

## APHORISMS

### 1. Uwagi ogólne

Tekst *Aphorisms* jest adresowany do studentów filologii, a także studentów kierunków humanistycznych, zainteresowanych tematyką aforyzmów i postaci, które wywarły wpływ na literaturę, naukę, myśl filozoficzną, politykę oraz losy współczesnego świata.

### 2. Poziom zaawansowania: B2+/C1

### 3. Czas trwania opisanych ćwiczeń

Do decyzji prowadzącego pozostaje, czy proponowany materiał wykorzysta w formie jednej rozbudowanej lekcji (90 minut), czy też podzieli materiał na kilka niezależnych (np. 15- lub 30-minutowych) modułów, przykładowo będących uzupełnieniem realizowanej tematyki.

### 4. Cele dydaktyczne

Celem dydaktycznym jest przybliżenie studentom postaci wybitnych i mniej znanych osobistości, które wywarły wpływ na kształt współczesnego świata. Punkt wyjścia do dyskusji nad wybranym zagadnieniem (np. pojmowaniem miłości lub stosunkiem do pracy, biznesu czy polityki) to skontrastowanie poglądów wyrażonych przez autorów wypowiedzi z własnym pojmowaniem tychże zjawisk. Nie bez znaczenia pozostaje element humorystyczny w zaprezentowanych cytatach.

### 5. Uwagi i sugestie

Ćwiczenia najlepiej przebiegają, jeśli studenci pracują w parach lub grupach maksymalnie trzyosobowych. Dla wszystkich ćwiczeń sprawdza się następująca procedura:

- czas na indywidualne zapoznanie się studenta z aforyzmami,

- czas na skonsultowanie odpowiedzi z partnerem (partnerami w małej grupie) – przy pytaniach zamkniętych,
- czas na zaprezentowanie i umotywowanie własnego stanowiska przed partnerem (partnerami w małej grupie) – przy pytaniach otwartych,
- wymiana myśli na forum całej grupy i ustosunkowanie się do zagadnień wyrażonych w aforyzmach.

Niemniej jednak prowadzący może, według swojego uznania, wprowadzić takie elementy, jak: limit czasowy na wykonanie ćwiczenia; współzawodnictwo pomiędzy zespołami – konkurs na najlepsze propozycje słów (ćwiczenie G); próba wspólnej klasyfikacji cytatów na forum grupy; dobranie się w zespoły osób, które prezentują podobne poglądy.

## APHORISMS

1. Read the Part I of the text on aphorisms. How is the *aphorism* defined?
2. Why, in your opinion, does James Geary call the aphorism “our most intimate, idiosyncratic literary genre?”

### PART I

#### **British Winter Introduces a Few Aphorisms and Their Makers**

*By Rob Kyff, teacher and writer in West Hartford, Conn., USA, © Creators Syndicate, Inc.*

“God is either cruel or incompetent.”

“Common sense is not so common.”

“The early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.”

These pithy quips from Woody Allen, Voltaire and Steven Wright, respectively, are classic examples of aphorisms. Briefly defined, an aphorism is a tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion. British writer James Geary loves aphorisms, and he’s collected over 300 of them in a new book, *Geary’s Guide to the World’s Greatest Aphorisms* (Bloomsbury, \$25.95).

Geary includes a brief profile of each contributor. “The aphorism is our most intimate, idiosyncratic literary genre,” he writes in the book’s introduction, “so I’ve tried to give a glimpse of the lives and personalities behind the sayings through quick character sketches.”

These snapshots reveal the idiosyncrasies of icons. Alexander Pope, for instance, author of “To err is human, to forgive divine,” stood just four feet, six inches tall. Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote, “When it is darkest, men see the stars,” was deeply influenced by his mother, who slept in a bed shaped like a coffin and wore a burial shroud when traveling. Gertrude Stein, who wrote, “We are always the same age inside,” drove supplies to French hospitals during World War I. (The only shortfall of Geary’s wonderful collection, by the way, is that it doesn’t include more female contributors.)

Source: [http://articles.courant.com/2007-10-05/features/0710050399\\_1\\_1aphorisms-james-geary-british](http://articles.courant.com/2007-10-05/features/0710050399_1_1aphorisms-james-geary-british), access: 13 February, 2013.

