“Dream of the Red Chamber” Study Guide for Secondary School Classes

Daiyu’s Arrival

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In collaboration with:
Daiyu's Arrival

A message to teachers:

The story “Daiyu’s Arrival” is from the classic Chinese novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, which is known as an “Encyclopedia of Pre-Modern China” (Zhōngguó bāikē quánshū 中国百科全书) because it paints a panoramic portrait of that era, detailing all aspects of society through hundreds of different characters. The book was written by Cao Xueqin and published in the 18th century. It became popular among young people immediately, but was not recognized as the most acclaimed Chinese classic novel until the early 20th century.

Through study of the chapter “Daiyu’s Arrival,” students will gain knowledge of the Chinese literature format known as xiāoshuō (小说), as well as the social and historical context of the novel. They will also learn how to analyze personalities of characters from a text and practice how to create characters in their own writing.

The study guide for “Daiyu’s Arrival” includes three sections that cover the chapter. Teachers should review this study guide to determine which sections they would like to incorporate into their lessons. For example, a Chinese language teacher might focus on the genre of xiāoshuō and incorporate some of the suggested Chinese vocabulary words and concepts into their lessons. An English literature teacher might find this study guide to be a useful supplement to a unit on 18th century literature. Reading “Daiyu’s Arrival” could provide an opportunity to compare and contrast 18th century literature from an international perspective, specifically the role of female characters, family relationships, or narrative style. English literature teachers might also use this text as an example of telling a story from a young adult's perspective, as the two protagonists, Baoyu and Daiyu, are themselves teenagers.

Text:

English:

中文:

Learning objectives for this story:

Version 8/16/16

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Student will be able to:

- Understand the reason "Dream of the Red Chamber" is one of the most important examples of Chinese literature.
- Explain the basic characteristics of Chinese xiăoshuō (小说), and how it differs from the definition of a novel.
- Use reading strategies to identify the different members of the Jia family and their staff and how they are seen from the perspective of Daiyu, a 15-year-old girl who has just arrived at the mansion of the Jia family.
- Read to analyze the personalities of different characters, especially Daiyu, Xifeng, and the Jia sisters.
- Use their own writing to describe a character.
- Recognize the perspective of the narrative.
- Practice describing different people at a family gathering/party from students’ own perspective.
- Use their knowledge of the use of poetry in Chinese xiăoshuō (小说) to understand the dynamics between Baoyu and Daiyu upon their first meeting as an example.

Recommended teaching plan:

First section: Introduce “Dream of the Red Chamber”

The teacher gives an introduction to the importance of "Dream of the Red Chamber" in Chinese society, the historical context of the novel, and the literary format of xiăoshuō and prepares the students with a strategy for reading this chapter.

Reference Materials:

1. Why read the greatest work of Chinese fiction?
   a. One translator of the English version of the novel on "The Best Book You've Never Heard Of":
   b. A reviewer calls the novel a "Book of the Millenium": http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/orientalia/tsots.htm

2. Historical and Literary Context
   b. Background information about the author Cao Xueqin
      i. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cao_Xueqin
c. 18th Century Chinese Society

d. 18th Century Chinese Literature— xiāoshuō

Objectives:
1. Understand the history and cultural background of the era in which the novel was published.
2. Be familiar with the format of Dream of the Red Chamber, including the plot and the characters.
3. Prepare students with a basic knowledge of Chinese xiaoshuo
4. Prepare the students with a specific strategy for reading this chapter, viewing the different members of the Jia family and the physical layout and furnishings of the mansion from the perspective of Daiyu, a 15-year-old girl.

Lesson Plan

1: Introduction of the historical and cultural context of the novel
   ● Discussion on what you know about life of the privileged classes in 18th century China

Divide the students into four groups before class and ask them to do some research on an assigned topic that will help them understand the historical and cultural context of the novel. Examples of topics: “The Privileged Classes of 18th century China”; “The Education System in 18th century China”, “Who is Cao Xueqin and what is the Dream of the Red Chamber”; and “What is xiāoshuō”.

Each group will present their research during class.

After the presentation, the teacher summarizes the presentations and tells the students that in the next section they will read a chapter from a classic Chinese novel about a privileged family of that era. Students may recognize their research topics in the text, and can compare and contrast the novel against their research.
2: Introduction to the novel, *Dream of the Red Chamber*; the author, Cao Xueqin; and the Chinese literature format, *xiāoshuō*.

