Chinese Women in History and Legend
Introduction

Although the Chinese have a saying “it’s the end of the world when the hen brings in the morning” 天下大乱, there are many famous Chinese women. They are the subjects of stories, poems, and songs in Chinese literature. The Chinese are proud of them—the beauties, soldiers, scholars, prostitutes, and empresses.

These stories of Chinese heroines are a combination of history and legend. All of the women, except Hua Mu Lan, were probably historical people, but most of them lived a long time ago, so the details of their lives are lost. These stories are the ones that most people know about these women—like Betsy Ross and the flag.

Most of these women were people of great character. Their stories are of sacrifice and determination as they tried to fulfill their often conflicting responsibilities—like Shi Sheh. Some of them were caught in events too complicated for them—like Yang Guei Fei. Those, like the Empress Wu and Tzy Shi, who held great political power, have been more or less villified by generations of historians, resenting women so far outside of their traditional place. We have tried to present all these women as clearly as possible in terms of motive, and character, and responsibilities. Many of the stories do not end fortunately—there are no happy endings in history—but in all of them the people did their best, and are respected by the Chinese for their deeds.
Shi Sheh
Of the four famous beauties in Chinese history, Shi Sheh is considered the most beautiful. Then there are Wong Jau Jiun, Diau Chan, and Yang Yu Huan. There are many sayings about her beauty; '情人眼裏出西施' is something people say about lovers all the time. It means "each girl's lover thinks she is as beautiful as Shi Sheh".

Shi Sheh was born in West Su Lo Village in Jehjiang. Her father was a woodcutter named Sheh. Since the family lived in the West Village, they called the little girl Shi (western) Sheh. Shi Sheh lived during the time of Confucius, in the Spring and Autumn Period. China was divided up into a lot of little kingdoms fighting each other, like Italy during the Renaissance. West Su Lo Village was part of the kingdom of Yueh.

The King of Yueh had been defeated by the King of Wu. They say he had even been made to be a slave in the court of Wu; after he was allowed to return to Yueh, he still felt defeat deeply and was very ashamed. They say he used to sleep on logs of firewood, and every day he tasted a piece of bitter gall hung up in his room, so he would not forget the shame and bitterness.

But the king and his ministers also had nine plans for winning the country back. One of them was to be very friendly to the King of Wu, and make him forget about the danger from Yueh, to gain time. He sent his minister around the country to look for pretty girls to send to the King of Wu. The minister found Shi Sheh and her friends washing silk in the village stream. He took them to the palace and trained them
在中國歷史上著名的四大美人中，西施是被公認為最美的一位。異三位
是楊玉環、王昭君、貂蟬。直到現在，以西施之美來做形容、譬喻的一些成
語，在日常生活中還是常被人們應用著。像“情人眼裏出西施”、“美如西子
”等等。

西施生在與孔子的同時，也是歷史上的春秋時代。那時的中國是由
許多小的國家割據，而互相爭戰着。正如中世紀的義大利一樣。西施是越國
的苧羅村人（現在的浙江省諸暨縣人）。她的父親是位樵夫，姓施，因住在
苧羅村的西邊，所以大家都把他那美麗的女兒叫“西施”。

越國當時和鄰近的吳國常相爭戰着，最後被吳國所敗。越王勾踐夫婦被
俘，吳王夫差命他們在吳宮中為奴，替夫差養馬。後來因為他們表現得很
忠順，夫差就把他們放回越國。勾踐回國之後，認為被吳國戰敗和在吳宮中
為奴，是他和他的國家的奇恥大辱。即每天臥薪嘗膽，誓雪戰敗之恥。

勾踐並與他的臣子們訂下了九項復國大計，其中一項是假意和吳國親善
，以使吳國不察越國之復仇計劃。同時又派他的大夫文種去各地搜尋美女以
獻給吳王，終於在苧羅村的小溪畔發現了正在與朋友們梳妝的西施。西施和
女友們一齊被帶進了宮中，施以政治教育和歌舞訓練。三年之後，她們被送
到吳國，獻給吳王夫差，以迷惑他而亂其政。

