

朝碧海而暮蒼梧

明末清初文豪錢謙益曾稱讚：“徐霞客千古奇人，遊記乃千古奇書。”徐霞客何許人也？名弘祖，字振之，號霞客，生於江陰殷實之家，自幼博覽羣書，尤喜《山海經》等地理典籍。明代應舉成風，他偏不慕功名，獨愛山水，“欲問奇於名山大川”，早就立下“朝碧海而暮蒼梧”的青雲志，終生不渝。

捨功名而逐山水，徐母不但沒有反對，更為兒子縫製了“遠遊冠”以壯行色。萬曆三十六年(1608)，青年徐霞客揮別故鄉，從太湖的煙波開始，揭開了壯遊神州的序幕，“達人之所未達，探人之所未知”。他以大地為紙，足跡為墨，跋涉山川之餘，筆耕不輟，日記所載，全是地貌、水文、地質、生態等寶貴資料。《徐霞客遊記》逾六十萬字，以優美的文筆為後世留下科學瑰寶。

徐霞客嘗言：“山川面目多為圖經志籍所蒙，故窮九州內外，探奇測幽。”為求真辨偽，他走出書齋，遨遊萬里，堅持以雙足丈量華山夏水，故逢山必登其巔頂，遇洞必探其幽邃。黃山天都、蓮花二峯孰高孰低，人言人殊。為查明底蘊，他於萬曆四十六年(1618)爬上天都峯，因察覺“萬峯無不下伏，獨蓮花與抗耳”，遂再登蓮花峯頂，結果證實其“獨出諸峯上”，是黃山第一高峯。此後十多年，他暢遊大江南北，足跡遍及華中、華北的山川大地。

年過半百，徐霞客深恐“老病將至”，決意開展“萬里遐征”，從家鄉出發，經湘、桂、黔等省，一直走到雲南。他早已名滿天下，何不願養天年而冒險西行？原來此行不為遊山玩水，而是要去偽存真，“欲窮江河之淵源、山脈之經絡也”。

途經廣西，盤桓桂林月餘，他考察了穿山岩與七星岩等溶洞，開中國溶洞地貌研究的先河。其後深入滇地，勘察金

沙江、瀾滄江和怒江等水系，追溯長江源頭，寫成思辨精彩的《江源考》，確認“推江源者，必當以金沙江為首”，推翻了儒家典籍《尚書·禹貢》的“岷山導江”之說。雖非石破天驚的創見，卻敢言前人之不敢言，彰顯其探求真理的精神。

徐霞客窮盡天涯，無險不冒，即使年邁，勇銳依然。探索洞深水急的株洲絡絲潭，他二話不說便“解衣伏水，蛇行以進”，只因當地人“無肯為前驅者”。他穿越瘴癘肆虐的廣西北流“鬼門關”，闖蕩豺虎晝行的雲巖山“虎窟”，深入伸手不見五指的柳州真仙洞，燭火一照，赫然有不見首尾的巨蛇橫卧石下。他登山涉水，屢陷絕境，要數最兇險者，非湘江遇劫莫屬。財物洗劫一空，更遭強盜揮刀亂砍，飛身入水才倖免於難。常人遇血光之災，魂飛魄散，徐霞客卻泰然處之：“吾荷一錫來，何處不可埋吾骨耶？”冒死勘險，銅心鐵膽，雖百折而不回。清初學者潘耒為《徐霞客遊記》作序，盛讚徐霞客全情投入探索山水，甚至置生死於度外：“以性靈遊，以軀命遊。亙古以來，一人而已。”

崇禎十二年(1639)，徐霞客應麗江土司木增之邀，為雞足山撰寫山志，其間突患腳疾，“兩足俱廢，心力交瘁”，須由木增遣人以竹椅抬至湖北黃岡，再經水路送返江陰老家。即便氣若游絲，豪氣仍不減當年：“張騫鑿空，未睹崑崙；唐玄奘、元耶律楚材銜人主之命，乃得西遊。吾以老布衣，孤筇雙屨，窮河沙，上崑崙，歷西域，題名絕國，與三人而為四，死不恨矣。”不久後徐霞客與世長辭，得年五十六。以布衣之身，得以遨遊天地，與張騫、玄奘、耶律楚材齊名，雖死亦無憾了。

