

TEACHING CONFUCIAN VALUES THROUGH THE KOREAN FOLKTALE *CH'UNHYANG*

GRADES: Middle to High School

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SUBJECT: History, Literature

TIME REQUIRED: One to two class periods

OBJECTIVES:

1. Evaluate the impact of Confucianism on Korean culture.
2. Demonstrate understanding of Confucian values such as loyalty, virtue, and filial piety.
3. Identify Confucian values found in the traditional Korean folktale *Ch'unhyang*.

STANDARDS:

NCSS Standards:

Standard 1: Culture

Standard 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Common Core Standards:

RH 1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussion

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

- Student handouts of the Korean folktale *Ch'unhyang* (attached) or access to an online version of the story. The folktale included is incomplete. Be sure to go to the folktale listed under Source to include the entire tale. (www.instrok.org/instrok/lesson1/page03.html?thisChar=4)
- Dialectic Journal (attached)

BACKGROUND:

Confucianism originated as a philosophical belief system in China during the Zhou Dynasty. At the center of Confucianism are several core values which include loyalty, virtue (humaneness), and filial piety. Filial piety originally consisted of a love and respect of one's parents and ancestors but has grown to include five relationships including ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, younger to elder, and friend to friend. Confucianism's influence spread to other East Asian nations including Japan and Korea. The Chosŏn Kingdom in Korea is considered the height of Confucianism's influence in Korea. Just as in China, civil service exams were given to those wishing to become government officials. These exams were based on Confucian teachings and values. Korean gentry were expected to exhibit and practice Confucian values in all areas of life.

Ch'unhyang is a traditional Korean folktale surrounding the love story between an upper class yangban (elite government official or scholar) and the daughter of lower class kisaeng (female

artist). It exemplifies several Confucian values including loyalty (keeping one's word at all costs), virtue (in this case the evil magistrate is the antithesis of virtue), and filial piety (the yangban not wanting to offend his father; *Ch'unhyang* remaining faithful despite imprisonment). Miso, a very popular musical production performed in Korea, is based on the traditional story of *Ch'unhyang*.

PROCEDURE:

1. Introduce Confucianism as an ethical belief system that began in China during the Zhou Dynasty and later spread to other East Asian nations including Japan and Korea.
2. Write the following words on the board: loyalty, virtue, and family. Have students brainstorm the definition of each word. In writing the words on the board, include role model.
3. Ask students, "Which of these values is most important in American culture? Students can rank the values in order of importance and share the reasoning behind their rankings.
4. Discuss the importance of loyalty, virtue, and family and the idea of role models in Confucian thought. Consider how these apply to both family and governmental situations. Introduce the concept of filial piety if necessary.
5. Ask students to brainstorm examples of loyalty, virtue, and filial piety from their own experiences. Have several students share their examples with the class.
6. Next introduce the Korean folktale of *Ch'unhyang* as an example of Confucian values found in Korean culture.
7. Provide students with a copy of the folktale and the dialectic journal.
8. Students should read through the folktale and note examples from the folktale that demonstrate the values of loyalty, virtue, and/or filial piety.
9. Create a class list where students can share their examples of the Confucian values found in the folktale. Guide students in assessing whether the examples chosen accurately reflect each Confucian value.
10. Students can work in small groups to create a book cover design for *Ch'unhyang*.
11. The book cover should represent the feeling of the story and feature the importance of one or more of the Confucian values discussed. As a final wrap-up, give students the Handout "Do you think like a Confucian?" Discuss the values expressed therein, and the extent to which they agree or not with them, and why.

EVALUATION:

Students will write use their dialectic journal to write a modern version of *Ch'unhyang* that includes the elements of virtue, loyalty, and filial piety. As students write, encourage them to stay as close to the original plot as possible. See the attached rubric for evaluation criteria.

ENRICHMENT:

Have students research the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. Students should complete a plot diagram that details the plot and major elements of *Romeo and Juliet* and then compare it to the plot of *Ch'unhyang*. Have students complete a Venn Diagram where they

compare the two literary works. Discuss with students the values and themes that are similar across the two stories and how Confucian values transcend cultural boundaries.

