Epigrams and Tao-Te Ching

• Activity 1
  • Copy at least two, and then write down your observations. What elements do they have in common?

1. The more corrupt the state, the more numerous the laws." -- Tacitus

2. "Mankind must put an end to war, or war will put and end to mankind." -- John F. Kennedy

3. "I am not young enough to know everything." -- Oscar Wilde

4. "I can resist everything but temptation." -- Oscar Wilde


• epigram
  • Epigram as a poetry form
    • Copy at least one
      
      Sir, I admit your general rule,
      That every poet is a fool,
      But you yourself may serve to show it,
      That every fool is not a poet.
      
      http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/poetic-form-epigram

Underwoods: Epigram

Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850 - 1894

Of all my verse, like not a single line;
But like my title, for it is not mine.

That title from a better man I stole:
Ah, how much better, had I stol’n the whole.

http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/underwoods-epigram

• concept
  • --The most basic definition of an epigram is a brief, clever, and memorable statement. Some of them are formulated with satirical purposes in mind, and others are purposely meant to be confusing.

(http://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-epigrams.html)

• --The Greek tradition of epigrams began as poems inscribed on votive offerings at
sanctuaries – including statues of athletes – and on funerary monuments, for example "Go tell it to the Spartans, passer-by ...".

• --We also think of epigram as having a "point" – that is, the poem ends in a punchline or satirical twist. By no means do all Greek epigrams behave this way; many are simply descriptive.

(https://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Epigram.html)

• paradox
  • other examples
    • -- Nobody goes to that restaurant because it is too crowded.
      -- You shouldn't go in the water until you know how to swim.
      -- If you didn't get this message, call me.
      -- Men work together whether they work together or apart. - Robert Frost
      -- The beginning of the end
      -- Drowning in the fountain of eternal life
      -- Deep down, you're really shallow.


• definition
  • --use of concepts or ideas that are contradictory to one another, yet when place together hold significant value on several levels

--a deeper level of meaning and significance is not revealed at first glance, but when it does crystalize, it provides astonishing insight

e.g. High walls make not a palace, full coffers make not a king.

http://literary-devices.com/content/paradox

...a paradox is a statement or situation containing apparently contradictory or incompatible elements but upon closer inspection might be true.

e.g.

Ghost House
by Robert Frost

I dwell in a lonely house I know
That vanished many a summer ago

http://www.poeticterminology.net/77-paradox-literary-term.htm

• Tao Te Ching
  • - said to have been written by Laozi
- originally referred as simply the Laozi after its purported author
- was recognized as a “classic” (jing)—that is, accorded canonical status, on account of its profound insight and significance
- it acquired a more exalted and hermeneutically instructive title, Daodejing (Tao-te ching), commonly translated as the “Classic of the Way and Virtue.”
- Its influence on Chinese culture is pervasive, and it reaches beyond China.
- Next to the Bible, the Daodejing is the most translated work in world literature.
- It is concerned with the Dao or “Way” and how it finds expression in “virtue” (de), especially through what the text calls “naturalness” (ziran) and “nonaction” (wuwei).

• Laozi
  • read LangLit 8 p. 9
  • Laozi (also Lao-Tzu or Lao-Tze)
    - “Laozi” is best taken to mean “Old (lao) Master (zi),”
    - was a philosopher and poet of ancient China.
    - best known as the reputed author of the Tao Te Ching and the founder of philosophical Taoism,
    - he is also revered as a deity in religious Taoism and traditional Chinese religions.
    - a legendary figure, he is usually dated to around the 6th century BC and reckoned a contemporary of Confucius
    - some historians contend that he actually lived during the Warring States period of the 5th or 4th century BC.
    - A central figure in Chinese culture; his name is claimed by both the emperors of the Tang dynasty and modern people of the Li surname as a founder of their lineage.
    - his work has been embraced by various anti-authoritarian movements.

• Activity 2
  • verses from the Book of Tao
    • 1. “To understand the limitation of things, desire them.”
    2. “The wise man is one who, knows, what he does not know.”
    3. “The further one goes, the less one knows.”
    4. “He who conquers others is strong; he who conquers himself is mighty”
    5. “Fill your bowl to the brim and it will spill. Keep sharpening your knife and it will blunt.”
    6. “When nothing is done, nothing is left undone.”

  http://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/100074

• denotation and connotation
  • concept
    • denotation
      • literal meaning (dictionary definition)
    • connotation
• associations connected to a word
• emotional suggestions related to a word

• e.g.
  • fox
    • sneaky or sly
  • shark
    • ruthless
  • dove
    • gentle
  • hen
    • motherly
  • owl
    • wise