

**Untitled (G370) - The secret of happiness, Gratitude**

Cy Twombly - American

1970

Crayon and Oil

Edwin Parker "Cy" Twombly, Jr. was an American painter of large-scale, freely scribbled, graphic and graffiti-like works on solid fields of mostly gray, tan, or off-white colors. Although he was influential and appealed to other artists his work was discomfiting to critics and difficult for the broad public. The Director of one art gallery said, "sometimes people need a little bit of help in recognizing a great work of art that might be unfamiliar." He became fascinated with tribal art and, using the painterly language of the early 1950's to invoke primitivism. Twombly soon developed a technique of gestural drawing that was characterized by thin white lines on a dark canvas that appear to be scratched onto the surface. He also made sculptures which he assembled from discarded objects. His series of "Blackboard Paintings" between 1967 and 1971 featured terse, colorless scrawls reminiscent of chalk on a blackboard but forming no actual words. He made theses using an unusual technique: he sat on the back of a friend, who shuttled back and forth along the length of the canvas, thus allowing the artist his fluid, continuous lines.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What do you see? What does it look like? What does it say?
2. Does it look to you like writing? Do you remember practicing handwriting using loops and lines?
3. If you knew that this was an important page from The Book of Fortune which gives you the secret of happiness, what words do you think it says? Would you choose to read a book which predicts your future?

**KEY IDEA:** Ba tells the story about the paper of happiness. Minli meets the people of the Village of Moon Rain and learns how they have always been happy. She realizes that she should be content with what she has. Ma, also understands, that gratitude is all you need to be happy.

**QUOTE:** The Story of the Paper of Happiness (p. 81 - 87) After the Magistrate's emissary has lost the paper, he tries to remember what it said. (p85) "The boy flushed and his head touched the floor as he bowed again. "Great Magistrate, I am your poor servant, he said. "I was close enough to see the line on the page...however, I cannot read. I do not know what the line said." Magistrate Tiger scowled with irritation and the emissary and the soldier shivered. "I...I did notice something," the soldier said. "What?" the magistrate demanded. There was only one character on the page," the soldier said. The line was one word written over and over again, many times." "One word?" the magistrate snarled and his anger seemed to burn deep in his eyes. "One word is the secret to happiness? It was a trick!...I, personally will get the secret of happiness and punish that family of lowly dogs."

**QUOTE:** When Minli finally reaches the Old Man of the Moon, she sees the page in the open book in his lap which she realizes is the king's borrowed line with it's holes and folds. She has seen statues that look like the goldfish man, the buffalo boy, the king, and Da-A-Fu watching her. (p.250) "And the words had changed again. There was a single line of words running down the entire page. As she looked, Minli realized for the first time, she could read the words- or really the word. For the line was only made of one word, written over and over again. And that word was *Thankfulness*."

QUOTE: Ma's story has the message that she should have been thankful. (p.252-4) The Story That Ma Told. "The woman was so caught up in her dissatisfaction, she did not realize that she was planting seeds of discontent in her daughter as well. Until then, her daughter had been pleased with their life, but now she began to feel troubled." After Minli leaves Ma realizes "How lucky she had been! She was at last able to see that her daughter's laughter and love could not be improved by having the finest clothes or jewels, that joy had been in her home like a gift waiting to be opened."

See Also: (332) "Oddfellows Objects" - values of wisdom, truth, love, cooperation, faith, love

### **Pictorial Hanging Illustrating the Feast of Peaches (G201)**

<https://collections.artsmia.org/index.php?page=detail&id=16871>

Artist Unknown

Late 18th century, China

Silk tapestry (kesi), 42.8.342

**Picture Hanging** (G217) is a newly displayed work for which similar connections can be made.

This tapestry illustrates a classic scene from Daoist mythology, the birthday party given for Xi Wangmu, Queen Mother of the West. Legend held that certain peach trees produced a fruit that conferred immortality when eaten. The trees blossomed every three thousand years. Once, when these miraculous peaches were ripening, a party was held to honor Xi Wangmu's birthday. In the tapestry, the queen mother descends from the clouds on a phoenix in the upper left, while the three deities of longevity, official office, and happiness await her arrival on the central terrace. The eight Daoist immortals are shown in the lower register making their way to the festivities. During the Han dynasty around second century BCE, Xi Wangmu was the major deity of a western paradise on the magic Mount Kunlun, where fairies and hybrid creatures dwelt, and where hares prepared the elixir of immortality. Her image was later incorporated into the religious system of Daoism where it continued to hold a powerful and active presence. A hanging such as this, full of Daoist images of longevity, would have been used to decorate a space for special occasions such as birthdays.