3. Read Part II of the text and match the aphorisms with their authors.

### PART II

Just for fun, see whether you can match these aphorisms from Geary's book with their creators.

Aphorisms:

1. The difference between medicine and poison is the dose.
2. The more I see of men the more I like dogs.
3. No man is great if he thinks he is.
4. The trouble ain't that there is too many fools, but that the lightning ain't distributed right.
5. It's not bragging if you can back it up.
6. If you're going through hell, keep going.
7. Prepare for the worst; expect the best; and take what comes.
8. Tell all the Truth but tell it slant.
9. For every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong.
10. Always go to other people's funerals; otherwise they won't go to yours.

Their creators:

- a. **Muhammad Ali**, b. 1942, American former professional boxing champion
- b. **Hannah Arendt**, 1906-1975, German-American political theorist
- c. **H.L. Mencken**, 1880-1956, American journalist, essayist, satirist, critic of American life and culture
- d. **Yogi Berra**, b. 1925, a former American baseball player
- e. **Emily Dickinson**, 1830-1886, American poet
- f. **Mark Twain**, 1835-1910, American writer and humorist
- g. **Madame de Stael**, 1766-1817, French-speaking Swiss author
- h. **David Byrne**, b. 1952, US-resident British musician and artist
- i. **Winston Churchill**, 1874-1965, British politician and wartime leader
- j. **Will Rogers**, 1879-1935, American cowboy, vaudeville performer, humorist, social commentator and actor

Source: <http://www.creators.com/lifestylefeatures/words-and-trivia/rob-kyff-word-guy/avarice-for-aphorisms.html>, access: 13 February, 2013.

4. According to their meaning, match the aphorisms to the following categories (some aphorisms may belong to more than one category):

TECHNOLOGY	LIMITATIONS	COMMUNICATION	ACHIEVEMENT/ COMPETITION

1. *"A house is a machine for living in."* ("Le Corbusier" Charles-Edouard Leaneret, 1887-1965, Swiss architect)
2. *"Everywhere is walking distance if you have the time."* (Steven Wright, b. 1955, American comedian)
3. *"I am a slow walker, but I never walk back."* (Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865, the 16th President of the US)
4. *"If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses."* (Henry Ford, 1863-1947, founder of Ford Motor Company)
5. *"Running's like breathing. It's something that comes really naturally."* (Cathy Freeman, b. 1973, Australian 400-metre Olympic champion)
6. *"Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play."* (George Orwell, 1903-1950, British author)
7. *"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."* (Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1889-1951, German philosopher)
8. *"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."* (Peter Drucker, 1909-2005, Austrian-American management guru)
9. *"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."* (Ken Olsen, b. 1926, Chairman, Digital Equipment Corp., quote from 1977)
10. *"To say nothing, especially when speaking, is half the art of diplomacy."* (Will Durant, 1885-1981, American writer)
11. *"Trying to sneak a fastball past Henry Aaron was like trying to sneak the sun past a rooster."* (Curt Simmons, b. 1929, former American baseball player)
12. *"Well done is better than well said."* (Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790, American politician and scientist)

5. EDUCATION/KNOWLEDGE. Look at the following collection of aphorisms and answer the questions. Which aphorisms (some may belong to more than one category):

- I. give advice?
- II. contrast two issues?
- III. seem to have an ironic meaning?
- IV. compare one issue to another?
- V. are very amusing, in your opinion?

1. *"Let nature be your teacher."* (William Wordsworth, 1770-1850, English poet)
2. *"I have never let my schooling interfere with my education."* (Mark Twain, 1835-1910, American writer and humorist)
3. *"College: a fountain of knowledge where all go to drink."* (Henny Youngman, 1906-1998, British-American comedian and violinist)
4. *"I find television very educational. Every time someone switches it on, I go into another room and read a good book."* (Groucho Marx, 1890-1977, American comedian)
5. *"A book should serve as an axe for the frozen sea within us."* (Franz Kafka, 1883-1924, German-language writer, modernist)