可是當西施被送到了吳王殿前時，勾踐的計劃幾乎失敗了。因夫差
覺得和越國太友好，是危險的事，就想拒絕勾踐的獻禮。西施就乘機諷諷吳
王竟會害怕幾個弱女子。吳王為西施所激，又因她的美貌和膽識，而將她們
留下了。

西施在吳國一住十八年，吳王深深的愛上了她。吳王為了取悦西施，更
為她建了一座宏偉的“姑蘇台”，並在台內造了一條前所未有的“響雁橋”，
西施在活動的樓上跳舞時，振動了樓下的樂器，就會發出美妙的音樂。夫差
與西施每天一起消磨著愉快的時光，而於國家大事，對越國的蠶食也鬆
懈了。
in singing, and dancing, and politics. Three years later, they were presented to the King of Wu, Fu Chai. Shi Sheh’s job was to please Fu Chai, and make him feel that Yueh wished him well.

But when Shi Sheh and her friends were presented to the king, the plan nearly failed. Fu Chai realized that there was a danger in becoming friendly to Yueh, and ordered them to go back. But Shi Sheh teased him about being afraid of a girl, and he was surprised and charmed, and let them stay.
For 18 years, Shi Sheh lived with the King of Wu. He became very much in love with her and did many things to please her. They say he built a beautiful palace, "Gu Shu Tai", for her; inside was the "Shang Dieh Lang", a hall with a special floor which made music when Shi Sheh danced on it. The king was happy with her, and no longer worried about the threat from Yueh.

In the meantime, the King of Yueh was working very hard to prepare his country. He lived and trained with the common people, instead of staying in the palace. He prepared the country for war. For this, he is famous in Chinese history as an example of great determination. He went to war, and wiped out the Kingdom of Wu.

Shi Sheh was caught in the middle. On one side, she had spent 18 years helping her country to regain its pride, but on the other, her husband of 18 years was being defeated and killed. The King of Yueh sent his minister to bring her back to Yueh. She would not leave, but waited for her husband, the King of Wu. On hearing he was killed, she went back to Yueh.

Shi Sheh is respected for her great loyalty to her country, and for doing her duty, even though it upset her own happiness.
Everyone knows who Confucius was. The Chinese call him the “greatest saint old teacher”. Mencius was also a philosopher; he is called the “second greatest saint old teacher”. This is a story about how wise his mother was in the way she raised him, so that he grew up to be so good.

When Mencius was little his family lived very close to the graveyard. He would always play games like people bringing offerings to their ancestors, or burning incense to the dead. His mother thought that was not a nice place for her son to live, and that he would not grow up well. So they moved to a place very close to a market place. Mencius would imitate the merchants yelling to sell things, or play the butcher killing pigs and cows. His mother thought, “this is not a place for my son either”. So they moved again to a place next to a school. Then Mencius was always watching people studying, and learning their manners and to be polite. His mother thought, “this is really the place for my son to live”. So they stayed.

When Mencius was old enough to go to school, at first he was not a very serious student, and did not do very well. One day, he cut school and came home while his mother was weaving. When she learned he had cut class, she picked up her scissors and cut her weaving in half. Mencius was scared, and asked her why she had done that. His mother replied “You studied but stopped in the middle, that is just the same as if I cut my weaving in the middle; you waste what you did before.” Mencius listened to his mother and learned to study hard; he became a famous scholar.
人人都知道孔子是「至聖先師」。孟子也是一位偉大的哲學家，世人稱之為「亞聖先師」。下面的故事是說孟母如何在孟子的孩提時代給予他適當的教育，奠定了孟子以後成爲偉大學者的根基。

當孟子小的時候，他父親就去世了。孟子和他母親首先是住在一個墳場附近，孟子每天看见祭祀死人的儀式，就也經常玩着上香祭祀的遊戲。孟母見着，認爲這不是能給孟子好教育的地方，於是她就把家搬了。他們搬到一個市場附近，孟子每天見着小販的叫賣，以及屠夫屠宰的情形，也就經常學着做遊戲。孟母因此覺得這也不是一個適合孟子住的地方，於是孟母又把家搬了，這次他們搬到一個學校旁邊，孟子每天見着人們唸書，學習禮儀，他也就模仿着。孟母覺得這才是孟子該長住的地方，因此就不再搬家了。