RESOURCES:

Confucianism in Korea. <http://www.asianinfo.org/asianinfo/korea/rel/confucianism.htm>

Cultural Values of the Chosŏn Dynasty: The *Ch'unhyang* Story.
<http://www.instrok.org/instrok/lesson1/page03.html?thisChar=4>

Dialectic Journal for the Korean Folktale *Ch'unhyang*

Example from the story	Confucian Value (Loyalty, Virtue, and/or Filial Piety)	Explanation/Thoughts

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Rubric: A Modern Version of *Ch'unhyang*

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Book Cover	Design clearly demonstrates Confucian values and relates to the storyline.	Design somewhat demonstrates Confucian values and relates to the storyline.	Design clearly demonstrates Confucian values but does not relate to the storyline.	Design does not clearly demonstrate Confucian values nor does it relate to the storyline.
Folktale Elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upper vs. lower class • importance of exams • secret love • adversity • separation 	Several of the elements of the folktale <i>Ch'unhyang</i> are included.	At least two elements of folktale <i>Ch'unhyang</i> are included.	One element of the folktale <i>Ch'unhyang</i> is included.	None of the elements of the folktale <i>Ch'unhyang</i> are included.
Confucian Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loyalty • virtue • filial piety 	The folktale clearly demonstrates understanding of all of the Confucian values.	The folktale somewhat demonstrates understanding of all of the Confucian values.	The folktale demonstrates understanding of some of the Confucian values.	The folktale does not demonstrate understanding of any of the Confucian values.
Storyline	The modern folktale follows the plot of <i>Ch'unhyang</i> in a creative and surprising way.	The modern folktale adequately follows the plot of <i>Ch'unhyang</i> .	The modern folktale somewhat follows the plot of <i>Ch'unhyang</i> .	The modern folktale does not follow the plot of <i>Ch'unhyang</i> .
Grammar/Punctuation/Spelling	The story contains zero errors.	The story contains one to two errors.	The story contains three to four errors.	The story contains five or more errors.

Ch'unhyang: A Korean Love Story

Formerly there lived in the province of Cholla, in the town of Namwon, a magistrate's son named Yi Mong-Yong. He had much literary talent, and grew up to be a handsome young man.

One beautiful morning, Master Yi Mong-Yong called his servant, Pangja, and asked him to show him a place where he might see wild flowers. Pangja led him to a summer pavilion near a bridge called "Ojak-kyo," or the "Magpie Bridge." The view from the bridge was as beautiful as the summer sky, and thus was named after the tale of the Herdboy and the Weaving Maid.

Looking at the distant mountains, Yi Mong-Yong caught sight of a young maiden swinging beneath one of the trees. He asked Pangja about the lovely maiden and her attendant. He replied that she was Ch'unhyang (Spring Fragrance), a daughter of Wolmae (Moon Plum), the retired kisaeng entertainer. Pangja related to his young master that this young girl was not only beautiful but also virtuous. Yi Mong-Yong insisted that Pangja inform Ch'unhyang that he wished to meet her.

"Don't you know the butterfly must pursue the flower, and the geese must seek the sea?" retorted Ch'unhyang.

The wind blew back her hair and long ribbon over her rosy face, and she glowed with virtue and happiness. "This good fortune is offered me today. Why wait until tomorrow? Should I not speak to this pretty girl now?" Yi Mong-Yong said to himself.

Just then Ch'unhyang, frightened at being watched, jumped down from her swing and ran toward her house. Stopping under a peach tree at her garden gate she plucked a blossom and kissed it, her lips and cheeks redder than the bloom, and was gone.

Pangja urged his master to hasten home so that his father might know nothing of his adventure, and then punish Pangja for allowing Yi Mong-Yong to wander so far. The youth returned home in a trance, and went immediately to sit at dinner with his parents. With the meal finished, Yi Mong-Yong went to his room, lit a candle, and opened a book. Reading proved impossible. The words blurred before his eyes and every word and every character was "Spring" and "Fragrance" - Ch'unhyang, Ch'unhyang, Ch'unhyang. Calling Pangja, he said, "Tonight I must see Ch'unhyang. Did she not say that the butterfly must pursue the flower?"

