

# Jue Ju Poetry



## Objectives

### The students will:

- Recognize a form of Chinese poetry.
- Be introduced to an important philosophy from China (Taoism).
- Write poems using various forms of poetry, including a Chinese form of poetry.

## Materials

- Student Handout: "The Poetry of Li Bai" (one copy per student)
- Student Handout: "Staying the Night at a Mountain Temple" (one copy per student)
- Large world map
- Drawing paper and utensils
- "Winter in Songming" book

## Procedure

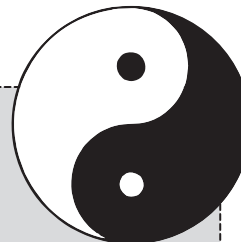
### 1. Introduce the poet Li Bai (also known as Li Po; pronounced either as "Lee-Buy" or "Lee-Bwo.")

Explain to students that China has a written history that is over 2,500 years old. During this extensive period of human history, the Chinese developed many forms of art and philosophy. Poetry was an extremely important art form in Chinese history.

Explain that Li Bai was one of China's most beloved poets. Li Bai grew up near Chengdu (pronounced "Chung-doo"), in Sichuan (pronounced "Se-chwan") Province, which is adjacent to Yunnan Province in the western part of China. The story "Winter in Songming" also takes place in this area. Using the large world map, have a student identify the locations of Asia, China and Sichuan Province.

### Taoism

Taoism (pronounced "Dow-ism"), along with Buddhism and Confucianism, is one of the three major philosophies from China. Taoism was founded by Lao Tzu (pronounced "Lau-Zu"), a contemporary of Confucius. Lao Tzu is believed to have written the "Tao Te Ching," (pronounced "Dow-De-Ching") which explains the core beliefs of Taoism. Some ideas from Taoism that have become popular in western culture include the practice of Tai Chi (a form of rhythmic movements) and the symbol of Yin and Yang. The Yin Yang symbol represents the balance of opposites in the universe. The dark represents the female side of the universe, and the light represents the male side. Another interpretation explains that the dark represents the night and the light represents the day. The two sides interact and constantly swirl, showing that change is the only constant in the universe. According to Taoism, when opposites are equally present, the result is balance and calmness. When things are out of balance, the result is confusion and disarray.



## National Standards Addressed



### Literature

**RL.3.2.** Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

**RL.4.2.** Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

**RF.3.4.** Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

- Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding

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- Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.



## Procedure (continued)

Li Bai was influenced by Taoism, a major philosophy in Chinese culture. Taoism emphasizes the link between people and nature and aligning the human character with nature. Because Li Bai was influenced by Taoism, much of his poetry depicted nature and human interaction with it.

- 2. Introduce the Chinese form of poetry known as “Jue Ju” (pronounced “Jeh-Jee”).** Li Bai used many forms of poetry. One that he commonly used was the Jue Ju form of poetry.

Jue Ju poetry has four lines. Each line has the same number of syllables – usually five, but sometimes seven. In Chinese, each character has one syllable. This means Jue Ju poetry has either five characters per line, or seven characters per line. When the poems are translated to English, the number of syllables often changes so they lose their strict format. When students write Jue Ju poetry, however, they should try to stick to the format of every line having the same number of syllables.

Distribute the student handout “The Poetry of Li Bai.” Read the poems and encourage students to sketch the images that come to mind. Solicit the students’ reactions to the poems.

- 3. Show students the difference between the Chinese versions and English version of a poem.** There are several versions of one poem in the “Staying the Night at a Mountain Temple” student handout. Distribute these to your students so they can see these concrete examples of how the English version, the Chinese version and the Chinese calligraphy version differ. Included are three versions of this poem:

- the Chinese version
- an English translation
- an example of the poem written using the art form of Chinese calligraphy

Using the information in the handout, discuss the different versions with your students.

- 4. Have students write Jue Ju poems.** Tell students that you will be writing poems in the Jue Ju style about the relationship between humans and nature. It doesn’t matter whether the students use rhymes or not. Some different topics they might write about include:

- Connections between people and nature in the book “Winter in Songming.”
- Connections between people and nature that they have learned about in previous lessons.
- Connections between themselves and nature, based on their own concrete experiences.

## Standards (continued)

### Writing

**W.3.10.** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### Examples of Jue Ju Poetry

written by teachers and students

The winter wind blows loudly  
Zadou listens through the wall  
The house is strong and sturdy  
He is warm and safe through all

Biogas is neat  
Gives off lots of heat  
Thanks to pig and cow  
We have heat right now

The trees protect the clean air  
The trees protect the rich soil  
The trees protect the water  
How can we protect the trees?

