Cookie Chronicles

SCRAMBLED FORTUNES

Ben Yokoyama has a really hard time figuring out what his fortune cookie fortunes actually mean. Help him match the proverbs in the first column with the meanings in the second column!

A picture is worth a thousand words.

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Two wrongs don't make a right.

Look before you leap.

One man's junk is another man's treasure.

Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

1. Don't assume things are going to turn out the way you think they will.
2. It's easier to make people like you by being kind than by being rude or mean.
3. Sometimes it's easier to explain something by showing it than by explaining it.
4. Consider the consequences before you do something.
5. What might seem worthless to one person can be important or valuable to someone else.
6. What you already have is more valuable than something you wish you had.
7. When you're working in a group, each person has to do their part, or the whole group will fail.
8. When someone treats you badly, treating them badly in return doesn't actually make things better.

Teacher Guide

Scrambled Fortunes

This exercise is meant to prepare your students for the upcoming assembly on the book Ben Yokoyama and the Cookie of Doom *by Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr.*

The book is about a literal-minded boy who misinterprets the meaning of a fortune cookie fortune—Live each day as if it were your last. Believing he has only one day left to live, Ben tries to fit a lifetime of hopes and dreams into a single day. By the end of the book, he learns the fortune's actual meaning—and a few other important lessons about friendship and life.

Objectives

1. Introduce students to the concept of fortune cookies
2. Explain that many fortune cookie fortunes are written as proverbs, which are short phrases that convey truth or advice—and that often include metaphorical language.
3. Challenge students to match well-known proverbs to their actual meanings.

Instructions:

1. Ask students if anyone knows what a fortune cookie is, then reinforce or redirect by reading the following (or putting it in your own words).

   Fortune cookies are small, crunchy treats often served as dessert at Chinese restaurants. They are hollow inside and contain a small strip of paper that offers a prediction or advice. Many of these fortunes are short, wise-phrases called proverbs. It's helpful to know what they mean, because you'll hear them all the time, but their meaning isn't always clear.

2. Hand out the worksheet and explain to the students that you're going to see if they can outsmart Ben.

   In a few weeks, we're going to be having an assembly with Matthew Swanson and Robbi Behr, the author and illustrator of *Ben Yokoyama and the Cookie of Doom.* In the book, Ben gets confused about the meaning of the fortune in his fortune cookie. We're going to do an exercise that lets you read a list of fortune cookie fortunes and see if you can figure out what they actually mean.

3. Walk through each of the proverbs, explaining the metaphors within each—either in your own words or using the following language as a guide.

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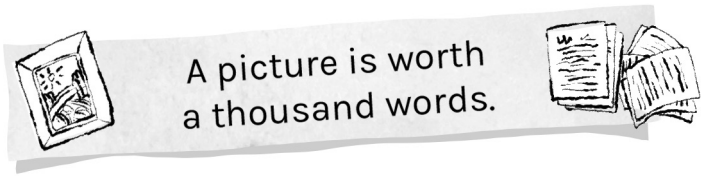
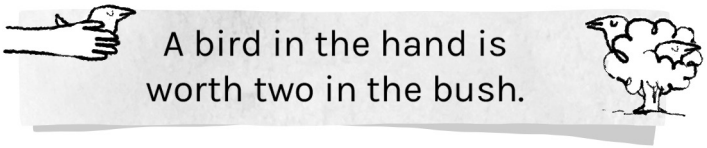


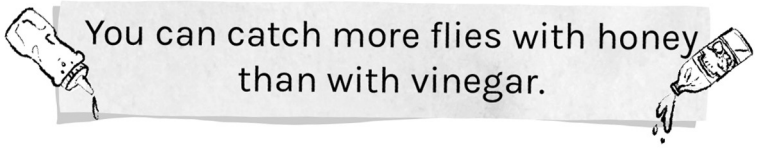
Definition: Sometimes it's easier to explain something by showing it than by explaining it.

Extended discussion: You can get lots of information really quickly by looking at something. Just one glance at a tree lets you know it's size, shape, and color, for example. It would take so much longer to learn all that by reading a description of the tree. But words are also wonderful! Reading a story gives you a chance to create your own picture of something in your head. It's not that pictures and words are better or worse than one another. They just do different things!