等孟子稍大，孟母就把他送進學堂唸書。孟子起先不是一個很認真向學的學生，學業也無大進步。有一天他逃學回家，孟母正在織布，等她知道孟子是逃學回家時，就用剪刀把織布機上織好的布剪斷了，孟子大驚，問她為什麼要這樣做？孟母說：『你逃學回家，學業半途而廢，就像剪斷這織了一半的布一樣，以前的努力都白費了！』孟子因此領悟了學而不繫的道理，就努力學習不息，終於成了一位偉大的學者。

許多年後，孟子結了婚，有一天他進入臥房，見到他的妻子正在換衣服，他一怒就走出了房間。孟子之妻知道他是生她的氣，就告訴了孟母，要求回娘家去。孟母就把孟子叫到跟前說：『當人進入房間之前，應先問是在屋裏，這才是敬人之道。而在進房之前又應先揚其聲，使房內的人知道你來了。在進房之後，眼睛應看下方，則不會看到別人的過失。今天你進房時沒注意到自己應守的禮節，而責怪你的妻子，是不對的。』孟子覺得自己錯了，就向妻子道歉，孟妻就留下了，不回娘家了。

這就是孟母所表現的智慧。
Years later, after Mencius was married, one day he came suddenly into his room and found his wife there with hardly any clothes on. He got angry and left. So his wife went to see Mencius' mother, and said that he was angry with her, and she would return to her own family. So Mencius' mother sent for him and said "when one goes into a room, one should always ask who is in there; that is the proper way to respect people. When you go into a room, you should always make your voice louder so that people will know you are coming; you should always look downwards, so that you will not see other people's faults. Today you came into the room without proper manners, and you blame your wife for not behaving". Mencius apologized to his wife, and she stayed with him.

Such was the wisdom of Mencius' mother.
Wong Jiau Jiu was one of the four famous beauties of Chinese history. She was born in the Han Dynasty around 53 B.C. When she was very young she was chosen to be sent to the palace, because of her beauty and talent.

In those days, the emperor had thousands of concubines in the palace, but not all of them ever saw him. The emperor didn't have enough time to look at all the thousands of girls and choose for himself. So there was a painter (Mao Yen Sho) who painted the girls' pictures first and then the emperor would choose from the pictures. Nearly all the girls bribed the painter to make them look more beautiful than they really were. But Wong did not believe in giving bribes, and also thought she was beautiful enough. So the painter made her quite ugly, and even painted a mole on her face, a sign that she would bring bad luck to the man who married her. So Wong was in the palace for three years and never saw the emperor at all.

The King of Mongolia came to Chang An (the capitol of China at the time) for a state visit. Mongolia at that time was not really a country but a group of nomadic tribes under one leader. These tribes had often fought with China. The Chinese emperor wanted very much to establish friendly relations with them, and have peace on the border. So as a sign of friendship, he decided to give the Mongolian king one of his own concubines as a wife. The emperor looked through all the pictures, and chose the ugly picture of Wong Jiau Jiu. So at last the
王昭君是中國四大美人之一。她生在漢朝（約公元前五十三年）。她在
年輕時因為她的美貌與才情而被選入宮中。

那時的漢帝在後宮中經常有數千嬪妃，所以並非每位宮女都有機會接近
皇帝，也沒有時間去一一挑選中意的妃嬪，都是畫工畫了宮女的像，讓
皇帝看畫挑選。所以那時幾乎所有的宮女都贿赂宮中的畫工毛延壽，希望
他把她們畫的更美些。但是王昭君以她的個性和美貌不願這樣做，所以毛延
壽就把她畫得很醜，還在她的臉上畫了一顆極不祥的痣，所以在宮中三年
，她一直沒有機會見到皇帝一面。