6. *"There are in fact two things, science and opinion."* (Hippocrates, 5th century BC, Greek physician)
7. *"The mind is an iceberg. It floats with only 17 percent of its bulk above the water."* (Sigmund Freud, 1856-1939, Austrian psychologist)
8. *"The best way to have a good idea is to have lots of ideas."* (Linus Pauling, 1901-1994, scientist and author)
9. *"You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows."* (Bob Dylan, b. 1941, American singer and songwriter)

6. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING. Put the appropriate words into the aphorisms below. Two words in the box are not necessary.

consequence    exercise    good    pleasure    sickness    use    wish

1. *"It's no longer a question of staying healthy. It is a question of finding a ..... you like."* (**Jackie Mason**, 1934-, American comedian)
2. *"I intend to live forever. So far, so ....."* (**Stephen Wright**, b. 1955, American comedian)
3. *"To ..... to be well is a part of becoming well."* (**Seneca**, 4 BC-65 AD, Roman philosopher and dramatist)
4. *"True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and ..... of the body."* (**Alexander von Humboldt**, 1769-1859, Prussian/German scientist/naturalist and explorer)
5. *"I refuse to spend my life worrying about what I eat. There is no ..... worth forgoing just for an extra three years in the geriatric ward."* (**John Mortimer**, 1923-2009, British dramatist, novelist and lawyer)

7. ENVIRONMENT/NATURE. In each of the quotations below, one word has been removed. Guess the word that best completes the sentence. All words relate to environment and nature.

1. *"Think ....., act locally."* (**Friends of the Earth** slogan, c. 1985)
2. *"The ..... is everything that isn't me."* (**Albert Einstein**, 1879-1955, German-Swiss-American scientist)
3. *"Climate is what we expect, ..... is what we get."* (**Mark Twain**, 1835-1910, American writer and humorist)
4. *"My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of ....."* (from *Frankenstein* by **Mary Shelley**, 1797-1851, English author)
5. *"A human can be healthy without killing ..... for food. Therefore if he eats meat he participates in taking animal life merely for the sake of his appetite."* (**Leo Tolstoy**, 1828-1910, Russian novelist)

8. WORK/BUSINESS. Read the quotations and answer the questions. Which aphorism:

- I. gives advice about making an investment?
- II. applies to very recent issues?
- III. has been quoted very often?
- IV. gives advice about troublesome people?
- V. is about leading a happy life?
- VI. sounds quite cynical?

1. *“There’s no business like show business.”* (**Irving Berlin**, 1888-1989, American composer)
2. *“Business? It’s quite simple. It’s other people’s money.”* (**Alexandre Dumas**, 1802-1870, French author)
3. *“Dealing with network executives is like being nibbled to death by ducks.”* (**Eric Sevareid**, 1912-1992, American journalist and war correspondent)
4. *“In the emerging global economy; everything is mobile.”* (**Bill Clinton**, b. 1946, 42nd president of the US)
5. *“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant.”* (**Robert Louis Stevenson**, 1850-1894, Scottish novelist, poet and travel writer)
6. *“When work is a pleasure, life is a joy!”* (**Maxim Gorky**, 1868-1936, Russian writer)

9. RELATIONSHIPS. Combine parts of sentences to make aphorisms.

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| 1. <i>“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like</i> | a. there always seem to be plenty of kittens.” (attributed to Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1865, the 16th President of the US)      |
| 2. <i>“Forgive your enemies,</i>                           | b. but never forget their names.” (John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963, the 35th President of the US)                                 |
| 3. <i>“Laughter is</i>                                     |  |
| 4. <i>“No matter how much cats fight,</i>                  | c. wrapping a present and not giving it.” (William Arthur Ward, 1921-1994, one of America’s most quoted writers of maxims)   |
| 5. <i>“Getting back with your old boyfriend is like</i>    | d. the shortest distance between two people.” (Victor Borge, 1909-2000, Danish and American comedian, conductor and pianist) |
| 6. <i>“Remarrying a husband you’ve divorced is like</i>    | e. having your appendix put back in.” (Phyllis Diller, 1917-2012, American actress and comedienne)                           |
|  | f. having a garage sale and buying your old stuff back.” (Laura Kightlinger, b. 1969, American actress, comedian and writer) |

10. Read the following aphorisms about LOVE and in your own words, explain how you understand them. Which quotation, in your opinion, best illustrates what love is?

