

# 九死一生

*jiu3 si3 yi4 sheng1*

What would you do if you were in the sea and suddenly found a gigantic (巨大的) shark as your companion?

Australian professional surfer Mick Fanning punched (拳擊) the shark, and the move saved his life.

The three-time world champion (世界冠軍) was in a major surfing (滑浪) competition in South Africa when he encountered two sharks, one of which approached his surfboard.

The 34-year-old sportsman said: "I just saw fins. I was waiting for the teeth." But he apparently had no intention of going down without a fight. He landed a punch on the back of the monster creature. It was startled (受驚) and disappeared back into the deep blue sea.

The Chinese idiom that described Fanning's predicament (困境) is 九死一生 (*jiu3 si3 yi4 sheng1*). "九" (*jiu3*) is nine, "死" is (*si3*) death or die, "一" (*yi4*) is one and "生" (*sheng1*) means live.

Literally, "九死一生" is "nine die one live," meaning

## Idiom by Lon Yan

an extremely dangerous situation in which death is almost certain.

The idiom actually speaks of the probability of survival, which is 10 percent, as "nine die" refers to a 90 percent chance of dying.

"A narrow escape," "close shave" and "close call" are English expressions that have a similar meaning. These phrases all describe "a situation where something unpleasant or dangerous nearly happened."

If you succeeded in staying alive in an extremely dangerous situation, you cheated death.

Fanning managed to escape "death by jaws," so we can say he has cheated death (死裡逃生).

### Terms containing the character "死" (*si3*) include:

死敵 (*si3 di2*) - irreconcilable enemy

死板 (*si3 ban3*) - inflexible, stubborn

死者 (*si3 zhe3*) - the dead, a dead person

死刑 (*si3 xing2*) - death penalty