

Chinese Idioms, Set 1

additional website assistance

This additional resource is intended to assist teachers who are using the Teacher Idea Sheet included in Classic Education Product CI001 (Chinese Idioms).

1. 说来话长 **shuō lái huà cháng** **It's a long story!**

解释: 表示事情很复杂, 不是几句话就能说清楚。

Jiěshì: Biǎoshì shìqíng hěn fùzá, bùshì jǐjùhuà jiù néng shuō qīngchǔ.

Explanation: Indicates matters are very complicated, and one must say many words to make his meaning clear.

例子: 这件事情说来话长。

Lìzi: Zhèjiàn shìqíng shuōláihuàcháng.

Example: This problem is a long story!

2. 爱屋及乌 **ài wū jí wū** **Love me, love my dog**

解释: 比喻爱一个人的时候, 也会关心和他有关的人和事物。

Jiěshì: Bǐyù ài yīgèrén de shíhou, yěhuì guānxīn hé tā yǒuguān de rén hé shìwù.

Explanation: When you love somebody, you will also care about the people or things that are important to that person.

例子:

A: “我很喜欢这个牌子的衣服。”

B: “你以前不是不喜欢吗?”

A: “因为我崇拜的那个明星他喜欢这个牌子啊。”

B: “真是爱屋及乌!”

Lìzi:

A: “Wǒ hěn xǐhuan zhège páizi de yīfu.”

B: “Nǐ yǐqián bú shì bù xǐhuan ma?”

A: “Yīnwèi wǒ chóngbài de nàge míngxīng tā xǐhuan zhège páizi ah.”

B: “Zhēnshì àiwūjíwū!”

Example:

A: "I really like this brand of clothes."

B: "Didn't you used to not like that brand?"

A: "The movie star I have a crush on likes that brand of clothing, so I do too."

B: "That is just like 'love me, love my dog.' "

背景故事:

古时候，刘向写的一本书里有一段话，大意是说：一位国王打败了另一个国王，于是打赢的国王问他的丞相：“我应该怎样对待输了的人？”丞相回答说：“我听说，如果喜爱那个人，就连他房子上的乌鸦也喜欢；如果不喜欢那个人，就连他家的仆人也讨厌，您觉得怎么样？”由于这个传说，就产生了“爱屋及乌”这句成语。

(注释：“乌鸦”在中国是一种不受欢迎的鸟，人们常常认为看见乌鸦就预示有不好的事情发生。)

Bèijǐng gùshì:

Gǔshíhòu, Liú Xiàng xiěde yīběn shūlǐ yǒu yīduàn huà, dàyi shìshuō: yīwèi guówáng dǎbài le língyīgè guówáng, yúshì dǎyíng de guówáng wèn tāde chéngxiàng: “wǒ yīnggāi zěnyàng duìdài shūle de rén?” chéngxiàng huídá shuō: “wǒ tīngshuō, rúguǒ xǐ'ài nàge rén, jiù lián tā fángzi shàng de wūyā yě xǐhuan; rúguǒ bù xǐhuan nàge rén, jiù lián tājiā de púrén yě tǎoyàn,, nín juéde zěnmeyàng?” yóuyú zhège chuánshuō, jiù chǎnshēngle “ài wū jí wū” zhè jù chéngyǔ.

(Zhùshì: “wūyā” zài Zhōngguó shì yīzhǒng bú shòu huānyíng de niǎo, rénmen chángcháng rènwéi kànjian wūyā jiù yùshì yǒu bùhǎo de shìqíng fāshēng.)

Idiom's origin:

In ancient times, Liu Xiang wrote a book containing this section: A king defeated another king. The winner did not know how to treat the loser, so he asked his Prime Minister. The Prime Minister replied, "I have heard that if you like a person, you should even like the crow perching on his roof. If you dislike a person, even his servants you will look upon with disgust. So, this story produced the saying, "When you love somebody, you will also care about the people or things that are important to that person." (Note: Crows are not well-received in China. If someone sees a crow, it may bring bad luck to that person.)

3. 远亲不如近邻 **yuǎn qīn bù rú jìn lín Distant relatives are not like close neighbors.**

解释：指遇到急难，住在远方的亲戚就不如邻居那样能及时帮助你。

Jiěshì: Zhǐ yùdào jí nán, zhù zài yuǎnfāng de qīnqi jiù bùrú línjū nà yàng néng jíshí bāngzhù nǐ.

Explanation: When you are in an emergency, neighbors can help you faster than relatives.

