

Literature Institute Study Guide

LIT 531 Chinese Literature

Instructions for the Study Guide: Please use the questions to develop a deeper understanding of the text and to review the concepts. As you read, consider the questions. Keeping careful notes or a journal will help you prepare to write the essays at the end of each section as well as the final essay. Your required and supplemental readings can be found in the "Readings" file.

Instructions for Essays: Please write a 1,250 – 1,500 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Instructions for Final Essay: Please write a 5,000 word essay that responds to the essay questions. Then, send your essay to your professor. You may send an outline and drafts to your instructor for feedback and guidance before you send your finished essay.

Required Texts

Bedford Anthology of World Literature, Books 1-6. Boston: Bedford-St. Martins, 2004.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- O1. To create in your mind a cohesive map of Chinese literature, from start to finish.
- O2. To see how the stages of Chinese literature grow in and out of one another.
- O3. To familiarize yourself with the various strands which go into making the fabric of Chinese literature.
- O4. To identify the major genres of Chinese literature, and to appreciate their importance, relative to one another, in keeping the German literary tradition alive.
- O5. To form some opinion of the historical and cultural setting of Chinese literature.
- O6. To relate Chinese literature to your own national literature/culture. How do they compare?

UNIT	WEEKS	TOPICS
I		Ancient Literature
	1	The Ancient Way
	Overview	A great state finds poetry at its center
	Introduction	A traditional society, China has remained close to its most ancient known cultural history. Archaic methods of divination, poetries originating in the middle of the second millennium B.C., a language--the oldest in the world in continuous use: these culture-shaping characteristics have continued to compel the Chinese imagination, even in our day of Cultural Revolution and "Made in China." The origins of the Chinese people—unlike those of Greeks, Hindus, Hebrews—were dynastic. Chinese myth does not recount the God-created origins of the Chinese people, but the dynastic houses that founded the civilization. (Court and ritual societies accordingly became the core of a giant bureaucracy, and of a cultured elite characteristically devoted to the arts.) Those who lived outside the limits of the Chinese state, which is circumscribed by the mountains and deserts of today's Western provinces--Xinjiang, Tibet—were regularly considered barbarians, no part of the cultural

excellence of China itself. Military prowess was there to protect this land-rich enclosure; mounted archers and crossbows, as Bedford reminds you, were potent discouragers of the “Barbarians.” And China was able to take care of its own dinner table. Millet, the staple crop of all levels of society, for millennia has provided a reliable source of nourishment for this vast enclosed land surface.

Over the course of the first two millennia B.C.E., China developed a culture in which poetry, and the belief systems it expressed, proved to be the central cultural fact. Like the Greeks, the Hebrews, and the Hindus, the Chinese founded and defined their culture in poetry. You will begin your reading in Chinese literature with one of the five so-called Confucian Classics, *The Book of Songs*. The shaping presence of this collection dominates all subsequent Chinese culture.

The Book of Songs

Overview Poetry in the Service of Culture Formation

Introduction The *Book of Songs* (*Shih Jing*) was the earliest collection of Chinese poetry; it consists of 305 poems, created from the early second millennium B.C.E. to the time of Christ. (The moral philosopher Confucius was alleged to have been the collector and editor of this work.) Hard to date within this vast time frame, the *Songs* are most easily classified by “subject matter”—see page 1575 in Bedford, Vol. I, for the details.) The poems included in our anthology give a taste of the range of this work, and, though in translation, some sense of the “verbal quality.”

What seems to you the prevailing verbal tone of these poems? Stately? Terse? Understated? Do you suppose that quality has some connection with the nature of the Chinese language? Isn't it noteworthy that the Chinese language—the oldest unbrokenly used language on earth—is based on pictographs, and that the typical verse line, in the *Book of Songs*, consists of four such characters?

You can deduce that the language of translation from Chinese must fill out the *implicit* meanings of the original, as well as interpret the explicit meanings. Do the translations you are reading, of the *Book of Songs*, give you the sense of poetry contemporary to you? Do you feel their presence in your life, as you might feel the presence of a poem written by a fine poet of your own age? Try, as you assess this poetry, to go into the detail of poetic language. (You can easily find an interlinear study translation of the *Book of Songs*!)

