

去如黃鶴

qu4 ru2 huang2 he4

Two jobless men appeared in court for stealing cars. They had responded to used car ads and arranged to meet the owners. They took the cars for a test drive and never returned.

In another case, a con man accosted senior citizens on the street and told them he was handing out free “health bracelets.” He asked the victims to take off their expensive watches to “measure their wrist” before leaving the scene with an excuse. Needless to say, the victims never saw him or their timepieces again.

The fraudsters – disappearing acts in both cases may be described as “去如黃鶴” (*qu4 ru2 huang2 he4*). “去” (*qu4*) is “to go,” “to leave,” “如” (*ru2*) means “as,” “like,” “similar to,” “黃” (*huang2*) is “yellow,” and “鶴” (*he4*) is “a crane,” “a stork.” Literally, “去如黃鶴” (*qu4 ru2 huang2 he4*) is “gone like the yellow stork.”

Idiom by Lon Yan

The idiom is based on a story about a fairy whose personal conveyance was a yellow stork. One day, they flew off into the clouds and were never seen again. So “去如黃鶴” (*qu4 ru2 huang2 he4*) means “nowhere to be found,” “disappear without a trace,” “gone and never to return.”

Another version of the idiom is “杳如黃鶴” (*yao3 ru2 huang2 he4*). “杳” (*yao3*) means “distant and out of sight,” “too far away to be traced.” So “杳如黃鶴” is “too far away to be traced like the yellow stork.”

Terms containing the character “杳” (*yao3*) include:

杳然 (*yao3 ran2*) - without any sound

杳遠 (*yao3 yuan3*) - far distant

杳冥 (*yao3 ming2*) - dark and fathomless

杳無音信 (*yao3 wu2 yin1 xin4*) - completely not heard from