

Lesson 16
Zulu & Xhosa Words of Wisdom



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Introduction: Proverbs express the wisdom of Xhosa and Zulu people and are a key to understanding their past and present culture. Their languages are rich in proverbs that reflect traditional values. In the past, oral traditions were shared as a sense of community. Effective speech and social success often depended on a good command of proverbs. Now, these esteemed sayings communicate the accepted wisdom of the ages and therefore serve as a reliable authority in arguments and discussion.

Objectives: At the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to:

1. Compare proverbs from American culture that are similar to Zulu and Xhosa proverbs.
2. Identify the characteristics of proverbs/words of wisdom associated with the Zulu and Xhosa tribes in South Africa.
3. Create a visual representing an interpretation of a proverb.
4. Create a skit illustrating an interpretation of a proverb.

Suggested Grade Level: 6-12

Time: Four to five 50-minute class periods

Suggested Subjects: Language Arts, Global Studies, and Sociology

Materials:

- ◆ Proverb Sheet #1
- ◆ Proverb Sheet #2
- ◆ Proverb Keys
- ◆ Assessment - Metacognitive Reflections on Visual Skit
- ◆ Butcher Paper
- ◆ Pens/Colored Pencils/Markers
- ◆ Magazines to cut up
- ◆ Glue
- ◆ Other items as available

Instructional Procedures:

1. Define the term “proverb” on the overhead or chalkboard. Ask students to identify some characteristics and purposes of proverbs.
2. Ask students for examples of proverbs in American culture. List them on a transparency or explain that proverbs are “universal” in all cultures, that they offer interesting insights into the “universality” of wisdom.
3. Share examples of proverbs from other countries (see bibliography).

4. Distribute Proverb Sheet #1 and have students complete it individually.
5. Organize students into groups of three or four. Instruct each small group to discuss and interpret the proverbs. Next, have students identify animals, items, people connected to the culture.
6. Have each group select a spokesperson to share their group's interpretations with whole class. Describe the situation of the statement in a literal sense.
7. Hand out Proverb Sheet #2. In the same groups, have students attempt to interpret the proverbs. Have students identify the "learning" that should come from the proverbs.
8. Assign each group one of the proverbs. Have each group create a visual, using a variety of materials, to illustrate their interpretation of their proverb. Another option is to have the group create a short skit, using props, illustrating their interpretation of the proverb.
9. Ask each group to present their visual or skit for each proverb. Conclude by discussing each group's interpretations. Lastly, share literal interpretations from the teacher's key.

Assessment: Meta-cognitive reflection on the visual/skit. (Included)

Bibliography:

<http://www.buildingwithbooks.org/resources/quotes/proverbs.html>

<http://www.afriprov.org/index.htm>

<http://www.btinternet.com/~alexandergrant/quotes/proverbial.htm>

<http://www.spiritwalk.org/quotes/vansell/proverbs1.htm>

<http://www.sacredtexts.com/afr/xft/xft27.htm>

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/wvs/views/proverbs/africa.html> - Kenya

Proverb Sheet #1

Xhosa Proverbs:

1. A brand burns him who stirs it up

similar American proverb: _____

2. You have cast away your own for that which you are not sure of.

similar American proverb: _____

Zulu Proverbs:

3. Travelling brings forth a male calf.

similar American proverb: _____

4. You begin with the meal before the water is boiling.

similar American proverb: _____

5. The cow licks the one that licks her.

similar American proverb: _____

6. Copying everyone else all the time, the monkey one day cut his throat.

similar American proverb: _____

Key - Proverb Sheet #1

Xhosa Proverbs/Sayings:

1. A brand burns him who stirs it up

similar American proverb: Let sleeping dogs lie

2. You have cast away your own for that which you are not sure of.

similar American proverb: A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush

Zulu Proverbs/Sayings:

3. Travelling brings forth a male calf.

similar American proverb: A rolling stone gathers no moss

4. You begin with the meal before the water is boiling.

similar American proverb: You count your chickens before they are hatched

5. The cow licks the one that licks her.

similar American proverb: Kindness brings its own reward

6. Copying everyone else all the time, the monkey one day cut his throat.

*similar American saying: If everyone jumped off a cliff, would you? or
Monkey see, monkey do*

Proverb Sheet #2

Zulu Proverbs and Sayings:

