

Monkey Study Guide

Monkey by Wu Cheng'en

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Plot Summary

Monkey by Wu Ch'eng-en and translated by Arthur Waley is a story about the Stone Monkey King and his journey, along with Hsuan Tsang and others, to get scrolls from Buddha's paradise in India and take them back to China. Along the way the group must fight demons, Immortals, save the innocent, and walk the path of Buddha without fail.

The Stone Monkey was born of a stone that was worked on by Heaven and Earth. The Stone Monkey lived with the other monkeys and soon was able to make himself king of the monkeys. He is happy being king until he thinks of his own mortality and goes in search of religion that he may find a way to cheat death. He finds a patriarch who is willing to teach him, and in the process Monkey learns many different kinds of magic. Soon he is showing off in front of the other students, and Monkey is banished back to his home. His powers are great and when he returns home he kills a demon to free the other monkeys. Soon he is getting himself into mischief and finds that the Jade Emperor, King of Heaven, has declared war on the Stone Monkey.

The Stone Monkey is unable to be beaten and when captured his body becomes hard as a diamond from all the magic that he has stolen; he cannot be killed. Buddha comes to help the Jade Emperor and is able to trick the Stone Monkey and trap him under a mountain where he is to stay until someone comes along to save him.

Many years later a Bodhisattva named Kuan-yin goes to look for a scripture-seeker that will take scriptures to the far away lands and save many souls. This scripture-seeker is a monk named Hsuan Tsang who is given the name "Tripitaka" when he agrees to take on the journey. As he travels along, he comes to the Stone Monkey that has been trapped under the mountain for five-hundred years. Tripitaka frees Monkey and takes him with him as a disciple of Buddha. They also encounter other beings along the way that join them in the quest to travel to India to bring sacred scrolls back to China, including Pigsy, Sandy, and the dragon king's son.

The Journey takes more than seven years and they have many calamities along the way and are forced to battle Immortals, monsters, ogres and many others. At the end they are able to get the scriptures and take them to China. Their reward is enlightenment and living in Buddha's paradise.



Chapter 1-5

Chapter 1-5 Summary

Monkey by Wu Ch'eng-en and translated by Arthur Waley is a story about the Stone Monkey King and his journey, along with Hsuan Tsang and others, to get scrolls from Buddha's paradise in India and take them back to China. Along the way the group must fight demons, Immortals, save the innocent, and walk the path of Buddha without fail.

The story begins with a rock that is worked upon by heaven and earth and gives birth to the Stone Monkey. He lives with the other monkeys in the forest and one day the monkeys decide to go and find where the mountain from which the spring comes. They find a veil of water flowing over the side of a mountain and announce that any of them that are brave enough to go through the veil of water flowing down the side of the mountain will be made the monkey king. The Stone Monkey agrees to go through to find from where the water comes. On the other side of the waterfall is a bridge that goes to a stone chamber where the water flows out of a hole in a rock. There is a sign stating that it is a blessed land that leads to heaven. The monkeys all go through to live and make the Stone Monkey their king.

They live happily at the blessed land in the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit until the Stone Monkey begins to think of his own mortality. He leaves his monkey friends and followers in the search of immortality and religion. He manages to find an Immortal called the Patriarch Subodhi. The Patriarch teaches the Stone Monkey how to have a long life and stave off the three calamities that are sent to claim a person every five hundred years. The Stone Monkey is unable to control himself with his new powers and is showing off for the Patriarch's other students. The Patriarch banishes the Stone Monkey and tells him that the Stone Monkey is to never tell anyone who taught him the secrets of immortality.

The Stone Monkey flies home on the clouds and finds that his monkey brethren have been plagued by a beast called Demon Havoc. The Stone Monkey flies to the mountain where the Demon lives and does battle with the Demon. The Stone Monkey takes a few of his hairs and does a spell quickly on them and turns them into other monkeys that fight for him. The Stone Monkey is able to kill the Demon and all his imps and flies back home.

The Stone Monkey decides that the other monkeys should learn to fight so they can protect themselves, but they have no weapons that aren't made of bamboo. The Stone Monkey goes to a human city and quietly steals all the weapons out of the armory but cannot find one that fits someone of his power. He decides to go to the palace of the dragon of the Eastern Sea. He demands a magical weapon and threatens the dragon king until he is able to get what he wants. He then forces the dragon king's four brothers to give him magical armor. The dragon kings have been threatened and insulted by the



Stone Monkey and decide to go to the Jade Emperor, ruler of Heaven, and ask him to do something about the Stone Monkey.