例子:

李华：“我今天很忙，没时间去接孩子。真不知道该怎么办？”

李华的邻居：“别担心，我可以帮你去接。”

李华：“太感谢你了，真是远亲不如近邻啊！”

Lìzi:

Lǐhuá: “Wǒ jīntiān hěn máng, méi shíjiān qù jiē háizi. Zhēn bùzhīdào gāi zěnmè bàn?”

Lǐhuá de línjū: “Biédānxīn, wǒ kěyǐ bāng nǐ qù jiē.”

Lǐhuá: “Tài gǎnxiè nǐle, zhēnshì yuǎnqīn bùrú jìnlín ah!”

Example:

Li Hua: "I'm very busy today and have no time to pick up the kids. I don't know what to do."

Li Hua's Neighbor: "Don't worry, I can pick them up for you."

Li Hua: "Thank you; distant relatives are not like close neighbors."

背景故事:

传说，古时候有对夫妻，很善良，可是儿子张清却很爱玩，又不做事。两个老人去世后，张清没人管，很快就花光了家里的钱，只好去要饭。一年冬天，张清又冷又饿，跑到舅舅家要饭。可是舅舅把他赶了出去。张清没地方去，昏倒在雪地里。这时，张清的邻居看见了，就把他背回家，给他饭吃，还请了医生给他看病。张清很感动，决心改掉坏毛病。他和邻居们一起努力的工作，很快生活就变好了。人们看见了都说：“真是远亲不如近邻啊！”

Bèijǐng gùshì:

Chuánshuō, gǔshíhou yǒu duì fūqī, hěn shànliáng, kěshì érzi ZhāngQīng què hěn ài wán, yòu bùzuòshì。 Liǎng gè lǎorén qù shìhòu, Zhāng Qīng méirén guǎn, hěnkuài jiù huāguāngle jiālǐde qián, zhǐhǎo qù yàofàn。 Yīnián dōngtiān, Zhāng Qīng yòu lěng yòu è pǎodào jiùjiujiā yàofàn。 Kěshì jiùjiu bǎ tā gǎnle chū qù。 Zhāng Qīng méi dìfāng qù, hūndǎo zài xuědìlǐ。 Zhèshí, Zhāng Qīng de línjū kànjiànle, jiù bǎ tā bēi huíjiā, gěi tā fàn chī, hái qǐng le yīshēng gěi tā kànbìng。 Zhāng Qīng hěn gǎndòng, juéxīn gǎidiào huài máobing。 Tā hé línjūmen yīqǐ nǚlì de gōngzuò, hěn kuài shēnghuó jiù biànhǎo le。 Rénmen kànjiànle dōu shuō: “zhēnshì yuǎnqīn bùrú jìnlín a!”

Idiom's Origin:

It has been said that in ancient times there was a couple who was good and kind. Their son, "Zhang Qing," however, only liked to goof off and not work. After the couple died, there was no one to look after Zhang Qing; he spent all his family's money and was forced to beg. One winter, Zhang Qing was both cold and hungry, and so he had to go to his uncle's house to beg him for food; but his uncle shooed him out the door. Zhang Qing had no place to go, and fainted in a snow-covered field. At that time, Zhang Qing's neighbor saw Zhang Qing and carried him home on his back, gave him food and found a doctor to treat his sickness. Zhang Qing was very touched, and was determined to give up his bad habits. Zhang Qing and his neighbors worked hard together, and Zhang Qing's life quickly changed for the better. When people saw him, they said, "Distant relatives are not like close neighbors!"

4. 一见钟情 yī jiàn zhōng qíng Love at first sight

解释：指男女之间一见面就产生爱情。也指对事物一看见就产生了感情。

Jiěshì: Zhǐ nánǚ zhījiān yījiànmiàn jiù chǎnshēng àiqíng。 Yě zhǐ duì shìwù yīkànjiàn jiù chǎnshēng le gǎnqíng。

Explanation: When a boy and a girl first meet, they immediately fall in love. Also, this may describe when one looks at an object and immediately likes it.