1. The last partridge to rise gets the most sticks thrown at it.

interpretation: _____

2. Every stream has its source.

interpretation: _____

3. Do not speak of a rhinoceros if there is no tree nearby.

interpretation: _____

4. The buck has got out of the pot.

interpretation: _____

5. You are sharp on one side like a knife.

interpretation: _____

6. Almost is not eaten.

interpretation: _____

7. I cannot hear what you say for the thunder of what you are.

interpretation: _____

Xhosa Proverbs and Sayings:

8. One fly does not provide for another.

interpretation: _____

9. It is not every one who is a son of Gaika.

interpretation: _____

10. The walls have come into collision.

interpretation: _____

11. It is a cob stripped of maize in an ashpit.

interpretation: _____

12. He has gone in pursuit of the (fabulous) birds of the sea.

interpretation: _____

13. You are creeping on your knees to the fireplace.

interpretation: _____

14. One does not become great by claiming greatness.

interpretation: _____

15. You will shed tears with one eye like a monkey.

interpretation: _____

Key - Proverb Sheet #2

Zulu Proverbs and Sayings:

1. The last partridge to rise gets the most sticks thrown at it. (Esuka 'muva ikolwa izagila)

interpretation. In hunting, the natives bring down birds by throwing sticks (izagila) at them. So in war, the last to run is most likely to be killed, etc. Intendele, a partridge, is understood. Kolwa means besides belief also, satisfaction, affliction, etc.

2. Every stream has its source.

interpretation: What happens now has a beginning someplace else; cause and effect.

3. Do not speak of a rhinoceros if there is no tree nearby.

interpretation: Don't say something unless you can back it up; some things are better left unsaid; don't go out on a limb unless you have a safety net

4. The buck has got out of the pot. (qina lipum' embizeni)

interpretation: - Literally, the buck has escaped the hunter just when he thought he had it. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip.

5. You are sharp on one side like a knife. (Uhlakanipa nganhlanye njengomese)

interpretation: You are clever, but still not all that you would wish us to think you.

6. Almost is not eaten.

interpretation: Don't put the cart before the horse

7. I cannot hear what you say for the thunder of what you are.

interpretation: A person's overbearing personality drowns out the message they want to convey.

Xhosa Proverbs and Sayings:

8. One fly does not provide for another. (Akuko mpukane inqakulela eny)

interpretation: A saying of the industrious to the idle, meaning that each should work for himself as the flies do.

9. It is not every one who is a son of Gaika. (Izinto azimntaka Ngqika zonke)

interpretation: Gaika was at the beginning of this century the most powerful chief west of the Kei. This proverb signifies that all are not equally fortunate.

10. The walls have come into collision. (Indonga ziwelene)

interpretation: Said of any dispute between persons of consequence.

11. It is a cob stripped of maize in an ashpit. (Ngumpa wezala)

interpretation: Said of a worthless character.

12. He has gone in pursuit of the (fabulous) birds of the sea. (Umke namangabangaba aselwandhle)

interpretation: A saying applied to one whose ambitious aspirations are not likely to be realized.

13. You are creeping on your knees to the fireplace. (Ukasela eziko)

interpretation: This saying is used as a warning to any one who is following a course that must lead to ruin. It is as if one said, "You are like an infant crawling towards the fire circle (in the middle of a Xhosa hut), who is sure to get burnt."

14. One does not become great by claiming greatness. (Ubukulu abubangwa)

interpretation: This proverb is used to incite any one to the performance of noble deeds. It means, a man's actions, not his talk and boasting, are what people judge of his greatness by.

15. You will shed tears with one eye like a monkey. (Uyakulila ngasonye uxele inkawu)

interpretation: A warning used to deter any one from being led into a snare of any kind. It is said that when a monkey is caught in a trap he cries, but that tears come out of one eye only.

Assessment - Metacognitive Reflections on Visual/Skit:

1. How did your group decide on the theme of your visual/skit?
2. What aspects of the visual/skit do you think work best?
3. What would you try to improve, if you had more time or could figure out how to do it?
4. State, in a sentence or two, what main thing you wanted your audience to understand from your visual/skit.
5. What did you learn from completing this assignment?
6. How would you have changed this assignment to make it a better experience for students?
7. What grade would you give this visual/skit? Why?

Essay:

8. Think of a time in your life when one of the proverbs applied to you. When was it, what happened and what were the results of the situation? What did you learn from the experience?