

My MEP Projects

Project: Chinese Literature
Series: Culture



Name: _____

Literature is what brings a language alive and can make it sound beautiful. And you can't beat a good story, right?

So far, you have been doing very well at studying the Chinese language and the culture of China. This Project is going to change the way you see Chinese as you go deeper into how the language is used in poetry and stories. This Project is quite simply a delicious mixture of words.

You are also going to embark on a journey to learn how to translate well. That's a real bonus, because translating is an excellent skill to have, both for your exams in the future, and for real-life situations too.

Go for it!

1. Little poem

This is one of the cutest and most amusing little poems you might ever read! It's called 鸡和蛋 jī hé dàn. Translate the title into English.

Answer: _____

2. Introducing the poem

First spend a few moments getting to know these words that are used in the poem:

鸡 jī = chicken

蛋 dàn = egg

生 shēng = to give birth to, to hatch

到底 dào dǐ = in the end, finally (or this word can just show emphasis)

有 yǒu = to exist, there is, there are

当然 dāng rán = of course

一定 yí dìng = for sure, definitely

不一定 bù yí dìng = not necessarily

先 xiān = first

才 cái = only then



Now go to the link below (ignore all the ads!) and read the poem once through. Try to only read the characters the first time round and **not** the pinyin. If you like you can have the audio track playing while you read.

<http://chinese-at-ease.com/learn-chinese-online-chicken-and-the-egg/>

★ Task 1 complete

3. Translation

Maybe you understood quite a few lines of the poem, maybe you didn't understand much at all. That doesn't matter. You're now going to do a translation of the poem into English.

The poem has been broken into chunks in the grid below to help you translate it. You'll notice that the second column is called 'Literal translation'. A literal translation is where you translate each word from Chinese without changing the order of the words and without trying to make it sound like good English. For example, 忙不忙? literally translated is 'Busy not busy?'

When you have done a literal translation of a sentence, you then need to make it sound more English. Do this in the last column, 'My version'. Here 忙不忙 could be translated as, 'Are you busy?' Sometimes it might be hard to re-write the literal translation, just write what you think it probably means for 'My version'.

The first and third lines have been done for you. Do the second and other lines.

Chinese	Literal translation	My version (sounds more English)
一二三, 鸡生蛋,	<i>One two three, chicken birth egg</i>	<i>One, two, three, the chicken lays an egg.</i>
三二一, 蛋生鸡,		

到底是先有鸡后有蛋，	<i>So is it first exist chicken, after exist egg?</i>	<i>So is it that chickens exist first and then eggs?</i>
还是先有蛋后有鸡？		
当然是先有鸡才有蛋，		
鸡一定生蛋，		
蛋不一定生鸡。		

NOTE: Your English version does **not** have to be the same as this one, as long as the meaning is more or less the same as the Chinese version. If you made any obvious mistakes in your translation, correct them. It's a good idea to look at the original Chinese wording again when you make any corrections.

★	Task 2 complete
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4. Short story

Now we turn to a wise little tale about money. Here's a question before you read the story: What do you normally do when you see a 1p coin lying on the ground as you're walking along? (You'll see why you've been asked this once you've read the story.)

Answer: _____

This short story is called 一个硬币 yí gè yìng bì. Translate this title into English as best you can. You might need to look up 硬币.

Answer: _____

First, study the vocabulary below:

硬币 yìng bì = coin

年轻人 nián qīng rén = young people

找 zhǎo = to look for, to find

躺 tǎng = to lie down

A translator's tip for you: You often have to change the word order around and even add or subtract words to make the English text actually sound like real English. I have faith in you!

看也不看 kàn yě bú kàn = not even look

激动地 jī dòng de = excitedly

捡起 jiǎn qǐ = to pick up

心里想 xīn lǐ xiǎng = think to oneself

没出息 méi chū xi = (someone) has no future, not promising, good for nothing

白白地 bái bái de = in vain, fruitless

溜走 liū zǒu = to slip away

工资 gōng zī = salary, wages

留 liú = to stay

经理 jīng lǐ = manager

还 hái = still (e.g. 还在找 = I am still looking)

发财 fā cái = to make a fortune, become wealthy

绅士般地 shēn shì bān de = like a gentleman, elegantly

免费 miǎn fèi = free, without cost



Now read through the story (click below) for the first time and **don't worry** if you don't understand things yet! That's totally normal.

<http://chinese-at-ease.com/learn-chinese-reading-online-a-coin/>

★ Task 3 complete

5. Translation

When you get stuck filling in this grid, use the pinyin in the online version to help you look up words on Pleco or MDBG. If you're still unsure about how to translate a sentence, don't worry, just try to make it the best translation that you can do.

The first sentence and a few other boxes have been completed to help you. Make sure all the boxes have something in them by the end.

