

Idiom by Lon Yan

暴殄天物

ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴

Truckloads of rice were seen being dumped quietly at a landfill in the small hours of the morning. The rice was found to be perfectly edible. It was believed to be surplus from some organization's rice-giving campaign.

Meanwhile, four tons of onion, also in good condition, were found discarded. It was believed to have come from supermarket chains that have overstocked and found it cheaper just to throw them away than paying for storage.

There is an idiom for such acts: “暴殄天物” (**ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴**). “暴” (**ba⁴**) means “sudden and violent,” “cruel,” “savage,” “excessively,” “殄” (**tian³**) “completely destroy or waste,” “to exterminate,” “to wipe out,” “天” (**tian¹**) “the sky,” “heaven,” “nature,” and “物” (**wu⁴**) “matter,” “things,” “substance.”

Literally, “暴殄天物” (**ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴**) is “excessively waste things of nature.” It means “to waste God's good gifts recklessly,” “to waste natural resources recklessly,” “to misuse things,” “to waste products of nature.”

“暴殄天物” (**ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴**) is a criticism against people who do not know how to use things sparingly.

In fact, most of us are guilty of “暴殄天物” (**ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴**) every day as we leave food in the plate, don't turn off the light when we leave the room, and keep water running when we brush our teeth.

Any kind of wastage can be called “暴殄天物” (**ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴**). When you see someone throwing away half a lunch box of food, you can say “Please don't “暴殄天物” (**ba⁴ tian³ tian¹ wu⁴**).

Terms containing the character “暴” (**ba⁴**) include:

暴力 (**ba⁴ li⁴**) – violence; force

暴動 (**ba⁴ dong⁴**) – a riot; an insurrection

暴露 (**ba⁴ lu⁴**) – to expose; to reveal; to lay bare

暴風 (**ba⁴ feng¹**) – a typhoon