They went to Ch'unhyang's house, stopping under the peach tree in the garden as they approached. At that moment Ch'unhyang's mother was telling her daughter that she had had a dream in which a blue dragon coiled itself around Ch'unhyang's body and, holding her in its

mouth, flew up to the sky. Looking up, instead of the dragon in the clouds, the girl's mother saw a dragon on earth, for Yi Mong-Yong walked out of darkness and spoke to her.

On learning the purpose of his visit she called Ch'unhyang to meet the young yangban, and Yi Mong-Yong asked Ch'unhyang's mother for the hand of her daughter. The old woman, thinking her dream had come true, gladly consented, and said, "You are a yangban's son and Ch'unhyang is the daughter of a kisaeng, so there cannot be a formal marriage. If you give us a secret marriage contract, writing your pledge not to desert her, we shall be contented."

Yi Mong-Yong seized a brush and set down the following lines: "The blue sea may become a mulberry field, and the mulberry fields may become the blue sea, but my heart for Ch'unhyang shall never change. Heaven and earth and all the gods are witnesses."

In their sleep that night they dreamed of Mandarin ducks swimming together. For several nights he visited his beloved, until she teased him, saying that he should go home and study hard to become a great official like his father. Unfortunately, their time together did not last.

Not long after the secret marriage, the servant brought Yi Mong-Yong a message saying that his father, newly appointed to the King's cabinet, was being recalled to the capitol. Yi Mong-Yong, who was to accompany his father, went that evening to Ch'unhyang and told her the bad news. The young couple was forced to say a tearful goodbye at the Magpie Bridge.

"Since there is no way to change our fate, let us embrace and part," said Ch'unhyang, throwing her arms around her lover.

She then gave him a ring. "This is my token of love for you. Keep it until we meet again. Go in peace, but do not forget me. I shall remain faithful to you and wait here for you to come and take me away to Seoul." With these words, they parted.

The new Namwon magistrate arrived soon afterward, and among his first words to his servant were, "Bring me Ch'unhyang, the pretty girl I have heard of."

"This is difficult sir," replied the retainer, "for she is already married secretly to Yi Mong-Yong, the son of the former magistrate."

Angered, the new magistrate ordered Ch'unhyang summoned at once. Too terrified to disobey an order by the magistrate, Ch'unhyang accompanied the servant. The magistrate looked at her attentively. "I heard much of you in Seoul, and today I see you are very beautiful. Will you come to me?"

Choosing her words carefully, Ch'unhyang replied, "I am committed to Yi Mong-Yong. That is

why I cannot do as you ask. The King has sent you here to take care of the people. You have a heavy responsibility to the throne. It would be better to fulfill your duties and apply justice according to the laws of the country." Ch'unhyang's defiance enraged the magistrate, and he ordered her taken to prison.

"Why put me in prison?" Ch'unhyang protested, "I have done no wrong. A married woman must be faithful to her husband, just as a magistrate should be faithful to the king."

This merely served to anger the magistrate further, and before long Ch'unhyang found herself in a prison cell.

Meanwhile, Yi Mong-Yong had arrived in Seoul, where he studied hard and learned all the famous Chinese classics. He passed the government examinations with the highest distinction, thereby qualifying for a position in the king's service. In congratulating him after the munkwa examinations, the king asked Yi Mong-Yong. "Do you wish to be a magistrate or a governor?"

"I should like to be appointed amhaeng osa," replied Yi Mong-Yong. Yi Mong-Yong, as an amhaeng osa, traveled around the country with his attendants, disguised as beggars. They inquired everywhere after the needs of the people in order to assess the quality of local districts' administrations. Soon he arrived near Namwon, and came to a small farming village where the people were planting rice.

While working, the peasants sadly chanted: "We come out in the scorching heat, plough our fields, sow our seeds, and make the rice grow. First we must pay tribute to the king, give a part to the poor, a part to travelers who come knocking at our doors, and save money for ancestral services. This would be all right if the magistrate did not squeeze us for even more, leaving us with hardly anything to eat."

Much interested, Yi Mong-Yong approached and said, "I have heard that the magistrate of Namwon has married Ch'unhyang and that they live together happily."

Source:

Cultural Values of the Choson Dynasty: The *Ch'unhyang* Story.
<http://www.instrok.org/instrok/lesson1/page03.html?thisChar=4>