



Overview

“Chang-O and the Moon” is a traditional Chinese tale that explains the phenomenon of the “goddess in the moon”. This dramatic tale has two storylines, with the first story setting the scene for the main story. The tale is accompanied by a note from the author describing its link to the Chinese Moon Festival.

“Chang-O and the Moon” requires students to “confidently use a range of processing and comprehension strategies to make meaning from and think critically about” text (from *The Literacy Learning Progressions*, page 14).

A PDF of this traditional tale and an audio version as an MP3 file are available at www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz

Related texts

Myths or traditional tales about aspects of the physical world, for example, about the moon: “Night is a Blanket” in *Night is a Blanket* (Ready to Read, Gold); about the stars: *Matariki Breakfast* (Ready to Read, shared) and *Matariki* (Ready to Read, Gold); about the sun: *Mauī and the Sun* (Ready to Read, Purple)

Non-fiction texts about aspects of Chinese culture and/or other cultural festivals: *Chinese New Year*, *Diwali*, *Matariki Breakfast* (Ready to Read, shared); *White Sunday in Sāmoa* (Ready to Read, Turquoise); *Matariki* (Ready to Read, Gold)

Other Chinese tales: *Two Tiger Tales* (Ready to Read, Purple)

Text characteristics

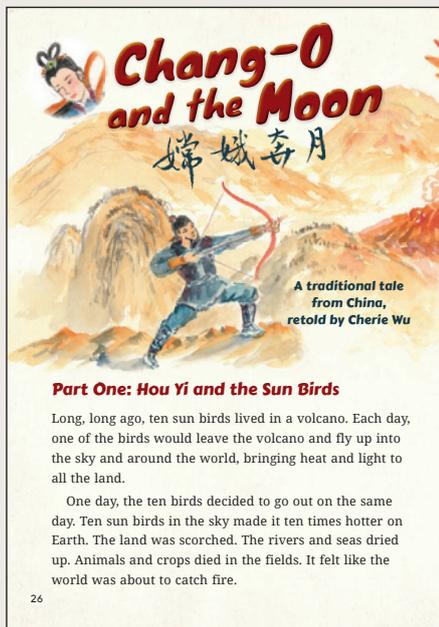
“Chang-O and the Moon” includes the following features that help develop the reading behaviours required at Gold.

A mix of explicit and implicit content that requires students to make connections between ideas in the story and their prior knowledge to make predictions and inferences

A mix of features of traditional tales (heroes, villains, kings and queens, tasks and challenges, magical events, spells or warnings, a faraway setting) and myths (explaining why the world is as it is and often including supernatural beings)

Contexts and ideas that may be unfamiliar, supported by an explanatory note from the author

Ideas and information organised in paragraphs



When Hou Yi came home and saw the empty bottle, he knew his wife had gone forever. He was full of grief and cried out his wife's name again and again. The Queen of Heaven heard Hou Yi's cry and took pity on him. She decided that she would let Hou Yi see Chang-O.

That night, the moon was big and bright. Hou Yi looked up and was amazed to see a shape in the moon that looked just like his wife! Then he realised that Chang-O had become a goddess of the moon.

Now, once a year, Chang-O returns. Look up – if it's a clear night, you will be able to see her.



Several characters and events and two linked storylines

Shifts in time, indicated by the division of the story into four parts with subheadings and a change to direct address of the reader in the final paragraph

A variety of sentence structures, requiring students to notice and use linking words (such as, “who”, “so”, “too”, “also”, “If”, “Then”, “But”, “when”, “Now”, “or”), indicators of time, and punctuation to clarify the links between ideas

Some unfamiliar words and phrases, including descriptive vocabulary, extended noun phrases, and literary language, the meaning of which is supported by the context, the sentence structure, the section headings, and/or the illustrations

English (Reading)

Levels 1 and 2: Selects and reads texts for enjoyment and personal fulfilment.

Level 2 – Ideas: Show some understanding of ideas within, across, and beyond texts.

Level 2 – Purposes and audiences: Show some understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

Level 2 – Language features: Show some understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

Social sciences

Level 2 – Understand how cultural practices reflect and express people's customs, traditions, and values.

Select from and adapt the suggestions below according to your students' strengths, needs, and experiences – their culture, language, and identity (*Reading and Writing Standards for Years 1–8, Knowledge of the Learner, page 6*).

Possible reading purpose

(*What can the students expect to find out or think about as a result of reading this text?*)

- To find out who Chang-O is and what her connection is to the moon

Subsequent readings

- To compare this story with other traditional tales and beliefs about the moon
- To think about the main ideas in this story

Possible learning goals

(*What opportunities does this text provide for students to learn more about how to “read, respond to, and think critically” about texts?*)

This text provides opportunities, over several readings, for students to:

- **make connections** to their prior knowledge, including knowledge of other traditional tales, to **make predictions** and **inferences**
- **ask questions** and look for or think about possible answers
- look for key words and **make connections** between ideas in the story to **visualise** and track characters and events
- **summarise** the roles of the main characters to **infer** why they are important in the story
- form an opinion about (**evaluate**) the **main ideas** in the story (about immortality and fairness)
- **monitor** their own reading, noticing when something is unclear and attempting to solve the problem.



