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Tales from  
China's Classic  
Essential Readings  
中国蒙学经典  
故事丛书

# Tales from the Three Character Classic

《三字经》故事

郁辉 Yu Hui◎著

[美]艾梅霞 Martha Avery◎译



CHINA INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

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# 前言

中国古代重视对儿童和青少年的教育，产生了多种流传很广的启蒙读物，使学生加强修养，增长智慧。《三字经》《百家姓》《千字文》和《幼学琼林》就是这些蒙学读物中的佼佼者，它们的主要功能是使学生认识汉字，并对他们进行文化和品德教育。

这些蒙学读物内容通俗易懂，形式简单，读起来很像歌谣，非常适合读者朗读和背诵。对很多中国人来说，这些读物是对他们一生影响最大的书籍，他们通过这些读物认识汉字，了解中国的历史、地理、社会等多方面的知识，并受到品德教育。直到今天，中国人仍然喜爱和重视这些蒙学读物。

上面提到的四本书中，《千字文》产生最早，是南北朝时梁朝人编写的，4个字一句，共250句，1000个字，所以称为“千字文”。

《三字经》产生于宋代，并经过后人的修改。它每句3个字，所以叫“三字经”。全书总共约500句，其中讲的许多观念和道理，对中国人影响深远。《三字经》已经被联合国教科文组织选入儿童



道德修养的必读书目，译成多国文字，在全世界范围内发行。

《百家姓》也产生于宋代，是有关中国人姓氏的启蒙读物，采用4个字一句的歌谣形式，共计568字，介绍了504个中国人的姓氏。

《幼学琼林》在这四本书里产生最晚，是明朝人编写的。它内容极为丰富，几乎是一部小型的自然和社会百科全书，所以有人说“读了《幼学》走天下”。

这些书中蕴藏着丰厚的中华民族历史文化传统，尤其是其中提到的那些隽永、生动的故事，令读者印象深刻。“中国蒙学经典故事”丛书从上述四本书中精选出一些在中国广泛流传的故事，以简短而生动有趣的文字讲述出来，通过它们，向全世界广大的读者介绍中华民族的历史文化知识和思想、道德观念。书中的故事分成若干现代人容易理解的类型，并配以幽默生动的漫画。

这套丛书不仅适合儿童和青少年，也适合广大对中国文化感兴趣、初步接触中国历史文化的读者。



# Preface

The ancient China long ago has stressed on the child and youth education. Many primer readings spreading far and beyond came into focus, thus strengthening the cause of child upbringing and brightness. *The Three Character Classic*, *the Hundreds Surnames*, *the Thousand Character Classic*, and *the Children's Knowledge Treasury* are the best examples of such primer readings. Their main goal is to enable the child to learn characters and educate them about culture and morality.

The readings are easy to understand, and simple to read and recite as they resemble songs. They influenced the lives of many Chinese. They learned Chinese, as well as gaining knowledge on Chinese history, geography, and society. They are well-educated on morality too. Till today, Chinese still love and stress these readings.

Of the above-mentioned four books, *the Thousand Character Classic* came out earliest. It was compiled by a man of the Liang Dynasty. With four characters in each sentence, there are 250 sentences and 1,000 characters in the book. Due to this reason, the book is titled *the Thousand Character Classic*.

*The Three Character Classic* came out during the Song Dynasty times and was modified later. As it has three characters in each sentence, the book is titled the Three Character Classic. It comprises about 500 sentences. Many





ideas and truths in it have profound impact on the Chinese people. UNESCO incorporated the book into a list of compulsory books dedicated for the child moral education. It was translated into many languages and circulated globally.

*The Hundreds Surnames* came out during the Song Dynasty times. It is a primer reading related to the Chinese surnames. With a total of 568 characters and in the form of songs with four characters in each sentence, it introduced 504 Chinese surnames in all.

*The Children's Knowledge Treasury* came out the latest. The people of Ming Dynasty compiled this book. With rich contents, it became a mini-encyclopedia of natural and social sciences. It owns the reputation of "Making you knowledgeable enough after reading *the Children's Knowledge Treasury*".

We can see profound historical and cultural traditions clearly in these books - especially those vivid and meaningful tales greatly impress the readers. *Tales from China's Classic Essential Readings* has selected tales spreading far and beyond in China from the above four books and tells them in short, lively and interesting truths. Readers, around the world, can learn the historical and cultural knowledge of the Chinese nation, ideology and morality through them. The tales are divided into categories to be easily understood by modern people, with the support of humorous and vivid cartoons.

The books are not only suitable for children and youth, but also for readers with interest in Chinese culture. They can experience the contact with Chinese history and culture.