- 18th century China
  - The Jia family as representative of a privileged family in 18th century China
    1. The typical head of a privileged family in 18th century China was a complex combination of merchant and landlord. They often controlled important national resources and owned or managed large amounts of land. Peasants and small landowners were often impoverished by the system and became dependent on the privileged families, serving as servants and even slaves.
    2. In privileged families, daughters were mainly taught by private tutors while sons usually attended private schools. At that time math and science was rarely included in the curriculum.
    3. The Chinese family was a rigidly paternal system. Since Daiyu is the maternal granddaughter of Grandmother Jia, she technically does not count as part of the family. Without a powerful father, she feels helpless and isolated most of the time.

- Cao Xueqin and *Dream of the Red Chamber*
  - Cao’s insight into life in a privileged Chinese family is inspired by his own personal experience.
  - Novels were not considered a serious form of literature at the time, so there was no expectation that his story would be published. However, as it gained popularity among the people, the manuscript of each chapter was copied and passed from reader to reader in Beijing. Cao died in 1763, but the book was not officially published until 1807. At that time only the first 80 chapters had been preserved. Another author, Gao E wrote the last 40 chapters based on clues he found in the first 80 chapters.

- Characteristics of *xiāoshuō*
  - Usually written in the common-use language instead of classical Chinese
  - Poetry is used to further the narrative
    - “Poetry has been the premier mode of composition for millennia and its ability to reveal the innermost thoughts and feelings of its creator is enshrined in the familiar slogan

- The evolution of xiāoshuō is associated with urbanization and growth of the urban population in China.

Words and concepts for Chinese language classes:

1. Background information:
   孔子 (Kǒngzǐ): Confucius
   曹雪芹 (Cáo Xuèqín): Cao Xueqin
   红楼梦 (Hóng lóu mèng): The Dream of the Red Chamber
   小说 (xiāoshuō): novel

2. 18th century Chinese society:
   封建社会 (fēngjiàn shèhuì): feudal society
   朝代 (cháodài): dynasty
   一夫多妻 (yī fū duō qī): polygamy
   皇帝 (huángdì): emperor
   大臣 (dàchén): minister
   大人 (dàrén): an honorific used when addressing someone of an older generation or an official of higher status

Second section: Analyze the story and characters
The teacher will guide students in reading the first part of the story about Daiyu’s arrival at the Jia family household, from the beginning of the story until the start of the dinner reception. Students will learn how to analyze the characters and identify the perspective of the narrative.

Materials:
- Passages from the Text:
  - “On the day of her arrival in the capital, ... attended across the courtyard as far as the covered way by the rest of the company.” Cao, Xueqin. The Dream of the Red Chamber. Trans. David Hawkes. Vol. 1. New York: Penguin, 1982. Print. P87-93

- **1987 CCTV Portrayal of Daiyu’s Arrival:**
  - The 24-minute scene (with English subtitles is from 21:00 to the end: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thABozjBrgb&index=2&list=PLCPRoDshkZyPn9zsLsUb_VRcKjyKGLV0qu](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thABozjBrgb&index=2&list=PLCPRoDshkZyPn9zsLsUb_VRcKjyKGLV0qu)

- **List of Characters:**
  - Characters in the opera: [http://redchamber.dash.umn.edu/Omeka/exhibits/show/characters](http://redchamber.dash.umn.edu/Omeka/exhibits/show/characters)

**Objectives:**
1. Understand the sequence of people Daiyu visits and note the absence of any older male family members in this sequence.
2. Be able to analyze the personalities of different characters, especially Daiyu, Xifeng, and the Jia Sisters. The publication of “Dream of the Red Chamber” marked the first time a female character was given a prominent role in a story.
3. Be able to analyze the use of poems as a literary device.

**Lesson Plan**

1. **The relationships inside a wealthy family in 18th century China**
   - Help students to visualize the map of the mansion of the Jia family based on the route Daiyu follows when she first arrives at the mansion of her mother’s family.
   - Discuss the order in which Daiyu visits people at the mansion. Who welcomes her when she first arrives? How do they greet each other?
   - Discuss the absence of older male relatives when Daiyu arrives.