When the Stone Monkey falls to sleep that night back at the stone chamber two men come to get him. They take him to where Yama, the King of Death, lives. The Stone Monkey has his magical weapon with him and takes it out and kills the two men, then forces the Judges of Death to give him a pen and he marks off his name and all his monkey brethren from the scrolls of death and then returns home.

A morning following, the Jade Emperor is approached by the dragon of the Eastern Sea and the First Judge of the Dead. After telling what happened to them at the hands of the Stone Monkey, the Emperor sends the Planet Venus to bring him the Stone Monkey that the Stone Monkey might have a job in heaven where he can be watched and controlled. The Stone Monkey is very excited to go and tells his fellow monkeys that he will send for them when he has a look around Heaven.

The Stone Monkey is enjoying himself in Heaven tending the horses in the stalls until he is told that his job is a menial one and that he is in one of the lowest positions in Heaven. The Stone Monkey is outraged and leaves for home where he can return to being King. He thought he had only been away for a night but he had been gone from the other monkeys for ten years or more. The Stone Monkey is convinced to go back to Heaven by the Planet Venus since the Stone Monkey is causing so much havoc on earth. He is given the title "The Sage, Equal to Heaven" so he will agree to come back and is put in charge of the Peach Garden, the fruit of which bestows magical powers. The Stone Monkey eats the fruit everyday and soon most of the peaches are gone when the Queen of Heaven sends her fairies to fetch the fruit and found little left.

The king sends his armies to destroy the Stone Monkey who has gone back to earth, but the Stone Monkey is too powerful and the kings armies retreat and make camp waiting to begin battle the next day.

Chapter 1-5 Analysis

The reader sees that the Stone Monkey is very self assured. The Stone Monkey will demand in the coming chapters that he be made the king of Heaven. It won't be until Buddha comes into the story that the Stone Monkey will meet his match. The monkey fears death, which is the reason he goes to find religion—to stave off death. The reader sees in the story as it continues that death doesn't hold the normal lines and definite ending that it does in real life. There will be people that bargain with death in the coming chapters and are able to have a second chance at life.

The Jade Emperor is a wise leader who takes council from many people. He is willing to listen to what others say and decide the wisest choice of action. The Stone Monkey is unwilling to take any advice given to him. Later in the story when he is freed from the Mountain of the Five Elements where Buddha imprisons him, the Stone Monkey is told



by the Dragon King of the Easter Ocean that he must learn to submit to other people or he will lose his chance at freedom.

The Stone Monkey has much changing to do, and there are hints of what will happen to him, but the reader is left to wonder about his destiny. In the following chapters the story will begin to change its focus from the Monkey to the scripture-seeker, who is also under the direction of Buddha.

The Planet Venus will show himself a lot more in the story. Not only does he try and stave off war between the Jade Emperor and the Stone Monkey two times, but later in the story the reader will see that the spirit of the Planet Venus will foretell the coming of the Great Sage Stone Monkey to those that will require his help.



Chapter 6-10

Chapter 6-10 Summary

The next day the battle continues. Monkey is too powerful for the 100,000 men the Jade Emperor sent. The Jade Emperor asks his nephew, the magician Erh-lang, to capture the monkey. Erh-lang is able to capture the Stone Monkey after a long battle. The Stone Monkey is bound and taken to heaven, but his body has been made as hard as a diamond from all the heavenly items he has stolen and eaten, such as the peaches and magic elixir. The Stone Monkey is taken and put into a crucible for forty-nine days in an attempt to remove some of the elixir and make Stone Monkey mortal. When the lid is removed the Stone Monkey begins to fight all the host of heaven once again. The Jade Emperor sends for Buddha to come and help with Monkey.

The Stone Monkey tells Buddha that he is better and stronger than the Jade Emperor and should be made the King of Heaven. Buddha sets forth a challenge for the Stone Monkey. He tells the Stone Monkey that if he can jump off the end of his palm, then he will make sure the Stone Monkey is named the King of Heaven, and the Jade Emperor will go back with Buddha to live in his temple. If monkey fails then he must do penance for the things he has done for many years before he can again talk to Buddha. Monkey agrees knowing that he can fly great distances in the blink of an eye. Monkey flies from the palm of Buddha's hand to the end of the earth and signs the post at the end of the earth and urinates there so he can prove he was there. When he returns Buddha shows Monkey that he never in fact left the palm of his hand. On Buddha's middle finger is Monkey's signature and a foul smell where monkey urinated. Buddha imprisons monkey in a mountain with instructions that he is to be fed and given water but not to be released until someone comes to rescue him.

