

Engelbert Thaler

Montaigne:

AB 8./9. SCHULJAHR

„Brevity is the soul of wit“ – schon Shakespeare wusste um die lernfördernde Wirkung geistreicher Sentenzen. Tiefgründige, provokative oder humorvolle Aphorismen lassen sich effektiv für mannigfache unterrichtliche Aktivitäten nutzen – denn: „less is more“.

„I quote others only in order the better to express myself“ – Aphorismen als Lernzünder

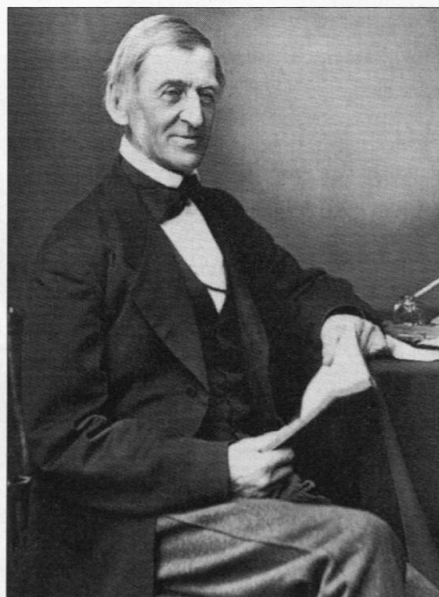
1. Funktion und Terminus – oder: „What's in a name? A rose, by any other name, would smell as sweet“ (Shakespeare)

Marketingexperten dient er als absatzförderndes Vehikel („Nichts Großes wurde je ohne Leidenschaft geboren“), Wahlkampfstrategen als den Gegner diskreditierende politische Waffe („Mit Statistiken kann man alles beweisen, notfalls sogar die Wahrheit“), Feuilletonisten als dankbare Modelliermasse („Bretter, die das Geld bedeuten“), Wissenschaftlern als Kapitel einleitendes Motto („In my beginning is my end“), Bildungsbürgern als Ausweis intellektueller Brillanz („Cogito ergo sum“), Fünftklässlerinnen als Zentrum ihrer Poesiebucheinträge („Nur mit dem Herzen sieht man gut“) – der Aphorismus ist omnipräsent und multifunktional.

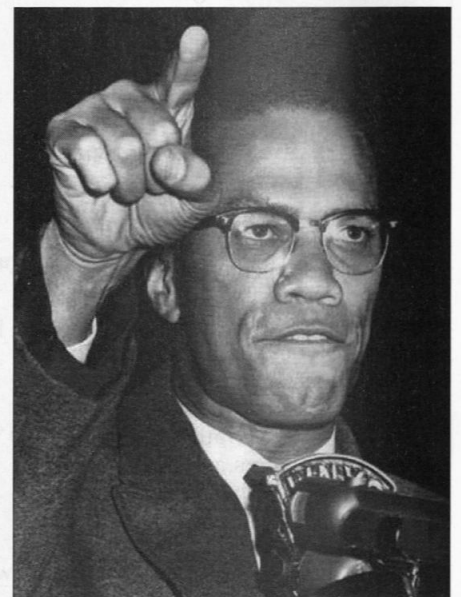
Als Vater des geistreichen Sinnspruchs wird Hippokrates betrachtet, Mark Aurel verfeinerte diese Gattung während der Antike, zu späteren Meistern zählen Gracian, Pascal, Nietzsche, Kraus oder Jünger. Das erste auf den Britischen Inseln in beweglichen Lettern gesetzte englischsprachige Buch war eine Aphorismen-

sammlung aus dem Verlagshaus Caxton (*Dictes and Sayenges of the Phylosophers*, 1477). Danach haben im angloamerikanischen Raum Francis Bacon, Samuel Johnson, William Somerset Maugham, Ambrose Bierce, Benjamin Disraeli, G. B. Shaw, Bertrand Russell, Gore Vidal, H. L. Mencken oder Woody Allen unvergessene Beispiele von „knowledge in capsule form“ (Speroni) produziert. Als Großmeister dieser Kleinform gilt freilich Oscar Wilde.