徐霞客以一生足跡，寫就了不朽篇章，留下珍貴的考證。他的文字如幽谷清泉，淙淙數百載，滋潤後世旅人的心田。





《曾國藩家書》

中國家訓文獻浩如煙海。芸芸著述中，《曾國藩家書》宛如明珠，恆久璀璨，將晚清一位重臣在治國、治軍、治學、治家等領域的心得細細道來，堪稱傳世家教的寶典。難怪自光緒五年(1879)梓行以來，志士學子莫不以之為處世南針，足為後人取法。

曾國藩出身寒微農家，能以一介布衣封侯拜相，成為晚清中興四大名臣之首，除了才華橫溢，更有賴過人的修身處世哲學。即使公務繁忙、戎馬倥傯，他仍然勤裁尺素，寫下近一千五百封家書，從為官之道到修身持家，無所不談。字裏行間，盡顯才情睿智，不論是傳統士夫還是維新派人物都深受啓迪。梁啟超對他推崇備至，嘗謂“曾文正者，豈惟近代，蓋有史以來不一二睹之大人也已；豈惟我國，抑全世界不一二睹之大人也已”，又盛讚其做到“立德、立功、立言”三不朽。毛澤東亦曾深表欽佩：“愚於近人，獨服曾文正。”

進德修業，是曾國藩念茲在茲的要事，亦是自勵勉人的箴言。他於道光二十四年(1844)八月給四位弟弟的信上說：“吾人只有進德、修業兩事靠得住。進德，則孝悌仁義是也；修業，則詩文作字是也。”不願見子弟做大官，卻期望他們都能“勤儉自持，習苦習勞”，成為讀書明理的君子。他篤信讀書讓人脫胎換骨，於同治元年(1862)四月的家書中表示：“人之氣質，由於天生，本難改變，惟讀書則可變化氣質。古之精相法者，並言讀書可以變換骨相。”何止談吐、氣質，讀書甚至能改變先天命定的“骨相”，決定人生的格局。

論讀書，曾國藩最重視立志，嘗言：“蓋士人讀書，第一要有志，第二要有識，第三要有恆。有志則斷不甘為下流……”道光二十二年(1842)十月，他寫信告誡弟弟：“君子之立志也，有民胞物與之量，有內聖外王之業，而後不忝於父母之生，不愧為天地之完人。”意謂儒生立志要高遠恢弘，才能踐行“修身、齊家、治國、平天下”的抱負。他深信志向堅定、努力奮進，事必可成，於道光二十四年九月的家書上說：“人苟能自立志，則聖賢豪傑，何事不可為？何必借助於人？”士人立堅卓之志，則學無不精，業無不成。

曾國藩不僅修身有法，更是齊家有道，一生以勤儉治家。咸豐十一年(1861)八月，他在信上訓示兒子：“居家之道，惟崇儉可以長久，處亂世尤以戒奢侈為要義。”這可不是空話，他以身作則，厲行節儉，“忝為將相，而所有衣服不值三百金”，又認為子弟“出門宜常走路，不可動用輿馬”，以免“長其驕惰之氣”。相傳他常以一道菜佐餐，故有“一品宰相”的清譽。他特意提醒新婚的兒子應“以早起為第一先務，自力行之”，又當率領新婦一齊遵守。男女的崗位和角色有別，他定的日課亦各有不同：男子要“看、讀、寫、作”，女眷要做小菜酒醬、針黹刺繡等，不容一日荒廢。

在這樣的家風薰陶下，曾國藩的子孫良才輩出，無不勤奮好學，崇儉養德，教人由衷欽羨。次子曾紀澤精通外文，縱橫外交場，曾任滿清政府駐英、法、俄公使，協助與俄國簽訂《伊犁條約》，收復萬里故土。三子曾紀鴻是數學家，在天文、算學領域取得矚目成就。曾孫曾約農與曾寶蓀是知名教育家，創辦湖南藝芳女子學校，春風化雨，作育無數英才。

曾國藩的家書樹立了書香世家百年家風，蘊含中華傳統文化君子自強之道，讓人見賢思齊，為後世留下彌足珍貴的智慧寶鑑。





邯鄲語林



邯鄲曾為戰國時期趙國的都城，是古風悠悠的冀南名城，獨享“中國成語典故之都”的美譽。與這座古城相關的成語典故逾二千條，最為人熟悉的有胡服騎射、負荊請罪、刎頸之交、黃粱美夢等。韓愈《送董邵南序》曰：“燕趙古稱多感慨悲歌之士。”燕趙北地民風彪悍，慷慨任俠之士輩出。俠客尚武重義，書生溫文爾雅，兩者風馬牛不相及，何以邯鄲盛產成語典故？