Literary Terms Please briefly define key literary terms. shih ching

Question: Q1. Discuss the themes you see emerging in the songs. Please identify one, and explain how the poems explore the themes.

Question Q2. What are the values that inform the songs? Describe them.

2 Confucius

Overview The Gentleman Thinker as Founder of Culture

Introduction Confucius. The German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, wrote of the fifth century B.C.E. as the Axle-time (*Achsenzeit*) in human culture. He referred to a variety of thinkers—Socrates, the Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao Tsu—whose thinking, at that time, led to decisive breakthroughs in human consciousness. Their thinking opened pathways into reason, a sense of community, a new clarity about moral values, a more individualistic sense of the importance of history. Can you draw any parallels among those various thinkers, from the personal knowledge you bring to this class?

Narrowing our set of concerns, let us think of Confucius in terms of the *Book of Songs*, of which he was traditionally considered the editor. Take a close look at the last three poems in our Bedford selection. Poem 195, ll. 13-30; Poem 238, ll. 27-72; Poem 241, ll. 42-58. In those poems you can the hallmarks not only of many of the Songs, but of Confucius' public philosophy. Confucius tirelessly promotes respect for order, which involves respect for the ancestors, care for the rituals that honor the ancestors, and behind those sanctioned actions a deep sense of maintaining the harmony in the world.

In the first place (p. 1596) he emphasizes education, which means moral and ritual understanding. He then goes on to discuss the importance of filial piety, of harmony, of the importance of order and uprightness in governing. Do you see the closeness of *The Songs* to the thought of Confucius, at least in the selections we are pointing to?

Does anything in the foregoing even start to explain the *lasting cultural importance* of Confucius in China, to our day? Would it be the careful sense of order, of dignity, of proper action? Do those fundamental civilizing beliefs, no matter how craftily formulated, seem enough to explain such influence as Confucius has exercised? Have any of the other members of Jaspers' *Achsenzeit* exerted a similar influence? Who? How? Finally who are the most ancient culture shaper figures in the culture *you* come from? How have those culture shapers exercised their influence.?

Question Q1. Confucius finds himself responding to requests for clarification on the nature of learning and teaching. So what does he have to say about these things--what is it to learn and understand, and what makes a good teacher? What do you yourself think about these matters?

Question Q2. What characterizes "the gentleman," according to Confucius? How, for instance, does a gentleman look upon his own endeavors? In what light does he understand his relationship to others both above and below him? How does he regard his parents

Laozi (Lao Tzu)
Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)

Overview Philosophy and the Nature of Things

Introduction Lao Tsu. According to one of several varying accounts, Lao Tsu was an older contemporary of Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.) This would put both men in that *Achsenzeit* of which we wrote above, and would illustrate—because these two men are so different in thought—how diverse the contributors to that revolutionary period were. It is no surprise that these two powerful precursors find themselves objects of cult and worship in China, to our day.

Where do your own sympathies (gut feelings) come down, as you read Lao Tsu after reading Confucius? Confucius, a dominant culture-shaper in China today, is all for principles: action, control, discipline of thought and behavior, honor in dealing with others, care in honoring the ancestors and the gods. In good and bad senses this ethics-based philosophy supports the middle-class, bureaucratic ideal, that of the responsible and law abiding citizen. Lao Tsu, on the other hand, recommends following the "way." (Notice--Bedford I, p. 1603-- that the characters composing the pictograph for "way" mean "head" and "going." Does "the conscious path" have something to be said for it, as a translation of these pictographs? Incidentally, while you are digesting this introductory query about translation, what are your thoughts about the problem of translating Chinese into English? Will that kind of translation be substantially different from translation into English of texts from a closely related language?) This "way" is embedded in the nature of things, requires suppleness—sensitivity to both yin and yang—to follow; this "way" is the gateway to the harmony of all things, is creative in its deftness at being neither this nor that, *wu wei*, onward coursing like water.

