

Red sky at night.

As I walked outside yesterday to throw the garbage in the dumpster, the evening sky caught my eye. There was a spread of small clouds that were lit up by the sun, beautiful and pink. An English saying came to mind:

Red sky at night, shepherd's delight; Red sky in the morning, shepherd's warning.

I remember hearing that saying when I was a child. At that time, I lived in a rural area where there was a lot of farm land. It was important to know when to plant seeds, and how the weather would affect the work on the farm. Who knows if this saying is accurate? Scientifically speaking, it is an indication that the low sun is lighting up clouds that are heavy with moisture. By the time the night has come and gone, it will either have rained, or the clouds will have gone. If the clouds are pink in the morning, the moisture will be around for the rest of the day, meaning that rain is on its way. That makes sense. The saying is one of many that we find in what is called 'weather lore', lore is a word that we don't often use which means 'old sayings' or 'old stories'. There must be some truth to some of them. They developed through the experience of people who have observed weather patterns over time, like fishermen and farmers. Another saying I like is:

When windows won't open, and the salt clogs the shaker, The weather will favour (favor) the umbrella maker.

Salt, as you know, absorbs water from the air. So, when there is high humidity, the salt will expand and not pour easily from the salt shaker. Also, the wood of doors and windows will expand because of moisture in the air. It's reasonable that generations of people tried to figure out what the weather would do, as a way of preserving their livelihoods. We're luckier nowadays, with weather satellites and weather stations, that can warn and inform us of important changes in the weather. We can even, ahead of time, evacuate areas that will be hit by hurricanes. And think what that saves! Weather lore has its uses, but science and technology now lead the way.

Grammar notes.

Related vocabulary: to clog, ...speaking, to make sense, to figure out.

1. Leaves have clogged the drain, so there is water everywhere.
2. Financially speaking, he is wealthy; however, emotionally speaking, he is poor.
3. That newspaper article didn't make sense. The argument was very weak.
4. I tried to figure out the instructions to put the shelves together, but they were not clear at all.