這座古城有其格外深厚的歷史文化淵源。據戰國時魏國史書《竹書紀年》記載：“紂時稍大其邑，南距朝歌，北據邯鄲及沙丘，皆為離宮別館。”商紂王於邯鄲修建宮殿，可知該地在殷商後期已具城市雛形，有最少三千多年的建城史，卻未嘗易名，為中華地名史上的孤例。趙敬侯元年(公元前386)，趙國定都邯鄲，歷八代國君，凡一百五十八年，直至為秦所滅。到了三國魏晉南北朝時期，離邯鄲咫尺之遙的鄴城是曹魏、後趙、冉魏、前燕、東魏及北齊六朝古都。漫步街頭巷尾的名勝古迹，不論是武靈叢台，還是回車巷，到處都有帝王將相的身影。

武靈叢台是趙武靈王觀看兵士操練和歌舞表演之處，古人曾有“台上弦歌醉美人，台下揚鞭耀武士”的詩句，形容當年叢台盛景。一代英主趙武靈王倡行軍事改革，頒令全國改穿短衣、長褲、皮靴等胡服，學習騎馬射箭。他認為“循禮未足多”，主張因時制宜，又說：“今吾將胡服騎射以教百姓，而世必議寡人矣。”(《戰國策·趙策二》)要崇尚衣冠禮儀的華夏人士師夷，必招物議，但為強兵圖存，只能擇善固執。厲行胡服騎射後，不出數年，便已翦滅宿敵中山國，擊退匈奴、林胡的侵擾，闢地千里，國勢如日中天，足與西秦爭雄。後世以“胡服騎射”表達銳意革新、勇於進取之意。

與此相對，回車巷塑造了中國古代倫理典範。趙國國勢日盛，除歸功於改革有方，更有賴將相和睦。回車巷據傳是名相藺相如引車迴避的窄巷。據《史記·廉頗藺相如列傳》記載，藺相如完璧歸趙，又在灑池舌戰秦王，不辱國格，獲封上卿。戰功顯赫的大將廉頗深懷妒恨，揚言要羞辱對方。藺相如重國家、輕私仇，對他百般忍讓，甚至道上偶遇，亦引車迴避。廉頗聞之，羞愧不已，遂“肉袒負荊”，向藺相如謝罪。兩人前嫌盡釋，結為刎頸之交。這段“將相和”的典故，成了傳誦千古的美談。後用“負荊請罪”表示認錯賠罪，“刎頸之交”指患難與共的摯友。

除了快意恩仇的故事，邯鄲典故亦隱含淡泊名利的哲思，將儒家積極應世的精神與黃老避世遁世的智慧共冶一爐，勸導士子進退有度，達則兼濟天下，窮則獨善其身。“黃粱夢”的故事源於唐人沈既濟的傳奇小說《枕中記》，發生在邯鄲道上：胸懷大志的盧生於客棧遇見道士呂翁，向他訴說鬱鬱不得意，須臾入夢，枕上享盡人間榮華，備極榮寵，富貴壽考，兒孫滿堂。夢醒之後，一切如故，所蒸黃粱猶未煮熟。呂翁說：“人生之適，亦如是矣。”這番話讓盧生頓悟浮生若夢，事了無痕。今人用成語“黃粱美夢”比喻富貴虛幻不實，倏忽無常。

黃粱一枕，歷盡人世滄桑。在數千年歷史長河中，帝王將相文治武功，雅士文人妙筆生花，孕育出浩瀚無垠的成語世界。從銳意興革的“胡服騎射”，到點化窮通的“黃粱美夢”，皆印證成語是歷史文化的活化石。邯鄲不獨見證着數千載華夏文明，更是盛載無數成語典故的寶庫。

這正如地上的路，其實地上本沒有路；
走的人多了，也便成了路。

魯迅《故鄉》



Jamie Vardy: From Nowhere, My Story



Jamie Vardy aspired to play professional football for Sheffield Wednesday from early on. Having been trained at the club's youth academy from a young age, he could not imagine a future without the sport. Unfortunately, his dream was dashed, at just 16, when he was released by his boyhood club for being not big enough to succeed as a footballer.

