

**Lesson Plan for China:  
Using T'ang Poetry to capture a moment**  
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**Purpose:** This lesson is intended to introduce students to *Tang* period poetry and to increase their ability to use words to accurately capture image and tone.

**Target Grade Level:** 10<sup>th</sup>

**Topic:** Tang Poetry

**Resources:**

1. <http://www.chinapage.com/poem/300poem/introduction.html>  
Background information for teacher.
2. Birch, Cyril, ed. *Anthology of Chinese Literature*. New York: Grove press, 1965.
3. Handout *Seven Translations* compiled by Dr. Luding Tong

**Concepts:** Tang Poetry and writing poetry

**Key Idea:** The Tang period is considered the “golden age” of Chinese poetry and reading key writers of the time will allow students models for their own writing.

**Skills:** *Knowledge:* Students will be able to identify Chinese poetry

*Application:* Given varying translations of Chinese poems, students will analyze the connotation of words chosen by translators.

*Analysis:* Students will be able to prepare several versions of their own poems to create mood

**Procedures:**

1. Students will be asked to bring in a photo they have taken or someone in their family has taken of something they have seen in nature. The photo can be scenic (ie: great view from backyard or a picture of Niagara Falls or more specific, (ie: flower, squirrel, gazelle, etc.). The emphasis is not necessarily on the object, but the idea that the student WAS present when the photo was taken.
2. The teacher should ask students to share the photo with a partner. He/she should tell when, where it was taken and anything he/she remembers about the experience. After one minute, teacher will redirect students to talk to one more person about his/her photo. (Students should discuss what part of the picture is most interesting, and/ or what part speaks loudest to the viewer.)
3. Students should then return to their places where they can look at the photo and create a list of 4 images that are strongest in the photo. They should write these on a post-it note and stick it

to the back of the photo. (Teacher should have his/her own photo on the screen and be prepared to discuss it with students as an example.)

4. Students will then receive a copy of "Seven Translations" of Li Po. Teacher will briefly explain background information about Li Po and discuss translation of poetry. See source.
5. Students will, in groups of 3, read the different translations of the poem and fill out the chart that compares the translations.
6. The teacher will then discuss these comparisons with the students. Teacher will then guide students in a discussion about how word connotation creates mood and tone in a piece of writing.
7. Students will then return to their partner groups to decide what word could be used to summarize the overall mood of each poem. Students will then decide, based on these translations, what the original meaning of the poem must have been to the writer.
8. Teacher will again lead a discussion with students about the poems meaning.
9. Students will then take out their original photos and image lists from the beginning of class. Students will create a four lined poem about the photo with specific mood and tone in mind.

**Evaluation:**

Students will write three versions of their own poem.

**Relationship to English Language Arts Standards (Ohio):**

Reading Applications (Reading Process)

- Demonstrate comprehension of print
- Analyze an author's implicit and explicit argument, perspective or viewpoint in the text.

Reading Applications (Acquisition of Vocabulary)

- Recognize the importance and function of figurative language
- Examine the relationships of analogical statements to infer word meanings

Writing Applications (Writing)

- Produce informal writings (eg, journals, notes and poems) for various Purposes

Communication: Oral and Visual

- Identify how language choice and delivery styles contribute to meaning

**Grade Adaptation:**

This lesson could be used with freshmen or could be adapted for upper grades. It could be easily adapted and added to for use with Romantic Poets.

**Comparison Chart  
Poetry of LI PO**

<b>Translator</b>	<b>Image: Moon</b>	<b>Image: Light</b>	<b>Image: Looking Up</b>	<b>Image: Memory</b>	<b>TONE (attitude) and/or Mood (atmosphere)</b>
1.Obata	<i>moonlight</i>				<i>reflective</i>
2.White Pony					
3.Giles		<i>Glittering like hoar- frost</i>			
4.Fletcher					<i>energetic</i>
5.Cranmer- Byng			<i>Gaze with lifted eyes</i>		
6.Watson					
7.Witter Bynner				<i>home</i>	

## Seven Translations (Li Po)

#1

I saw the moonlight before my couch,  
And wondered if it were not the frost on the ground.  
I raised my head and looked out on the mountain moon,  
I bowed my head and thought of my far-off home.

(TR. S. Obata)

#2

I see the moonlight shining on my couch.  
Can it be that frost has fallen?  
I lift my head and watch the mountain moon,  
Then my head droops in meditation of earth.  
(White Pony)

#3

I wake, and moonbeams play around my bed,  
Glittering like hoar-frost to my wandering eyes;  
Up towards the glorious moon I raise my head,  
Then lay me down---and thoughts of home arise.

( Tr. Herbert A. Giles)

#4

Seeing the moon before my couch so bright  
I thought hoar frost had fallen from the night.  
On her clear face I gaze with lifted eyes:  
Then hide them full of Youth's sweet memories.

(Tr. W.J.B. Fletcher)

#5

Athwart the bed  
I watch the moonbeams cast a trail  
So bright, so cold, so frail,  
That for a space it gleams  
Like hoar-frost on the margin of my dreams.  
I raise my head, -  
The splendid moon I see:  
Then droop my head,  
And sink to dreams of thee -  
My father land, of thee!

(Tr. L.Cranmer-Byng)

#6

Moonlight in front of my bed—  
I took it for frost on the ground!  
I lift my eyes to watch the mountain moon,  
Lower them and dream of home.

#7

So bright a gleam at the foot of my bed—  
Could there have been a frost already?  
Lifting myself to look, I found that it was moonlight.  
Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home.

From: <http://zhidao.baidu.com/question/36788696.html>

**Sample Poem:**

Photo: picture of waterfall in Tennessee

Listed images: Clear Water, green Foliage, Rigid rocks, Mist

Clear Water	Green Foliage	Rocks	Light
<i>Translucent water</i>	<i>Waxy green foliage</i>	<i>Breaking the water</i>	<i>Filling light</i>
<i>Cascading water</i>	<i>Bright green leaves</i>	<i>Directing the</i>	<i>Yellow beams</i>
<i>Moving water</i>	<i>Spring green leaves</i>	<i>droplets</i>	<i>Shining drops</i>
<i>Soft Water</i>	<i>Richly colored</i>	<i>Emerging rocks</i>	<i>Sprays of light</i>
<i>Freefalling water</i>	<i>foliage</i>	<i>Unmoving rocks</i>	<i>Trickling strings</i>
<i>Rushing water</i>		<i>Unconquerable</i>	
<i>Spirited water</i>		<i>rocks</i>	
<i>Inferable water</i>			

**Poem One:**

I gaze upon the cascading water splashing before me,

The cool droplets spraying the waxy green foliage.

I look down to emerging rocks

Retrospective sprays of light promising air.

**Attempted Tone: peaceful**

**Poem Two:**

I peer onto the rushing water pounding in the foreground,

The blue drops littering the bright green leaves.

I glance upon unconquerable rocks

Glaring yellow beams leave chasms for the breeze.

**Attempted Tone: powerful**

**Sample Poem:**

Photo:

Listed images:


**Your Poem One:**

**Goal Tone:**

**Your Poem Two:**

**Goal Two:**