While Confucius wrote and thought with the principle of statecraft and social order in mind, Lao Tsu wrote for everyone equally, or no one in particular. We can better understand this mysterious but transparent philosophy of life if we confront passages from the *Dao De Jing*, the text (probably) created by Lao Tsu. (Have you a method for reading such texts? Is it at all like the method you use for reading a novel? What is the difference?) *Wu wei wu*, not this nor that, seems one principle theme playing through this work. The image of the uncarved block might be a carrier of this theme. (See poems 15 and 28, Bedford, I, pp. 1606-1608). Potential *contains* its actuality. Nothing is limited to what it seems to be. This is one theme in the poems we have before us. Let's not add up themes, which is time consuming and inappropriate—when it comes to the *Dao De Jing*. Let's ask another question, OK?

Is Lao Tsu (or whoever the author is) proposing quietism, withdrawal? If so, from what is he proposing withdrawal? From society? From ambitions? From moral decision? Do you see how off the mark each of these questions is? Is it because whatever you ask of this "philosophy" ignites its refusal to be pinned down to a concrete reply? Is this refusal in

itself a form of thought, a taking of position? May I propose the line I have most to learn from in these texts? It is: "a great tailor cuts little." Have you a favorite line or poem? Why do you like it? Or are you a Confucian? Are you impatient with this darkness, mystery?

- Question Q1. What are the main teachings of Lao Tzu? Describe his idea of "Letting Go of Self."
- Question Q2. What does the term "Tao Te Ching" mean? Why can the Tao not be spoken of? How can one "express the inexpressible"? Is action possible, given the notion of passivity?
- Zhuangzi (Chuang Tzu)
- Overview Fulfillment of the Uncarved Block
- Introduction Zhuangzi lived almost two hundred years after Confucius, during a period of political turmoil which we call the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.E.) (Is any period of history not "turbulent" if viewed close up, or "peaceful" if viewed within the pages of a history book?) While Confucius confronted disorder with a highly developed emphasis on order, control, discipline, respect—for ancestors and for the Heavens-- Zhuangzi took the Daoist path of inaction (*wu wei*) and flow, the dominant principles of the world view enshrined in the *Dao de Jing* and, with twists of individual difference, in the writing of Lao Tsu. Can you see to what exquisite paradoxes this Daoist perspective arrives, from within the bosom of silence?
- In a piece like "Woodworker" (Bedford, I, p. 1621) you will be reminded of the uncarved block in Lao Tsu's work, the block of wood before it has been carved, and while it is still potential. Isn't it as though, in Zhuangzi, action, coming to change, is both everywhere and obvious, and yet, in another sense, illusory, not real? Is the prioritizing of inaction a way of hollowing out the self so that it can perceive, and be fully? Do you remember Lao Tsu's observation that "Observers of the Tao do not seek fulfillment?" Now remember something else; Zhuangzi's "The Job Offer." Doesn't the contempt for worldly honor run through Daoism, almost to the point of defining it? Can you relate this tradition of thought and feeling to your own life? Can the action of studying—you are currently a student—be at the same time a form of inaction?
- Question Q1. Who was Chuang Tzu, and discuss the values that his work embodies. Describe the nature of his questions / questioning.
- Essay** E1. Can you draw any parallels among those various thinkers, from the personal knowledge you bring to this class? Socrates, the Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao Tsu? Discuss the similarities and differences between the thinkers.

II Middle Period

- 3 Middle Period Dynasties
Tao Qian
- Overview Poetry as the Voice of the Centuries
- Introduction You will see, in this brief introduction to Chinese cultural development from the end of the Warring States Period (third century B.C.E) to the fifth century A.D., that there was the expected sequence of dynastic powers and Empires—notably the Tang and the Sung—and the inevitable extinction of many cultural achievements by an invading power, in this case the Mongols who, under Jinghis Khan, for a while sowed disaster wherever they trod. Do you not find, as you survey even a survey of the annals of such a political/military back and forth, that it is a relief to come on creative figures—like the poets of the Tang Dynasty (p. 299, Bedford II)--who emerge from the forests of greed and power with fresh individual voices and a fascination with being in the world? Or is this view of art, and its saving presence, too mandarin for your tastes?
- Tao Qian (born 365 A.D.) is one of those "fresh voices," and to this day a revered poet in China. You see that the themes of Taoism, and now of Buddhism, which had seeped into Chinese culture through travels and translations from Indian culture, make themselves felt in Tao Qian. (Do you see that the great poetic traditions of China pass through Taoism and Buddhism, rather than through the statelier world view of Confucius? Can you observe that point while still according to Confucius the classic poetic sensibility you

