

HORSE PROVERBS

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In "Horsing Around" in the November 1984 *Word Ways*, Leonard Ashley challenged readers to come up with 24 proverbs about horses, citing three alleged examples. Two of his three examples are phrase, not genuine proverbs, and the third one uses the plural HORSES instead of the singular HORSE. Below are 25 authentic proverbs, all of them using the singular form HORSE. I have selected them from 172 horse proverbs in the following reference work:

Tilley, Morris Palmer. *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Collection of the Proverbs Found in English Literature and the Dictionaries of the Period*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1950.

This scholarly work includes, among the 172 examples, proverbial phrases, examples using the plural HORSES, and examples using terms such as HORSEBACK, HORSE KISSES, HORSELOAD, and HORSE LOAVES. The 25 following example are all "pure" ones, meeting the highest criteria that can be applied:

1. The best horse needs breaking, and the aptest child needs teaching
2. The best-shod horse does slip sometimes
3. The blind horse is hardiest
4. Choose a horse made - and a wife to make
5. Do not spur a free horse
6. A flea-bitten horse never tires
7. A gentle horse should be seldom spurred
8. A good horse draws himself and his master out of the mire
9. A grunting horse and a groaning wife never fail their master
10. He that cannot beat the horse beats the saddle
11. He that has a white horse and a fair wife never wants trouble
12. He will lie as fast as a horse will trot
13. The horse looks not on the hedge but the corn
14. The horse that draws after him his halter is not altogether escaped
15. The horse thinks one thing and he that saddles him another
16. A hungry horse makes a clean manger
17. It is a good horse that never stumbles
18. It is an ill horse that can neither whinny nor wag his tail
19. Look not a given horse in the mouth
20. A running horse needs no spur
21. A short horse is soon curried

22. Rub a galled horse on the back and he will kick
23. Where the horse lies down, there some hair will be found
24. You may beat a horse till he be sad and a cow till she be mad
25. You may know the horse by his harness

OPPERLANDSE TAAL- & LETTERKUNDE

Once every decade or so, there appears a seminal book in the field of recreational linguistics. Dmitri Borgmann's *Language on Vacation* (Scribner's, 1965) has been joined by a 203-page paperback with the above title, written by "Battus" (a pseudonym for H. Brandt Corstius) and published by Querido in 1981. The book is arranged in two parallel parts: expository background on various recreational linguistics topics (taalkunde), and literary examples or illustrative word lists (letterkunde). The author has somewhat arbitrarily divided recreational linguistics into nine chapters of ten topics each, each chapter headed by a -gram word:

- 1 Lipograms (plus isograms, pangrams, univocalics)
- 2 Palingrams (letter, syllable and word palindromes)
- 3 Doublegrams (anagrams, charades, spoonerisms)
- 4 Hypergrams (consecutive identical letters, n-grams, words)
- 5 N-Grams (word and syllable lengths, lexicostatistics)
- 6 Ungrams (grammatical oddities, blendwords, pleonasms)
- 7 Miragrams (tautonyms, eponyms, oxymorons, print errors)
- 8 Xenograms (interlingual wordplay, secret languages)
- 9 Epigrams (alphabet-order wordplay, rebuses, alternades)

The Dutch language is no real obstacle to understanding if one has a working knowledge of German; furthermore, one can often deduce the wordplay being discussed from a close examination of the lists or literary examples. I find it amazing that a country of only 14 million people has such a well-developed wordplay tradition. For a flavor of this book, the reader is referred to "Dutch Palindromes" in the November 1979 *Word Ways*, a translation of pp. 70-71 in Chapter 2; it is hoped that other translations will appear from time to time in future issues of *Word Ways*.

I know of noplac in the United States where this book can be obtained. If you don't have a friend visiting the Netherlands, a check for \$31.53 to uitgevers distributienentrum b.v., postbus 7203, 1007 je amsterdam, will produce a copy in approximately two months.