

# 面目可憎

*mian4 mu4 ke3 zeng1*

It doesn't pay to have an angry face all the time, unless you are a bird, in which case you can gain world fame as the character of an electronic game everybody plays.

Neither is it advisable to be always grumpy, unless you are Tardar Sauce, dubbed Grumpy Cat. The feline created an internet sensation when her owner posted her now famous perpetual scowl online.

Grumpy even has a wax sculpture made in her image. At the ceremony to unveil it at San Francisco's Madame Tussauds recently, Grumpy looked, well, grumpy, as usual.

An angry or grumpy look on the face of a cartoon figure or a cat can be endearing. But on the human face, such expressions have the opposite effect of making one “面目可憎” (*mian4 mu4 ke3 zeng1*).

“面” (*mian4*) is “the face,” “目” (*mu4*) is “eye,” “可” (*ke3*) means “can,” “may,” and “憎” (*zeng1*)

## Idiom by Lon Yan

is “to dislike,” “to detest.” Literally, “面目可憎” (*mian4 mu4 ke3 zeng1*) is “face and eye can be disliked.”

“面目” (*mian4 mu4*) as a term, means facial expression, demeanor. So “面目可憎” (*mian4 mu4 ke3 zeng1*) is “a face that invites detesting,” “a hateful appearance,” “repulsive looks.”

“面目可憎” (*mian4 mu4 ke3 zeng1*) was used by Sung dynasty scholar and artist Huang Tingjian (黃庭堅) when discussing the importance of reading books. In his view, not having touched a book for three days would render a person “面目可憎” (*mian4 mu4 ke3 zeng1*), and conversation with him or her uninteresting too.

**Terms containing the character “憎” (*zeng1*) include:**

憎恨 (*zeng1 hen4*) - to hate intensely

憎惡 (*zeng1 e4*) - to abhor

乞人憎 (*qi3 ren2 zeng1*) - annoying

可憎 (*ke3 zeng1*) - abominable