

# The Teaching of Classical Poetry and the Cultivation of Students' Personalities

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## ABSTRACT

In the teaching of Chinese, the teaching of classical poetry has a special advantage in cultivating students' healthy personalities. This article explores the personality education in the current teaching of classical poetry in high schools, and proposes practical and effective teaching strategies.

## KEYWORDS

Classical poetry; Teaching; Students; Personality development

## 1 Introduction

Classical poetry is a precious treasure passed down over thousands of years in the Chinese nation. The teaching of classical poetry is currently a hot topic in Chinese language teaching. It not only teaches students basic knowledge and the charm of language and writing, but also cultivates their appreciation of language and the ideas and emotions expressed in classical poetry. As a language teacher, I believe that the purpose of education is to nurture people. The ultimate goal of nurturing people is to cultivate a good personality. Guiding students to learn classical poetry, enhancing their interest in classical poetry, and fostering their healthy personalities are very important and necessary.

However, how to set specific learning tasks to guide students to perceive the traditional virtues and wisdom in classical poetry, how to use it to shape their character, and how to promote the development of healthy habits and the formation of correct life, values, and worldviews are questions that many Chinese teachers are struggling with.

## 2 Overview of Classical Poetry and Student Personality

### 2.1 Overview of Classical Poetry

The concept of "classical poetry" does not have a clear and consistent definition in the theoretical community. It can generally refer to the songs and poems that have emerged since the birth of ancient literature, as well as the ancient and modern poetry of the three, four, five, and seven verses that emerged after the mid-Tang Dynasty, and the songs of the Yuan Dynasty. Based on the explanations of "classical" and "poetry" in modern Chinese dictionaries, the term "classical poetry" can be understood as literary works that have been passed down from ancient times and are considered authentic or exemplary by later generations. These works represent the most authentic essence of traditional culture and provide the most accurate portrayal of people's social life and spiritual world during that time. The form of classical poetry primarily originates from the social practices of ancient China, with its roots in folk culture.

### 2.2 Overview of Student Personality

The concept of "personality" has many definitions, so the criteria for defining personality are also different. Modern psychology considers personality to be the sum of a person's character, temperament, hobbies, behavior, viewpoints, and attitudes. Based on the definitions of personality by numerous researchers, personality should be a comprehensive concept that integrates various aspects of a person's physiology, psychology, and social behavior. It is a unique self-concept formed on the basis of a person's innate physiological structure and during the process of socialization, which includes various psychological processes, cognitive abilities, behavioral motivations, emotional responses, interpersonal relationships, attitudes, beliefs, moral values, and aesthetic tastes.

## 3 The Theoretical Basis for the Use of Classical Poetry in the Cultivationality

### 3.1 The Basic Concepts of the New Chinese Curriculum Standards

The "Compulsory Education Chinese Language Curriculum Standards (2022 Edition)" propose that the Chinese language curriculum aims to develop the core competencies of all students, lay a foundation for them to learn other subjects well; establish a correct worldview, outlook on life, values, form a good personality and healthy character;

cultivate students' spirit of seeking truth and innovation, practical abilities, and cooperation and communication skills; and promote the all-round development of morality, intelligence, physical fitness, aesthetics, labor, and students' lifelong development. It can be seen that the fundamental goal of all teaching content in language education, including classical poetry, is not only to focus on the increase of the total amount of knowledge that is immediately apparent and can be expressed concretely, but also to enhance the overall quality of the students, cultivate their temperament, improve their personality and promote their lifelong development.

### 3.2 The Humanistic Values and Personality Ideas Contained in Classical Poetry

As Mr. Gu Sui said, "A kind of knowledge must always relate to people's lives." The fundamental purpose of inheriting Chinese classical poetry is to learn from the wisdom of the sages and lead a good life in the present. There must be something valuable and unique in the humanistic value of classical poetry for it to have survived to this day.

#### 3.2.1 Moral Value

"The Great Learning", as an important Confucian classic in the Four Books, is regarded as the "gateway to virtue". It begins with the statement: "The way of the Great Learning lies in clarifying virtue, in serving the people, and in achieving perfect goodness." The ancient Chinese governance philosophy emphasizes "matching virtue with heaven", and "virtue governance" necessarily involves educating the people with virtue. The people can also achieve their ideals and contribute to the country through "establishing virtue in their careers", forming a virtuous cycle of governance and education. Therefore, "clarifying virtue" naturally becomes the most fundamental task of traditional Chinese education.