1. *“Love is friendship set to music.”* (**E. Joseph Cossman**, 1918-2002, American entrepreneur)
2. *“Love makes your soul crawl out from its hiding place.”* (**Zora Neale Hurston**, 1891-1960, American folklorist, anthropologist and author)
3. *“To love and be loved is to feel the sun from both sides.”* (**David Viscott**, 1938-1996, American psychiatrist, author and businessman)

4. “Do not bite the bait of pleasure till you know there is no hook in it.” (**Thomas Jefferson**, 1743-1826, American Founding Father and the 3rd President of the US)
11. Look at this selection of MISCELLANEOUS quotations and choose one that:
- I. you find particularly amusing
  - II. you totally agree with
  - III. you partially agree with

Justify your choice in 2-3 sentences.

1. “I took a speed reading course and read War and Peace in 20 minutes. It involves Russia.” (**Woody Allen**, b. 1935, American film-maker and actor)
2. “Fashions fade, but style is eternal.” (**Yves Saint-Laurent**, 1936-2008, French designer)
3. “In journalism there has always been a tension between getting it first and getting it right.” (**Ellen Goodman**, b. 1941, American Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist)
4. “Please remember that law and sense are not always the same.” (**Jawaharlal Nehru**, 1899-1964, Indian statesman)
5. “The spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom – these are the pillars of society.” (**Henrik Ibsen**, 1828-1906, Norwegian dramatist)
6. “Government is like a baby. An alimentary canal with a big appetite at one end and no sense of responsibility at the other.” (**Ronald Reagan**, 1911-2004, the 40th President of the US)
7. “No travel writer I have ever known has written about the importance of parking.” (**J.G. Ballard**, 1930-2009, British novelist)
8. “Night, when words fade and things come alive.” (**Antoine de St. Exupéry**, 1900-1944, French aviator and author)
9. “A 2-year-old is like having a blender but you don’t have a top for it.” (**Jerry Seinfeld**, b. 1954, American stand-up comedian, actor, writer, and television/film producer)
10. “Luck is the residue of design.” (**Branch Rickey**, 1881-1965, an innovative baseball executive)
11. “Never answer an anonymous letter.” (**Yogi Berra**, b. 1925, a former American baseball player)

Sources of quotations in exercises 4-11: [http://articles.courant.com/2008-11-28/news/words/1128.art\\_1\\_metaphors-similes-love](http://articles.courant.com/2008-11-28/news/words/1128.art_1_metaphors-similes-love), access: 7 March, 2016; D. Cotton, D. Falvey, S. Kent, I. Lebeau, G. Rees, *Language Leader Advanced*, Pearson Longman, 2010; D. Cotton, D. Falvey, S. Kent, *Language Leader Upper-intermediate*, Pearson Longman, 2008; I. Lebeau, G. Rees, *Language Leader Intermediate*, Pearson Longman, 2008.



## KEY

1. “a tersely phrased statement of a truth or opinion”
2. SS’ own answers. Possible answers may be that aphorisms are well-phrased, concise, often humorous and they reveal the personality of the author.
3. 1 – h, 2 – g, 3 – j, 4 – f, 5 – a, 6 – i, 7 – b, 8 – e, 9 – c, 10 – d
4. Technology: 1, 4, 9; Limitations: 2, 3, 7; Communication: 7, 8, 10, 12; Achievement/Competition: 4, 5, 6, 11
5. Possible answers: I – 1, 5, 8, 9; II – 2, 6; III – 2, 3, 4, 9; IV – 5, 7; V – SS’ own answers
6. 1 – sickness, 2 – good, 3 – wish, 4 – exercise, 5 – pleasure
7. 1 – globally, 2 – environment, 3 – weather, 4 – nature, 5 – animals
8. I – 5, II – 4, III – 1, IV – 3, V – 6, VI – 2
9. 1c, 2b, 3d, 4a, 5f, 6e
10. SS’ own opinions
11. SS’ own opinions