

The Ballad of Mulan (Ode of Mulan)

This poem was composed in the fifth or sixth century CE (BC). At the time, China was divided between north and south. From 386-534 CD, the rulers of the north were from Turkic ethnic groups. In this region, rulers were given the name **Son of Heaven** – “**Khan**.”

T*siek tsiek* and again *tsiek tsiek*,
Mulan weaves, facing the door.
You don't hear the shuttle's sound,
You only hear Daughter's sighs.

They ask Daughter who's in her heart,
They ask Daughter who's on her mind.
“No one is on Daughter's heart,
No one is on Daughter's mind.

Last night I saw the draft posters.
The Khan is calling many troops.
The army list is in twelve scrolls,
On every scroll there's Father's name.

Father has no grown-up son,
Mulan has no elder brother.
I want to buy a saddle and horse,
And serve in the army in Father's place.”

In the East Market she buys a spirited horse,
In the West Market she buys a saddle,
In the South Market she buys a bridle,
In the North Market she buys a long whip.

At dawn she takes leave of Father and Mother,
In the evening she camps on the Yellow River's bank.
She doesn't hear the sound of Father and Mother calling,
She only hears the Yellow River's flowing water cry *tsien tsien*.

At dawn she takes leave of the Yellow River.
In the evening she arrives at Black Mountain.
She doesn't hear the sound of Father and Mother calling,
She only hears Mount Yen's nomad horses cry *tsiu tsiu*.

She goes ten thousand miles on the business of war,
She crosses passes and mountains like flying.
Northern gusts carry the rattle of army pots,
Chilly light shines on iron armor.



http://www.putclub.com/uploads/090929/7434_110005_1.jpg



<https://chinesemartialstudies.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/mulan-3.jpg>

Generals die in a hundred battles,
Stout soldiers return after ten years.
On her return she sees the Son of Heaven,
The Son of Heaven sits in the Splendid Hall.

He gives out promotions in twelve ranks
And prizes of a hundred thousand and more.
The Khan asks her what she desires.
“Mulan has no use for a minister’s post.

I wish to ride a swift mount
To take me back to my home.”
When Father and Mother hear Daughter is coming
They go outside the wall to meet her,
leaning on each other.

When Elder Sister hears Younger Sister is coming
She fixes her rouge [make-up], facing the door.
When Little Brother hears Elder Sister is coming
He whets [sharpens] the knife, quick quick, for pig and sheep.

“I open the door to my east chamber.
I sit on my couch in the west room.
I take off my wartime gown
And put on my old-time clothes.”

Facing the window she fixes her cloudlike hair,
Hanging up a mirror she dabs on yellow flower powder.
She goes out the door and sees her war comrades.
Her comrades are all amazed and perplexed.

Traveling together for twelve years
They didn’t know Mulan was a girl.

“The he-hare’s feet go hop and skip,
The she-hare’s eyes are muddled and fuddled.
Two hares running side by side close to the ground,
How can they tell if I am he or she?”



<http://history.cultural-china.com/en/48H12434H14969.html>



Statue: Mulan welcomed home (Xinxiang, China)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hua_Mulan#/media/File:Mulan_statue_in_Xinxiang.jpg

Name: _____ Hour: _____

The Ballad of Mulan (Ode of Mulan)

The Ballad of Mulan is a legend. The following characteristics describe a legend:

- A legend is a retelling of a story passed down and retold over many years.
- Legends are usually told without a lot of details so the storytellers can remember.
- There may be different versions of the legend.
- The legend has an important message.



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1. What is Mulan doing when the ballad starts?
2. How did Mulan learn that her father would be sent to war?
3. Mulan went to prevent her father from having to go. According to the ballad, what could have caused Mulan to stay home? (If you're not sure, re-read the first four stanzas.)
- 4-7. Mulan bought four things before she left. What were they
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8. The words *tsiek tsiek*, *tsien tsien* and *tsiu tsiu* are used in the ballad. They are in italics because they are not exactly typical words – even in Chinese. What do these words stand for? (Study the context in which each is used! It's not really hard to figure out.)
9. How far does Mulan travel for the war?
10. Who is the "Son of Heaven" she sees when she returns? (If you're not sure, check the information at the top of the page **before** the ballad.)
11. What clue does the writer give you that Mulan's parents are old when she returns?
- 12-13. In the ballad, Mulan has a siblings. What are their ages (compared to her) and genders?
14. What does it mean that her brother sharpens the knife for the animals? (What does that have to do with her return?)
15. How many years has she traveled with the army as a man?

#16-21 on back

16-21. This version of The Ballad of Mulan was written down after the legend had already been retold – just spoken – for many years. **Make believe** you lived in those years **BEFORE** the legend was written down.

Decide **how you could retell it** in a **simpler** form than it is written – so it will be **easy** for another person **to RE-tell**. What do you **have to include** to make sure the message of the legend was not lost?

→ SO, keep it **simple** but make sure the **message is still clear!** ←

• **BEGINNING:** _____

• **MIDDLE:** _____

• **END:** _____

▶ **MESSAGE of the legend:** _____