(Use these suggestions before, during, or after reading in response to students' needs.)

Vocabulary

- Possibly unfamiliar vocabulary: “sun birds”, “volcano”, “scorched”, “crops”, “Emperor”, “archer”, “bow”, “warmth”, “rewarded”, “richly”, “flocked”, “Elixir of Immortality”, “ascend”, “immortal”, “conversation”, “refused”, “escape”, “swallowed”, “heavens”, “full of grief”, “took pity”, “realised”, “goddess”, “Festival”, “celebrate”, “worship”
- Extended noun phrases (for example, “a young man named Hou Yi”, “the cupboard where it was hidden”)

Prompt the students to remember the strategies they can use, often in combination, for example:

- when **decoding**:
 - breaking words into smaller chunks or syllables (for example, “Em-per-or”, “re-ward-ed”, “rich-ly”, “con-ver-sa-tion”, “E-lix-ir of Im-mor-tal-it-y”)
 - drawing on their knowledge that some letters or letter combinations can have more than one sound (“volcano”, “bow”, “warmth”, “rewarded”, “swallowed”, “heavens”, “celebrate”, “worship”) and that some letters may be silent (“ascend”)
 - using context and sentence structure to confirm decoding attempts
- when **working out word meanings**:
 - making connections to their prior knowledge
 - reading on to look for further information, including looking at the next word or words to help clarify a noun phrase
 - noting terms they are not sure of and want to find out more about.

Have a dictionary available for students to confirm or clarify word meanings, but remind them that they can make a best attempt at a word and come back to it later.

Note that readers are able to use strategies for working out unfamiliar words only when they know most of the vocabulary in the text. For English language learners who need support with vocabulary, introduce and practise selected items before reading. See suggestions in “Introducing the text” and “After reading”. For more ideas, see [ESOL Online: Vocabulary](#).



Introducing the text

A short video on the importance of introducing the text is available at <https://vimeo.com/142446572>

Before using this text with students, familiarise yourself with the pronunciation of any of the Chinese names that are new to you. You can listen to the audio version at www.juniorjournal.tki.org.nz

Use your knowledge of the students to ensure that your introduction to the text is effective in building or activating their prior knowledge and providing appropriate support for a successful first reading.

Several options are provided below for you to **select from and adapt**.

- Have the students read the title and the author byline to clarify that this is a tale from China. (Expect the students to infer that the figure shown in the inset illustration by the title is Chang-O.) Invite any students with knowledge of this story and the Moon Festival to share what they know. You could have the students look at page 32 so that they know about the story's connection to the Moon Festival before reading, or you could leave this for them to discover by themselves.
- Prompt the students to recall some common features of traditional tales (refer to "Text characteristics"). Feed the word "emperor" into the discussion as the Chinese equivalent of king.
- The students are likely to notice the apparent mismatch between the title and the main illustration on pages 26 and 27. Together, read the subheading on page 26 (Part One: Hou Yi and the Sun Birds). *What does this tell you about the story? Draw out the idea*

that this suggests that Hou Yi is another character and that the story is divided into parts.

- Have the students use the illustration, the title, and the subheading to generate questions (for example: Who are Chang-O and Hou Yi? What is the connection between them? What is the connection between them and the moon? Why is the archer shooting the birds?) Remind the students that asking themselves questions as they are reading (and looking for or thinking about the answers) will help build their understanding of the story.
- You could share the reading purpose and have the students begin reading from this point. Alternatively, you could have them look through the rest of the story, reading the other three subheadings and exploring the illustrations. Discuss what an Elixir of Immortality might be, prompting the students to make connections to any stories, films, or games they know. If necessary, explain that "ascend" means to rise up. There is no need, however, to cover every aspect of the story before reading. Remind the students they will find answers to their questions as they read.
- Provide the students with sticky notes to mark aspects they are not sure about or to jot down any questions or thoughts to return to later.
- Together, clarify the purpose for reading. Share the learning goal(s).

Reading and discussing the text

Suggestions for ways that you can support the students to achieve the learning goals are in the right-hand column of the table below. **Select from and adapt** the suggestions according to your students' needs.

Encourage the students to read the text by themselves, intervening only if it's clear a student needs help. During the first reading, the focus is on students experiencing and enjoying the story, following the events, and making and reviewing predictions (forming and testing hypotheses). Much of the processing that they do is "inside their heads" and may not be obvious until the discussion after the reading. There will be many opportunities to provide support with word-solving and comprehension on subsequent readings.