CONNECTION: Author Grace Linn shared that her fantasy is a sort of compilation of traditional Chinese folktales. Here we have a scene from Daoist mythology. It was made more than 200 hundred years ago, but the story is much older.

#### QUESTIONS:

- Can you identify any WMMM story elements in this silk tapestry?
- What do you think is this story is about?
- What role did peaches play in WMM? (pg. 120-125. Her generosity toward the “beggar” allows her to meet the king.)

#### CONNECTIONS:

This each tree blossoms only once every 3,000 years. In our story, the Man of the Moon answers question only once every 99 years.

- Why do you suppose authors put such elements in stories?  
Heightened drama, rarity makes something precious.

The God of Longevity (featured) was part of Linn’s inspiration for the Old Man of the Moon.

Queen Mother of the West is also an element of our **Money Tree**, G210

<http://new.artsmia.org/teaching-the-arts/money-tree/taoism-and-hsi-wang-mu/>

## **The Zodiac Figures (G207) - Making your own luck, Luck/Fortune**

China

7th - 10th Century

Ceramic and pigment

Today China uses the Gregorian calendar, or Western calendar, as does most of the world. However, the traditional Chinese calendar for festivals and holidays is still followed. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, in which years are numbered in a limitless sequence, this ancient calendar repeats in a sixty-year cycle. Each year is assigned a name based on two components, a Heavenly Stem and an Earthly Branch. With ten Heavenly Stems and twelve Earthly Branches cycling in a given order, there are sixty possible names for years.

The Earthly Branches are represented by twelve animals, each assigned to a particular hour, day, month, and year. Within the calendar, the animals follow a specific order: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. Many legends describe how that order was established. According to one, the Buddha invited all the animals to compete in a race, but only twelve participated. The Buddha awarded each of them a place on the calendar, corresponding to the order in which they finished the race.

From the Chinese calendar, Chinese astrology developed. It was a way of foretelling the future using the twelve-year cycle of animals, known as the Chinese zodiac. A person's year of birth was believed to link him or her to the animal in charge of that year. The person was likely to share the animal's characteristics and to be influenced in physical appearance, personality, success, and happiness.

### QUESTIONS:

1. What do you notice? What is it?
2. What's going on in these sculpture? Can you tell where the dragon is?
3. Have you ever heard of the Chinese New Year?
4. What year were you born? What animal represents that year? (I have a chart)
5. What are the attributes of a person born in that year? Are you like that?
6. Have you heard of a horoscope? (Share some from the day.)
7. Do you think you have to be the way you are predicted to be based on your year of birth or on what day it is? Do you have control over your own destiny?

**KEY IDEA:** Minli lived in a place and time where people believed that The Book of Fortune predicted their lives. She learns from her actions, from stories she hears, and from the outcome of her search that she can be the agent of change. There are many examples of the choices she makes which change the dragon's life, her family's life, and even the whole Fruitless Mountain.

**QUOTE:** Minli spends half of her money to buy a goldfish in order to change her family's fortune. Ma thinks it's a waste of time. (p. 24) "Of course he was," Ba replied. "The Old Man of the Moon knows everything and can answer any question you ask." "I should ask him to bring fortune to our house!" Minli said. "He would know, I'll ask him. Where do I find him?" "They say he lives on top of Never-Ending-Mountain," Ba said. "But no one I have ever spoken to know where that is." "Maybe we can find out," Minli said. "Oh, Minli! Ma said impatiently. Bringing fortune to our house! Making Fruitless Mountain bloom! You're always wishing to do impossible things! Stop believing stories and stop wasting your time."

QUOTE: At every turn, she chooses to do the impossible despite being told she was foolish. She is amazed that the Book of Fortune can be changed when the king tells her more of the story of the magistrate in (p. 136-7) *The Unknown Part of The Story of the Old Man of The Moon*. When the King gives her the page which was torn out he tells her that it says, "You only lose what you cling to."

KEY IDEA: Minli discovers that she should be grateful for what she has. Ma also learns the same lesson which she expresses in the story - (p.252-4) Ma's Story. They see that gold and wealth aren't as important as love.