have already found in him?) What is for you the distinctive tenor of Tao Qian's work? We are, after all, more than five hundred years later than Lao Tsu or Zhuangzi, but don't you feel some of the same tones of repose, respect for the dignity and harmony of nature, an inner reflective search for peace? (If you feel this thematic unity, among the poets we are discussing, won't it suggest that the great religious/cultural tradition they work in does a lot to bring them together?) Do any lines come out at you, as though they were "thesis statements" for this poet's work? I keep underlining, "I've returned to all that comes of itself." (Bedford II, p. 312). I seem to find the peace, resignation, sadness, joy of life here, in this testimony from another refugee from the busy city, who asks nothing more than to take it slow on his farm. What about that wine? Does he drink or is this a metaphor?

Question: Q1. Consider the long term of Chinese history — in what historical periods do you think men would be most likely to identify with the author and refer to this piece of writing in their prose or poetry?

4-5 Tang Dynasty Poets

Overview A Life Giving Oasis of Language

Introduction Are you struck by the centrality of poetry for early Chinese civilization? Will you continue, please, to reflect on the importance of poetry for the formative stages of culture—Chinese, Greek, Indian? While you are assessing this state of affairs, note that poetry was flourishing in China, say during the Tang Dynasty—7th to 9th centuries A.D.—at a time when literature and other forms of cultural expression were stagnant in the West. (And not only poetry, but music and visual art were aflame during the Tang period. Have you seen Tang pottery?) Which poets speak to you most effectively, from the foursome selected in Bedford II?

Do you notice the persistence of concerns—stillness and harmony in nature, the sadness of aging, the recourse to wine (repose), the flight from city and court—which we met in the poems of Daoism, and especially in those of Lao Tsu? Do you begin to spot the differences between these two widely separated groups of poets—from Lao Tsu to the Tang poets is a millennium? (There is a bewitching paradox at the heart of many of the Taoist poems. This kind of mystery tends to be replaced, in the Tang dynasty writing, by a kind of breathless understatement! You will be aware, from your introductory reading, that there was a wide choice of metric patterns available to these Tang poets. Do you think translation into a Western Latin alphabet is able to replicate sound as well as sense in this ancient Chinese lyric poetry?)

Question Q1. How does Li Bo establish a persona as an outsider--that is, as radically different from the Confucian poet-scholar typical of classical China? Refer to specific examples from his poetry to describe his a) family and educational background; b) political and social points of view; c) religious stance; d) personal behavior

Essay E2. Discuss themes of nature, harmony, and inner balance in the works in this unit.

III Early Modern China

6 Ming Dynasty

Overview Distantly Nearing the Modern Temper

Introduction Do you notice that we are leaping from one historical period to another? We began with texts from the first centuries B.C.E., then vaulted to the Tang Dynasty, 500 to 1000 years later, and now we find ourselves in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with the Ming Dynasty. Read closely the pages devoted to historical/cultural issues arising in the almost four centuries constituting this dynasty, in the course of which both Chinese tradition and new social development were assured—after a painful period of Mongol domination. You will see that some of the traits, of the Renaissance in the West, crop up in this period of Chinese development. The arts begin to flourish, exploration thrives, commerce develops, and with it some of the infrastructural blessings of wealth—roads, better housing, improved agricultural means.

Your study effort, this week, should go into the above reading, but also into the question, which will apply in force during the following two weeks, of just what relation

Monkey (16th century, created by Wu Chengen; of whom little is known) has to the period in which it was created. Surely this study issue has been of concern as you mature in your experience of literature. What relation has any text to the time in which it is created? Is literature able to exist outside of its immediate setting? Can we *really* understand texts written before our own time?

