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Proverbs: A Handbook (International Folkloristics)

Wolfgang Mieder

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The book comprises a comprehensive survey of the multifaceted nature of proverbs as colorful expressions of folk wisdom. The first part deals with the definition and classification of proverbs, including such matters as proverb markers and meanings, origin and dissemination, traditional forms related to proverbs, and types of proverb collections. The second part presents essays on the origin, history and modern use of a variety of proverbs. There are also representative lists of proverbs from different cultures and languages, Native American proverbs, African American proverbs, etc. The third part discusses the fascinating scholarship on proverbs that includes empirical studies, linguistic and semiotic considerations, proverb performance in social contexts, issues of culture, folklore, and history, the appearance of proverbs in politics, the expression of stereotypes and worldview in proverbs, the anthropological, sociological, and psychological study of proverbs, the use of proverbs in folk narratives and literature, proverbs in religion and wisdom literature, pedagogical use of proverbs, the illustrations of proverbs in art, and the appearance of proverbs in the modern age of mass media and popular culture. The fourth part contains chapters on the use and function of proverbs in the writings of Lord Chesterfield, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Diickens, Winston S. Churchill, and Bertolt Brecht. There are also sections on proverb poems and songs, proverbs in caricatures, cartoons, comics, advertisements, and newspaper headlines. An extensive bibliography of major studies and collections as well as name, subject, and proverb indices conclude this inclusive study.

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