背景故事:

清代的《西湖佳话》这本书中写到：一位美丽的姑娘苏小小乘车在西湖游玩时，遇到一位男孩子，两人一见面就喜欢上了。苏小小对这个男孩子说了一句话，大概的意思是：“你对我的一见钟情，我的心里也有同样的感受”。此后，“一见钟情”一直延用到现在。

Bèijǐng gùshì:

Qīngdài de《Xī Hú jiāhuà》zhè běn shūzhōng xiědào: yī wèi měilide nǚhái Sū Xiǎoxiǎo chéngchē zài Xī Hú yóuwán shí, yùdào yī wèi nánháizi, liǎng rén yī jiànmiàn jiù xǐhuan shàng le。 Sū

Xiǎoxiǎo duì zhège nánháizi shuōle yī jù huà, dàgài de yìsi shì: “nǐ duì wǒ de yījiànzhōngqíng, wǒ de xīnlǐ yěyǒu tóngyàng de gǎnshòu”。Cǐhòu, “yījiànzhōngqíng”yīzhí yányòngdào xiànzài。

Idiom's Origin:

The book, "西湖佳话" ("Xī Hú Jiāhuà") was written during the Qing dynasty, and contained the following story: A beautiful girl named "Su Xiaoxiao" took a horse-drawn carriage to HangZhou's West Lake. When she was wandering around, she met a boy, and the two immediately liked each other. Su Xiaoxiao said to the boy something like this: "When you first saw me, you liked me, and I felt the same way." From then on, it was 'love at first sight.'

例子: 班里来了一位新同学, 我对他有“一见钟情”的感觉。

Lìzi: Bān lǐlái le yī wèi xīn tóngxué, wǒ duì tā yǒu“yījiànzhōngqíng”de gǎnjué。

Example: We have a new classmate; I took one look at him, and discovered it was love at first sight.

5. 不管三七二十一 **bù guǎn sān qī èr shí yī** No matter what

解释: 不顾一切, 不问是非情由。

Jiěshì: Bùgù yīqiè, búwèn shìfēi qíngyóu。

Explanation: Do something no matter what, without clearly understanding the situation.

例子:

小王: “明天要考试了, 我很紧张, 不想出去玩。”

小李: “咱们不管三七二十一, 先玩个痛快再说。”

Lìzi:

Xiǎo wáng: “Míngtiān yào kǎoshìle, wǒ hěn jǐnzhāng, bù xiǎng chū qù wán。”

Xiǎo lǐ: “Zánmen bù guǎn sānqī èrshíyī, xiān wán gè tòngkuai zài shuō。”

Example:

Xiao Wang: "I will take a test tomorrow; I am very nervous and so won't go out tonight."

Xiao Li: "Don't worry. No matter what, let's have fun first."

背景故事:

战国时期, 苏秦在劝齐国的王一起对抗秦国时, 谈到关于军队的数量。齐王觉得自己的军队不够, 苏秦说: “这个城市有七万户人家, 我计算了一下, 每户找三个男子来参军, 这就是三七二十一万兵, 就足够了。”

苏秦的这个算法显然是不对的, 全城不可能让每户都出三个男子去参军。就算有三个男子, 也不一定都能去, 因为有的已经老了、有的还很小、有的生病了等等。

后来, “三七二十一”的意思就变成不问清楚事情的原因就下决定。

Bèijǐng gùshi:

Zhànguó shíqī, Sū Qín zài quàn Qíguó de wáng yīqǐ duìkàng Qínguó shí, tándào guānyú jūnduì de shùliàng。Qí wáng juéde zìjǐ de jūnduì búgòu, Sū Qín shuō: “zhège chéngshì yǒu qīwàn hù

rénjiā, wǒ jìsuàn le yīxià, měi hù zhǎo sān gè nánzǐ lái cānjūn, zhè jiù shì sānqī èrshíyī wàn bīng, jiù zúgòu le。”

Sū Qín de zhège suànfǎ xiǎnrán shì búduì de, quánhéng bùkěnéng ràng měihù dōu chū sān gè nánzǐ qù cānjūn。 Jiù suàn yǒu sān gè nánzǐ, yě bù yīdìng dōu néng qù, yīnwèi yǒude yǐjīng lǎole, yǒude hái hěn xiǎo, yǒude shēngbìng le dēngdēng。 Hòulái, “sān qī èrshíyī” de yìsi jiù biànchéng búwèn qīngchǔ shìqíng de yuányīn jiù xià juédìng。

Idiom's Origin:

During the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.), Su Qin persuaded the King of Qi to fight against the Kingdom of Qin. The King of Qi thought his soldiers were not enough, so Su Qin advised the King of Qi, "This city has 70,000 families. According to my calculations, if each family provides three men to join the army, we'll have 210,000 soldiers, which will be enough."

