



## Overheard: Dress Sayings and Proverbs

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Coded into our everyday speech, sartorial expressions abound. In his study of Rastafarian proverbs, Sw. Anand Prahlad outlines four levels of meaning embedded within this speech act: 1) the *grammatical* or literal meaning; 2) the *social* meaning, where meaning is understood within a group context; 3) the *situational* meaning, which depends on how the proverb is used rhetorically; and 4) the *symbolic* meaning, or meanings, which emerge from each individual speaker or listener's experience (2001:2). How might students analyze their own common phrases that include dress-related expressions? By giving them a couple of examples from below, what other phrases may they discover? How do they use these sayings? What meanings do such sayings have to them?

Dress slowly, we're in a hurry.  
Let a smile be your umbrella.  
A stitch in time saves nine.  
That's a feather in your cap.  
The emperor wore no clothes.  
Don't air your dirty linen in public.  
All dressed up and nowhere to go.  
It was as comfortable as an old shoe.  
Wear your best bib and tucker.  
Buckle down and work hard.  
It was a cloak-and-dagger operation.  
Those two are cut from the same cloth.  
They were dressed to kill.  
I'll eat my hat.  
She would give you the shirt off her back.  
He got the boot.  
Handle him with kid gloves.  
She might have a card up her sleeve.  
Try to walk in another's shoes.  
Keep your shirt on.  
We did it on a shoestring.  
Pass the hat.  
Pull up your bootstraps.

### Works Cited

Prahlad, Sw. Anand. 2001. *Reggae Wisdom: Proverbs in Jamaican Music*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.