Question	Q1. During the Ming Dynasty, popular stories and oral histories were written and collected. How did they begin to challenge the classical tradition of lyric poetry established in the Tang Dynasty
7-8	Wu Chengen (1500-1582). <i>Monkey</i>
Overview	Hijinks and High Culture on the Indo-Chinese Border
Introduction	<p><i>Monkey</i> creates from historical reality—the transportation of Buddhist texts from India to China in the seventh century, the time of Tang Dynasty poets—but <i>Monkey</i> turns that reality into a new reality, through the lens of fiction. (Yes, <i>fiction</i>. This is the first time that we have included fiction in our reading of Chinese literature.) Please examine the way the narrative unfolds, in the section of Chapter 8 that you are reading. Kuan yin is elected to make the trip to China, to find the right person to return the manuscripts from India to China. A bodyguard joins the goddess Kuan yin. Dragons emerge to harass Kuan Yin, then retreat, and agree to continue to China with her. Finally Monkey, who has long been imprisoned in a mountain, is released and prepares to join the group march to China. That is all in part of Chapter 8.</p> <p>What conclusion do you draw, about the way the narrative unfolds? Is there a “logical conclusion” leading from one stage to the next? Is there something fortuitous about the progress of events? Finally, what would you say about the level of “reality” on which this text operates? Is this story an allegory? Or is it something else, like a comic fantasy, without embedded meanings as it advances step by step? Do you know Cervantes’ <i>Don Quixote</i>? That Spanish text is nearly contemporary to <i>Monkey</i>. Can you find a similar picaresque/comic movement in both texts?</p>
Question	Q1. Monkey learns special daoist (taoist) powers: a magic staff and the ability to summersault huge distances and to grown or shrink, for example. He even learns the supreme secret of Daoism: immortality. But Monkey also demonstrates some less exalted aspects of human personality and behavior, and he is thrown out of the Celestial Kingdom until he learns better behavior. What has Monkey done wrong and what do those mischievous deeds show about his character? What does Monkey have to learn before he can reenter the Celestial Empire? What human traits does he demonstrate and which of these endear him to readers?
9	Early Qing Dynasty
Overview	China Grows “Modern”
Introduction	<p>For a long time China had been a protected and distant landmass, not easy of access from outside, and from the 13th century on it was protected by a Great Wall. But with the Qing dynasty China finds itself entering the “modern world” which now it shares with the Western Enlightenment. (The great <i>Encyclopédie</i>, 18th century France’s testimony to the modern world of science, social analysis, freedom from “superstition,” is rivaled by an 80,000 volume Chinese <i>Complete Collection of Written Materials</i> “completed in 1782, after ten years by a group of 360 scholars...” (Bedford, IV, p. 766). It is significant that at this time, sustained Western penetration of the Middle Kingdom takes place. Jesuits, and Jesuit scientists like Father Matteo Ricci (d. 1610) were introducing to China new ideas from a West where Galileo and Descartes were building new world-perspectives. Chinese culture was growing less feudal, less hierarchical, and, in an astonishing text like the 18th century <i>The Story of Stone</i>, was showing its capacity to reflect nostalgically onto itself, rethinking its past, and analyzing the nature of social constructions with the sharpness of Western European contemporary novelists like Fielding or Sterne.</p>
Question	Q1. Describe the main historical and literary developments during the Ming Dynasty.
10	Pu Song-Ling (1640-1715)
Overview	Looking Through the Window at the Middle Class