當時匈奴國王到長安（當時的國都）來朝貢。那時的匈奴時常在邊界上
與漢朝作戰，漢帝想討好匈奴以減少邊境的紛紛，讓在後宮中選出一名自
己的妃子給他。但他又不願把貌美的送給匈奴王，因此就在那些宮女的畫像
中挑選了被畫很醜的王昭君。等到皇帝召見時，才發現王昭君竟是當時最
美的宮女中最美的一位，就非常懊悔。但為了一國的信譽，只有忍痛的讓王昭君
隨着匈奴王出塞。毛延壽也因欺君之罪被皇帝殺了。

王昭君離開了繁榮的國都，走向黃沙一片的匈奴國境，她彈着琵琶，唱
着悲曲，不時回望着慢慢遠去的故國，心情是極為悲傷的，這情景的描寫，
我們經常可在詩詞、戲曲、或繪畫中見到的。

王昭君後來成爲匈奴王的正妻，並生了一個兒子，最後死在匈奴，也
葬在那裏。王昭君的出塞為當時的漢朝帶來了一段時間的和平。在匈奴她也
時以漢朝文化教育他們。她帶去的琵琶也被匈奴人模仿，改造成一種新樂器
。王昭君可說是對兩國國家都有貢獻。

王昭君一直未回到自己的家園，對於她的身死異鄉，也是後人們為她而
感嘆的！
emperor saw Wong, at the ceremony to give her away. Seeing her beauty, he regretted his decision. But he had to think of his honor, and of peace for China; so he had to let her go. Afterward, he had the painter Mao killed for his trickery.

So Wong left the beautiful, busy capital, and went to the desert country of Mongolia. On her long journey, she would often look back at China, as she rode farther and farther away. She felt sad and lonely, and did not know if she would ever return. So she played her pi pa and sang sad laments. This scene inspired many painters and writers; it is often seen on the Chinese stage too.

Wong Jiau Jiuin never returned to China. She became the wife of the Mongolian king, and bore him a son. She died in Mongolia and was buried there. The Chinese feel that she did a lot for China: she made peace with the border tribes, and brought Chinese culture to the Mongolian court. Even her pi pa was copied by the Mongolians. Since the Chinese see dying in a foreign land as a curse from heaven, they feel forever in debt to Wong Jiau Jiuin for her self-sacrifice.
Ban Jau was a writer and historian. She lived from 60-130 A.D. Perhaps she was the first woman historian in China.

She is famous for having finished the "History of the Han" after her father and brother died. The History of the Han was a huge book telling everything about the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-8 A.D.). It was the first dynastic history. It told all about the rulers and important people, and about the literature, music, economics, geography and other things of that time. This book became the model for all later dynastic histories.

The History of the Han was begun by Ban Jau's father; most of it was written by her brother, Ban Gu. He was jailed for political reasons, and died. Then it became Ban Jau's job to finish the research and the book. She brought a lot of important historical material to the palace library, and was very much respected by the court.

Ban Jau also wrote a famous book of her own. It was called "Rules for Women" and listed all the rules and moral laws that women should follow. It was a study of the customs of that time. After the Emperor died, Ban Jau was made an adviser to the Queen.
班昭是一位史学家和女才子。她生活在公元后六十——一百年间。
她也是中国的第一位女史学家。

《汉书》是一部伟大的历史著作，也是中国第一部《朝代史》。内容包括了天文、地理、人物、法典、规程、文献、文学、艺术、音乐、经济等。

这部钜著著终成后世史书的典范。

《汉书》是由班昭的父亲史学家班彪，开始写的。但只完成了一小部份就逝世了。班昭的哥哥班固，接着写下去。他完成了大部分，却因受到政治上的牵连而入狱，死在狱中。因此班昭就毅然的接下了重任，继续完成了这部伟大著作。她还供给宫廷的书库许多珍贵的资料。她在宫中深受敬爱，人们都以师礼待班昭。

班昭还写了一本很著名的书——《女诫》。书中列举妇女们应遵守的道德律，以供当时女性的守则。汉和帝去世后，邓皇后临朝，班昭被礼聘为皇后的最高顾问。
Diau Chan was the most beautiful woman in the Three Kingdom Period. Her story is also about self-sacrifice: she gave up her own chance for happiness in order to help her country.