Student behaviours

Examples of behaviours that will help the students achieve their learning goal(s).

Deliberate acts of teaching

Examples of how you can support individual students (if needed).

The first reading

- The students use explicit and implicit information in the text and illustrations to track events and make predictions and inferences. For example:
 - they use the subheadings and the indicators of time to track the sequence of events
 - they make connections between the title, the dire situation described in the first paragraph, and the Emperor's response to infer that Hou Yi is the archer shown in the opening illustration and that he is a "hero" character
 - on page 28, they infer from the events described in the text that the illustration shows the Queen of Heaven
 - they make connections between the inset illustration on page 26 and the unfolding story to infer that Chang-O is the woman shown on page 29 and they look for clues in the text to confirm these inferences as they read on
 - they predict from the word "But" in the first paragraph on page 29 that a significant change is coming and that Feng Meng is a villain, and they notice words such as "sneaked" and "steal" in the next paragraph to confirm their prediction
 - at the end of page 29, they make connections to the instructions about the elixir that were given to Hou Yi to predict what will happen to Chang-O.
- Remind the students to use the illustrations and look for key words (including the headings) to help them track who the characters are and what is happening.
- Encourage them to make connections to their knowledge of traditional tales to help them make predictions and inferences, in particular about the characters (heroes or villains or "good" or "bad").
- You could have the students pause at the end of page 29 to write or share a prediction with a partner about what will happen to Chang-O when she drinks all the elixir.

- They think critically and ask themselves questions about the unfolding story. For example:
 - on page 28, after noticing that Hou Yi and Chang-O only need to drink half the elixir each to live a happy life together, they may wonder why anyone would want to drink *all* of the elixir
 - on page 30, they may wonder if Chang-O will be able to get back to Earth (and they find the answer to their question on page 31).
- Explain that asking themselves questions as they read helps them to get more involved in the story and to understand what is happening and why.
- The students demonstrate self-monitoring and problem solving, for example:
 - they look for clues in the text and illustrations to help clarify the meaning of words and phrases (for example, “ten times hotter”, “dried up”, “about to catch fire” to help with the meaning of “scorched” and “shoot down” and “ten arrows and a huge bow” to help with the meaning of “archer”)
 - they decode “Elixir of Immortality” by breaking it into smaller chunks. They recognise its connection to the word “immortal” and use the references to living forever to clarify its meaning
 - they use their knowledge of sentence structure and the concept of heaven being “above” to clarify the meaning of “ascend” (and notice further clues on page 30)
 - they mark aspects they are unsure of or that are of particular interest.
- Remind the students to think about the strategies they can use for decoding or when meaning is unclear. Prompt them to look at the words and phrases that surround unfamiliar words and think about the overall meaning of the sentence or paragraph.
- On page 31, the students notice the change in the last paragraph, with the author talking directly to the reader. They read page 32 and begin to think about why this tale and the Moon Festival are important in Chinese culture.
- Encourage them to note things they want to come back to.
- As they finish reading, ask the students to reflect on their reading purpose and their questions and/or predictions.

Discussing the text

You can revisit this story several times, focusing on different aspects and providing opportunities for the students to build comprehension.

Select from and adapt the suggestions according to your students’ needs and interests. Several of the suggestions overlap. They can also be explored further as “After-reading” activities.

 For some suggestions, you may find it helpful to project the PDF of the article so that you can zoom in on relevant sections.