Introduction	Pu Song-ling lives into the 18 th century (d. 1715) and though not a Realist, in any sense, comes across as the first modern in our reading. <i>Monkey</i> , a work of the 16 th century, and with traditional roots plunging far into Chinese cultural history, strikes a note between fantasy and allegory, and allies with the prose tale of the early modern period in the West. But that is to change. By the time of Pu Song-ling—and we will see this more evidently in <i>The Story of the Stone</i> (to follow)--the development of Qing culture is promoting a new middle class, urban societies, a broader reading public, in short all the conditioning needed for the “realism” of the modern novel. So in the two stories we read, from Pu Song-ling, though fantasy has its role, the settings suggest the realities of daily life—the secrets of the middle class boudoir and the dream life of a man working through sexual desires. What do you think of the psychological insights of this author? Does he seem to you to reach for understandings that are modern in the sense of our own time? How does this new fictional mode play out in the voice of the author? Do you feel “closer” to the author of “The Wise Neighbor” than to the author of <i>Monkey</i> ?
Question	Q1. Discuss the complexities and problems of polygamy with multiple wives and concubines in the seventeenth century Chinese Society. Describe the supernatural character’s advice over the psychology of attraction in romantic relations. Is her advice useful and effective? Why?
11-12	Cao Xueqin (1715-1763) and Gao E (1740-1815). <i>Story of the Stone</i>
Overview	The Intricacies of Middle Class Sainthood
Introduction	Does this 18th century novel give you the sense of being back home in a world we Postmoderns know at our fingertips? Do we not have, here, the ingredients of a full scale social novel, with “spiritual implications,” mirroring the development of a middle-class society? Do we not find the four generations of a middle class family web, is there not intrigue and romance, and ultimately the spiritual growth of that Bao-yu who develops into a saintly figure? And isn’t there the elaborate complexity of personal interrelations and subplots which seems the stuff of the novel of our time? As you look back on the texts we have read, in this course, what sense do you have of the relation of literature—or any art—to the society that it emerges from? This is a question I have raised persistently, because from your response you may deduce the kind of literary history you are building in your mind, as you trace the growth stages of Chinese literature. Do you view the sequence of texts, which you are reading in this course, as a chart of the development and change of Chinese culture, or as a series of developments and changes within the growth of an art like literature? Or does that formulation seem to you too black and white? What kind of map of Chinese literature are you forming in your mind?
Question	Q1. Why is this novel a “Bildungsroman”? Describe Bai-yu’ s stages of growth from irresponsible childhood and adolescence to responsible adult to enlightened Monk.
Question	Q2. Discuss the ideals of Confucianism vs Daoism/Buddhism in the Chinese society. Compare and contrast the life of Bai-yu and his father Jia Zheng
Essay	E3. Discuss trends in literature in this unit. What is the relationship of the individual to society and to others?

IV Modern China

13	Lu Xun (1881-1936)
Overview	Bullets, Turmoil, and the Clash of the New
Introduction	You are aware, of course, that you are taking a roller coaster ride through Chinese literature, touching down here and there as dictated by Bedford. Why not? All literary history is a lottery of choices, and each set of choices generates its own special discoveries. The “modern texts” we have been reading— <i>Monkey</i> , <i>The Story of the Stone</i> , “The Wise Neighbor,” now “The True Story of Ah Q”—seem tinged with a distinctive humor. That humor can be rather bold, as in <i>Monkey</i> , burlesque in “Ah Q,” or dry and mysterious as in “The Wise Neighbor.” In “The True Story of Ah Q,” the humor is social and parodic, looking first at the buffoonish failures of the main figure, as he tries to make his way in a new social world unfamiliar to him. Subsequent panels, of this many shaded portrayal of the new society of twentieth century China, feature an elderly

gentleman as foolishly Confucian as (the author claims) was the old Confucian society, and a new revolutionary class, which lacks understanding for the human situation, and behaves with callow brutality. Has Lu Xun a position of his own, as he surveys these portraits of his society, in the crosshairs of the Cultural Revolution? Does this story remind you of any aspects of *The Story of the Stone*? Does the author of each text delight in the finesse of social relations, and what they bring out from human nature? How do the authors differ, in their views of the nature and possibilities of social life?

Question Q1. Discuss the theme of loneliness and being an outcast in this story. Why might Ah Q be considered an anti-hero?

Question Q2. The Madman's central realization (3rd section) is that Chinese society is cannibalistic; he learns this only after studying the classical texts. Although the Madman refers to incidents of actual cannibalism in China, his diary also develops an analogy between cannibalism and the social and political injustices of imperial China. In what way were individuals "consumed" by traditional Chinese society? How does Confucianism lend itself to repressive social and political practices? Is the madman himself cannibalized by the system? Describe some specific traditional Chinese practices that victimized and repressed people. For example, what was the position of women in Confucian society? What about the average farmer in the feudal Chinese society? What do you make of the report that the Madman has recovered and is waiting to take a job with the government?