Many years later Buddha sends Kuan-yin, one of Buddha's Bodhisattvas, to find a scripture seeker on earth to help spread the teachings of Buddha. Prince Moksha, religious name Hui-yen, goes along with Kuan-yin to make sure she is safe on her journey. Buddha sends five talismans with Kuan-yin to give to the scripture-seeker. When Kuan-yin and Hui-yen get to the first river they find a monster that attacks them. The monster was a host in heaven but was banished to be a monster in the river and it eats people. Kuan-yin offers him redemption if he will turn from his ways and agree to embrace the religion of Buddha and help the scripture-seeker when he comes. The monster agrees and is given a new name called Sandy Priest.

Two more times Kuan-yin and Hui-yen encounter monsters that were former hosts of Heaven that have been banished. Both agree to help the scripture seeker when he returns and are given new names. One is a pig that was a marshal of the hosts of Heaven and is given the new name Pigsy. The other is a son of a dragon king who is set to be executed but is instead changed into a horse by Kuan-yin to wait on the scripture-seeker. When Kuan-yin passes the Mountain of Five Elements, Kuan-yin talks with the Stone Monkey who has been imprisoned for five-hundred years and tells him that if he



is truly repentant when the scripture-seeker comes he will be set free. The monkey's religious name given to him from his Patriarch many years ago is Aware-of-Vacuity.

Kuan-yin and Hui-yen arrive at the city of Ch'ang and change themselves into shabby priests. They set forth a decree calling for everyone, regardless of sect to come and be tested for their talents. A man named Ch'en O goes and finishes top of the tests. He is riding through the city when he is chosen by Wen-ch'iao to be her husband. They marry and he takes her to meet his mother, and then the three of them begin their trek to the city of Chiang-chou to be Governor. On the way Ch'en O buys a carp from a fisherman and sets it free. Soon after his mother takes ill, and he must leave her at a inn but promises to return for her. Ch'en O and Wen-ch'iao come to a river where two men are to ferry them across. The two men, Li and Liu take them to a secluded spot and kill all of Ch'en's servants and Ch'en. They promise to not harm Wen-ch'iao if she will come with them. Li stays in charge of the boat but Liu puts on Ch'en O's garments and takes Wen-ch'iao on to Chiang-chou where he will assume the position of governor. The fish that Ch'en had set free was in fact a dragon king who finds Ch'en's body and keeps him safe.

Wen-ch'iao is expecting a child and doesn't argue with Liu. When they reach the city she has the child while Liu is out. When he returns he demands the child be killed but Wen-ch'iao has already been told by a spirit that the child is not a normal mortal and she must protect it. She writes a note in her blood telling of the child's heritage and what happened to his father Ch'en O and bites off the child's small toe on the first joint so she can identify the child. She places the child on a plank of wood, and he is taken in by monks and named River Float. River Float is named Hsuan Tsang when he enters the priesthood at seventeen and is told of his heritage. He goes to see his mother and avenge his father's death. The mother sends a message with Hsuan Tsang to find Chen O's mother and give word of what has happened to Wen-ch'iao's father. After Hsuan Tsang reaches his grandfather and tells him of what has happened, troops are sent to kill Liu. Liu is killed on the spot that he murdered Ch'en O, and the dragon king that Ch'en had released gave him his body and spirit back. Ch'en O is given an important position and reunited with his family.

The dragon king tries to prove a soothsayer wrong so he may have the man run out of the city. The dragon king is in charge of the rains, and when the soothsayer tells the exact moments it will start, stop, and how much will fall the dragon decides to change it just a little so the soothsayer will be found to be wrong. The dragon king receives word from the Jade Emperor which are exactly in line with the soothsayer's predictions but the dragon king ignores the details. For his disobedience he is set to be beheaded by minister Wei Cheng. The dragon king goes to the Emperor of T'ang to beg for mercy and the Emperor agrees to help. He tries to keep Wei Cheng busy the next day so he will not have time to behead the dragon king, but Wei Cheng falls asleep and beheads the dragon in his dream state. The dragon tells the Emperor of T'ang that he is going to impeach him before Yama, the king of Death. The Emperor soon falls ill and is unable to sleep or eat. As he lies dying Wei Cheng gives him a letter to take to Ts'ui Chio, one of the judges of the Dead and the Emperor dies.



