



American Proverbs About Women: A Reference Guide (Education; 70)

Lois Kerschen

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Proverbs supposedly contain the wisdom of the common folk?eternal truths to be passed down through the ages. They are short, often humorous, expressions that teach lessons or give practical advice, and they are perhaps the best indicators of attitudes and beliefs of any form of folklore. Not only reflecting culture, proverbs also perpetuate the cultural dictates of the past, including the fears, prejudices, and misconceptions of their predominately male authors. Because they are generalizations, proverbs sometimes impede accurate observation and analysis and stifle original thought. Like many other traditions and cultural practices, proverbs often promote misleading stereotypes of women. This reference book collects more than 800 American proverbs about women and analyzes their significance.

The volume begins with introductory chapters that explore the relationship between proverbs and culture and the image of women presented in proverbs. The chapters that follow are devoted to particular categories, such as wives and marriage, mothers and daughters, women as property, and old women and grandmothers. Each chapter includes a brief introductory overview and a listing of proverbs relating to the topic. The proverbs were gathered through an extensive review of journal articles, proverb dictionaries, and other literature. In addition to true proverbs, the volume includes some phrases, sayings, and proverbial comparisons. Not included are expressions that contain words like mother or daughter but do not really describe women or comment about them. The book then presents a concluding analysis of how American proverbs portray women, an alphabetical index of proverbs, and an extensive bibliography.

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