

## Classic poems

(May 04 JKW)

The well-known poems of China are written in classical Chinese. But although they were written long ago, because they are written in characters, they can be given a modern pronunciation – whether Mandarin, as below, or Cantonese, Shanghainese or some other regional pronunciation. The following selection includes poems by four of the best known poets of the Tang dynasty. Memorizing poems, of course, makes them your own, which is exciting in itself; but memorizing them also provides good practice in both pronunciation and character writing.

## 靜夜思

Jìng yè sī

Quiet night thinking

床前明月光  
疑是地上霜  
舉頭望明月  
低頭思故鄉

Chuáng qián míng yuè guāng  
yí shì dì shàng shuāng  
jǔ tóu wàng míng yuè  
dī tóu sī gù xiāng.

## 鹿柴

Lù Chái

Deer Park

空山不見人  
但聞人語響  
返景入深林  
復照青苔上

Kōng shān bú jiàn rén  
dàn wén rén yǔ xiǎng  
fǎn jǐng rù shēn lín  
fú zhào qīng tāi shàng.

## 李白

Lǐ Bái or Lǐ Bó

701-762, native of Sichuan, served the Tang court briefly, wandered through the S and SE, incarcerated for a time after the An Lushan rebellion. He was pardoned, but never regained full favor, and died soon after.

床前明月光  
疑是地上霜  
舉頭望明月  
低頭思故鄉

Bed front bright moon light  
suspect is ground on frost  
raise head look bright moon  
lower head think-of old country.

## 王维

Wáng Wéi, 699-759, a Buddhist, and a landscape painter, rather mystical in his outlook.

空山不見人  
但聞人語響  
返景入深林  
復照青苔上

Empty mountains no see people  
but hear peoples' talk sound;  
return shadows enter deep forest  
again illuminate green moss rise.

春望  
Chūn Wàng  
Spring view

国破山河在  
城春草木深  
感时花溅泪  
恨别鸟惊心

烽火连三月  
家书抵万金  
白头搔更短  
浑欲不胜簪

Guó pò shān hé zài  
chéng chūn cǎo mù shēn  
gǎn shí huā jiàn lèi  
hèn bié niǎo jīng xīn.

Fēng huǒ lián sān yuè  
jiā shū dī wàn jīn  
bái tóu sāo gèng duǎn  
hún yù bù shèng zān.

春晓  
Chūn Xiǎo  
Spring Dawn

春眠不觉晓  
处处闻啼鸟  
夜来风雨声  
花落知多少

Chūn mián bù jué xiǎo  
chùchù wén tí niǎo  
yè lái fēng yǔ shēng  
huā luò zhī duō shǎo.

杜甫  
Dù Fǔ, 712-70, a friend of Li Bo's, who also  
suffered as a result of the An Lushan rebellion.  
Often ill, he clung to civilized values as his world  
collapsed around him.

國破山河在  
城春草木深  
感時花濺淚  
恨別鳥驚心

烽火連三月  
家書抵萬金  
白頭搔更短  
渾欲不勝簪

State ruined mountains-rivers survive  
city spring grass-trees thick  
moving times flowers splash tears  
hating separation birds surprise heart.

Beacon-fires continue 3 months  
home-letter equal 10,000 gold  
white hair scratch even shorter  
whole will-be un equal-to hatpin.

孟浩然  
Mèng Hàorán, 689-740, failed at politics and  
returned home to Hubei to lead a reclusive life. He  
was also a friend of Wang Wei and Li Bo.

春眠不覺曉  
處處聞啼鳥  
夜來風雨聲  
花落知多少

Spring slumber not notice dawn  
everywhere hear cry birds  
night come wind rain sound  
flowers fall know many few.