



含英  
咀華

## Black Sheep

"We're little black sheep who've gone astray..."  
(Rudyard Kipling, Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature 1907)

We use "black sheep" to refer to somebody who is considered by his family or peer group as bad or worthless and thus a cause of embarrassment.

For hundreds of years, black sheep have been regarded as a disgusting or at least an undesirable class of animals. This is especially true with shepherds probably because of economic considerations. White sheep usually sell better than their black relatives and are therefore worth more. It goes without saying that black sheep are seen to be unwelcome. Meanwhile, people not engaged in sheep rearing may still dislike black sheep, but simply because of their colour. To many of them, black symbolises devil, evil or bad omens which bring misfortune and disasters.



## 害羣之馬

英語 有所謂 "black sheep", 乃指敗家子或危害團體的人。在漢語習語, 卻只有 "黑馬", 不見 "黑羊"。然則, 如何用中文表達 "black sheep" 這個概念呢?

無巧不成話, 兩種語言都借用了動物來打譬喻。漢語的 "害之馬", 也有 "black sheep" 的意思。這句成語出自《莊子 徐無鬼》:

"小童曰: 夫為天下者, 亦奚以異乎牧馬者哉? 亦去其害馬者而已矣!"

"害馬" 指的就是那些有害於馬的 "壞馬", 比喻危害集體的人。莊子拿牧馬來比喻治理國家, 認為只要把對國家有害無益的不良分子肅清, 國家就不會有動亂。西方的牧羊人會用竿子責打搗亂的黑羊, 同樣, 中原的牧馬者也會教訓害之馬, 以收整治之效。在漢語 "馬" 就成了 "黑羊" 的 "代罪羔羊"。



## WORD FOR WORD



### Doubting Thomas

"I can assure the doubting Thomases that there is no question of me staying to slow down these changes."  
(Mrs. Anson Chan, Chief Secretary for Administration)

This statement was made by Mrs. Anson Chan at a luncheon meeting. In her speech, Mrs. Chan mentioned the public sector reform. There she reiterated the Government's determination to pursue a major programme of improvements to public services and, equally important, her commitment to get things done. But why did she choose to use the expression "doubting Thomases" in her statement?

This idiom came from the Bible. Thomas was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. Jesus appeared before some of his followers on several occasions after his crucifixion. But Thomas, not

among them, had all along rejected their claim that Jesus had resurrected. It was not until he had seen the print of the nails in Jesus' hands and put his hand into Jesus' side that he believed. So Jesus taught this doubting Thomas a lesson in John 20:29: "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and have believed."

A doubting Thomas is one who refuses to believe anything before he can see the evidence with his own eyes. It is also used to refer to a sceptic who tends to have doubts about all things which are against his expectations.