Das *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* definiert den *aphorism* als „any principle or precept expressed shortly and pithily“ und stellt damit kernig-markige Kürze als wesentliches Kriterium heraus. Etwas ausführlicher bestimmt der Brockhaus den Begriff Aphorismus: „knapper, oft schlagkräftig geformter, in sich geschlossener Sinnspruch in Prosa, vermittelt überraschend eine Erkenntnis durch Vergleich, Gegensatz oder Widerspruch und regt zum Nachdenken an“. Nachdenken könnte man daher, ob er außer in politischen, ökonomischen, sozialen und publizistischen Kontexten auch im Englischunterricht wertvolle Dienste zu leisten imstande ist.



What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)



Show me a capitalist and I'll show you a bloodsucker.
(Malcolm X)

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ZUM THEMA

No.	Type	Task
1	Reading	Read out this aphorism.
2	Dictation	Write the following aphorism into your exercise book.
3	Listening: memory game	Which parts of the aphorism you've just heard can you remember?
4	Translation	How would you render this statement in stylistically appropriate German?
5	Comprehension	What does ... mean?
6	Point of view	Who is trying to convince whom?
7	Interpretation	What does ... refer to?
8	Evaluation	Is this aphorism irrelevant/old-fashioned/cynical?
9	Linguistic analysis	What rhetorical devices/syntactic features can you detect?
10	Interview	Ask your classmates/other English teachers/people in the street what they think about this quotation.
11	Personalizing	Do any of your personal experiences support this aphorism?
12	Discussion	Do you agree with the message?
13	Debate	Let's prepare and carry out a debate (including proposer, opposer, chairman) on "...".
14	Expansion	Lengthen this aphorism by adding
		– adjectives/nouns
		– subordinate clauses
		– additional sentences.
15	Media transfer	Change this aphorism into
		– another text type (short story, playlet)
		– a visual form (picture, graph, table)
		– a radio play.
16	Reconstruction	Restore this defective aphorism (gapped text, first/second half missing) to its complete form.
17	Matching	The following 10 aphorisms have been cut into halves. Put them together again.
18	Change of perspective	Express a mood different from/contrary to the one in this aphorism.
19	Comparison	What parallels/differences can you identify between the following two/three aphorisms?
20	Ranking	Place the following aphorisms in order of suitability.
21	Pyramid discussion	First in pairs, then in groups of four, finally in the whole class, choose the most convincing of the following aphorisms.
22	Biographical research	What biographical background may have inspired the author to say something like that? Make use of traditional and digital resources.
23	Composition	Write a dialectical composition on this statement of about 200 words.
24	Creative essay	Write an essay that consists only of aphorisms (which contains 10 aphorisms).
25	Project work	Let's take this aphorism as the title of our project:
		a) The different aspects of the aphorism are brainstormed into a mind map.
		b) Groups are formed which are given one aspect each.
		c) The groups work on their task.
		d) Group work is integrated into a common product (video, wall display, booklet etc).
		e) The product is presented.

Kasten 1: Übungsformen bei der Arbeit mit Aphorismen



The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat.
(Lily Tomlin)

- Aufforderungscharakter oder (Provokation)
- Rhetorik/Stilistik
- Humor (Ironie, Satire)

Die konsequente Selbstbeschränkung des Aphoristikers auf das syntaktische Minimum eröffnet einen großen semantischen Spielraum. Als „Einfall zu etwas Größere, durch keine Ausführung verdorben“ (Brudzinski), regt er zum Nachdenken an. Knapp zu schreiben „heißt nicht ‚wenig zu schreiben‘ oder ‚nur das Nötigste zu schreiben‘, sondern: weniger zu schreiben, als eigentlich ‚nötig‘ wäre, und die nötigen Ergänzungen der Eigenanstrengung des Lesers zu übernehmen“ (Fricke). Der „Gedankentorso“ (Fricke) macht dem Lerner also Arbeit, statt sie ihm durch Erklärung, Paraphrase und andere Redundanzen abzunehmen.