However, Su Qin's method wasn't good. Not every family was able to provide three men. Even if they had three men, they were not necessarily all able to go to war because of age, sickness, or other reasons. Later, people used the phrase "three seven twenty-one" to express the term "no matter what." That is, one makes a decision before clearly understanding the situation.

6. 开夜车kāi yè chē Burning the midnight oil

解释： 为了学习或工作而熬夜。
Jiěshì: Wèile xuéxí huò gōngzuò ér áoyè。
Explanation: Stay up late studying or working.

例子：
小王：“考试复习得怎样啊？”
小李：“时间真不够用，只好开夜车了。”

Lìzi:
Xiǎo Wáng: “Kǎoshì fùxí de zěnyàng ah?”
Xiǎo Lǐ: “Shíjiān zhēn búgòu yòng, zhǐhǎo kāiyèchēle。”

Example:
Xiao Wang: "How did your studying for the test go?"
Xiao Li: "There wasn't enough time, so I had to burn the midnight oil."

7. 有借有还，再借不难 **yǒu jiè yǒu huán, zài jiè bù nán**
If you borrow something and then return it, it's easier to borrow the next time.

解释： 这句谚语用在两个朋友，或银行与客户之间，借的东西通常是财物方面。说明朋友之间借贷双方的诚信很重要。

Jiěshì: Zhè jù yànyǔ yòng zài liǎng gè péngyou, huò yínháng yǔ kèhù zhījiān, jiè de dōngxi tōngcháng shì cáiwù fāngmiàn。 Shuōmíng péngyou zhījiān huò jièdài shuāngfāng de chéngxìn hěn zhòngyào。

Explanation: This saying can be used between friends, or between a bank and its customers. The borrowed item is often some kind of monetary item. It shows that honesty between two parties is very important.

例子：

弟弟向大哥借钱，大哥一边把钱递给弟弟，一边爽快地说：“有借有还，再借不难”。

Lìzi:

Dìdì xiàng dàgē jièqián, dàgē yībiān bǎ qián dìgěi dìdì, yībiān shuǎngkuai de shuō “yǒu jiè yǒuhuán, zài jiè bù nán”。

Example:

The little brother wants to borrow money from his older brother. While giving the money to his little brother, the older brother said, "If you borrow something and then return it, it's easier to borrow the next time."

8. 情人眼里出西施 **qíng rén yǎn lǐ chū xī shī** **Love is blind!**

解释： 这句谚语用在两人在谈恋爱时，其中一方由于感情很深，觉得对方是最完美的。

Jiěshì: Zhè jù yànyǔ yòng zài liǎng rén zài tán ài shí, qízhōng yīfāng yóuyú gǎnqíng hěn shēn, juéde duìfāng shì zuì wánměi de。

Explanation: This saying is usually used between two people who fall in love. One of them is so in love with the other that he or she considers the other one perfect.

例子：

A: “我太崇拜他了，他很体贴，很绅士，很……”

B: “真是情人眼里出西施啊！”

Lìzi:

A: “Wǒ tài chóngbài tāle, tā hěn tǐtiē, hěn shēnshì, hěn……”

B: “Zhēnshì qíng rén yǎn lǐ chū Xī Shī ah!”

Example:

A: "I really admire him because he is so considerate, gentle, and……"

B: "Love is blind!"



备注： 西施是公元前六世纪时有名的美女。中国古代有四大美女，其中西施是第一位，所以西是“美”的代名词。

Bèizhù: Xī Shī shì gōngyuánqián liù shìjì shí yǒumíng de měinǚ。 Zhōngguó gǔdài yǒu sìdà měinǚ, qízhōng Xī Shī shì dìyī wèi, suǒyǐ Xī Shī shì“měi”de dài míngcí。

Supplementary information:

Xi Shi is a well-known beauty from the sixth century B.C. Ancient China has four famous beauties, of which Xi Shi is the most well-known. Thus, the name "Xi Shi" stands for beauty.

9. 热锅上的蚂蚁 **rè guō shàng de mǎ yǐ** Experiencing great anxiety due to worry.

解释： 这句谚语用在当一个人非常着急，且找不到解决方法的时候。

Jiěshì: Zhè jù yànyǔ yòng zài dāng yī gè rén fēicháng zháojí, qiě zhǎobudào jiějué fāngfǎ de shíhou。

Explanation: This saying can be used when a person is extremely anxious, and cannot find any way out.

