



The Illustrated Book of Sayings: Curious Expressions from Around the World

Ella Frances Sanders

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From the author of the New York Times bestseller, *Lost in Translation*, come this collection of 52 artistic renderings of sayings from around the world that illuminate the whimsical nature of language.

Ella Frances Sanders's first book, *Lost in Translation*, captured the imagination of readers with its charmingly illustrated words that have no direct English translation. Now, the New York Times-bestselling author is back with an illustrated collection that addresses the nuances of language in the form of sayings from around the world. From the French idiom "to pedal in the sauerkraut," (i.e., "to spin your wheels,") to the Japanese idiom "even monkeys fall from trees" (meaning, "even experts can be wrong"), Sanders presents sayings that reveal the remarkable diversity, humor, and poignancy of the world's languages and cultures.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Illustrated Book of Sayings: Curious Expressions from Around the World Details

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From Reader Review The Illustrated Book of Sayings: Curious Expressions from Around the World for online ebook

Bianca St. says

I received this as a gift from my Italian friend who knows that I am completely amazed and enthralled by languages and strange untranslatable words and idioms. I really enjoyed this and even chuckled at some of the Romanian expressions they explained which made me realise how silly my mother tongue can sound to others. Overall, this is a great gift for the polyglot/ linguist in your life!

Morgan says

I received this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

You know it's going to be a good one when it includes my favorite: [image not from book]

(Polish) "Not my circus, not my monkeys."

A lovely gift book for the word-lovers in your life. There are phrases and expressions from multiple languages -- some I had never heard of, so I was glad that each was prefaced not only with a discussion of the expression itself (and potentially others that are similar in other languages), but also a little about where the language is spoken, the people who speak it, and where it takes its roots from.

I think the only thing that keeps this from being a five star version of this sort of book is that there were times when the text (in either the original language or the English translation) was a bit difficult to read. It didn't have much definition to keep it from blending in with the drawings/backgrounds.

PattyMacDotComma says

5★

A beautifully illustrated, entertaining picture book about the quirky ways we express ourselves in different languages and cultures.

For example, I grew up in the US being told, if I were blocking someone's view, "You make a better door than a window." In German, I learned the expression "Your father was not a window-maker." I suspect Germany had the saying first.

In this book, the author often mentions just this sort of similarity. On the left-hand page, she gives us a brief, often funny, paragraph or two about the expression, with a bit of history and some comparisons with similar idioms in other languages, many of which are just as peculiar.

On the right-hand side, opposite the text, is a full page drawing showing the saying in a colourful, funny way. The words are there in both the original language (including those with other alphabets) and then the English translation.

Here's an example.

"Many idioms translate oddly, but Romanian ones can be exceptionally confusing when translated into English, and without an explanation, we wouldn't have much hope of understanding them. But my, are they wonderful."

'To pull someone out of their watermelons' is to drive them crazy, a bit nuts.

While the rest of us are surprised, Romanians' faces fall off (I-a picat fa?a); they do not lose their tempers but instead, their mustard will jump off (Îi sare mu?tarul).

They will not tell you to stop wasting time but to stop rubbing the mint (A freca menta), and a Romanian will not lie to you but will sell you doughnuts (Vinde gogo?i).

Static on your TV in Romania? 'The TV has fleas!' (Televizorul are purici).

And instead of catching your breath? You are pulling your soul (A-?i trage sufletul). The list goes on in a fascinating fashion."

Thanks to NetGalley and Ten Speed Press for an advanced review copy of this very attractive publication. Language-lovers will get a kick out of it.

P.S. On Amazon Australia and UK, this seems to be called Speaking in Tongues: Curious Expressions from Around the World, which appears to be the same book.

Asun says

Un precioso recorrido por las distintas expresiones que esconden los diversos idiomas del mundo. Las ilustraciones son muy alegres y logradas y la explicación que acompaña a cada uno de los dichos es muy entretenida.

Kristine (A Cozy Booknook) says

This is a delightful book. The title caught my attention right away, I enjoy learning about the origin of phrases and their meanings. This book is filled with phrases from around the globe and their meanings.

Each of the sayings explored in this book are presented in their original language with the translation beneath it. There is an accompanying illustration that is fun and witty. The author writes with humor to get the point across of the idiom. This is a fun way to learn about other languages and cultures.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher via Blogging for Books. I voluntarily chose to submit a

review for this book.