Diau’s father died when she was very young. So she and her mother had to become servants in the house of Wong Yuen, a minister in the government. After Diau’s mother died, she was taken care of by the wife of the minister, who was very fond of her. So Diau was well brought up. She was not only pretty, but also very clever. She liked to read and study.

At that time, the country was having trouble with the nobles. They had become very powerful and had big armies, so that they could make the government do whatever they wanted. One of the worst of these men was called Dong Juo.

Diau’s master, Wong Yuen, was very concerned about the power of this man. Wong was trying to think of a way to get rid of Dong for the good of the country. But he did not want to kill him openly, or cause a big scandal, because Dong Juo had very powerful friends. One of them was his god-son, Lui Bu, a fierce and powerful young general.
貂蟬被認為是三國時代最美的女人。她也是個能放棄一己的幸福，犧牲小我，而報效國家的人。
貂蟬幼時，父親就過世了。她隨着寡母投奔到當時在朝庭做司徒的王允府中做婢。貂蟬的母親去世後，王允的夫人就把她帶在身邊，撫養成人。貂蟬不但國色天香，而且非常聰慧，喜歡讀書，深明義理。
那個時候諸侯弄權，他們的權利有時大而可以左右天子，其中權勢最大的要算是太師董卓了。
貂蟬的主人王允忠心愛國，想除掉董卓，但又非常顧忌董卓的義子——一個非常勇猛的將軍——呂布，和一些其他董卓在朝庭中有勢的狐黨們。
貂蟬每看到王允從朝庭回來，都坐立不安，心事重重，如他是為國事而煩心。所以有一天夜晚，貂蟬乘著滿月，就在花園裏焚香禱告，希望上天幫助她的主人解決難題。正巧王允也因心煩不能入睡，到花園來散步，當他聽到貂蟬的禱告時，就心生一計。他要求貂蟬能犧牲自己，以達成他的計劃——美人連環計——以破壞董卓和呂布的感情，他的計劃是這樣的：
王允先將貂蟬獻給董卓，同時又把貂蟬當做自己的女兒介紹給呂布。呂布非常喜歡貂蟬的美色，王允即乘機答應他們的婚事，並選好日子給他們完婚。然後王允卻把貂蟬送入董卓府中。
王允告訴呂布的卻是：董卓在王允家見到了美麗的貂蟬，不管王允說已許配給了呂布，硬給要去了。呂布聽了大怒，卻又不敢馬上有所行動。最後終於找到了機會，將董卓殺死在“鳳儀亭”外。於是董卓的勢力瓦解了。王允的計劃成功了。
歷史上沒有提到貂蟬後來的事，據說是嫁給了呂布。
貂蟬與呂布的故事，我們常可在小說或京劇、電影中見到。
One day, Diau saw Wong Yuen come back from court looking very worried. She knew his concern for the country. That night, she went into the garden to burn incense and ask the heavens for a way to help her master. Wong Yuen had gone out for a walk and heard Diau praying; this gave him an idea. It was not a very nice idea. He made a plan to use Diau Chan to break down the friendship of Dong Juo and Lui Bu. This was the plan:

First, Wong Yuen offered Diau Chan to Dong Juo. Then, he introduced her as his daughter to Lui Bu. Lui Bu immediately wanted to marry her. At the time planned for the wedding, Wong Yueh sent Diau to Dong Juo’s house instead, and told Lui Bu that she had been kidnapped by his god-father. Lui Bu became very angry, and wanted to kill Dong Juo. However, even Lui Bu was afraid of the great power of Dong Juo, and did not dare to kill him right away. Meanwhile, Diau Chan continued to make the two men even more jealous of each other. At last Lui Bu found a chance, and killed Dong Juo. So the power of this ambitious man was broken; Wong Yuen’s patriotic plan succeeded. No one knows what happened to Diau Chan; probably she married Lui Bu.

This story of Diau Chan and Lui Bu is very famous; it is told in many novels and operas under the title of “The Tangled Rings”
Shuen Guan lived during the Jin Dynasty in Honan Province. She was a very brave girl, and had studied all the different kinds of fighting. She could fight with swords, and spears, and hands. Because she knew how to fight so well, she had a nickname “Little Tigeress”.

