

Proverb is a kind of national folk literature. It is verbally created by ordinary people; thus, colloquialism is a vivid characteristic of proverb.

Usually, proverbs are short in word and easy for understanding. They are mainly consist of monosyllabic words. Moreover, the sentences are short with simple structure.

Make hay while the sun shines.

One man is no man.





A man can not spin and reel at the same time.

No fire without smoke.

**Concise and Comprehensive**

English proverbs are using a few words to summarize rich meaning. There is always a profound truth in proverb. Thomas Fuller said in his famous *The History of the Worthies of English*: A proverb is much matter decocted into few words.

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No pains, no gains. 痛苦换来幸福

Easy come, easy go. 来得容易, 去得快

Waste not, want not. 节约, 不浪费

Well begun is half done. 好的开始, 是成功的一半

## Be abundant of Rhetoric

English proverbs use various rhetoric in expression to present thoughtful meaning as well as deep impression. Major types of rhetoric are as follows:

### Simile

Simile is composed of tenor, simile marker and vehicle. Some simile markers are like, as, as if, as though, as...as, as... so, similar to, to bear a resemblance to, etc.

Examples:

Life is like a fire; it begins in smoke and ends in ashes. 生活就像火; 它始于烟, 终于灰

□□

Beauty, unaccompanied by virtue, is as a flower without perfume. 没有美德的漂亮, 就像没有香味的花

□□□□□□

### Metaphor

There are no simile markers in metaphor. The mood in metaphor is much stronger than simile.

Examples:

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Speech is silver, silence is gold. □□□□□□□□

Money is the root of all evil. □□□□□□□□

## Metonymy

Metonymy uses vehicle as tenor. Usually, it uses visualized image to replace something abstract.

Examples:

Homer sometimes nods. □□□□, □□□□□□

Make hay while the sun shines. □□□□□□

## Personification

Personification is to give inanimate objects characteristics and behavior of human beings.

Examples:

Facts speak louder than words. □□□□□□□□

Lies have short legs. □□□□□□

## Antithesis

Antithesis use phrases or sentences with same numbers of words, same structure, relevant meanings, to form contrast or comparison. This kind of proverbs is perfect in symmetry, concise in language and easy to pronounce.

Examples:

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Art is long, life is short. □□□□□□□□□□

A wise man thinks all that he says; a fool man says all that he thinks. □□□

□□□□□□□□□□

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