

BOOK REVIEWS

GENERAL

MIEDER, WOLFGANG and DEBORAH HOLMES. *"Children and Proverbs Speak the Truth": Teaching Proverbial Wisdom to Fourth Graders*. Supplement Series of *Proverbium*, Volume 7. Burlington: University of Vermont, 2000. 240 pages. Illustrations and photographs. Paper, n.p.

"Children and Proverbs Speak the Truth" should be read by people who like children, like proverbs, write project reports, want new ideas for teaching, oversee teaching programs, are interested in language, want to see an American elementary school classroom at work, teach English as a foreign language, and by non-native English speakers who are interested in conducting a similar project with proverbs in their mother tongues.

To say that this book is a complete report to the John Templeton Foundation that funded the project may be misleading (it sounds too technical); yet, it is true in a most interesting and informative way. From the opening pages that present the John Templeton Foundation request for proposals to the final pages of the parents' letters (feedback requested by the Foundation), this book details the experiment of teaching proverbs to children nine and ten years old, an age some maintain is not old enough to be able to understand and use the proverbs' metaphorical messages. It is a collaboration between a researcher (university professor) and teacher (fourth grade classroom teacher) to see whether moral principles in the form of proverbs can be taught to children at a young age.

The riches in this book may be best summarized by listing the contents. An asterisk (*) by the title indicates that these sections would be helpful for those already engaged in teaching proverbs or interested in doing so.

- Teaching and Learning Proverbs (Request for Proposals)
- Proposal to Teach Proverbs to Fourth Graders
- * Review of Modern Proverb Studies
- * Bibliography for Teaching and Learning Proverbs
- * 150 Frequently Used Anglo-American Proverbs
- * What is a Proverb?
- * (14 pages of proverbs in advertising and in cartoons)
- Interim Progress Report on Teaching Proverbs
- Group Pictures of Students and Teachers
- * Forty Illustrated Proverb Interpretations (Two from each of the twenty students: proverb/illustration drawn by student/student's interpretation)
- * Student Puppet Plays and Stories
- Proverb Knowledge Assessment Questionnaire (Complete the missing second half of the proverb. Test given at the beginning and at the end of the project)
- Final Student Questionnaire (Eight questions about the proverb study project)
- Teacher Reflections on Teaching Proverbs

* Proverb Pillow Made by the Students (for Wolfgang Mieder)
 Thank You Letter to the Students (Wolfgang Mieder)
 Several Letters from Parents

For several years I have taught proverbs in my first-year university oral communication courses. This book has given me many ideas on how to make teaching these courses more effective and entertaining. Although I have made a list of 40 proverbs for my course, the list of 150 proverbs provided in the book contains many proverbs that I will consider adding to my list or will use instead of the ones already on my list. The pages that present proverbs in advertising and cartoons will help introduce the idea of proverbs and show how proverbs appear in many forms in daily life. The forty illustrated proverb interpretations can be used for class discussion or serve as examples for an activity to draw out students' understanding of the proverbs they have learned. For example, one student's illustration of the proverb "There is nothing new under the sun," shows cooking over a campfire in the year 1505 and cooking on a stove in 2000 with the explanation: "I think this proverb means that there is nothing new in the world it just gets better" (159).

Which proverbs did children liked best? What value did they find in the proverbs? How did the proverbs enter their lives? The answers to these and many other questions are contained in this entertaining and informative report. The eighth question in the Final Student Questionnaire reads: "What would you like Professor Mieder to know about this project?" One student writes: "I would like Professor Mieder to know that I really enjoyed working with him. I think he's the nicest world famous I've ever met" (210). Read the book and you will understand why.

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OTTO, BEATRICE K. *Fools Are Everywhere: The Court Jester Around the World*.
 Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. xxiv + 420 pages.
 Illustrations, appendix, glossary of Chinese characters, bibliography, and
 index. Cloth US\$45.00/£28.50 ISBN 0-226-64091-4.

The title proclaims the thesis: fools are everywhere. (Not exactly everywhere, but "he is not the product of any particular time or place" [xvii].) The many examples range from the well-known British jester and his kind throughout the mainland of Europe, via Asia to China, which has the earliest and longest jester tradition. The examples follow each other without evaluation. Their existence shows the extent of the phenomenon and this mere existence appears to be enough to warrant inclusion in the text. Often the original texts are given so readers can appreciate the nuances that are lost in translation. As the chapters move on, Beatrice Otto sometimes offers conclusions, but generally the readers are left to make their own deductions.

The British court jester had antecedents in Greek and Roman fools. Sometimes retarded or physically handicapped, the fool from a lower social status was not a threat to the authority of the king. So the fool could speak his mind with impunity. Such fools were cultivated because kings realized their value in holding up a mirror to the kings' own stupidities. A wise word put as a joke from a fool could prevent the king from making a fool of himself. In Europe, a costume was added and the fool became a jester, known for his quick, insulting wit. He entertained the king and his court. He also served as an unofficial counselor representing