Vicki says

This book is the perfect little read when you want something new, fresh and interesting. Saying from all over the world packed into a small book that really was a joy to read. The sayings remind me of other ones that have been adapted here, but seeing them as a native speaker sees them, was lovely. where we might say a wolf in sheep's clothing the Japanese say you are wearing a cat on your head. Same premise, different animal.

The sayings are cute and show in the native language and then are translated into English. It is a nice gift for anyone that loves different sayings and different cultures.

I was provided this book by Blogging for Books and have posted my honest opinion of my own free will.

karen says

To feel like an octopus in a garage - Spanish

another book by the woman who wrote Lost in Translation: An Illustrated Compendium of Untranslatable Words from Around the World, which i recently reviewed here.

this one involves 52 idioms from different languages instead of single words, which is a fantastic idea, since every language has idioms that are just plain crazytown, and it's fun to check out other cultures through their idioms and wonder just what the heck they mean and where they came from. english is full of idioms that seem nonsensical, but they're so much a part of common exchange, i personally don't spend too much time thinking about their origins or marveling at how odd they are, so books like these remind me to be more conscious of things i just say without even registering their linguistic oddity or imagery.

Some days honey, some days onions - Arabic

although i am not at all surprised that this is a swedish saying, as i am well aware how much the swedes value sandwiches:

Sliding in on a shrimp sandwich - Swedish

in the last book, she transliterated the words, but in this one, they appear in their original script. i think if she does a third book, i would like to see it with both, as well as a handy pronunciation guide. i definitely like seeing the saying in its original, but i got zero chance of ever stumbling on how to pronounce this:

To wear a cat on your head - Japanese

nor can i pronounce unfamiliar foreign words even when i do recognize the letters:

To pace around hot porridge like a cat - Finnish

and i do so want to use some of these, especially this one:

Not my circus, not my monkeys - Polish

and i know the internet is a wonderful place to learn things like this, but i am a lazy-face, and i can't go skipping all over the world wide web just to learn how to pronounce stuff. that's what books are for!

in the review for the last book, i gave the picture, the word, and the definition, but because these involve more detailed explanations, this time i think i'm just going to let the pictures and the idioms speak for themselves. which is frustrating, but those of you who are less lazy than i am can surely discover their meanings for yourselves.

having JUST said that, there are a couple i will explain, because i want to discuss them a bit:

To feed a donkey sponge cake - Portuguese

which is an idiom analogous to 'casting pearls before swine.' i understand the intention, but look at how happy that donkey is with that sponge cake! much happier than a pig confronted with some oyster-wart. it seems like feeding a donkey sponge cake would be a totally worthwhile act! this idiom is broken!

and

I will eat your liver - Farsi

this one i like because it seems so sinister and threatening, but in usage, it's actually quite sweet - equivalent examples the book gives are, "I could just eat you up," or "You are my heart," or "I would do anything for you." but it's much more badass in farsi and makes me think of The Taste of a Man.

many of these involve animals in some way, so points for that:

Even monkeys fall from trees - Japanese

Who saw the peacock dance in the jungle? - Hindi

Into the mouth of the wolf! - Italian

To travel as a rabbit - Finnish

In a river full of piranhas, caiman swim on their backs - Brazilian Portuguese

The bear dances there! - German

and apart from the english one included which does not count, there were only two i'd ever encountered before:

I'm on the pig's back - Irish

and

I'm returning to my sheep - French

now i will leave you with two opportunities to make LGM jokes:

To blow little ducks - Latvian

and

It's blowing half a pelican - Danish

other languages included are:

Dutch, Korean, Serbian, Hungarian, Indonesian, Mandarin, Kashmiri, Australian English, Hebrew, Maltese, Ga, Yiddish, Tibetan, Mongolian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Ukrainian, Czech, Russian, Turkish, Armenian, Norwegian, Swahili, Colombian Spanish, Igbo, Filipino, and Aromanian.

so, another fun word-nerd book to file away in the "holidays are approaching" portion of your mind.

Nat says

This book first captured my attention when it mentioned Brandon Stanton's photography project (and book) Humans of New York in the introduction. **HONY** is one of my all-time favorite books, so that was a great surprise for me to see in the very first pages.

The Illustrated Book of Sayings is an introduction to some of the world's strangest and most wonderful expressions, which is truly such an iconic and original idea to explore.