*"There's still some work left in this one. Get him another pot of coffee."
... or: Men, for the sake of getting a living, forget to live.*
(Margaret Fuller)

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2. Unterrichtliche Eignung – oder: „Aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to inquire further“ (Bacon)

In der Literaturgeschichte fällt die aphoristische Gattung kaum ins Gewicht. Aufgrund Unscheinbarkeit, Fragmentarität und Totalitätsaskese sah sich die „Sätzchenkunst“ oft genug mit einem hochnäsigen Herablächeln konfrontiert. Aber gerade in ihrer scheinbaren Schwäche liegt ihre gesamte Stärke. Für ihre Verwendung im Englischunterricht sprechen folgende Kennzeichen:

- Kürze
- Prägnanz
- Sentenzhaftigkeit
- Überraschungseffekt

3. Lernziele – oder: „If you would hit the mark, you must aim a little above it“ (Longfellow)

Obwohl oder gerade weil sie Stückwerk sind, lassen sich Aphorismen flexibel einsetzen. Mit den „Denkaufgaben“ (Novalis) können verschiedene Ziele im Englischunterricht verfolgt werden:

- Sprachtraining in den vier Grundfertigkeiten *reading, listening, speaking, writing*
- Übung der fünften Fertigkeit: Übersetzung
- Festigung struktureller und funktionaler Phänomene
- Sprachbewusstsein (*language awareness*)
- Gedächtnisschulung
- Erweiterung des Weltwissens

- Interkulturelles Lernen (*cultural awareness*)
 - Ausbau des kritischen Urteilsvermögens
 - Berücksichtigung affektiver Faktoren.
- So lassen sich, ausgehend von der emotionalen Dimension der Freude an geistreich-humorvollen Kurztexten, verschiedene sprachpraktische, kognitive und kommunikative Intentionen verfolgen.

4. Übungsformen – oder: „I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat“ (Churchill)

In Kasten 1 (S. 37) sind 25 Übungstypen aufgeführt, die veranschaulichen, wie man mit Aphorismen konkret im Englischunterricht arbeiten kann. Die Palette zeigt, dass die Bandbreite an Aufgaben von einem zweiminütigen Stundeneinstieg bis zu einem mehrwöchigen Projekt reicht.

5. Beispiele – oder: „It is a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations“ (Churchill)

Die in Material 1 (S. 39 ff.) genannten Aphorismen von Autoren des englischsprachigen Kulturkreises drehen sich um Themen, die Heranwachsende persönlich berühren. Sowohl sprachliches als auch gehaltliches Niveau sind so einfach, dass ein Einsatz bereits ab der Mittelstufe der Sekundarstufe I möglich ist.

Weitere Beispiele von Aphorismen findet man beispielsweise in dem Reclam-Büchlein Horstmann, Ulrich (Hrsg.) (1993): *English Aphorisms*. Stuttgart. Oder auf der CD-ROM *Infopedia 2.0* (Softkey), die das *Merriam Webster Dictionary of Quotations* alphabetisch nach Stichworten und Autoren kategorisiert hat.



Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go.
(Oscar Wilde)

MATERIAL 1

Topic	Aphorism	Author
<i>Money</i>	• Money – the root of all good.	Anonymous
	• Show me a capitalist and I'll show you a bloodsucker.	Malcolm X
	• The trouble with the rat race is that even if you win, you're still a rat.	Lily Tomlin
	• There's no reason to be the richest man in the cemetery.	Colonel Sanders
	• It is not enough to succeed. Others must fail.	Gore Vidal
<i>Man and Woman</i>	• Girls have an unfair advantage over men. If they don't get what they want by being smart, they can get it by being dumb.	Yul Brynner
	• You see an awful lot of smart guys with dumb women, but you hardly ever see a smart woman with a dumb guy.	Clint Eastwood
	• They have a right to work wherever they want to – as long as they have dinner ready when you get home.	John Wayne
	• That woman speaks eighteen languages, and she can't say "no" in any of them.	Dorothy Parker
	• In politics if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman.	Margaret Thatcher
	• The course of true love never did run smooth.	Shakespeare
<i>Marriage</i>	• A man in love is incomplete until he is married. Then he is finished.	Zsa Zsa Gabor
	• Everyone I know is either married or dotty.	Germaine Greer
	• Husbands are like fires. They go out when unattended.	Zsa Zsa Gabor
	• Why does a woman work ten years to change a man's habits and then complain that he is not the man she married?	Barbra Streisand
	• Men marry because they are tired; women because they are curious. Both are disappointed.	Oscar Wilde
<i>School and Education</i>	• The purpose of education is to replace an empty mind with an open one.	Malcolm Forbes
	• In examinations those who do not wish to know ask questions of those who cannot tell.	Sir Walter Raleigh
	• Education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten.	B. F. Skinner

