

Interpreting Tang Dynasty Poetry: "At Heron Lodge"

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At Heron Lodge

By Wang Zhihuan

The sun goes down behind the mountains;
The Yellow River flows seaward.
You can enjoy a grander sight
By climbing to a greater height.

"At Heron Lodge" in Chinese

登鶴雀樓
王之渙

白日依山盡，黃河入海流。
欲窮千里目，更上一層樓。

About Wang Zhihuan (王之渙)

Wang Zhihuan (688 - 742 A.D.), also known as Wang Jiling, was a famous poet at the peak of the Tang Dynasty. He was most famous for his poems describing border scenery.

About the Poem

The Heron Lodge is located in southwestern Yongji County, Shanxi Province. The Heron Lodge is three stories high. Many poets from the Tang Dynasty came here to enjoy the view and write poems here. This poem is one of the most immortally beloved ones written there.

The Author's Interpretation

In just ten simple Chinese characters, Wang Zhihuan portrayed a powerful painting with both still and moving themes and a magnificent view. In just ten simple Chinese characters, he brought the readers to the scenery without actually being there and made the readers open up their hearts to the grand, magnificent view. Wang Zhihuan used ten very ordinary characters, but he expounded a philosophical law that everyone can relate to: "You can enjoy a grander sight
By climbing to a greater height."

This may be a simple fact of life, but he is able to draw the extraordinary out of the ordinary and make it very refreshing to the readers.

In our daily lives, we usually observe the external world from the "height" of our character. It is our own "height" of character that defines or limits our emotions, lives and our comprehension of the world. However, few people realize this or make a conscious effort to elevate their "height." We are accustomed to anxiously looking for beautiful views that satisfy our expectations, but we rarely think of comparing our height of character with that of other people or think of upgrading our height of character. We all have many opportunities to upgrade our vantage points to have a better sight of the world or move closer to the truth. When a kindhearted person approaches you to tell you the truth about something, be sure not to lose the opportunity to learn the truth and to climb to a greater height!

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