Chapter 6-10 Analysis

When Buddha tricks the Stone Monkey it seems the Monkey is more appalled that he has been tricked than by the fact that he doesn't get to be king. The Stone Monkey is childlike in many of his characteristics, as if he has never been reprimanded. The reader sees later on in the story when the scripture-seeker comes and sets Monkey free that he will not be totally reformed and will require a heavy hand.

Wen-ch'iao hears a voice when she is giving birth to her son, Hsuan Tsang. The reader doesn't know whose voice it is at the time, but later in the story it will be revealed that the voice was that of Kuan-yin. The importance of the child is hidden to the reader, but there is foreshadowing showing his destiny. The child, Hsuan Tsang, will be the scripture-seeker that Buddha is looking for and will also be the one that frees the Stone Monkey.

Hsuan Tsang will have to face things he is unsure of when he undertakes the task of retrieving the scriptures. He will find the Stone Monkey in some ways to be just as much a help as a hindrance for a large part of the journey. The reader will see later on in the journey that the Stone Monkey seems to be enjoying the journey to illumination.



Chapter 11-15

Chapter 11-15 Summary

The Emperor of T'ang is led into the presence of the Judges of the Dead by Ts'ui Chio who had been a friend to the Emperor's minister, Wei Cheng. The letter Wei Cheng had given to the Emperor was to be given to Ts'ui Chio who agreed that he would make sure that the Emperor would return to the land of the living. The Judges of the Dead agree with the Emperor that the death of the dragon was not his fault but that they had to make an inquisition into the matter. They then send Ts'ui Chio to get the scrolls of death to see when the Emperor is supposed to die. Ts'ui sees that the scrolls have the Emperor being dead that day but Ts'ui quickly makes a few marks to the scroll and adds twenty years to the Emperor's life.

The Emperor returns home and makes a great feast to the dead souls that are in torment that they might be released as he was instructed by Ts'ui Chio. The priest that leads this celebration is Hsuan Tsang. During all this, Kuan-yin is still looking for a priest to be the scripture-seeker. She hears of Hsuan Tsang and decides he is who she has been looking for, since Kuan-yin herself had a hand in his birth. She travels to the city to the celebration and reveals herself as the Bodhisattva and ascends to her home. She tells the Emperor before she leaves of the scriptures she has and what they will do for the country of T'ang. The Emperor asks if there is someone who would be willing to go and Hsuan Tsang volunteers. The Emperor gives him the name of Tripitaka before he goes on his journey. The Emperor sends him with two men and a horse along with supplies.

Tripitaka hasn't gone very far with his two companions when they are attacked, and the two companions are torn apart and eaten by ogres. Tripitaka is saved by an elderly gentleman who turns out to be the Planet Venus, who then leaves him. Tripitaka is attacked by animals later on in his journey but is saved by a hunter. Tripitaka is accompanied by the hunter to the mountain where Monkey is trapped. Tripitaka frees the Stone Monkey who swears to serve him, and the hunter returns home.

Many days later on their journey Monkey and Tripitaka are attacked by six thieves. Monkey kills them but is reprimanded by Tripitaka upon which Monkey runs away. The Bodhisattva, Kuan-yin, appears and gives Tripitaka a magic hat and coat to give to Monkey when he returns. Kuan-yin teaches Tripitaka a chant that will cause the hat and coat to give Monkey unimaginable pain. When Monkey returns Tripitaka is able to trick him into the clothes which Monkey can't get back off. Tripitaka is able to keep him under control with this magic.

When Monkey and Tripitaka reach the river, the dragon king son who was banished appears out of the river and eats the horse. Monkey begins battling the great beast but is unable to defeat him and calls Kuan-yin to come and help. She tells the dragon that Tripitaka is the scripture-seeker, and the dragon king son must help him if he wants to



be forgiven his sins. The dragon is turned into a horse on which Tripitaka can ride. She also gives Monkey three magic hairs that he can use to get himself out of dangerous situations.

Chapter 11-15 Analysis

It appears Tripitaka is not well suited to adventure. He has broken down crying at more than one interval already. Kuan-yin had told Tripitaka's mother when he was born that he would be more than an average mortal, but the reader has yet to see him do much that would qualify as more than average. The reader sees later on in the story that Pigsy is able to trick Tripitaka when Pigsy and Monkey retrieve the body of an Emperor from a well in an attempt to stop the impostor that has stolen the Emperor's throne.