Qu Yuan's "I sigh deeply to hide my tears, lamenting the many hardships of the people," Du Fu's "How can we have thousands of large houses to shelter the poor of the world, so that they can all be happy?" and "The wine and meat in the rich man's house smell bad, while there are frozen corpses on the road," Li Shen's "Who knows that every grain of food in the plate is hard-won," and Zheng Banqiao's "Our small officials in the prefecture and counties are deeply concerned about every branch and leaf," are all works and phrases that deeply reflect the voices of the people. Therefore, classical poetry was the voice of the people at that time, its content came from the people and could move the people, thus having a good moral education effect.

#### 3.2.2 Patriotism

Du Mu's "Parking at the Qinhuai River" expresses the poet's concern for the country's fate through the line, "The courtesans don't know the sorrow of a fallen nation, they still sing 'Hou Ting Hua' across the river." Du Fu's "Song of the Broken Thatched Cottage" expresses the poet's passionate concern for the country and people through the line, "How can I find thousands of large houses to shelter the cold people of the world and make them all happy?" Wen Tianxiang's "Passing Through the Lingdingyang" expresses the poet's strong sense of duty and willingness to sacrifice for the country, even in the face of death, through the line, "Since ancient times, who has not died? Leave your red heart to shine through the ages." These poems fully embody the classical Chinese literature. The teaching of poetry is of great value in cultivating students' patriotism.

#### 3.2.3 Life Attitude

Classical poetry contains a lot of optimistic and positive attitude towards life and lofty ideal pursuit. For example, in Liu Yuxi's "Remarkable Heaven and Yangzhou's First Meeting at the Seat", "Thousands of sails pass by the side of the sunken boat, and thousands of wood springs in front of the sick tree", although he has not been reused and relegated for many years, he is still full of optimism about life. In Li Bai's "Difficult Road (Part 1)", "The long wind and waves will sometimes break through, and the sails will hang straight to the sea". The high and optimistic spiritual strength that tries to break free from the bitter dream can encourage him to maintain a high and upward spirit when he encounters academic difficulties, not afraid of difficulties and dangers, and have the courage to pursue his own ideals. Su Shi's poem "Jiangchengzi · Mizhou Hunting" contains the line "I will draw my bow like the full moon, look to the northwest, and shoot the wolf of the sky." This can inspire students to aspire to contribute to the country.

## 4 Strategies for Cultivating Personality through Classical Poetry Teaching

### 4.1 The Current Situation and Problems of Classical Poetry Teaching

At present, the most prominent problem in the teaching of ancient poetry is that the whole process of poetry teaching

is boring and hollow, lacks originality, and cannot reflect the realm of "a poem is a matter of eternity, and one knows its merits and demerits in one's heart". The teaching of ancient poetry falls into a "dead loop", like a pool of stagnant water, and cannot be "vivid and lively". Specifically, there are two manifestations:

Firstly, teachers' teaching methods are outdated and monotonous. Some teachers' teaching methods are not flexible enough, and the phenomenon of "one-man show" is very common. Students' main role in the classroom has not been reflected. At the same time, teachers' interpretation of poetry content only follows the reference books of the textbook, and they cannot guide students to deeply explore its connotation, let alone form their own unique opinions.

Secondly, students' interest in learning is declining. For classical poetry, most students are not very interested in learning, and they are not very active in exploring it on their own initiative. The vast majority of students memorize and appreciate classical poetry just to cope with the exam. In this case, how can we make students achieve the goal of "practicing thousands of pieces of music to understand the essence of sound, and observing thousands of swords to recognize their shapes"?

#### **4.2 The Reasons for the Lack of Personality Cultivation in Classical Poetry Teaching**

Firstly, it comes from the constraints of exam-oriented education. Due to the pressure of the Gaokao, teachers, students, and parents all attach great importance to exam-oriented education. They would rather sacrifice students' creativity and development potential, so that they can pass the Gaokao and win the admission notice of a famous university. In this situation of "everything is measured by scores", even classical poetry, which is full of national wisdom and aesthetic significance, can't escape its fate.

Secondly, ignoring aesthetic teaching and lacking aesthetic quality. A healthy personality should be the unity of moral personality, intelligent personality and aesthetic personality. Aesthetic ability often affects people's judgment of moral behavior, and in turn has a far-reaching impact on the development of human nature as a whole. In actual teaching, the utilitarian characteristics of exam-oriented education push aesthetic teaching to an ignored position. Teachers are accustomed to instilling teaching instead of students' perception of the aesthetics of works. This teaching method is difficult to touch students' hearts and stimulate their enthusiasm for learning.