When she was a child, her father was the mayor of a small town, Shing Chen City. One day when she was only 13 years old, the city was attacked by bandits. The chief was a man named Wong Tung; they say he had an army of 30,000 men. Shuen Guan’s father only had a thousand men to protect the city. There was a general named Shyr Lan in a nearby town, who had already beaten Wong Tung once. But nobody in Shing Chen City dared to leave the town and go for help.

So the thirteen-year-old Shuen Guan volunteered. She left the city in the middle of the night with only two dozen men. The bandits didn’t think anyone was brave enough to come out, so they were not prepared; Shuen Guan and her soldiers killed many of them. Shuen Guan and her men fought their way through to the city where general Shyr Lan was. At first he didn’t want to risk his army to save such a small town. But he was so impressed by Shuen Guan’s bravery that he changed his mind. So he took his army to Shing Chen City and fought the bandit army. Shuen Guan also fought in the battle, and killed many bandit leaders. The battle was right outside the town walls, so
荀灌生於晉朝的河南省。她從小就聰明過人，精通各種武藝，徒手，槍、劍都能。因爲她的武藝過人，所以大家都稱她爲「蘭陵駱虎」。

荀灌的父親是襄城的太守。在她十三歲時，以王通為首的三萬土匪來攻打襄城，而荀灌的父親荀崧只擁有守兵一千人，但在懸城的石顥將軍，拥有重兵，曾大敗王通。但是懸城中無人敢衝破匪兵的重圍，去懸城去求救兵。

於是十三歲的荀灌就自告奮勇，她帶了數十個勇士，在半夜開了懸門衝殺了出去，匪兵沒想到會有人敢衝出去求救，一時措手不及。被荀灌他們殺出了一條血路，而到了石顥將軍的行轅。起先石顥不想調動大軍去救小小的懸城，但他卻深深的被荀灌的勇敢行動所感動，就發兵搶救懸城。就在懸城城外發生了一場大戰，懸城的百姓們也都在城牆上看到了荀灌英勇的殺敵。

土匪被趕走之後，懸城的百姓們大開城門迎接他們的女英雄荀灌。

此後，王通不敢再來騷擾懸城了，懸城的百姓們也享受了許多年的太平生活。荀灌的英勇事蹟更受到了皇帝的嘉獎！
everyone in Shing Chen saw the fighting and admired Shuen's bravery. At the end they opened the gates and had a big celebration to welcome Shuen Guan.

Wong Tung, the bandit chief, did not dare to bring his army back to bother the town. So Shing Chen City was safe for a long time. Shuen Guan was honored by the emperor for her courage.
Hua Mu Lan
Hua Mu Lan is the heroine of a long poem; this is her story.

Hua's father was an officer in the army; so from the time she was a child she learned all the fighting skills. She got to be very good. One day when she was sitting at home weaving, like all girls did then, a messenger came from the emperor commanding her father to raise an army to fight bandits. (At that time there was a lot of trouble with the nomadic tribes on the northern border.) But her father had spent all his life on the battlefield. He was then very old and sick and could not possibly go to war again. In old China when someone was called to fight and could not go, he could find someone else to go for him. But the only son in the family was Hua's little brother, and he was too young. The family was worried and did not know what to do.

Hua decided she would go into the army for her father, but her parents would not give her permission. So she secretly changed clothes and put on her father's army uniform, and came to the front gate. Her father saw a young, handsome officer, and thought it was someone from the village who had also been drafted. They never guessed that it was their own daughter. Then Hua took off her helmet, and her hair fell down. Her parents were very surprised when they recognized her, and gave her permission to go. Hua was then 17 years old.
花木蘭是北魏時候的人，她的父親是一位軍官，所以她從小就學會了各種武藝，而且樣樣精通。有一天正當她在織布的時候，一位信差送來了一份天子的詔書，要花木蘭的父親再去帶領軍隊打仗。因那時在北方的番邦，常來邊境擾亂。但是她的父親一生在軍中，現在年老多病，不能再去從軍。那時如果被徵召入伍而不能應徵的，可以找人代替，但是花家唯一的兒子—木蘭的弟弟又太小，所以他們全家都很憂慮，不知如何是好？