QUOTE: (p. 258-9) - "...the dragon asked, "What about you? Did the Old Man tell you how to change your fortune?" Mini was silent. Dragon turned to look at her. "What happened?" he asked. "I didn't ask," Minli said. "I was only allowed one question." "What?" the dragon said. "You need to know! You have come all this way. We will fly back and you can ask him! ... "The Old Man of the Moon will not see me again. He won't answer any question for another ninety-nine years." ... "It's all right. When it was time for me to choose, I suddenly saw I didn't have to ask it." ...suddenly memories rushed through her. She heard the buffalo boy's laughter as he refused her money, saw the king's generous smile as he willingly parted with his family's treasure, and remembered Da-A-Fu's last words to her. "Why would we want to change our fortune?"... but now, finally, Minli understood all of it. Fortune was not a house full of gold and jade, but something much more. Something she already had and did not need to change.

See also:

- (p. 62 - 67) The Goldfish Man's Story - the Book of Fortune is changed
- (201) - "The Money Tree" - to show what is considered valuable
- (204) - "T'ang Rabbit" to show her bowl and discuss the rabbit as a symbol of luck and longevity

**K'uei-hsing (God of Literature)** (G201) – Import of stories, carp morphing to dragon  
<https://collections.artsmia.org/index.php?page=detail&id=5798>

Artist Unknown

6th century, China

Bronze with traces of gilt, 98.67.5

Originating as a Taoist deity associated with the constellation Ursa Major, K'uei-hsing (also called Wen Ch'ang and Wen-ti) is worshipped in the third and eighth months as the God of Literature and patron saint of scholars. The surly-looking divinity is represented holding a brush in his right hand while standing on the head of a large fish becoming a dragon. The transformation of a carp into a dragon was a synonym for the literary success of an industrious student. This image holds a cap won by the chief graduate in his left hand while balancing a brushwasher on the heel of his upturned foot. Within Confucian society, scholarship could be the main determinant of one's rank and social status. The Chinese evolved a variety of so-called "household gods" to help them attain wealth, health, long life, and martial prowess. Statues representing the god of literature would have been owned by all manner of literary persons: students, calligraphers, government officials, and writers.

#### QUESTIONS:

- What is happening in the sculpture?
- If today we were to develop a god of literature, what might his/her sculpture include?
- This artwork depicts the goldfish becoming a dragon. Do you recall this part of the book? (Story of the Dragon Gate, pg. 93-92) How is a goldfish becoming a dragon in WMMM like a student becoming a scholar?

#### CONNECTION:

Celebrating literature is esp. important in relation to this book, as stories played such a key role: Faith in future, cautionary tales (i.e. greed, anger), way to pass the time, inspirational, relationship rebuilding between Ba and Ma. Stories are the red threads that connect us (idea shared by Grace Linn)

QUOTE: "What kept Minli from becoming dull and brown like the rest of her village were the stories her father told her every night at dinner. She glowed with such wonder and excited that even Ma would smile, though she would shake her head at the same time. Ba seemed to drop his great and work weariness – his black eyes sparkled like raindrops in the sun when he began a story." Pg. 3

In same gallery, you'll find:

**Numinous Treasure Emissaries** (dragon and tiger on silk)

<https://collections.artsmia.org/index.php?page=detail&id=91031>

Tiger and dragon as powerful, balancing forces, Numinous Treasure are books

**Money Tree**

<https://collections.artsmia.org/index.php?page=detail&id=46241>

## **Ahab** (G100) Dragon + Doing the Impossible

<https://collections.artsmia.org/index.php?page=detail&id=3215>

Alexander Calder

1953, United States,

Painted Metal, 83.77

From childhood Alexander Calder enjoyed inventing mechanical toys and gadgets. In Paris during the 1920s and 1930s he encountered a new type of sculpture, pioneered by Picasso and the Russian Constructivists: assemblages of wood, metal, plastic, and cardboard, with space incorporated as part of the design. Calder began building similar abstract pieces in 1930 but gave them a new dimension--motion. Fellow artist Marcel Duchamp christened the moving sculptures "mobiles." One of Calder's largest mobiles, Ahab is composed of three arcs made of steel rods and irregularly shaped disks that suggest natural forms. The title refers to the maniacal sea captain who pursued the white whale in Herman Melville's novel Moby Dick (1851).