#### **4.3 Strategies for Cultivating Personality in the Teaching of Classical Poetry**

Personality is the organic combination of an individual's distinctive character, traits, attitudes, or habits, as well as the organic synthesis of their morality, emotions, knowledge, and behavioral abilities. Classical poetry is the essence of our traditional culture, which has important humanistic educational value. It plays an irreplaceable role in cultivating students' temperament and perfecting their personality. The following are the strategies for integrating personality cultivation into classical poetry teaching:

##### **4.3.1 Adopt the Method of Situational Teaching to Create Situational Chinese Education**

Situational Chinese education is an educational theoretical system developed by our teacher Li Jilin from Nantong. Teachers need to introduce or create specific situations that are relevant, vivid, and emotionally charged according to the content they want to teach, so as to guide students to gain corresponding cognitive feelings or emotional experiences more intuitively and directly. This teaching method helps students get closer to the author and the text, and to the greatest extent possible, understand the content expressed in the text, the feelings expressed, and the views stated, and enable students to achieve effective development and improvement. The key lies in embedding the teaching content in specific situations, so that students feel as if they are in the scene, and effectively integrate with the author and the text, that is, the teaching content, to achieve the effective unity of students, text, author, and teacher.

##### **4.3.2 Combine Reading and Writing to Optimize the Classroom Effect**

For classical poetry, it is particularly important to "read and write together, and promote reading through writing". The space for "writing" classical poetry is very broad. From the perspective of the relationship between reading and writing, it can be divided into understanding writing, appreciative writing, and creative writing; from the perspective of writing content, it can be divided into sentence style, paragraph style, text style, and context style. When teaching, we should set up diversified writing tasks, enrich the form of the class, and optimize the effect of the class.

##### **4.3.3 Use Multiple Evaluation Methods to Guide Students to Give Their Own Feedback**

The evaluation methods of teaching effectiveness usually include: assessment-based teaching evaluation, interview-

based teaching evaluation, and reflective teaching evaluation. Interview-based teaching evaluation can enable teachers and students to communicate face to face and discuss problems. Teachers can find problems in the interview and further understand students' learning situation. Reflective teaching evaluation, on the one hand, teachers reflect on their own teaching process, teaching design, etc.; on the other hand, it also guides students to learn to reflect, reflect on the problems they encounter in the learning of ancient poetry, find their own shortcomings, and which aspects need to be improved, so as to facilitate improvement in future learning.

#### **4.4 Matters Needing Attention (Requirements) in the Teaching of Classical Poetry in Terms of Personality Cultivation**

##### **4.4.1 Pay Attention to Emotional Teaching**

Classical poetry is a style full of artistic inspiration, and its concise and beautiful verses contain a very high value of emotional experience. "Emotion" is not only the soul of ancient poetry but also the root of ancient poetry teaching. If this value of emotional experience can be guided scientifically and effectively, we can sow the seeds of truth, kindness and beauty in the deepest part of students' hearts like spring rain, which will have a positive impact on their lifelong personality development, thus achieving the main teaching purpose of "making people's emotions develop and reach the realm of perfection".

##### **4.4.2 Respect Students' Status as the Subject of Aesthetics**

From the perspective of education, aesthetic education and personality education are both complementary parts of quality education. The development of aesthetic education is conducive to assisting and complementing personality education, and promoting the unity of knowledge, emotion, intention and action in the character of the educated. The process of personality development includes individualization and socialization. The two are interdependent and complement each other. Individualization refers to the personality characteristics that a person shows more and more different from others in the process of growth. In personality education, we need to pay attention to the development of individualization, and the concept of individualization comes from the full affirmation of the subject status of students in teaching.

##### **4.4.3 Effectively Play the Leading Role of Teachers**

In the teaching process, we must organically combine the principles of "taking students as the main body" and "giving full play to the leading role of teachers" in order to enhance students' enthusiasm for learning classical poetry and restore the vitality and charm of the classroom. In this lively classroom, we can maximally protect students' precious individuality and imagination, let them enter the wonderful works with a comfortable and free mood, make their mind become open-minded, their soul get the purification of beauty, and their personality be improved.

#### **About the Author**

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