例子：

A: “当时在车站买完票，找不到你的时候，我就像热锅上的蚂蚁，急死我了。”

B: “对不起，我错了，我不应该没有和你说一声就走了。”

Lìzi:

A: “Dāngshízài chēzhàn mǎi wán piào, zhǎobudào nǐ de shíhou, wǒ jiù xiàng règuō shàng de mǎyǐ, jí sǐ wǒle。”

B: “Duìbuqǐ, wǒ cuòle, wǒ bù yīnggāi méiyǒu hé nǐ shuō yīshēng jiù zǒu le。”

Example:

A: "When I was buying a ticket, I could not find you, and was anxious and worried."

B: "I'm sorry, I was wrong, I shouldn't have left without telling you."

10. 良药苦口，忠言逆耳 liáng yào kǔ kǒu , zhōng yán nì ěr**As good medicine can be bitter to the tongue, good advice can be unpleasant to the ear.**

解释： 这句话的目的在于教育人们要能勇敢地接受批评，现在常用来说明应该正确对待别人意见和批评。

Jiěshì: Zhè jù huà de mùdì zàiyú jiàoyù rénmen yào néng yǒnggǎn de jiēshòu pīpíng, xiànzài cháng yònglái shuōmíng yīnggāi zhèngquè duìdài biéren de yìjian hé pīpíng.

Explanation: This saying is used to teach people to bravely and humbly accept criticism. Today, it also teaches people to take criticism with a positive attitude.

例子：

A: “我知道我错了，如果早点听爸爸那些话，我就不会这样了，只是不知为什么，他的话，我听不进去。”

B: “我能理解你的感受，正所谓‘良药苦口，忠言逆耳’啊。”

Lìzi:

A: “Wǒ zhīdao wǒ cuòle, rúguǒ zǎodiǎn tīng bàba nàxiēhuà, wǒ jiù búhuì zhèyàng le, zhǐshì bùzhī wèishénme, tā dehuà, wǒ tīngbujìnqù。”

B: “Wǒ néng lǐjiě nǐ de gǎnshòu, zhèng suǒwèi ‘liángyàokǔkǒu, zhōngyánnì’ěr’ ah。”

Example:

A: "I realize I was wrong. If only I had listened to dad's words, I would not have messed up. But I don't know why I was unwilling to accept my dad's words."

B: "I can understand how you feel. This describes, 'As good medicine can be bitter to the tongue, good advice can be unpleasant to the ear.' "

11. 活到老,学到老 huó dào lǎo, xué dào lǎo Be a lifelong learner!

解释： 这句谚语鼓励我们应该一生都不断虚心学习。

Jiěshì: Zhè jù yànyǔ gǔlì wǒmen yīnggāi yīshēng dōu bùduàn xūxīn xuéxí.

Explanation: This saying encourages a person to never stop learning.

例子：

A: “在这位爷爷身上总是可以学到好多东西，认识他的人都这么说。”

B: “是啊，我也很敬佩他，他是一位活到老，学到老的好老师。”

Lìzi:

A: “Zài zhè wèi yéye shēnshang zǒngshì kěyǐ xuédào hǎoduō dōngxi, rènshi tā de rén dōu zhème shuō。”

B: “Shì a, wǒ yě hěn jìngpèi tā, tā shì yī wèi huó dào lǎo, xué dào lǎo de hǎo lǎoshī。”

Example:

A: "We can always learn a lot from this elderly man. All those who know him agree."

B: "You're right, I also highly respect him. He is a good teacher who is a lifelong learner!"

12. 心想事成 xīn xiǎng shì chéng Whatever you put your mind to, it will be successful.

解释：这是中国人在节日的时候，或为某人庆祝特别的日子的时候，常用的一个祝福的词语。

Jiěshì: Zhè shì Zhōngguó rén zài jié rì de shí hòu, huò wèi mǒu rén qìng zhù tè bié de rì zǐ de shí hòu, cháng yòng de yí gè zhù fú de cí yǔ.

Explanation: This can be said at a Chinese holiday celebration or to encourage someone celebrating a special life event.

例子：

A: “新年到了，祝你新的一年，万事如意，心想事成。”

B: “谢谢你，同样祝福你。”

Lì zǐ:

A: “Xīn nián dào le, zhù nǐ xīn de yī nián, wàn shì rú yì, xīn xiǎng shì chéng。”

B: “Xiè xie nǐ, tóng yàng zhù fú nǐ。”

Example:

A: "The New Year has arrived. In the New Year, I wish you well and I know that whatever you put your mind to, it will be successful."

B: "Thank you, and the same to you."