### QUESTIONS:

- What's going on this sculpture?
- If I said it reminded me of the dragon, do you see that? Why/why not?
- Have you made a mobile?
- What knowledge or tools do you think it takes to construct this?
- As an artist, would you like to create something this large?

CONNECTIONS: Minli was someone who dreamed big, was undaunted by the impossibility of her quest. Artist Alexander Calder was the same, in that he did not limit his creations to what was considered acceptable art. He created his own form of sculpture – mobiles.

QUOTE: "Oh Minli!" Ma said impatiently. "Bringing fortune to our house! Making Fruitless Mountain Bloom! You're always wishing to do impossible things! Stop believing stories and stop wasting your time." Pg. 24-25

Minli was influenced by her father's stories (and Ma worries, by her ungrateful attitude). Calder, too, was influenced by his home life. Called Sandy, he was born in 1898 into a very artistic family; his father and grandfather were sculptors, and his mother was a painter. As a child, he had a workshop and used tools to construct toys and gadgets with bits of wire, cloth, and string. "Mother and Father were all for my efforts to build things myself. They approved of the homemade," he explained. Calder loved to invent and play. He continued to do both throughout his life.



<http://www.calder.org>

<https://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/calder/realsp/roomenter-foyer.htm>

Show examples in Walker Sculpture Garden of stabiles?

**The Cathedral** (Off View Spring 2016) Family, Friends/Loyalty/Interconnectedness/Generosity  
Auguste Rodin  
France  
After 1908

He created sculptures of fragmented human body. He had the ability to employ the power of gesture to convey deep emotions and used his skill to express these gestures in sculpture. Rodin had a lifelong fascination with cathedrals. Both are right hands.

QUESTIONS:

4. What do you notice? What is it?
5. What's going on in this sculpture? What story does it tell? How is it like a conversation?
6. What does it make you feel? What gestures do we make with our hands?
7. What does it remind you of?
8. How does it show love and support?

KEY IDEA: Minli took her family for granted until she left and met Buffalo Boy and the people in Moon Rain Village. She finally realized she had security and love. Later, she and Ma both learned that they didn't need to be rich when they had love.

QUOTE: (p. 252 – 254) Ma's Story

QUOTE:(p.158-9) "But that night Minli could not fall asleep. Even with the dragon snoring behind her, the fire crackling, and her blanket around her shoulders, her eyes did not close. Like the stone dust that the wind blew, thoughts kept circling in her head. She kept thinking about Ma and Ba and the orphan buffalo boy. With pangs of guilt, she thought about how Ma and Ba pushed her to go home early from the field, how her rice bowl was always the first filled, how every night when she went to sleep in her warm bed she knew that they were there, and how worried they must have been that now she was not. The buffalo boy didn't have that. Instead he had a dirt floor, a pile of grass for his bed, a muddy buffalo, and a secretive friend. Yet he turned away her copper coin and laughed in the sun. Minli couldn't quite understand it and, somehow, felt ashamed."

KEY IDEA: Minli finds many friends during her journey. The Buffalo Boy shows her how to find the City of Bright Moonlight so she can ask the king about the borrowed line. He shows by example how a friend is someone you trust without question.

QUOTE: (p. 113 -14) "I talked to my friend. She said that the king might be at the Market of Green Abundance tomorrow morning, but you are going to have to find him yourself." "Really?" Minli said. "How does she know?" The boy shrugged. "You didn't ask?" Minli asked. "Don't you think it's mysterious that you only see her once in a while? And you never visit her, she only visits you? And that she knows things like where the king might be tomorrow? Who is she, really?" "She's my friend," the boy said simply. "That's who she is and that's enough for me." As Minli looked at the buffalo boy, aglow with happiness against his poor surroundings, she saw it was enough for him. More than enough, as the smile that kept curling up on his face told her. Minli's questions fell from her as she realized there was nothing else to say.