"Anger and confusion were bubbling up inside. Everything I'd ever wanted had just been snatched away from me," Vardy reveals in his autobiography *Jamie Vardy: From Nowhere, My Story*. Co-written with Stuart James, Vardy's autobiography chronicles his meteoric rise to fame from an anonymous non-league football player to an iconic, prolific goalscorer for Leicester City—the Premier League champions for the 2015-16 season. Disillusioned and distraught after being rejected, he admits that he "was a bit wild," embroiled in trouble in his late teens, which were marked by scuffles and a curfew following a conviction for assault.



Determined not to give up on his football dream, Vardy toiled on the factory floor in the daytime, while pouring himself into gruelling training sessions after work. His goal-scoring touch and amazing speed set him apart from others as he climbed every rung of the non-league ladder with Stocksbridge Park Steels, Halifax Town and Fleetwood Town. His relentless efforts paid off when Leicester City, nicknamed the Foxes, signed him in May 2012 for £1 million, a record fee for a non-league player. It was a bold gamble for the club, considering that the newbie had yet to make a League appearance at the age of 25.

It was not all plain sailing following his fairy-tale transfer, as the footballer struggled on the pitch, managing only four league goals in his debut season. With confidence ebbing, he found himself at rock bottom in the second half of the 2012-13 season as he was reduced to a place on the bench. At one point he wished he could just walk away from the mess and "go back to Fleetwood Town on loan". It was Nigel Pearson, the club's manager, who put his faith in him, instilling in Vardy the confidence that he "could play at that level".

In hindsight, Pearson's support and reassurance proved career-defining for Vardy, who persevered, fought back and delivered an impressive 16 goals in the following season. Thanks to his spectacular turnaround, Leicester City clinched the Championship title, earning promotion to the Premier League for the 2014-15 season.

The rags-to-riches narrative did not end here, as the Foxes returned to the Premier League with promising performances including a dramatic 5-3 win over Manchester United and managed to stay in the top flight. In a stunning turn of events, the club defied all odds and was crowned Premier League champions in the 2015-16 season, despite being tipped for relegation at the start of the season. Vardy had more to celebrate than the trophy, as the prodigious striker netted in a record 11 Premier League matches in a row and scored 24 goals in 36 starts throughout the season. Just one more goal would have secured him the Premier League Golden Boot alongside England striker Harry Kane.

Vardy's first cap for England in 2015 added to his legend. Having previously struggled to make ends meet, Vardy could hardly believe that he was playing in the top league of English football and representing his country. He recalls laughing when John Morris, his agent, suggested that "you can go on and play for England." "You can't be serious," he had said, but it was Morris who proved correct.

Chapter 10 of the book, "In the Eye of a Storm", offers a rare glimpse into Vardy's personal struggles amidst his rise to fame, addressing controversies surrounding his racist remarks and the intense media scrutiny of his family feud. He found it hard to "get used to being in the limelight", with people watching his every move. There were times when the stress became unbearable. "I wish I could go back to those days when I was so anonymous ..." admits Vardy. While football aficionados may admire him as an underdog champion, he is, after all, a man of flesh and blood.

Vardy's story delivers a message that resonates far beyond the football pitch. It shows how late bloomers can achieve stellar success, regardless of who they are and where they come from. His journey is a testament to unswerving resilience, perseverance and determination in charting a bold future.

In certain cases, carrying on, merely continuing, is superhuman.

Albert Camus



為霞尚滿天

唐元和十年(815)二月，長安玄都觀桃花灼灼，遊人如織。久貶歸來的劉禹錫偕友賞花，以“戲贈”為題，揮毫寫下《元和十年自朗州至京戲贈看花諸君子》詩：“紫陌紅塵拂面來，無人道看花回。玄都觀裏桃千樹，盡是劉郎去後栽”，暗諷當時趨炎附勢的朝中小人。詩作很快在長安流傳開來，不料觸怒執政者，詩人未幾因“語涉譏刺”再貶邊州。只是吟詠詩句，何以罹此大禍？

劉禹錫流離的命運始於十年前的“永貞革新”。德宗即位後，藩鎮坐大，宦官弄權，太子李誦聯同內官王叔文和王伾籌謀興革。劉禹錫未滿而立之年連登三科，才名遐揚，以匡正天下為己志。主持革新的二王對他青眼有加，委以重任，自貞元二十一年(805)正月，與柳宗元一道襄助推行新政，惜因宦官權臣反對，功敗垂成。

