

Name: _____ Class: _____

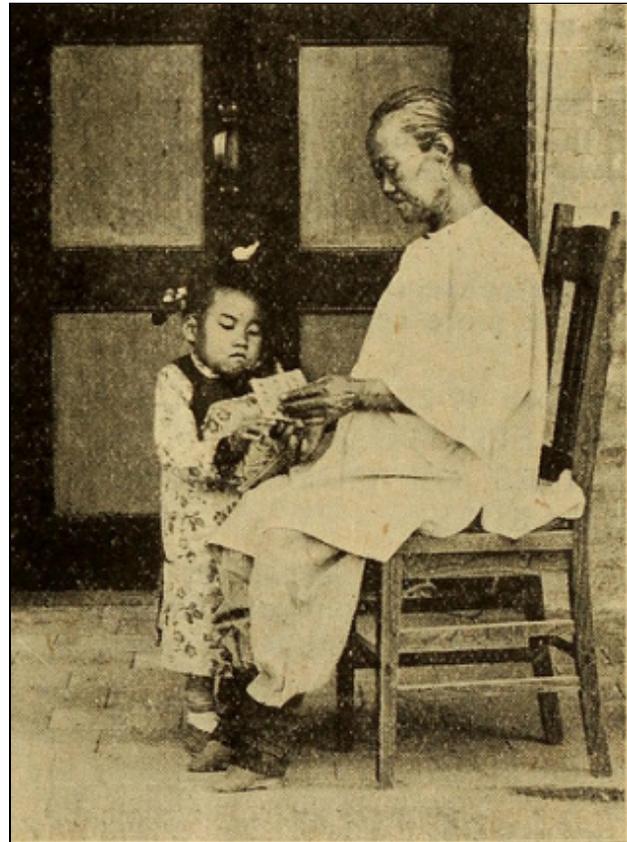
On Reverence for Parents

By Zhao Ban

From The Chinese Book Of Etiquette And Conduct For Women And Girls • c. 49 - c. 120

Zhao Ban (45-116 CE) was the first known female Chinese historian. She wrote extensively about the ideal way in which girls and women should conduct themselves. Her works on this subject were extremely influential in China. The concept of filial piety, or respect for one's parents and ancestors, is central to Chinese culture, dating back to the philosopher Confucius (551-479 BC). Because this piece was written hundreds of years ago in another language, the sentence structure may be difficult to understand at first. Read the text carefully, paying attention to the punctuation and rereading lines when necessary. As you read, take notes on the author's diction (word choice) and how it contributes to the tone of the text.

- [1] Girls not yet gone out from their homes¹
 Must carefully reverence² their parents;
 Early rise, and to them
 The morning salutations³ present.
- [5] If cold, build a fire to warm them;
 If warm, use the fan to cool them;
 If they are hungry, hasten⁴ to supply them food;
 If thirsty, prepare from them the tea.
 If your parents rebuke you,
- [10] Receive it not impatiently,
 But, standing in their presence,
 Hear with reverence and obedient heart,
 And repent of and forsake⁵ the wrong.
 The words of your parents,
- [15] Regard as beyond all others important;
 Obey their instructions;
 Turn not away your head,
 And be not stiff-necked.
 If you do wrong, confess to your parents,
- [20] Requesting instruction and reproof.⁶
 When your parents become old,
 Morning and night be sorrowful and fearful;
 Their clothes, food, and drink,
 With the utmost care provide,
- [25] Observing the demands
 Of the four seasons in your care for them.
 If your parents are sick,
 Leave not their bedside,



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1. In other words, girls who are not yet married
2. **Reverence (verb):** to regard or treat with deep respect
3. **Salutation (noun):** greeting
4. **Hasten (verb):** to hurry
5. **Forsake (verb):** to give up or renounce
6. **Reproof (noun):** an expression of blame or disapproval

- Loosen not your girdle⁷ to lie down;
[30] The tea and the medicine,
Yourself first taste
To be sure that it is just right.
Cease⁸ not to cry unto heaven,
Or to pray in the ancestral temple,
[35] That they may be restored.
Never let it be said
That your parents died
For lack of attention from you.
When they die
[40] Your very bones should grieve,
And to your life's end cease not to mourn.
Grief's clothing, for your parents,
Three years you must wear;
The sacrificial offering to them,
[45] You must never cease to make.
Thus should you honor your ancestors.

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7. An elasticized corset extending from waist to thigh

8. **Cease** (*verb*): to stop

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes the central theme of the text? [RI.2]
 - A. Children owe their parents their devotion because of the great effort required to bear and raise a child.
 - B. Someone who treats his or her parents well is more likely to be a respectable and morally upright person.
 - C. Unmarried girls should devote themselves to painstakingly caring for their parents and demonstrating great respect for them.
 - D. Girls should take care to choose their spouses carefully to ensure that they will maintain a good relationship with their parents.

2. PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "Girls not yet gone out from their homes [not married] / Must carefully reverence their parents" (Lines 1-2)
 - B. "Hear with reverence and obedient heart, / And repent of and forsake the wrong" (Lines 12-13)
 - C. "The words of your parents, / Regard as beyond all others important" (Lines 14-15)
 - D. "When your parents become old, / Morning and night be sorrowful and fearful" (Lines 21-22)

3. PART A: What does the word "rebuke" most closely mean as it is used in Line 9? [RI.4]
 - A. to criticize without cause or reason
 - B. to overly stress a point or argument
 - C. to punish someone for disobeying an order
 - D. to express sharp disapproval of someone's behavior

4. PART B: Which of the following phrases from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "Receive it not impatiently" (Line 10)
 - B. "standing in their presence" (Line 11)
 - C. "And repent of and forsake the wrong" (Line 13)
 - D. "Obey their instructions" (Line 16)

5. Explain how the diction used in the text contribute to the development of its theme and tone. Cite evidence from the text in your response. [RI.4] [RI.2]

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Do you think the themes of this text are still relevant today? Do you think a change has occurred in the way children relate to and treat their parents?
2. Do you think the idea of parental respect was specific to Chinese culture? Do you think it is less present—or present in a different way—in other cultures?
3. While Zhao Ban’s instructions may read as old-school and even sexist to a modern reader, many contemporary scholars think of her work as a way to encourage girls and young women to stay out of trouble in their youth, so that they may achieve some level of power in adulthood. What do you think of this possibility? Is it important to challenge oppressive structures as an individual, or is it better to work within them?
4. In the context of the text, what does it mean to be grown up? Is maturity defined by independence and distance from one’s parents or the willingness and ability to appreciate and honor one’s parents? Or a combination of both? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
5. The guidelines presented in the text are aimed at “Girls not yet gone out from their homes” (Line 1). In the context of this story, how do we define the roles of men and women? Why is the question of whether or not a young woman is married relevant? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
6. In the context of this story, what is the meaning of family? Do you agree with this meaning? Why or why not? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.