花木蘭決定代父從軍，但是她的父母不准許，於是她就改換了她父親的軍裝，來到了前門，她父親見到了這位青年英俊的軍官，還以為是要同去應召的，他更在沒想到這就是他們的女兒。後來花木蘭除下了頭盔，讓她的長髪披散下來，他們才驚奇的認出這是他們的女兒。於是她的父母終於讓她去代父從軍了。那時她才十七歲。

因花木蘭的智勇，所以她打了許多勝仗，立了不少汗馬功勞，而且升為將軍。軍士們都非常愛戴她，但是卻沒有知道她是一位女兒！

經過了十二年的征戰，邊界上的亂事已平定。因她立下了很大的戰功，所以當皇帝召見她時，問她要什麼官職？但花木蘭却要回家去照順年老的父母，皇帝很感動她的孝心，因此就賜予許多的賞賜，並讓許多軍中的袍澤們護送她回家。

當她回家之後，就換回了女裝，所有的同伴都不敢相信這美麗溫柔的女孩，竟然是和他們在一起和他們共同征戰了十二年的勇猛善戰的將軍！

後來她和她的一位軍中夥伴結了婚。
Hua Mu Lan fought on the border for 12 years. Because she was very brave and skillful, she was made a general. She was very popular and well-liked by the soldiers. But no one knew that she was a girl.

At the end of 12 years of fighting the trouble was almost over. There was peace with the tribes again. Because Hua was such a good general and had won so many victories, the emperor wanted her to stay with her army. He asked her what kind of position she would like. But Hua said she must go home to take care of her old parents, so she could not accept his offer. The emperor respected her devotion to her parents. He rewarded her with many presents, and commanded the other officers to take her home in honor.

When she got home she changed into her girl’s clothes again. No one recognized her. None of her friends from the army could believe that this pretty woman was the same brave general who had fought like a tiger beside them for 12 years. Later she married one of her “fellow soldiers” from the army.
The Empress Wu was the only woman in Chinese history who took the title “Empress” and ruled China directly. She was a very intelligent and tough woman, who killed a lot of people, and also did a lot of good things for China.

She came to the palace in 636 when she was 12 as a concubine of the Tai Tsung Emperor. She became a Buddhist nun when he died, and was brought back to the palace by his son, the Gau Tsung Emperor, who was in love with her. He divorced his first wife and made Wu his queen. She was very interested in the work of government, and helped the weak Gau Tsung emperor with much of his official business. In his old age, much of the real power was already in her hands. He took the title of “King and Queen of Heaven”, and made her his equal in title also.

After the death of her husband in 684, she ruled through several weak emperors. She is supposed to have poisoned dozens and dozens of relatives and heirs to the throne to keep her position. Then in 690, she took the title for herself, and called her dynasty Jou. She ruled until she was 81, and died in 702. So actually, she was in control of China for more than 30 years.
武則天是中國歷史上，唯一真正稱帝，定國號的女皇帝。她是一位非常精明而有魄力的女人。她雖曾殺了不少人，但在政治上卻也多有建樹。

武則天在十二歲入宮（公元六三六年），做唐太宗的宮女（嬪妃）。太
宗登基之後，她就入廟為尼。後來高宗皇帝接她回宮，廢了自己的妻子，而
立她為皇后。她經常幫助平康的高宗處理朝政，所以到了高宗晚年，政權實
已操於武后手中，她並和高宗分稱天皇、天后，有如共治。據說她曾毒死不
少皇親、國戚，以鞏固自己的地位。高宗卒後，她就臨朝稱制（公元六八四
年），並先後廢了中宗、睿宗二帝，在公元六九○年，即正式稱「聖神皇帝
」，改國號為周，成了中國歷史上唯一的女皇帝。武后君臨天下卅多年（包
括她在高宗時即已掌權，稱制六年，與在位十六年的時間），她死於公元七
○五年，享年八十二歲。