劉禹錫事後貶守朗州，當了十載閒官，但沒有因官場失意自怨自艾。朗州十年，成了他人生的“砥石”。他在《砥石賦》中自喻為鏽刀，將困厄視作磨礪，堅信寶刀終會鋒芒再現：“既賦形而終用，一蒙垢焉何恥？感利鈍之有時兮，寄雄心於瞪視。”剛毅不屈之氣躍然紙上。

元和九年(814)冬，劉禹錫還朝待詔，原以為守得雲開見月明，詎料因玄都觀桃花詩惹禍，被貶至更偏遠的播州，幸得柳宗元自願代其謫守，方可改任連州刺史。此後十多年間，堅貞自勵，樂觀如故。調任夔州刺史後，四出采風，汲取養分，為巴蜀民歌譜上新詞，創作《竹枝詞》和《浪淘沙詞》等傳世之作。詩人在《浪淘沙詞·其八》將堅強信念寄於其中：“莫道謔言如浪深，莫言遷客似沙沉。千淘萬漉雖

辛苦，吹盡狂沙始到金。”“永貞革新”的同道，雖已風流雲散，惟他堅信持守正道者，終會為世所見。在和州的陋室裏，他寫成千古美文《陋室銘》自勉：“山不在高，有仙則名。水不在深，有龍則靈。斯是陋室，惟吾德馨。”精神世界豐盈富足，物質匱乏亦能怡然自在。

寶曆二年(826)，劉禹錫奉詔回東都洛陽任事，距當年首貶朗州，已歷二十多個寒暑。白居易替他的際遇扼腕：“亦知合被才名折，二十三年折太多。”惋惜好友樹大招風，蹉跎經年。劉禹錫卻報以千古絕唱：“沉舟側畔千帆過，病樹前頭萬木春。”世事白雲蒼狗，合該豁達大度，奮發上進。千帆過盡，新舊交替，原是天道至理。

翌年，劉禹錫重訪玄都觀，但見桃花蕩然無存，追憶前塵，百感交集，又成《再遊玄都觀》：“百畝庭中半是苔，桃花淨盡菜花開。種桃道士歸何處，前度劉郎今又來。”當年得勢的宵小之徒已不知所終，只有持守的正道古今不易。在詩中重提舊事，得意之情溢於筆下。大和六年(832)，劉禹錫調任蘇州刺史，雖已屆花甲之年，仍老驥伏櫪，到任後大力治理水利，興革農業，百姓和樂。蘇州政績甲天下，唐文宗龍顏大悅，賜以紫金魚袋，以示榮寵。

“莫道桑榆晚，為霞尚滿天。”劉禹錫老而彌堅，在生命的黃昏，餘暉依然絢麗無比。白居易嘗言：“彭城劉夢得，詩豪者也。其鋒森然，少敢當者。”縱觀夢得先生的詩文人生，確是豪氣縱橫，萬夫莫敵。

古之立大事者，不惟有超世之才，亦必有堅忍不拔之志。

蘇軾《晁錯論》



Stay the Course

In his memoir *What I Talk about When I Talk about Running*, the renowned Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami distills the essence of distance running into a pithy remark: “Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.” The epigram leaves a few questions unanswered. To what extent is suffering truly optional? Does the maxim “The more pain, the more gain” hold merit? To untangle these questions, one may turn to Sabrina Little, an acclaimed ultramarathon runner and philosophy scholar at Ohio State University.

In her book *The Examined Run*, Little discusses how running can foster character growth. It echoes Murakami’s belief that focus and endurance, two essential attributes for a novelist, can be enhanced through training. But is repeating tough tasks the key to developing a good character?

Little asserts that “not all forms of pain and toughness are constructive”. Standing by her convictions, she refused to give a soundbite for a shoe company’s advertising campaign that advocated the theme of limitlessness. For Little, phrases glorifying physical sufferings, in particular “No pain, no gain”, are disturbing. For the running coach, it is not the act of enduring difficulty that forges virtue, but “the right motivation” behind it.

Little’s book offers a philosophical insight into the concept of “doing hard things”, intriguingly resonating with *Politics*, where Aristotle warns against the perils of excessive physical training. He concludes: “A man’s constitution should be inured to labour, but not to labour which is excessive or of one sort only, such as is practised by athletes.” For the Greek philosopher, a virtue exists in a state between extremes. Therefore, one should navigate between excess and deficiency in both acts and emotions. For instance, an excess of fear leads to cowardice, but a deficiency brings recklessness. Between these two vices lies the virtue of courage. Aristotle’s theory on virtue ethics, also known as the doctrine of the Golden Mean, captures the importance of finding the equilibrium.

