Chinese Super Hero: 

THE MONKEY KING

Journey to the West is one of the four classics of Chinese literature. Written by Wu Cheng’en (d. 1582), this popular novel is based on the story of a Buddhist monk named Xuanzang who traveled to India to bring Buddhist sutras back to China. In Journey to the West Sun Wukong, known as the Monkey King, is forced by the Buddha to assist Xuanzang on his journey to India.

On their journey, they encounter one trial after another - a total of 81. This novel is rich in symbolism and the tribulations these travelers face are metaphors for the trials one must pass through in life.

Who is the Monkey King?

If you think Superman or Spiderman were the first superheroes, think again. The Monkey King has been China’s favorite superhero for over 500 years. He is amazingly strong, he flies, and he does things that others can’t.

The Monkey King acquired a magic golden rod (jin gu bang) that he uses as a weapon. He received this incredible weapon from the Dragon King of the Eastern Sea. This golden rod weighed around 18,000 pounds and its size was unlimited; it could grow to the size of a needle or as tall as the sky. When he is not using the jin gu bang, he hides it in his ear.

The Monkey King can transform himself into anything and anyone. He can change tufts of his hair into an army of monkeys. He can multiply his head and hands into three heads and six arms. He can fly over long distances by doing one somersault through the air. He has the power to freeze anyone with a single syllable and point of his finger. He has control over the elements of the earth. He is not only amazingly strong, fast, and intelligent, he is also immortal.

In short, The Monkey King symbolizes hope, justice, and the fighting spirit that we all possess.

Important Questions:

1. Who are the 4 companions in Journey to the West?
2. What is their mission?
3. What is the name of the Monkey King in Chinese?
4. What is the name of the weapon the Monkey King uses?
5. Name 4 special powers the Monkey King possesses.

To learn more about Journey to the West and Monkey King: ouci.ou.edu/monkeyking

Chinese Language Summer Camps

Startalk – Tulsa June 13th – June 29th (ouci.ou.edu/startalk)
OU Confucius Institute – Norman June 6th – June 24th (ouci.ou.edu/summercamp)