Chinese	Literal translation	My version
两个年轻人一起去找工作。	Two young people together go to look work.	Two young people went together to look for work.
一个硬币躺在地上，	A coin lay the ground on	
第一个年轻人看也不看走了过去，	The first young person look not even looked walked past (it)	

另外一个年轻人激动地捡起了它。		
第一个年轻人看了，心里想：一个硬币也捡，真没出息。		<i>The first person saw this and thought to himself: he's actually picking up one single coin! He's got no hope.</i>
第二个年轻人看着他的朋友，心里想：让钱白白地从身边溜走，真没出息。		
两个人同时走进一家公司。	<i>The two of them at the same time entered a company.</i>	
公司很小，工作很累，工资也低，		
第一个年轻人很不高兴地走了，		
可是第二个年轻人高兴地留了下来。		<i>but the other person happily stayed on at the company.</i>
两年后，两个人在街上又见面了，	<i>Two years later, the two people on the street again met</i>	
第二个年轻人已经成了经理，可是第一个年轻人还在找工作。		

第一个年轻人说：“你怎么这么快就发财了？”		
他的朋友说：		
“因为我没像你那样绅士般地从一枚硬币处走开。”		<i>‘Because unlike you, I didn’t walk passed the coin as if I were some gentleman.’</i>
你连免费的钱都不要，怎么会发大财呢？”		

☆ Task 4 complete

6. Translating a classical poem

China has a wonderfully rich tradition of poetry. Some of the most famous poems were written during the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 AD), and to this day many Chinese people recite them and love them. Here is a taster for you. Tang poets, such as Wang Zhihuan who wrote this one, were masters at packing a lot of meaning and atmosphere into very few words.

This type of poetry is written in what is known as Classical Chinese and some characters can have different meanings to their meaning today. As you translate your first traditional Chinese poem in the box provided below, just do the best that you can even if you feel a bit unsure. You can always improve it later on. Use the vocabulary list at the bottom and your dictionaries to help. You do not have to use the same English words as the ones below and you can be creative to make your version sound good in English. Don’t worry: there is not one correct way to translate this poem. A grid and list of vocabulary are provided again for you below the poem.

唐诗

táng shī (Tang poetry)

登鹤雀楼 (Dēng guàn què lóu) Climbing White Stork Tower

by 王之涣 (Wáng zhī huàn) Wang Zhihuan (Tang)

白日依山尽
Bái rì yī shān jìn

黄河入海流
Huáng hé rù hǎi liú

欲穷千里目
Yù qióng qiān lǐ mù

更上一层楼
Gèng shàng yì céng lóu



Vocabulary

依 yī = to lean on or cling to (normally means 'to depend on', but that doesn't fit here)

尽 jìn = finished, to the limit, used up, to go away (completely)

欲 yù = to wish to, to want, to desire

穷 qióng = the entire, the furthest, the extreme

里 lǐ = an old measure of distance (roughly 500 metres)

目 mù = to see, eye

上 shàng = to go up

Chinese	Literal translation	My version (sounds more English)
白日依山尽	<i>White sun relies on mountain to end (last bit of day)</i>	<i>The last bit of sun presses upon the mountains,</i>
黄河入海流		
欲穷千里目		
更上一层楼		

What do you think the poet might be wanting you to think about with the imagery of climbing higher to see an entire view? Write your suggestions here:

Answer: _____

Visit this blogger's page about the poem. You will see that actually there are a lot of ways to translate it, and you have just done a completely new one yourself!



[https://allpoetry.com/topic/268872983-My Comments on 6 different versions of Up O](https://allpoetry.com/topic/268872983-My%20Comments%20on%206%20different%20versions%20of%20Up%20O)

★	Task 5 complete	
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7. Ooh! A video!

Relax and enjoy some of these performances and videos of 'Climbing White Stalk Tower'. Try to read along out loud with the speakers and singers!

<http://www.chinesetolearn.com/%E7%99%BB%E9%B9%B3%E9%9B%80%E6%A5%BC-deng-guan-que-lou-ascend-stork-tower-%E7%8E%8B%E4%B9%8B%E6%B6%A3-wang-zhi-hua/>

Tip

Optional: Do you have what it takes to learn this short poem off by heart? If you do, you will always be able to seriously impress Chinese people with it!

Notice how the man and the girl in the first video on the page above use a special rhythm to recite the poem; try copying their rhythm as you learn the poem.

★	Task 6 complete	
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8. A glance at the four great novels

Watch this introduction to the four great novels of Classical Chinese literature. Write down the names of the four novels on the next page in Chinese and English. Add the pinyin as well if you need it to help remember the Chinese characters. (Pause the video to write.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGe0wtjgk0>

	中文	英文
1		
2		
3		
4		

Which of these four novels attracts you the most?

Answer: _____

Spend 5-10 researching this novel and make a few notes about some of the interesting features below.

Notes about _____ (add novel name):

★ Task 7 complete

Well done!



太棒了！

Your Achievements

Congratulations on completing 1 MEP Project!

- You have carried out your very first translations of Chinese literature
- The language used in Chinese literature is a bit different from the Chinese you might have learned in the classroom. But isn't it lovely! You have expanded your knowledge of how Chinese can be used.
- Your mind has just had an amazing workout as you wrestled to find the best words for your translations!

While you're in the mood, why not write your own poem in English or Chinese!?

*If your teacher signs you off,
you will collect 1 Badge!*