

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND PROVERB COLLECTIONProverbial ComparisonsInstructions to Collectors

The Department of English is building up a collection of proverbial comparisons. By these are meant similes and other such figures heard in the speech of Newfoundlanders. All of them are of interest, whether common to other English-speaking countries (e.g. 'cold as ice', 'quick as a flash'), or characteristic of Newfoundland only (e.g. 'stun as a mope', 'a stomach as big as a harbour tom-cod', 'as cute as a connor', 'as stupid as a caplin'). Most of them will probably be found to fit into one of the following forms: proverbial exaggerations of the form 'So cold that ...'; comparisons in the comparative degree (e.g. 'poorer than a church-mouse'); or comparisons using like and as.

Students are asked to write down as many of these proverbial comparisons as they can think of. It is important that certain additional information be given, for example, the name of the student, his place of birth and, particularly, the communities or community in which the comparison has been heard (if all your comparisons come from the same place, there is no need to repeat the name of the community in each case.) It would also be very helpful if the student would indicate, in each case, whether the comparison is rare or common, whether used by older people or by younger, whether it is used in polite company or is considered vulgar, and above all the contexts in which it is used (e.g. the comparison 'white as a ghost' describes a person in a state of illness or shock, and would not normally be used to describe, say, the colour of a house). If in doubt, give a sentence illustrating how you have heard the comparison used, or how you would use it yourself.

Students are asked to compile their lists on sheets of about this size, alphabetically, and with each item numbered. An alphabetical arrangement will stimulate the memory in recalling items. Simply list them either by the first word, or the first noun or very -e.g. 'black as pitch' would be listed under the letter b or p; 'run like a house afire' would be listed under r or h.

Attached is a sample plan. The completed list should be handed to your instructor.

(over)

Name:

Date:

Place of Birth:

Home Address:

(Suggested arrangement in column form)

<u>Proverbial Comparison</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Notes</u>
(EXAMPLES)			
1. As blind as a bat	Bats have poor eyesight; hence the comparison is used of persons (a) with bad eyesight (b) slow to understand a point.	Fogo	Very common
2. As cool as a cucumber	Cucumbers are cool and moist; used of people who are calm	Brigus	Common, esp. among children
3. Drink like a fish	Fish take in water constantly; used of people addicted to alcohol	St. John's	Common; used by adults
4. As good as gold	Gold is precious; hence the expression refers to anyone with a good disposition, especially children	Fortune	Very common
5. Eat like a pig	Pigs are greedy and sloppy feeders; applied to people who eat like this	St. John's	Very common
6. So hot the sea boiled	The sea is very cold; hence an exaggerated way of saying how warm it is	Bay Roberts	Rare; heard only twice
7. Madder than the devil	The devil is said to be always angry	St. John's	Occasional
8. Sweeter than sugar	Sugar is sweet; hence applied to very nice people (especially girls)	Grand Falls	Common
9. Like water off a duck's back	Water runs off ducks without wetting the feathers; hence applied to a person who doesn't pay attention to what is said to him, or doesn't care.	St. John's	Quite common
10. Smoke like a tilt	A tilt is a small cabin heated in winter by a wood-stove; hence applied to a person who smokes pipe or cigarettes excessively	Twillingate	Common