## Procedure (continued)

Help the students think of other topics to write about by creating a list together as a class. Some ideas for connections between humans and nature based on the book, “Winter in Songming,” include:

- The people’s attitude toward snow.
- Activities that occur during winter in Songming County.
- What you imagine people will be doing with crops during other seasons of the year.
- Zadou in his room at sunrise.
- Zadou and his brother caring for the pig.

Some ideas of topics based on other lessons in this unit include:

- Rivers and people.
- People’s dependence on water.
- The creation of mountains.
- People’s reliance on energy.
- How people get energy.

Have the students draw an image to accompany the final draft of their poems.

- 5. Have students share their poems with a wide audience.** Display the poems in the classroom or the school hallway.

### Extension Activity

Have students write about the subjects in Procedure 4 using other common forms of poetry such as:

- Acrostic.
- Cinquain.
- Diamante.
- Shape Poems.
- Rhyming Poems (couplets, triplets, quatrains).

## Links To Heifer International

### Connecting to Nature

Heifer International supports the development of communities around the world while consistently maintaining a strong emphasis on protecting the natural environment. Educating people about other cultures and the connection between humans and the natural environment throughout the world is central to Heifer International’s promotion of worldwide sustainable development.



# Student Handout:

## The Poetry of Li Bai

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Li Bai was one of China's most famous poets. He lived nearly 2,000 years ago, during the Tang Dynasty. Li Bai was known for writing about nature. One form of poetry that he used is called "Jue Ju" (pronounced "Jeh-Jee").

The Jue Ju form of poetry has four lines. Every line has the same number of syllables. Jue Ju poetry does not tell a story; instead, it creates a mood.

Here are some examples of Jue Ju poetry by Li Bai. In the Chinese versions, each line has the same number of syllables. In the English translations, however, English words are substituted for Chinese words so the number of syllables in each line is not necessarily equal.

As you read or listen to these poems, pay attention to how Li Bai wrote about nature. What emotions or moods do you feel when listening to these poems? As you listen to the poems, sketch the images that come into your mind next to the written poems.

### Thoughts on a Still Night

Before my bed, the moon is shining bright,  
I think that it is frost upon the ground.  
I raise my head and look at the bright moon,  
I lower my head and think of home.

### Dialogue in a Mountain

You ask me why I live among the hills green,  
I smile without reply, my heart serene.  
Peach blossoms flow away with running streams.  
It's a world other than the earth of men.

### Sitting Alone on Mount Jingting

All the birds have flown up and gone;  
A lonely cloud floats leisurely by.  
We never tire of looking at each other -  
Only the mountain and I.

# Student Handout: "Staying the Night at a Mountain Temple"

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Here are three versions of the same poem by Li Bai.

- **Version 1 – The Chinese version.**

This version is written using Chinese characters. Each character uses one syllable. Begin at the top left corner, and read from left to right. The first line is the title of the poem, with four characters. The next four lines have five syllables each.

- **Version 2– An English translation.**

There are many different ways to translate a poem from one language to another because the translator can choose among many different words. This is one of many English translations of Li Bai's original poem.

- **Version 3 – An example of the poem written using the art form of Chinese calligraphy.**

Calligraphy is an ancient art in China that evokes a mood through the appearance of the characters. In this version, the characters are written in the Chinese format that begins at the top right hand character, down to the bottom of the column, then to the top of the next column. The last character read is at the bottom, left corner of the poem.

The smaller characters tell the artist's name and the date the calligraphy was created. The square block at the bottom left is called a seal and shows the artist's signature in Chinese characters.

This ink and paper calligraphy is by Ramon Lim. For more information on the artist, see [www.thegalleriesdowntown.com/dynamic/artist.asp?ArtistID=1069](http://www.thegalleriesdowntown.com/dynamic/artist.asp?ArtistID=1069).

**Version 1**

夜宿山寺  
危楼高百尺，  
手可摘星辰。  
不敢高声语，  
恐惊天上人。

**Version 2**

**Staying the Night at a Mountain Temple**  
The high tower is a hundred feet tall,  
From here one's hand could pluck the stars.  
I do not dare to speak in a loud voice,  
I fear to disturb the people in heaven.

**Version 3**