Sanders presents sayings that reveal the remarkable diversity, humor, and poignancy of the world's languages and cultures.

And here are a few of my favorites:

(P.S. it was really hard choosing which to feature because they're all so witty!!)

Japanse:

This saying points out that *"everybody gets it wrong sometimes, that even the cleverest among us, the most skilled, the most practiced—they still make mistakes."*

Indonesian:

"This, as one might expect, is a way of multitasking, of doing more than one thing at the same time."

Dutch:

"This Dutch expression perfectly encapsulates the condition of being neither here or there."

Hebrew:

"This is, more or less, the Hebrew version of "Out of sight, out of mind," but instead of speaking about the mind, it speaks of the heart."

Ga:

"It's a roundabout way of suggesting that if you don't have anything helpful to say or don't plan on making any kind of contribution, don't then criticize someone who's trying to get things done, and in doing so may make genuine mistakes."

French:

This saying is used *"in conversation when you're going horribly off topic while trying to make a point and need to assure those you're talking to that you are getting back to the aforementioned point."*

@Me when I go off topic in my reviews... for important reasons, of course.

Italian:

"If a head is full of crickets, it's full of what some would call nonsense—of whims, of fantasy, of strange ideas and desires and flights of fancy."

Yiddish:

"This widely used idiomatic phrase essentially means "Stop bothering me!"

Bulgarian:

"Little by little, greatness—that's essentially what this Bulgarian proverb means."

Ukrainian:

"When used in conversation, this expression means that you don't know anything about what is being said—that it's not your business."

Hindi:

This saying essentially means that *"those who have little real knowledge tend to make a great song and dance about it all; who tend to proclaim things loudly and jump about or wave their arms in great sweeping motions, gesticulating wildly and often without cause."*

Russian:

If a Russian tells you he's going to show you where the crayfish spends the winter, *"he is going to show you what's what, to give you a piece of his mind, and you'd better watch out."*

Turkish:

"The idea behind this saying is that we begin to resemble the company we keep, and that we mature by learning from those around us."

Swahili:

"This proverb aims to teach that even after a long and arduous journey, the water of the sea is never going to quench a person's thirst."

I left this book with a newfound respect for languages. And I appreciate all the motivation I can get when it comes to learning a new language.

ARC kindly provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying **The Illustrated Book of Sayings, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!**

Manybooks says

While I have indeed found especially the linguistic, historical details and contents regarding the presented, diverse worldwide idiomatic expressions interesting (and yes, also entertaining and a generally quick and diverting enough read), there are two rather heavy-duty and for and to me massively annoying and frustrating issues with Ella Frances Sanders' The Illustrated Book of Sayings that allow me on an entirely personal level to only consider a one and a half star rating at best (and actually rounded down to a one star ranking, as truth be told, The Illustrated Book of Sayings is in many ways a rather and majorly painful disappointment for me, although I do realise and understand, appreciate that this book does indeed seem quite popular and generally has consistently high ratings and glowing reviews).

For one, and yes, the further along I was reading, the increasingly annoyed and frustrated I was indeed becoming, I have found it massively difficult (even with my brand new reading glasses) to be able to even figure out linguistically and semantically many of the actual sayings themselves, as while the explanations of the fifty odd expressions are clearly shown in a solid black font on a white background that is visually appealing and with more than enough contrast for easy perusal, that the sayings themselves along with their necessary English translations are all part of each accompanying illustration and only located there (and often either minutely sized or almost totally blending into the coloured background), this makes for really and utterly terrible readability for me, even for sayings from languages that I know, with which I am familiar (and frankly, I simply do not even remotely understand why Ella Frances Sanders could not also have included each individual saying in its entirety in the explanation and analysis section, as the manner in which the featured expressions have been presented as part of the illustrations has totally strained my eyes and very much and very negatively affected my potential reading pleasure).

