



Words and Their Stories: Golden Rules and Golden Oldies

Now, the VOA Special English program WORDS AND THEIR STORIES.

Throughout history, gold has been a sign of purity, beauty and power. Calling something **golden** means it has great quality and value.

For example, the **golden rule** is possibly the world's most widespread moral rule.

It says people should treat others the way they themselves would like to be treated. Every major religion has its own version of this idea.

The **golden ratio** is found in art, architecture and nature. It describes a rectangle with a length about one and one-half times its width. Objects using this ratio in their design seem to please the eye more than others.

Philosophers have their own golden idea. The **golden mean** says moderation in all things is the best way to live one's life. It is an idea linked to the Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle. Similar thoughts exist in Buddhism and Confucianism.

Ancient Greek myths told of a time long ago when people lived in peace and happiness. Poets called it the **Golden Age**. A **golden age** now describes a historical period of great artistic, scientific or economic progress. It can even recall a time of success and popularity for an industry. For example, the nineteen thirties and forties were called the **Golden Age of Radio**.

You may have heard the proverb **silence is golden**. This means silence is of great value. It is sometimes better to say nothing than to speak.

You might say your child was **good as gold** when he behaved well at school. British writer Charles Dickens used this expression in eighteen forty-three. He was describing the child Tiny Tim in the book "A Christmas Carol."

In nineteen thirty-seven, American playwright Clifford Odets wrote a play called "**The Golden Boy**." This expression describes a young man who has many good qualities and a bright future.

You might tell someone **you are golden** when that person does something very well.

Gold digger is another description. But this does not say something nice about a person. A **gold digger** is someone who seeks to marry a rich person because he or she is only interested in that person's money.

Maybe you like old songs from the nineteen fifties or sixties that are still well known and popular today. These are called **golden oldies**.

In the nineteen eighties and nineties, an American television comedy series told about four older women living in Miami, Florida. **The Golden Girls** often dealt with social issues in a funny way.

Today, most older people look forward to reaching their **golden years**. This is when hard-working people can retire to a life of ease and fulfillment.

This program was written by Mario Ritter. I'm Faith Lapidus. You can find more WORDS AND THEIR STORIES at our website, voaspecialenglish.com.