

Not All Mother Expressions Are As Nice As Mom

In the United States, Mother's Day falls on the second Sunday in May. It was back in 1908 when a woman named Anna Jarvis created this unofficial holiday to honor mothers. However, Ms. Jarvis would later criticize Mother's Day. She said it had become too **commercial** -- too much about spending money.

She had a good point.

Traditionally, children and husbands celebrate mothers of all ages by buying flowers, cards and other gifts or taking them to dinner in a nice restaurant. But today, you will not need any money at all.

We instead will talk about some expressions that use the word "mother."

To start with, most mothers give birth. So, your **motherland** is where you were born and your **mother tongue** is your native language.

Some cultures believe **Mother Earth** gave birth to everything that exists on our planet. In Greek mythology, a goddess named Gaia was the mother of all. She was said to have created the Earth and the Universe. **Mother Nature** is a little different. This term relates to the natural world as if it were a woman.

It has been said that there is nothing as great as a **mother's love**. Some mother expressions mean just that. The **mother lode** comes from mining. It means the place where the largest amount of gold, silver, or anything else of value can be found.

But now, the term mother lode means a rich supply of anything. We often use the word "strike" with this expression. For example, you might say, "She just graduated college and struck the mother lode with her new job!" In other words, the woman's new job is making her rich!



Love from a Mama elephant is some of the biggest around! This baby Asian elephant walks with her mother. The baby elephant was born in a U.S. zoo on Dec. 22, 2014 and is named Achara. (AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki)

When we call something “**the mother of all**,” this means it is the biggest or best of something. Here is an example: “We are going to throw the mother of all parties this weekend. So you have to come!”

Naturally, the word “mother” can be used to mean to give birth, even to something you cannot touch, such as an idea or wisdom. The saying “**necessity is the mother of invention**” means that when people really need to do something, they will find a way to do it. And “**experience is the mother of wisdom**” means that people learn from what happens to them.

You might think that all expressions about mothers are sweet and loving. Not so.

A boy who is “**tied to his mother’s apron strings**” is controlled by his mother. We can also call him a “**mama’s boy**.” Both of these terms are even more insulting if you are talking about a man, not a young boy. It can be a huge mistake for a woman to marry a “mama’s boy” who is still “**tied to his mother’s apron strings**.”

A show about mothers would not be complete without talking about the very popular but mysterious **Mother Goose**. The short poems and songs that Mother Goose supposedly wrote are very much a part of growing up in the United States. Real or not, you could say Mother Goose is the mother of all nursery rhyme writers.

We *do* know that writer Robert Louis Stevenson was real. He is famous for such stories as "Treasure Island" and "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." He also wrote this poem titled, simply, "To My Mother."

You too, my mother, read my rhymes

For love of unforgotten times,

And you may chance to hear once more

The little feet along the floor.

To all mothers of all types around the world, we here at VOA Learning English wish you a very Happy Mother's Day!

I'm Anna Matteo.

Anna Matteo wrote and produced this program. Jim Tedder read the poem "To My Mother."