

# 17. KOREAN PROVERBS

GRADES: 4-6

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SUBJECT: Language Arts, Social Studies

TIME REQUIRED: One class period

## OBJECTIVES:

1. Analyze Korean proverbs and discuss their meaning.
2. Compare a Korean proverb to its Western counterpart.
3. Rewrite a Western proverb to reflect the Korean culture.

## MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Handout of Korean Proverbs

## BACKGROUND:

The Korean word for proverb is *soktam*. Korean proverbs, or folk sayings, provide Koreans with humor and metaphors. They are indirect ways to teach young people important lessons about integrity and cooperation. Proverbs also provide us a window into Korean culture and language.

## PROCEDURE:

1. Ask the class to define the word *proverb*, and then give an example or ask the class for one. An example might be, “slow and steady wins the race.” Ask for an interpretation. Explain that most cultures have their own proverbs that are used to teach integrity and cooperation among its people.
2. Tell the class that they are going to read, discuss, and analyze Korean proverbs.
3. Divide the class into groups of three to five, and pass out the student handout. Ask the student groups to read the Korean proverbs and write their interpretations for each one.
4. When finished, lead them to discuss their written interpretations. At this time you may want to give them the Korean interpretation to see how close they came to understanding and analyzing.
5. Next, have each group write below their interpretation what they think might be a Western counterpart for the Korean proverb.
6. Then use the Korean proverb key to check responses.
7. Lastly, put the list of Western proverbs on the board or a transparency. Have student groups rewrite each proverb as if it were a Korean proverb. They need to try and think like a Korean and create proverbs of a style similar to the original Korean proverbs.

## EVALUATION:

The completed student handout may be graded. Note observations of students by discussing their findings.

## ENRICHMENT:

Create a classroom Western-Eastern Proverb Book. Have each class member write a Korean and Western proverb, along with an illustration.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Holt, Daniel D. *Tigers, Frogs, and Rice Cakes: A Book of Korean Proverbs*. Auburn CA: Shen's

## HANDOUT — KOREAN PROVERBS

The Korean word for proverb, or folk saying, is *soktam*. See if you and your group can interpret the meaning for each of the following Korean proverbs. After discussing your interpretation, try to think of a Western counterpart. See example.

1. Korean: *Though it is small, the pepper is hot.* (write your interpretation below)

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Western Counterpart: *example — Good things come in small packages.*

2. Korean: *Speak of the tiger, and it appears.*

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Western Counterpart: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Korean: *Too many carpenters knock over the house.*

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Western Counterpart: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Korean: *Seven falls, eight rises.*

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Western Counterpart: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Korean: *Someone else's rice cake looks bigger.*

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Western Counterpart: \_\_\_\_\_

6. Korean: *Starting is half done.*

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Western Counterpart: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Korean Proverb Key**

1. Good things come in small packages.
2. Speak of the devil.
3. Too many cooks spoil the broth
4. If at first you don't succeed try, try, again.
5. The grass is always greener on the other side.
6. A stitch in time saves nine.

### **Western Proverbs**

Try rewriting as Korean proverbs.

1. Don't cut off your nose to spite your face.

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2. You can't see the forest for the trees.

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3. Don't cry over spilt milk.

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4. Out of the fire and into the pan.

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5. Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

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6. Haste makes waste.

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