MATERIAL 1

Topic	Aphorism	Author
<i>School and Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught. • The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function. • He who can, does. He who cannot, teaches. 	<p>Oscar Wilde</p> <p>F. Scott Fitzgerald</p> <p>G. B. Shaw</p>
<i>Language</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After all, when you come right down to it, how many people speak the same language even when they speak the same language? • Thanks to words, we have been able to rise above the brutes; and thanks to words, we have often sunk to the level of the demons. • Language is the dress of thought. • England and America are two countries separated by the same language. • Why care for grammar as long as we are good? 	<p>Russell Hoban</p> <p>Aldous Huxley</p> <p>Samuel Johnson</p> <p>G. B. Shaw</p> <p>Artemus Ward</p>
<i>Intelligence and Success</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence, like truth, beauty and contact lenses, is in the eye of the beholder. • Every man loves what he is good at. • Nothing is so commonplace as to wish to be remarkable. • Most people would succeed in small things, if they were not troubled with great ambitions. • Not failure, but low aim, is crime. 	<p>Laurence J. Peter</p> <p>Thomas Shadwell</p> <p>O. W. Holmes</p> <p>H. W. Longfellow</p> <p>J. R. Lowell</p>
<i>Happiness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human felicity is produced not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day. • The secret of happiness is to admire without desiring. And that is not happiness. • The search for happiness is one of the chief sources of unhappiness. • Happiness is like coke – something you get as a by-product in the process of making something else. • There are two things to aim at in life: first, to get what you want; and, after that, to enjoy it. Only the wisest of mankind achieve the second. 	<p>Benjamin Franklin</p> <p>F. H. Bradley</p> <p>Eric Hoffer</p> <p>Aldous Huxley</p> <p>L. P. Smith</p>

MATERIAL 1

Topic	Aphorism	Author
<i>Happiness</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any man may be in good spirits and good temper when he's well dressed. There ain't much credit in that. 	Charles Dickens
<i>Modern Times</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The medium is the message. Man is still the most extraordinary computer of all. A computer does not substitute for judgment any more than a pencil substitutes for literacy. But writing without a pencil is no particular advantage. The means by which we live have outdistanced the ends for which we live. Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men. Technology is a queer thing; it brings you great gifts with one hand, and it stabs you in the back with the other. 	Marshall McLuhan John F. Kennedy Robert McNamara Martin Luther King C. P. Snow
<i>Life and Meaning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this world there are only two tragedies. One is not getting what one wants, and the other is getting it. „Blessed is the man who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed“ was the ninth beatitude. If a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live. An idealist is one who, on noticing that a rose smells better than a cabbage, concludes that it will also make better soup. Men, for the sake of getting a living, forget to live. Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't so much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that, what have you had? Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player. 	Oscar Wilde Alexander Pope Martin Luther King H. L. Mencken Margaret Fuller Henry James Shakespeare
<i>Man and Superman</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals. Half of the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. A gossip is one who talks to you about others; a bore is one who talks to you about himself; and a brilliant conversationalist is one who talks to you about yourself. In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence. opiate, n.: An unlocked door in the prison of identity. It leads into the jail yard. 	Benjamin Franklin T. S. Eliot Lisa Kirk Laurence J. Peter, The Peter Principle Ambrose Bierce