But even more of an issue and for me a truly massive no-no is the fact that there are no suggestions for further reading and research and that all of the information, that all of the linguistic and historical details presented on the featured expressions, on the sayings compiled by the author appear without any academic sourcing, without any footnotes, without any endnotes, with no real source acknowledgements whatsoever, rendering The Illustrated Book of Sayings both pretty well useless for me on an academic, research based level and also, more importantly and seriously, rendering this book problematically academically suspect if not actually even potentially dishonest (as with this absolute absence of sources, of information from where Ella Frances Sanders has gleaned, has taken her textual, linguistic, historical details on the sayings, on the idiomatic expressions and their development, their genesis, their position in their respective languages, there is really also no way for potential readers to verify the veracity of what the author claims, of whether the information on the presented expressions and sayings in The Illustrated Book of Sayings is even true). And while I was in fact not in any way expecting an academic treatise, I did still expect Ella Frances Sanders to at least provide a basic and decent source acknowledgment and am massively annoyed that this has not at all taken place here (for the linguistic and historical information provided, the author obviously has obtained from somewhere and these books, websites and the like should, no, they need to really be listed at the back of The Illustrated Book of Sayings).

Perri says

I liked this book even more than *Lost in Translation*. For one thing it was easier to read, the illustrations didn't interfere with the text.. The sayings could often be compared to English ones. so they are more easily understood. For example, in French, "I'm returning to my sheep" is the English equivalent to "But I digress". So fun to learn about different languages-Ga a tribe and language in Ghana, one of sixteen official languages! Yiddish, evolved from Middle High German with bits of Russian and Hebrew blended in. Personally I'm going to start using "Not my circus, not my monkeys" (not my problem) I just wish I could say it in Polish!

Candace Robinson says

What a cool book! The illustrations go well with the saying that it is describing through art. I really liked the diversity of learning the different sayings from countries around the world and what they mean. Pretty much all the sayings were new to me! Full review on my blog <https://literarydust.wordpress.com/20...>

Melissa says

I received this from netgalley for an honest review.

The sayings in this book are from all around the world. The pictures are a bit more cartoonish then I expected but still a bit charming.

The only thing I really disliked was how the sayings were placed after the information about it. I really thought it would of been better to read the saying before learning about it.

Kirsty says

Speaking in Tongues is utterly fantastic. Sanders is wise and witty, and gives the history of each obscure phrase in an intelligent and entertaining manner. A wealth of different languages have been used here, from Serbian and Latvian to Mandarin and Kashmiri. The illustrations fit wonderfully with the whole. Below are translations of some of my favourite phrases within the volume. Asterisks denote those which I will endeavour to use in everyday conversation if I possibly can.

1. 'To pace around hot porridge like a cat' (Finnish) *
2. 'Sliding in a shrimp sandwich' (Swedish) *
3. 'To wear a cat on your head' (Japanese)
4. 'To have a head full of crickets' (Italian)
5. 'The bear dances here' (German)
6. 'Stop ironing my head' (Armenian)
7. 'To be caught with your beard in the mailbox' (Norwegian) *
8. 'Swallowed like a postman's sock' (Colombian Spanish)

Silvia Sirea says

Tagliare le nuvole col naso. Modi di dire dal mondo è un libriccino dal contenuto bello ed è un oggetto ancora più bello, anzi, bellissimo. Colorato e divertente, è perfetto per chi è curioso. Stimola l'immaginazione e offre spunti di riflessione, per questo lo ritengo adatto a grandi e piccini. E' una lettura che tiene impegnati per pochissimo tempo, data la sua brevità, ma è anche, e soprattutto, uno svago piacevolissimo.

Cinque stelline perché è unico nel suo genere.

Cheri says

The illustrations are charming, as are the expressions and their translations along with the more American version of the sayings from around the world. There are no literal English / American translations, however there is typically a saying that we are accustomed to that is used to express the same (more or less) idea. For example, the French expression, “to pedal in the sauerkraut” equates (again, more or less) to be at a complete loss, or to lose one’s thoughts. Some are probably more “useful” to you than others, all have some level of amusement for the reader, and the illustrations really add quite a bit to the overall fun of this book. This would make an fun gift for almost anyone.

I learned quite a few miscellaneous jeopardy-type information, things I was surprised to find out. One of my favorite sayings in this book is one of the “most well known in the Japanese language” was “Even monkeys fall from trees,” which (apparently nonsense) is said to show that everybody makes mistakes, gets things wrong sometimes.

You’ll learn some things, but mostly this is just a charming little book meant to give you a moment or two to pause and remember that no matter the language, we’re all experiencing shared feelings and bumps in the road of life.

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Many thanks to Ten Speed Press, NetGalley and to the author, Ella Frances Sanders for sending me an advanced copy for reading and review.