- The students share their initial responses to the story.
- Encourage the students to share their responses. *Was the ending fair?* Draw out the idea that traditional tales (unlike fairy tales) do not always have happy endings and that good people are not always rewarded or bad people punished. Remind the students of the link between this story and the celebration of the Moon Festival and that this tale is a way of explaining why the moon looks as it does.
- The students summarise the main events in the story – what happened and why it happened.
- Look through the story together to clarify and summarise what happened. Alternatively, the students could work in pairs to summarise one part of the story each and then share their summaries with the group.
- They think critically about the roles of the characters and why they behave as they do.
- Ask them to think critically about why each of the main characters (and possibly, the Emperor) are important.
- The students build their understanding of the main ideas in the story through discussion.
- Discuss the concepts of immortality and what it means to “ascend to heaven”. Encourage the students to share their opinions about the choice the Queen gave Hou Yi to drink half or all the elixir.
- The students discuss features that helped them understand the story, for example, the headings, the descriptive language, the indicators of time, the illustrations, and/or making connections to their knowledge of similar stories (such as the concept of elixirs and immortality in the Harry Potter stories).
- Ask the students to reflect on what helped them understand what was happening. For example, you could ask them to describe what helped them track or visualise a particular setting, event, or character.
- The students identify aspects they have marked in the text. For example:
 - words and phrases of particular interest (for example, “scorched”, “flocked”, “Elixir of Immortality”, “immortal”, “ascend”, “Try as she might”, “the heavens”, “full of grief”, “took pity”)
 - vocabulary challenges
 - questions they thought of as they were reading.
- Discuss aspects the students have marked in the text. Explore ideas and provide support as necessary. For example:
 - discuss the meanings of interesting words and phrases and how they add impact to the story
 - ask the students to share how they worked out unfamiliar words (or tried to). Model strategies they could use. Note any aspects you might want to explore further in subsequent lessons.
 - discuss the students’ questions. Explain that some sorts of questions may be answered in the text but some may have no clear answers (like whether Hou Yi would have wanted to “ascend to heaven”). Explain that both types of questions are important and useful because asking questions as they read helps readers think more deeply about the story.
- The students think critically about this story as a myth and its connection to the Moon Festival. They make connections to their knowledge of other tales about the moon and their experiences of “seeing” objects or people when they look at the moon.
- You could use this tale to explore other ideas about the moon. Ask them to think critically about the wider purpose of this tale (to explain why Chinese people celebrate the Moon Festival). Remind them of other traditional tales that are linked to celebrations or festivals (for example, Matariki and Diwali). Encourage the students to share any other tales about the moon from their cultures.

How you can support your students to be metacognitive

Here are some ways you can build students' awareness of the processes and strategies they are using as they make meaning and think critically.

With support, the students reflect on their learning.

- The students talk with a partner about words, phrases, or ideas they found challenging and how they worked them out (or tried to).
 - The students explain the processes and strategies they used as they made meaning and thought critically about the article.
- Remind the students of the reading purpose and learning goal(s).
- Ask the students to identify a challenge they had when reading and how they solved or attempted to solve it. Note examples that you might want to return to in a subsequent lesson.
 - Ask questions to prompt the students to think about how they built their understanding.
 - *How did looking for key words help you understand why Hou Yi wanted to share the elixir with Chang-O and not drink it all himself?*

After reading: Practice and reinforcement

After-reading tasks should arise from your monitoring of the students' needs during the lesson and should provide purposeful practice and reinforcement. Where possible, make links to other reading texts, including texts generated by the students, and to the wider literacy programme (oral language, writing, handwriting, word games and activities) and other curriculum areas.

- The students can reread the story as they listen to the audio version. Audio versions also provide students, including English language learners, with good models of pronunciation, intonation, and expression.
 - Encourage the students to reread the story and others (see Related texts). They could also record themselves reading the story so that others can listen to it.
 - Support summarising by having the students retell the story. They could do this orally or use apps such as Puppet Pals, Sock Puppets, or Book Creator.
 - Have the students choose one of the main characters in the story and, on a printout of the text, have them highlight words and phrases and look in the illustrations for clues to that character's personality and appearance. Have them use the examples to create their own illustration of the character.
 - The students could find out more about the Moon Festival. Students with Chinese heritage could invite family members to share stories. Make a display to celebrate what the students have discovered. Make links to other festivals celebrated by members of the group (or the whole class). The students could draw and write about their own experience of a cultural celebration.
 - Compare this tale with a myth from another culture, for example, "Maui and the Sun". You can find more examples of myths at these websites:
 - [TKI – Māori Myths, Legends and Contemporary Stories: A selection of Māori myths retold by Wiremu Grace](#)
 - [Windows to the Universe: A brief summary of moon myths around the world, including the story of Rona and the Moon](#)
 - [Exemplore: A list of ten myths about the moon with a brief summary of each.](#)
-  You could use Google Docs to create and share a comparison chart such as the one below.

Common features of myths	Chang-O and the Moon	[Another myth]
Setting (time and place)	Set in the past Set in China (on Earth) and also on the moon	
What it explains	Why we see a person in the moon Why the Moon Festival is celebrated	
Problems	Sun birds are destroying Earth Feng Meng tries to steal the elixir	
Characters with super powers	Sun birds The Queen of Heaven	
Heroes	Hou Yi and Chang-O	
Villains	Feng Meng	

- They could find out more about aspects of the Hou Yi story (for example, sun birds or archery).
- Support students to build their vocabulary by exploring the descriptive language in the story. Identify how the author has described heat on Earth on pages 26 and 27 ("ten times hotter", "land was scorched", "rivers and seas dried up", "about to catch fire", "warmth"). From these, generate a list of further words and phrases (for example, "hot", "warm", "shimmering with heat", "toasty", "sweltering"), then have the students work in pairs to arrange them on a continuum (or cline) from coldest to hottest. There are no "right" answers but the discussion and negotiation involved in making the decisions (for example, is "scorched" hotter than "shimmering with heat"?) helps students learn about degrees of meaning. This activity is particularly supportive for English language learners.