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# Studying Encouraging Tales

# 劝学故事





## 孟母择邻

原文：

xī mèng mǔ      zé lín chǔ  
昔 孟 母 ， 择 邻 处 ，  
zǐ bù xué      duàn jī zhù  
子 不 学 ， 断 机 杼 。

故事：

孟子（前372—前289）是中国战国时期（前475—前221）一位伟大的思想家、教育家，他名叫孟轲（kē），孟子是人们对他的尊称。他继承并发扬了孔子的思想，被认为是仅次于孔子的儒家宗师。孟子能取得这么大的成就，与母亲从小重视对他的教育是分不开的。

孟子的故乡在现在山东省的邹城，祖上是贵族。在他很小的时候，父亲就去世了，家境不好。孟母做织布等工作辛苦地养家，但她并不因此而放松对儿子的教育，希望他将来能成为一个有思想、有学问的人。

起初，他们居住的地方靠近一块墓地，不时有人来这



里举行葬礼。年幼的孟子和邻居的小朋友们跑去观看。举行葬礼的人走了，他们就模仿那些下葬、跪拜、伤心痛哭等动作，觉得很好玩。孟母看到这种情况，觉得这种环境不适合孩子求学上进，就宁愿多花一些钱，搬到一条热闹的道路上去住。

搬到新家没多久，孟母又发现了新的问题。原来，周围邻居大都是做生意的，离他们家不远处就有一家卖肉的店铺。孟子跟邻居那些孩子们很快熟悉了，经常跟他们一起到肉店去看热闹，然后就玩起做生意的游戏来：有人假扮卖肉的商人，有人假扮买肉的顾客，讨价还价，玩得十分高兴。当时的中国社会，人们认为经商是一种低贱的职业，商人在





社会上不受尊重。孟母不想让儿子将来成为一个商人，于是她决定再次搬家。

搬到哪里去呢？孟母经过慎重考虑，决定把家搬到学校的附近。

当时的学校设在王宫附近，是贵族子弟受教育的地方。孟子听到学校里孩子们的读书声，也跟着读。另外，每个月的农历初一、十五这两天，官员们都要到这里举行祭祀仪式，大家按照规定互相行礼，显得优雅庄重。孟子看在眼里，记在心上，回家去把这些礼节学给母亲看。孟母看到儿子新学习的这些东西，终于放心了，欣慰地说：“这才是适合我们住的地方呀！”于是他们就在这里定居下来。母亲还把孟子送去上学，这一来她的负担更重了。

有一天孟子去上学，没到放学时间，就早早跑回家了。孟母正忙着织布，见他回来，就问：“学习怎么样了？”孟子支支吾吾地答：“还行吧。”孟母知道他是因为贪玩而逃学了，很生气，但并没有直接指责他，而是拿起剪刀，把刚刚织好的布剪断了。孟子很不安，问母亲为什么这样做，孟母说：“读书求学就像织布一样，必须不断地积累，才能有所成就。剪断的布还能有什么用呢？你荒废学业，后果也是这样。”孟子十分后悔，向母亲承认了错误。此后，他严格要求自己，勤奋好学，终于成为有名望的学者。





## Mencius' Mother Chooses Neighbors

Mencius was one of China's greatest philosophers and educators. He lived from 372 to 289 BCE, during the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE) in Chinese history. Although he was respectfully addressed as Meng-zi in Chinese, his name was Meng Ke. Considered second only to Confucius as a master of the Ru school of philosophy, known as "Confucianism" in English, Mencius both taught and further developed Confucian ideas. His accomplishments would not have been possible without the all-abiding importance that his mother placed on his education.

Mencius' homeland was a place called "Zou" in what is now the province of Shandong. His father died when he was young and the family circumstances were difficult. His mother worked as a weaver and at other jobs to support the family. Despite all, she did not let go of her belief in the importance of education; she hoped that one day Mencius would become an educated man with his own ideas.

At the very beginning, the family lived near a graveyard. People would frequently come by to conduct funeral rites and the young Mencius and his friends in the neighborhood would run over to watch.



After the mourners had left, the boys would mimic what had taken place, the lowering of the coffin, the kneeling and praying, the wailing and mourning. They thought this was all good fun. Mencius' mother looked upon this as a poor environment for getting a proper education. She decided she would rather spend a little money and move to a place



that was on a regular street and that had a livelier atmosphere.

Not long after moving to a new home, Mencius' mother discovered a new problem. All of the neighbors in the new place were involved in trade, and the family of one small friend had a shop that dealt in meat. After watching the comings and goings at the meat shop, Mencius and his friends would play at doing business, one the buyer, one the seller, haggling over prices, having a great time. At that time in China, tradesmen were regarded as being engaged in the lowest and most humble occupation. People in business were accorded no respect. Mencius' mother was now afraid that her son would become a businessman, so she determined to move again.

This time, after long consideration, she decided to move the family to a location that was near a school.

Schools were generally situated near the homes of the well to do at the time, near "princely homes." They were set up for the purpose of educating the sons of aristocrats. From where he lived, Mencius could hear the sounds of the children's voices, reciting their lessons. He was soon mimicking them, reciting the lessons as well. Moreover, on the First Day and the Fifteenth Day of every lunar month, officials would gather at the school to conduct rituals. As per the proper way of doing things, everyone would perform rites that seemed wonderfully elegant and sophisticated and grand. Mencius observed these things minutely,