# Proverbs

VOCABULARY PRACTICE

UPPER-INTERMEDIATE | B2

**Name:** _____ **Date:** _____

## 1 Match each proverb with the principle it conveys.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. | ____ | a closeness may reduce respect |
| 2 Fortune favours the bold. | ____ | b a quiet surface may conceal depth |
| 3 The road to hell is paved with good intentions. | ____ | c critics may share the faults they attack |
| 4 People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. | ____ | d partial understanding creates false confidence |
| 5 You reap what you sow. | ____ | e an unusual case highlights a general pattern |
| 6 Still waters run deep. | ____ | f courageous action may be rewarded |
| 7 Familiarity breeds contempt. | ____ | g outcomes follow from earlier behaviour |
| 8 The exception proves the rule. | ____ | h good aims do not guarantee good results |

## 2 Complete the abstract nouns in the proverbs.

**bold** | **contempt** | **exception** | **intentions** | **knowledge** | **rule** | **sow** | **waters**

**1** a little _____ is a dangerous thing

**2** fortune favours the _____

**3** the road to hell is paved with good _____

**4** you reap what you _____

**5** still _____ run deep

**6** familiarity breeds _____

**7** the _____ proves the rule

**8** an exception to the general _____

## 3 Choose the proverb that most precisely frames the case.

**1** A novice gives unsafe advice after one article: *A little knowledge is a dangerous thing / Still waters run deep*.

**2** A start-up takes a calculated risk and succeeds: *Fortune favours the bold / Familiarity breeds contempt*.

**3** A well-meant ban causes serious harm: *The road to hell is paved with good intentions / You reap what you sow*.

**4** A dishonest official attacks another's ethics: *People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones / Still waters run deep*.

**5** Years of neglect damage the building: *You reap what you sow / The exception proves the rule*.

**6** A reserved colleague reveals great insight: *Still waters run deep / Fortune favours the bold*.

**7** Constant exposure reduces admiration: *Familiarity breeds contempt / A little knowledge is dangerous*.

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## 4 Complete the commentary with words from the box.

**bold** | **contempt** | **exception** | **glass houses** | **intentions** | **knowledge** | **sow** | **waters**

The documentary warns that a little **1** _____ is a dangerous thing. Its entrepreneur believes fortune favours the **2** _____, yet several reforms show how the road to hell is paved with good **3** _____. Critics who live in **4** _____ nevertheless throw stones. The film argues that institutions reap what they **5** _____. One quiet investigator proves that still **6** _____ run deep. Repeated scandal makes familiarity breed **7** _____, while one surprising **8** _____ draws attention to the rule.

## 5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

**Whose common sense?**
Proverbs often present historically situated values as universal common sense. Fortune favours the bold praises risk, but its appeal may depend on overlooking those whose equally bold choices failed. This is survivorship bias. Other sayings can distribute responsibility unfairly: You reap what you sow may blame individuals for outcomes shaped by unequal opportunities. Critical use does not require rejecting proverbs; it requires examining assumptions, missing cases and the speaker's purpose.

**1** How do proverbs often present values? _____

**2** Which value does Fortune favours the bold praise? _____

**3** Whose experiences may it overlook? _____

**4** What bias does this create? _____

**5** How might You reap what you sow be unfair? _____

**6** What three things should critical users examine? _____

## 6 Rewrite using the expression in capitals.

**1** Limited expertise created dangerous confidence. **KNOWLEDGE** _

**2** Good motives did not prevent harmful results. **INTENTIONS** _

**3** His quiet manner concealed real depth. **STILL WATERS** _

**4** They now face the results of earlier choices. **REAP** ____

## OVER TO YOU

Write a **120-150 word** evaluation of a proverb used in public advice. Discuss its value, assumptions, limitations and one possible counterexample.

[ ] Interpret rather than merely repeat. [ ] Identify hidden assumptions. [ ] Use evidence or a counterexample.

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## ANSWER KEY

### 1 Principles conveyed

1 **d** 2 **f** 3 **h** 4 **c** 5 **g** 6 **b** 7 **a** 8 **e**

### 2 Abstract nouns

1 **knowledge** 2 **bold** 3 **intentions** 4 **sow** 5 **waters** 6 **contempt** 7 **exception** 8 **rule**

### 3 Precise framing

1 **A little knowledge is a dangerous thing** 2 **Fortune favours the bold** 3 **The road to hell is paved with good intentions** 4 **People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones**
5 **You reap what you sow** 6 **Still waters run deep** 7 **Familiarity breeds contempt**

### 4 Commentary

1 **knowledge** 2 **bold** 3 **intentions** 4 **glass houses** 5 **sow** 6 **waters** 7 **contempt** 8 **exception**

### 5 Reading - suggested answers

1 As universal common sense. 2 Risk. 3 People whose bold choices failed. 4 Survivorship bias.
5 It may ignore unequal opportunity. 6 Assumptions, missing cases and speaker purpose.

### 6 Rewriting - possible answers

1 **A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.** 2 **The road to hell is paved with good intentions.** 3 **Still waters run deep.** 4 They are **reaping what they sowed**.

**Over to you:** Answers will vary. Check interpretation, assumptions and counterevidence.