With this philosophical backdrop, we may now understand how perseverance in distance running can go awry sometimes. While the phrase “death before DNF (Did Not Finish)” is often delivered with humour, it can reflect a kind of excessive perseverance instead of a manifestation of willpower. When runners relentlessly pursue a goal that is no longer worth sweating for, they risk turning perseverance into intransigence. This is particularly so when wounded runners limp and hobble in a futile attempt to finish their races, only to sustain injuries that could imperil their long-term health.

Striking the perfect balance is vital for anyone engaged in the rigors of distance running. When this equilibrium is achieved, distance running, heralded as the epitome of endurance, unveils its remarkable psychological benefits. Notably, it transcends mere physical fitness to cultivate emotional intelligence. In explaining the importance of downregulating heightened emotions for runners, Little quotes in her book an old adage: “Emotions can cook your food or set your kitchen on fire.” Runners who remain calm while under distress can manage their energy effectively throughout the race, a skill “conducive to the development of certain virtues”.

Even the fastest runners will slow down some day, a reality both Murakami and Little know only too well. The former likens ageing to a river flowing to sea, an inevitable landscape in nature. Juggling motherhood and an academic career, Little finds it difficult to maintain the same pace she once found effortless. Yet, coming to terms with their limits has not taken the joy of running from either of them—both continue to relish the sport without fixating on time.

In life’s marathon, no one can outpace Father Time. All we can do is to keep moving forward, one step at a time, for the race is not about speed but rather endurance.

In the realm of ideas, everything depends on enthusiasm. In the real world, all rest on perseverance.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe



我們都是查理布朗



經典漫畫《花生》(*Peanuts*)風靡全球，美國漫畫家舒爾茲(Charles Schulz)塑造的角色，陪伴無數讀者成長。漫畫以小孩的觀點探討人生。對於景遇，拉納斯(Linus)幽幽的告訴查理布朗(Charlie Brown)：“好事前後不過八秒，壞事卻三周都用不掉。”年紀小小卻老氣橫秋，令人莞爾。

《花生》漫畫圍繞的看似是生活瑣事，但作者悄悄將從軍經歷、日常生活中的挫折、失落與孤單，細膩地描畫出來。讀者投入其中，總能找到自己的身影。舒爾茲坦言，《花生》漫畫的內容充滿苦澀，故事主人翁的願望好像幾乎永遠落空。

以拉納斯為例，他深信南瓜大仙會在萬聖節夜現身，每年在南瓜田苦候，可惜仙蹤杳然。主角查理布朗是個常吃虧的小伙子，被大家爭相取笑，生活像是一敗塗地。他從不敢與心儀的紅髮女孩攀談，帶領的棒球隊敗北連連，露西(Lucy)

應承會扶好攬球讓他踢出，卻總在最後一刻把球拿走，令他摔個四腳朝天。

這些小人兒沒有被失敗打倒，仍然憑着一股傻勁勇往直前。拉納斯睡醒後，又再寫信給南瓜大仙，相信有天大仙會降臨南瓜園。查理布朗在全國拼字比賽落敗，沮喪得不願起牀，拉納斯安慰他：“還不至於世界末日吧？”查理布朗便振作起來，外出散步，欣見草地翠綠如故，露西如常把玩攬球。他衝前想踢球，結果又中了露西的計。

舒爾茲一直認為，漫畫家的角色是道出問題所在，可不是負責解決問題。不過，他認為《花生》漫畫倒有一帖處世良方：“……像查理布朗一樣屢敗屢戰吧。若論誰人該舉手投降，他理當是第一個，但他從來沒有放棄過。”面對人生順逆，讀者驀然驚覺：原來我們都是查理布朗。



On Perseverance: A Rocky Detour from Mountain to Hill

Few can resist the temptation of **Rocky Road**, a delightful ice cream flavour that melds chocolate chips, marshmallow and nuts into a comforting treat. Its origin is a bit of a puzzle. Some suggest that it was William Dreyer, the co-founder of Dreyer's ice cream, who introduced it in 1929—a nod to the rugged landscape following the Wall Street crash. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)* traces the name back to a chocolate dessert in an advertisement as early as 1920. Regardless of its lineage, the flavour is a universal winner. Much less so for its lower-case counterpart, **rocky road**, which refers to a path strewn with rocks, bumps and hollows and is used metaphorically to convey the challenges that we face on our life journey.