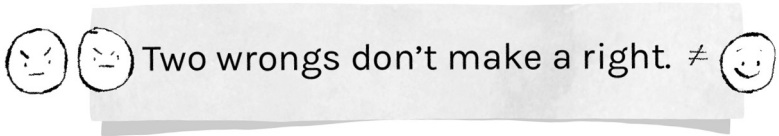
Definition: What you already have is more valuable than something you wish you had.

Extended discussion: It's easy to overlook or take for granted something you already have. Especially when you wish you had something else. But if you give up the thing you have while trying to get something you think is better, you might end up with empty hands! (And often times the things we think are better actually aren't.)



Definition: It's easier to make people like you by being kind than by being rude or mean.

Extended discussion: The proverb isn't actually talking about flies, it's talking about people and the best way to treat them. As you might know, vinegar is sour. But honey is sweet. The proverb is reminding you that you're more likely to get along with other people by treating them with kindness (sweetly) than by treating them badly (in a way that is sour).



Definition: When someone treats you badly, treating them badly in return doesn't actually make things better.

Extended discussion: If someone shoves you and you decide to shove them back, you both get hurt and probably get in trouble, too. There's usually a different way to respond to the problem that doesn't involve making things worse. (If you're not sure what to do, a teacher or family member can help you figure it out.)

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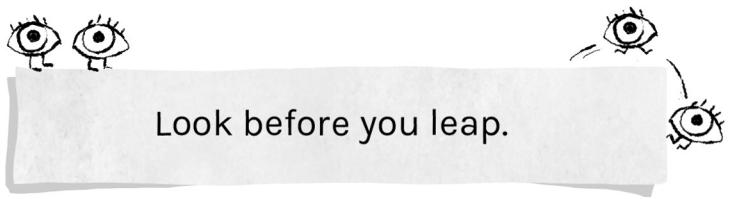
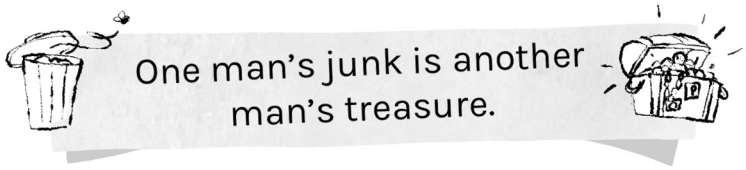


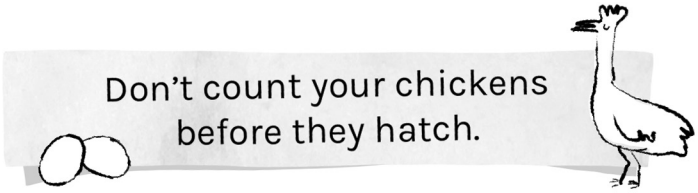
Definition: Consider the consequences before you do something.

Extended discussion: What if you were on the diving board about to jump into the pool. Wouldn't you check first to make sure there was water in the pool? This proverb is trying to remind you to do think about what might happen before you do something—especially something that might be risky or dangerous. Another example: make sure you find out if someone's dog is friendly before you pet it.



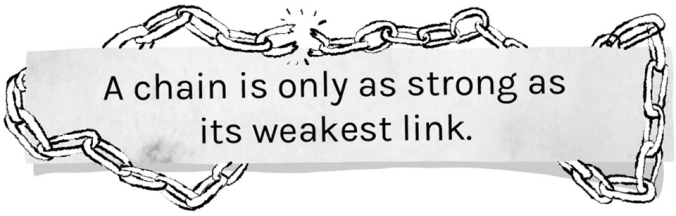
Definition: What might seem worthless to one person can be important or valuable to someone else.

Extended discussion: What if someone is getting rid of a bunch of books because they're moving into a smaller house with fewer bookshelves? Even though they're throwing them away, those books are like treasure to you! Everyone gets to choose what they think is interesting, useful, or valuable. It's a matter of opinion. Never let someone else tell you what you can or should care about. You get to decide!



Definition: Don't assume things are going to turn out the way you think they will.

Extended discussion: The previous proverb was about appreciating what you have. This one is about not taking for granted what you don't have yet! If the farmer assumes that every egg in the henhouse is going to turn into a chicken, he might be disappointed, because not every egg hatches. Similarly, be careful about assuming you know how something is going to turn out.



Definition: When you're working in a group, each person has to do their part or the whole group will fail.

Extended discussion: Think about a bike chain. Even though it's really strong, if any one piece of it breaks, it won't keep your bike safe—no matter how strong the other parts are. For a group to succeed, every person has to do their part.