



NEBRASKA BY HEART

Folk Arts • Traditional Arts • Folklife
Curriculum Unit • Grades 6–8
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Nebraska Proverbs

All languages have proverbs, which are short sayings that illustrate some general truth or wisdom with a metaphor, usually a comparison with some everyday thing or event. How many of these have you heard?

Some Proverbs in English

These are a selection of proverbs used in Nebraska as of 1932. They are taken from a much longer list in *Proverbial Lore in Nebraska* by Emma Louise Snapp, then a graduate student of University of Nebraska folklorist, Dr. Louise Pound.

[Snapp, Emma Louise *Proverbial Lore in Nebraska* Thesis (MA Dept. of English) University of Nebraska Lincoln 1932 (Available in UNL Love Library, Call # Tm Snapp EL 1932)]

Animal Proverbs

These were the largest group of any proverbs Ms. Snapp gathered in Nebraska in 1932. She thought it might be so because most people worked in agriculture at that time.

Every dog has his day.

His bark is worse than his bite.

Let sleeping dogs lie.

Cats that wear gloves catch no mice.

Curiosity killed the cat.

When the cat's away the mouse will play.

A short horse is soon curried.

Never look a gift horse in the mouth.

You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink.

Root, hog or die.

You can't make a silk purse from a sow's ear.

There is one black sheep in every flock.

Rats desert a sinking ship.

The worm will turn.

Chickens come home to roost.

What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Birds of a feather flock together.

The early bird catches the worm.

It's a silly fish that is caught twice with the same bait.

Weather Proverbs

There is always a calm before a storm.

April showers bring May flowers.

Every cloud has a silver lining.

If March comes in like a lamb, it will go out like a lion.

Lightning never strikes twice in the same place.

Make hay while the sun shines.

Rain before seven; dry before eleven.

Those who are weather-wise are rarely otherwise.

Love and Relationships

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

All is fair in love and war.

Beauty is only skin deep.

Faint heart ne'er won fair lady.

Marry in haste and repent at leisure.

Love is blind.

Two is company, three's a crowd.

Man's work is from sun to sun. But women's work is never done.

Some Proverbs in Spanish with English translations and equivalents

In Spanish, proverbs are called "dichos" which means "sayings." (see also Handout 1.6)

A donde fueres haz lo que vieres.

Wherever you go, do what you see. When in Rome do as the Romans do.

Al hierro caliente batir de repente.

Beat the hot iron at once. Strike while the iron is hot.

Beben agua en el mismo jarrito.

They drink water from the same little jug. They're thick as thieves.

Caras vemos, corazones no sabemos.

Faces we see, hearts we don't know. You can't judge a book by its cover.

Con estos bueyes hay que arar.

With these burros one must plow. One must make do with what one has.

Camarón que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente.

The shrimp that falls asleep, the current carries it away. Snooze and you lose.

De tal palo, tal astilla.

From such a log, such chips. A chip off the old block.

De la subida más alta es la caída más lastimosa.

Of the highest rise, the shortest fall. The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

En menos que canta un gallo.

In less time than the rooster crows. In the shake of a lamb's tail.

Esi es harina de otro costal.

That's flour from another sack. That's a different story.

Estar como perro en barrio ajeno.

To be like a dog in a neighbor's yard. To feel like a fish out of water.

El hijo de la gato, ratones mata.

The son of a cat kills mice. Like father, like son.

Más vale pájaro en mano que ciento volando.

A bird in the hand is worth more than a hundred flying. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

Más loco que una cabra.

Crazier than a goat. As mad as a hatter.