Symbols of permanence and eternity, mountains and hills find their way into the language as metaphors of perseverance. For example, the proverb **faith can move mountains** comes from the Bible. In the Book of Matthew, Jesus preached to his disciples, saying that with faith as small as a mustard seed, one would be able to command a mountain to move. The phrase **to move mountains** conveys two meanings: to achieve something miraculous and to make every possible effort. In the latter sense, one may also use the phrase **to move heaven and earth**.

A mountain to climb refers to an arduous task, an expression commonly used in sports commentary when a team faces tremendous difficulty in gearing up for a comeback. The imagery of climbing mountains can also be found in the musical *The Sound of Music*. Maria, a postulant nun, is torn between her deepening love for Captain von Trapp and her vows to serve God. Mother Abbess encourages Maria to follow her heart and pursue her passions through singing the song “Climb Ev’ry Mountain”. The simple yet powerful lyrics capture the ambience of a challenging journey toward goals and dreams: Climb ev’ry mountain, / Ford ev’ry stream, / Follow ev’ry rainbow / Till you find your dream.

Sometimes views from hilltops are so spectacular and breathtaking that one almost feels compelled to defend them at all costs. **A hill to die on**, a phrase added to the *OED* since 2022, has nothing to do with scenery nevertheless. Contrary to its romantic associations, it alludes to a relentless resolve where one will defend a hill or high ground irrespective of its strategic merits. In a broader sense, it refers to an opinion that someone will vehemently defend, whatever the cost. Ultimately, the expression invites people to reflect on whether certain opinions are worth espousing. After all, there is a fine line between tenacity and sheer obstinacy.



That Spark in the Shadows

It may seem strange at first, but the interplay between failure and hardship can be a catalyst for creativity. Very often, great writers and cartoonists find ways to transform their distress into an astonishing wealth of inspiration. Answer the following questions to find out how these creators make sense of their misery and persist in the face of adversity.

1. He lost his job at an oil company during the Great Depression. To eke out a living, he wrote his first hard-boiled detective fiction at the age of 44, which turned out a huge success. Who is this American novelist?
2. While serving in prison, William Sydney Porter reinvented himself as a prolific short story writer renowned for ingenious plot twists. What is his most well-known pen name?
3. His cartoon sketches were turned down by editors of his high school's yearbook, but he went on to create a comic strip featuring an anthropomorphic dog character, which ran in newspapers worldwide for nearly half a century before his retirement. Who is this cartoonist?
4. F. Scott Fitzgerald was rejected by the family of his first love due to his humble background, which inspired him to write a novel with themes of social class divide and the hollowness of materialism during the Jazz Age. What is the title of this profound piece?
5. During World War I, Ernest Hemingway sustained severe wounds alongside a romantic heartbreak. He channelled his sorrow and anguish into a critically acclaimed novel about war and love. What is the title of this work?
6. To improve her hand mobility after cancer surgery, this Hong Kong writer began crafting teddy bears, which became the subject of her book *The Teddy Bear Chronicles*. Who is she?
7. After his insect-themed comic strip met with a lukewarm reception, Jim Davis started a new comic series about an overweight orange tabby cat with a cynical demeanour, now an iconic character in pop culture. What is the name of this character?
8. Rejected at the age of 11 from an arts course for being too young, Scott Adams eventually created a successful comic strip from his own experience as a white-collar worker that was a biting satire on corporate absurdity. Who is the main character of this work?

Please send your entry by fax (2521 8772) or email (csbolrs@csb.gov.hk) to the Editorial Board of *Word Power* by **28 May 2026**. Watch out for our coming issue to see if you get all the answers right, and better still, if you are one of the lucky ten to win a prize. The Editorial Board will have the final say on the answers.

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第一百零二期答案

1. 白雲蒼狗
2. 《紅樓夢》
3. 《武陵春》
4. 《牡丹亭》
5. 蘇三
6. 泰戈爾 (Rabindranath Tagore)
7. 《女人花》
8. 《人類群星閃耀時》

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歡迎同事投稿，細則請按這裏。

Issue No. 104 (July 2026) : Cents and Sensibility

Issue No. 105 (October 2026) : An Ode to Chivalry

Contributions from colleagues are welcome. Please click [here](#) for details.

中文顧問 洪若震博士 英語顧問 Prof. Grant Hamilton

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