人們批評她的不對，大約有三個理由：第一、因為她是女人，在封建的
觀念上，女人是不能當皇帝的。第二、因為她的私生活不甚檢點。（封建的
觀念是皇帝可以有嬪妃數千，而女皇帝的私生活卻不該潔。）第三、她殘酷
殘暴。這點倒可以算是她的缺點。武則天和西方歷史的克里奧尼國一樣，
都是以性來做政治工具的。

她在政治上的建樹也不少，在用人方面，為了要打破傳統，選用新人材
，就特重科考。故在她統治之時，名相輩出，如狄仁傑、婁師德、李嶠等。
她也裁減軍備和稅收。她亦大力發揚佛教，使得佛教大盛。

總之，在武則天統治時的中國，國力還算富強，人民生活亦很安定。
People have said a lot of bad things about the Empress Wu for three reasons:

1. They think she shouldn't have been emperor at all, since she was a woman.
2. She is supposed to have had a very wild sex life. This is an unfair criticism, since an emperor had thousands of concubines, yet a woman was expected to be pure. Like Cleopatra, the Empress Wu used sex for politics.
3. She was a ruthless person who let nothing stand between her and power, and killed many people. This is probably the most serious criticism of her.

But she did many important things for China. Maybe the most important was that she made it easier for talented people to get good government jobs, by strengthening the merit system. She didn't mind intelligent criticism, and was good at picking men to help her rule. Some very famous ministers served under her, like Di Ren Jie (Judge Dee), Lo Sheh Deh, and Li Chiau. She reduced the army and reduced taxes. Buddhism became very strong during her rule. In general her reign was peaceful and fair (unless you were related to her).
Chinese bandits were not like Robin Hood. Bandits often had large well-organized armies, and sometimes controlled land. If times were poor there would be a lot of men out of work and they would join the bandits. The camps would get very large with thousands of men. They would attack merchants and towns. Many times the government would have to send armies to put down the bandits. Sometimes bandit armies would get interested in politics and try to put down the government. Sometimes the Chinese use the word "bandit" to mean the nomads.

A concubine was a king's or rich man's girl friend. Rich men had lots of concubines, kings sometimes thousands, who lived in the household. A concubine could become rich and powerful—but she had no protection if her master didn't want her anymore. When she got old, she would probably be sent home to her family, but no one would marry her. Her only protection was through her children. If she had sons, she would be important. If the man's wives had no sons, she might become a wife, or at least the mother of the heir, and her future was secure.
DYNASTY

A dynasty was a long time, usually several hundred years, when the imperial power was passed from father to son. Dynasties usually began and ended in war. In old China people believed that heaven gave the right to rule to one family for a time, but that this family would lose the right someday and start to rule badly. When that happened, it was right that a new family would take over. Dates in Chinese history are usually given by dynasty: early Ming, late Tang, etc....

NOMADS

Nomads are a people who don't build big cities and grow food, but who travel around on horses or camels and fight and hunt for their food. They and their families might stay in one place for only one month or so. There were a lot of nomadic tribes who lived north of China and were always fighting the towns. The Chinese called them barbarians because they didn't think the nomads were very civilized.
The names in this book are romanized into Mandarin Chinese sounds. Although Mandarin is the official language of both the People's Republic of China, and the R.O.C., it is a northern Chinese dialect. People from other parts of China will pronounce the words differently, even though the written form is the same.

Since Chinese dialects are tonal, they are impossible to romanize correctly without using code. However, we have developed our own system for the casual reader, using phonetic American English. A word is pronounced as it looks — more or less. Our system, which is based on that of Y. R. Chao, has the disadvantage that it is quite different from the prevailing systems: Wade-Giles, Post Office, and National Romanization. However, it has the advantage that you will be able to pronounce the names in Mandarin consistently and nearly correctly, without learning a code.

Use the following vowel sounds:

- a = father;
- e = her;
- i = eye;
- o = glory;
- u = rude

The only exceptions we make are a few place names, such as Peking, which ought for pronunciation to be spelled "Beijing."