

# Idiom by Lon Yan

## 異想天開

yi4 xiang3 tian1 kai1

Getting rich is the dream of many, and Hong Kong people have certainly come up with some curious ways to try to make this happen. One of these is close association with the number “8”, as in Cantonese “8” (*baat*) rhymes with the character “fat” (發) – “fat tat” (發達), which means “getting rich” of course.

So everyone wants to live on the 8th floor, or better still, the 88th floor (call the 40th floor 88th if the building doesn’t have that many levels), and have a flat number, or drive a car with a license plate that contains “8”.

One person even wrote “Win Mark Six” on a Kongming lantern (孔明燈) and sent it skyward.

This secret get-rich-quick trick was revealed when the paper lantern fell back to earth, and landed in the backyard of a house in the New Territories, almost starting a fire, which could have achieved the exact

opposite for the lantern owner – losing big money in a lawsuit.

Thinking that such methods would work can be called “異想天開” (*yi4 xiang3 tian1 kai1*).

“異” (*yi4*) is “different,” “unusual,” “想” (*xiang3*) “to think,” “to suppose,” “天” (*tian1*) is “the sky,” “the heaven,” and “開” (*kai1*) “to open.” Literally, “異想天開” (*yi4 xiang3 tian1 kai1*) is “having the unusual thought that the sky would crack open.”

The idiom means “to indulge in the wildest fantasy,” “to have fantastic notions,” “to imagine the wildest thing.”

Saying someone’s idea is “異想天開” (*yi4 xiang3 tian1 kai1*) means that you think the idea is highly impractical or even ridiculous. It’s like saying “Dream on!”

### Terms containing the character “異” (*yi4*) include:

異常 (*yi4 chang2*) – unusual; extraordinary; exceptional

怪異 (*guai4 yi4*) – strange; weird; eerie

異味 (*yi4 wei4*) – a peculiar smell

異性 (*yi4 xing4*) – the opposite sex