

# Proverbs Reflect Culture

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## Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Analyze elements of US culture as reflected in proverbs.
  - Analyze elements of Brazilian culture as reflected in proverbs.
  - Write an essay related to the proverbs using one of several prompts.
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## Materials

- Student Handout: **Proverbs Frequently Used in the United States**
  - Student Handout: **Proverbs Frequently Used In Brazil**
  - Teacher Handout : **Cultural Traits to Facilitate Discussion**
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## Activities

1. Distribute the student handout entitled **Proverbs from the United States**.
    - a. Direct students to silently read these proverbs.
    - b. After the reading is completed, ask students to explain the meaning of each proverb. (Take the time to explain any they don't know.)
    - c. Ask students to give examples from their own lives that exemplify the proverbs.
  2. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4.
    - a. Using the following guiding questions, direct each group to analyze the elements of our culture that are reflected in the proverbs.
      - What key words do you see in several of the proverbs?
      - Which ideas and values are important for those who use these proverbs?
    - b. Once the groups have reached their conclusions, ask each group to share the key words and values they identified, asking each group to support their opinions with specific examples. (Record their responses on the chalkboard.)
  3. Repeat these 4 steps with the Brazilian proverbs.
  4. Concluding activity: Using one of the following prompts, direct students to write an essay based on the work they have done:
    - a. Compare proverbs used in the US and Brazil and the ways that they reflect the respective cultures. Use specific examples of proverbs and cultural elements to support what you write.
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**Activities  
(continued)**

- b. Select two or three proverbs (from the same culture) that you think have a similar message. Explain the message citing examples from life that illustrate the proverbs
  - c. Select one or two proverbs from each culture (a total of 2 – 4 proverbs). Explain how they are similar (or different) using specific examples from daily life that support your opinion.
5. Alternate or Enrichment Activity for those who have access to digital cameras.
- a. Have students take pictures in their home, school, and/or neighborhood to illustrate a proverb, writing an explanation of what is shown and the proverb it represents. Direct students to present the pictures and related written explanations to the class.
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## Proverbs Frequently Used in the United States

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- Pull yourself up by your bootstraps.
  - Time is money.
  - A stitch in time saves nine.
  - A penny saved is a penny earned.
  - Find a penny pick it up; the rest of the day you'll have good luck.
  - Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.
  - Don't count your chickens before they hatch.
  - Good fences make good neighbors.
  - Too many cooks spoil the broth.
  - There's more than one way to skin a cat.
  - A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.
  - Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today.
  - Ignorance is bliss.
  - The early bird gets the worm.
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## Proverbs Frequently Used in Brazil

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Portuguese	English Translation
Cavalo dado não se olha os dentes.	Don't smell a gift horse's mouth.
En quanto você vai com a farinha eu venho como o bolo.	When you start with flour cake results.
Nos melhores vidros estão os melhores perfumes.	In the smallest bottles is the best perfume. (Often used to describe small people.)
Nadou, nadou e morreu na praia.	I swam and swam and died on the beach. (After much effort, I failed at the last moment.)
Quanto mais eu rezo mais assombração me aparece.	The more I pray, the more ghosts appear. (The more I try, the more problems come.)
Você colhe o que você planta.	You reap what you sow.
Diz-me com quem andas dir-te-ei quem és.	Tell me who you spend time with, and I will tell you who you are.
O apressado come cru.	He who eats in a hurry, eats raw food.
Uma andorinha só não faz vero.	One bird alone doesn't make a flock.
O que os olhos não vêem o coração não sente.	That which the eyes don't see, the heart doesn't feel. (For example, if a wife doesn't see that her husband is having an affair, she can pretend not to know and not be hurt.)
Acabou em pizza.	It all ends in pizza. (This most often refers to investigations into corruption because after months of work, the investigators usually have a party (pizza) and announce there is no corruption.)

# Cultural Traits to Facilitate Discussion

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The cultural elements listed below are generalizations. That means that, in both countries, they are generally true, but do not fit all people. Please be careful not to assume that everyone agrees or lives by these principles!

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## **Cultural elements reflected in U.S. proverbs**

- Time drives our society and most people.
  - Money is more important than most other things.
  - People are generally optimistic and hopeful about the future.
  - Individual effort will result in an improved life or the resolution of a problem.
  - Most people believe that hard and dedicated work is important and brings results.
  - The self-made man is valued.
  - Individual rights and desires are often more important than the community as a whole.
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## **Cultural elements reflected in Brazilian proverbs**

- Relationships with others are very important.
- Don't hurt others' feelings.
- People value living and working collectively.
- They prefer to things well.
- People often judge by appearance.
- Corruption is a huge problem in Brazil.
- Many people are poor with many problems. They feel that that even great effort will not change their situation. This is often reflected in a fatalistic attitude.