See also:

- Pages 259, 267 for quotes
- (240)"Family Portrait" - David Sengel - family conflict



**Beginning Form Meets Spiral** (Off View Spring 2016) - Poverty/Wealth, Gratitude, Friends, Dragons

Hoshino Satoru - Japan

2006

Black clay impregnated with manganese and iron

2006.24

After graduating from college, Hoshino Satoru abandoned his chosen field of economics to pursue his passions for ceramics. He joined So-deisha, a society of artists devoted to exploring non-traditional ceramics. In 1973 he and his wife -- also a ceramist-- founded an independent studio. After a landslide destroyed their studio in 1986, Hoshino discarded his precise, carefully controlled approach in favor of a much more visceral process in which he leaves deep impressions of his fingers and thumbs in clay as evidence of his interaction and conflict with nature. For this work, he was inspired by large clay jars from Japan's prehistoric past. Building the jar with a thick spiral of clay, he continued the pattern on the surrounding walls to suggest nature's energy as it fluctuates between chaos and order.

**QUESTIONS:**

9. What strikes you about this piece?
10. What feeling do you get from it?
11. What do you think it's made of? Does that affect how you feel about it?
12. Think about the places in the book? Does this remind you of any of them?
13. Would you like living in a place that looks like this? How does Minli feel about living in by Fruitless Mountain? What does she do about her feeling?

**KEY IDEA:** The book opens with a description of the bleak landscape of Fruitless Mountain and the drudgery of daily life amidst poverty for Minli and her family. Discontent with her life leads her on her quest to find fortune for her family and, eventually, leads her to understand that she should have been content and grateful all along.

**QUOTE:** (p. 1 - 2) "Far away from here, following the Jade River, there was once a black mountain that cut into the sky like a jagged piece of rough metal. The villagers called it Fruitless Mountain because nothing grew on it and birds and animals did not rest there. Crowded in the corner of where Fruitless Mountain and the Jade River met was a village that was a shade of faded brown. This was because the land around the village was hard and poor. To coax rice out of the stubborn land, the fields had to be flooded with water. The villagers had to tramp in the mud, bending and stooping and planting day after day. Working in the mud so much made it spread everywhere and the hot sun dried it onto their clothes and hair and homes. Over time, everything in the village had become the dull color of dried mud. One of the houses in this village was so small that its wood boards, held together by the roof, made one think of a bunch of matches tied with a piece of twine."

**QUESTION:** What would you miss most if you lived by Fruitless Mountain?

See also: (215) "The Fusang Tree" - M'ing Chi object which tells story of a drought and the origin of why we have only one sun

**QUOTE:** (p.4-7) The Story of Fruitless Mountain - In anger Jade Dragon stopped the rain after she overheard the villages complaining about it. Her children: Pearl, Yellow, Long, and Black met to figure out how to help the people who would die without water. They sacrificed themselves by turning themselves into the 4 great rivers of China. Broken-hearted, Jade Dragon fell from the sky to become the Jade River and her broken heart became Fruitless Mountain. Her sad spirit will stay in the river until she's re-united with at least one of her children.

KEY IDEA: No one can bring water so the mountain could bloom and the villagers could thrive because the spirits of the children were released from the rivers and Jade Dragon can't find them. Over a hundred years ago a man tried to reunite them by turning stones from the mountain into inking stones. Later (p. 269) Minli realizes that her friend the dragon was created with that ink and is the cause of the mountain beginning to bloom.

QUOTE: (p.268-9) "The entire village had flowed into the street, talking and shouting like a flock of birds discovering a feast. "What is happening?" "It's Fruitless Mountain!" the neighbor said. "Fruitless Mountain has turned green..." "It's true, it's true!" another neighbor chimed in. "Fruitless Mountain is no longer fruitless! And the Jade River is clear and fresh too!" Minli, Ma, and Ba looked at the mountain. It was true. Fruitless Mountain was no longer a black shadow above them. As the day dawned, the mountain had transformed. A green lushness seemed to bloom from the rock -- a jewel-colored splendor softened the sharp edges that had painfully sliced the sky. The sky itself seemed to be embracing the mountain. The wind softly caressed the new-born greenery with a nurturing breeze and skimmed the Jade River, the water now as clear as tears of joy. "

See also: (351) "Field of Flowers in Bloom near Caen" - Metzinger - this shows fields of blooming flowers which capture the spirit.

QUOTE: The Goldfish man returns years later to see dragons frolicking, rich homes, lively children and a festival of kites. (p.273) "But then he remembered hearing a story about how a family that live by the Jade River had given the King of the City of Bright Moonlight the incredible gift of a Dragon Pearl, refusing any payment. In **gratitude** the king presented the entire village with gifts of seeds and farming equipment that brought more prosperity than any reward of gold and jade."