2. **Discuss the personalities of the main characters:**
   - Ask students to think about what information from the novel helps them to understand the main characters. Are they focused on descriptions of the individuals, the conversations, their behaviors, or all of these?
   - Introduce the use of poems in *xiaoshuo*, using Xifeng as an example.
   - Divide students into four groups and discuss the personalities of Xifeng and Daiyu. Note that the publication of “Dream of the Red Chamber” marked the first time a female character was given a central place in a
Chinese novel. In literature of that era, female characters were either an abandoned lover, or a devoted mother, but in Dream of the Red Chamber, women are described with more complexity.

3. Discuss the different perspectives of the family members and Daiyu’s position as an outsider
   • Pay attention to the difference in the way Daiyu speaks to the family compared to the way they speak to her. Daiyu is carefully observing the Jia family in order to avoid saying anything inappropriate. The Jia family is observing her as well. Daiyu is beautiful, fragile and strange to them. This exchange of perspectives demonstrates that although Daiyu seems to be so warmly welcomed by the entire family, she is not thought as one of them.

Words and concepts for Chinese language classes:

1. Traditional Chinese family kinship:
   父母 (fùmǔ): Parent(s)
   姑娘 (gūniáng): Miss
   兄弟姐妹 (xiōngdì jiěmèi): Brothers and sisters, siblings
   老祖宗 (lǎozǔzōng): Honorific, grandparent(s)
   外孙女 (wàisūn nǚ): daughter's daughter
   舅母 (jiùmǔ): Wife of mother's brother
   姐姐 (jiējiě): Older sister
   妹妹 (mèimèi): Younger sister
   儿女 (ér nǚ): Sons and Daughters, offspring
   舅舅 (jiūjiū): Mother’s brother
   外甥 (wàishēng): Sister's daughter; niece
   嫂子 (sǎozi): Older brother’s wife

2. Traditional Chinese greetings:
   请安 (qǐngān): Give one's regards
   告辞 (gàocí): Farewell

3. Other words about Chinese culture:
教养 (jiàoyǎng): v. Bring up and educate, n. Education; upbringing
去世 (qùshì): to pass away
属 (shǔ) …(yang): Chinese zodiac, born in the year of the … (sheep)

Third section: Analyze relationships between characters and interpret poems

Reference Materials:
• Passages from the Text:
• 1987 CCTV Portrayal of Daiyu and Baoyu’s first meeting: This scene is shown from the beginning of the episode to 7:20: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4eAgaAdjw&index=3&list=PLCPRoDsHkZyPn9zsLsU

Objectives:
1. Be able to use the strategy that was taught in Lesson 2 to discuss Daiyu’s behavior during the dinner reception and Baoyu’s personality.
2. Be able to use the knowledge of poems in Chinese xiaoshuo to understand the inferences of the poems and discuss the dynamics between Baoyu and Daiyu upon their first meeting, particularly the feeling of familiarity between them, which references the supernatural theme that runs through “Dream of the Red Chamber.”
3. Learn and practice how to write about different people in a family gathering/party from a personal perspective.

Lesson Plan

1. Compare and contrast the gaze exchanged between Daiyu and Baoyu vs. the one between Daiyu and the Jia Family
   • How would you interpret the familiar feeling between Baoyu and Daiyu? (Hint: During the dinner reception Daiyu is uneasy, constantly observing other people’s manners and following their lead. However, when she meets Baoyu, she feels comfortable, as if she already knows him.)
   • How would you interpret Baoyu’s reaction when he learns that Daiyu was
not born with a jade in her mouth, as he was? (Hint: Baoyu reacts strongly because he thinks that because he and Daiyu share a familiar feeling, they should also share this special identity.)

2. Understanding the poems in the story
   - Based on the poems included in this reading, what are Baoyu’s and Daiyu’s first impressions of one another?
   - How does the author use a combination of poems and narrative to introduce the dynamic between these two characters?

3. Write your own story
Write something about your experience meeting a group of people for the first time. What do you observe about the group? What do you think the group notices about you?

Words and concepts for language classes:

- 嘱咐 (zhǔfù): Tell, entrust;
- 混世魔王 (hùnshì mówáng): Devil (nickname);
- 甜言蜜语 (tiányánmìyǔ): His words are honey-sweet (Used to describe someone);
- 念书 (niànshū): Read, learn, go to school;
- 面善 (miànshàn): Look familiar;
- 旧相识 (jiù xiāngshì): Old acquaintance, someone you knew before;
- 玉 (yù): Jade;
- 远别重逢 (yuǎnbíé chóngféng): A reunion of old friends;
- 和睦 (hé mù): Harmony;
- 多心 (duōxīn): Oversensitive