14 Bei Dao (1949-)

Overview Poetry in the Front Lines

Introduction With Bei Dao, born in 1949, we crash onto the scene of the world that you students know about: the turbulent revolutionary upheavals of the 20th century, grand in its World Wars, vast moves of social revision, and reconceptualizings of the human condition. In Lu Xun we have already seen a critique of the social setting which deploys into the Cultural Revolution, and you will know, from your reading in Bedford, that Lu Xun was himself drawn to the Communist social revision. But Lu Xun died at the beginning of Mao's transformation. Bei Dao lived the dislocations and frayed hopes of the violent Cultural Revolution in China, and experienced—though from abroad—the Tienanmen Square massacre. Many of his contemporaries and friends lost their lives and careers in this sharply repressed uprising, which was to lead into the almost equally disorienting Capitalism/Communism of Deng Shao Ping.

The lyrics of Bei Dao are red hot reminders of the turbulence he experienced. What do you think of his bloody tribute to resistance and persistence? Do his images—"From star-like bullet holes shall flow/A blood-red dawn"—work for you? How do you compare his poetry to that of Lao Tzu or the Tang Dynasty poets? Are there any points of convergence, that would establish a "Chinese" quality for the work of all these poets?

Question Q1. Discuss the political aspects of Bei Dao's writing.

15 Gao Xingjian (1940-)

Overview Meaning and Silence on Stage

Introduction "Dialogue and Rebuttal" is the first Chinese play we have read. What is the effect of a play on a reader—on a reader, as distinct from a theater goer? Do you read the play with a sense of the real people in action, the people who are acting the play? Do you enjoy the experience of play-reading? Does Gao's play give you a sense of a background and a time in which it is occurring? Or do you experience the play almost as a geometry of two persons?

As our introductory material points out, Gao too (b. 1940) experienced the full force of China's turbulent twentieth century. Unlike the protest life of Bei Dao, Gao was an active member of the Red Guards, the "elite" arm of Mao's Cultural Revolution. But since Gao was an intellectual he was sent to a re-education camp. He worked and lived as a peasant, finally found his way to the Beijing People's Art Theater, and ultimately went to the West. Do you see traces of this kind of experience in the play we are reading? What kind of view of life comes out of the dialogue between the Man and the Woman? What is the role of the Monk in the play? And why do his antics and handstands form a

counterpoint to the dialogue? Are you comfortable with the description of this play as theater of the absurd? Does the "action" of the play make "no sense"? Do you see any connection between the world view of this play and that of Lu Xun's fiction?

Question

Q1. In the play "Dialogues and Rebuttal," two strangers – a man and a girl -- never reveal themselves to each other, but talk superficially on many different topics. Discuss the theme of loneliness and alienation in the modern world illustrated in this play.

Essay

E4. Discuss the themes of loneliness, alienation, and madness in the works in this unit.

V

Finals

16

Review, Annotated Bibliography, Research Paper

FE1. What role does humor play in the Chinese literature you have read? What kinds of humor—belly laugh, irony, satire, biting humor—seem to you to surface in this literature? Would you accept the idea that humor is culturally specific, or does it seem to cut across cultural lines, from one time and place to another? In other words, is there a specific kind of Chinese humor in literature?

FE 2. Chinese culture is widely considered the oldest continuous culture. When it comes to the language, this fact is indisputable. But what about the literary texts we have read? When it comes to literature, is there a pervading continuity reaching from The Ancient Way to the Modern China? If not a total unity, traceable step by step, are there partial continuities? Does it make sense to talk about "Chinese literature" as a unit?

FE 3. *Monkey* and *The Story of the Stone* are often taken to be the greatest prose masterpieces of Chinese literature. Do you see a strong poetic, and even fanciful, side to each of those tales? Would you call *The Story of the Stone* a novel? Do you know other novels like it? Of what genre would you think *Monkey*, which dates from the sixteenth century? Does either work seem to you a novel in the usual sense?