Monkey would be just as hard to control as before it would appear if he was left up to his own devices. His true downfall is the fact that he believes himself to be so far above everyone else that he can't be tricked or outdone. This and his unyielding desire to do whatever he feels like doing are the things that get him into trouble. They have yet to meet the other two monsters along the journey with whom Kuan-yin has made a pact. The reader will see that there will be the same problems with the other two, Pigsy and Sandy, in that Monkey will not announce who Tripitaka is.

Tripitaka has been having trouble keeping Monkey out of trouble to some extent. This will not get any easier when the others join the group. Pigsy and Monkey will seem as children and appear to give Tripitaka a lot of trouble.



Chapter 16-20

Chapter 16-20 Summary

When Monkey and Tripitaka come to a group of houses, they find that it is being plagued by a hideous beast that has claimed the youngest daughter of the farmer that owns the land, as his wife. The farmer asks Tripitaka and Monkey to help him put a stop to the monster and save them. Monkey uses his magic to make himself look like the monster's bride. The monster is called Pigsy, and when Pigsy returns home, Pigsy tries to kiss Monkey. Monkey begins to talk to the monster and tells him that the farmer has gotten the Great Sage Equal of Heaven to come and stop Pigsy. Pigsy gets up and runs away stating that Monkey would be a match for him. At this point Monkey shows his true form and they begin to battle. Pigsy flies to his home on a cave and Monkey follows in battle. Stone Monkey returns to Tripitaka when Pigsy locks himself in the house to let his master know what is happening.

When Monkey returns to Pigsy's home, he tells Pigsy that his master is the scripture-seeker. Pigsy then swears he is bound to serve Tripitaka and asks Monkey to take him to Tripitaka. After talking with Tripitaka the three of them leave the farmer and get their horse, the dragon son, and continue on their journey. They come to a wide river and while deciding how to get across, they find another monster that attempts to eat them. Monkey and Pigsy both begin to fight the great beast. After some time Monkey goes to beg help from Kuan-yin. She tells them again that the creature there has sworn to help the scripture-seeker if Monkey had only told him who they were. The Monster is summoned by saying his name Kuan-yin gave him, Sandy, and helps Tripitaka across the great waters.

After getting across the water, they find a place to stay for the night, but Tripitaka has a dream about a dead King of the city of Crow-Cock who was drowned in a garden well by a magician who took the form of the King and has been ruling in his stead now for three years. The King asks Tripitaka for help defeating the impostor Emperor and leaves Tripitaka with a treasure to convince his son and his wife that it is all true.

Tripitaka is able to talk to the prince who is not easily persuaded that his father is dead until he confers in secret with his mother. Monkey and Pigsy go to the garden well where the King's body has been perfectly preserved by a magic pearl. They take the body back to Tripitaka. Pigsy is angry with Monkey and decides to play a joke on him and convinces Tripitaka that Monkey can bring the Emperor of Crow-Cock back to life without talking to the King of the Dead. Tripitaka tries to force Monkey to do this by chanting the spell over the hat and coat that monkey wears causing him great pain.



Chapter 16-20 Analysis

Monkey is beginning to realize there is a lot of planning that has gone into their trip. He apparently figured out that the Emperor of Crow-cock was waiting on them when they arrived as well as the others before. They enter the town of Cart Slow and the Buddhists priests that have been put into slavery tell him that if he had been a day later they would all be dead. You find later on that they show up just at the moment they are needed most for many more quests. The Stone Monkey had been imprisoned in the Mountain of Elements for five hundred years, but the reader is beginning to see that that alone may not be the only penance that he has to pay.

Many of the places they go to Monkey finds that the spirit of the Planet Venus has foretold the coming of the Great Sage of Heaven. While Monkey is flattered by this, it does appear that the Planet Venus has taken a special interest in Monkey from the start of the book. Venus does not have a large part or a place and the reader learns little about him, but he has a significant role nonetheless.

Pigsy makes the comment to Sandy later in the story that they should have taken more consideration of the Monkey when they see the power he demonstrates. Monkey is still rather childish when this occurs and the reader will see that he tries to get even and nearly gets them killed because he thinks they are talking badly about him.



Chapter 21-25

Chapter 21-25 Summary

Monkey is overcome with the pain from the magic spell that Tripitaka puts on him and finally agrees to find a way to bring the Emperor of Crow-cock back to life. He tells Tripitaka that he can travel to Heaven and get a life-restoring elixir. Tripitaka sends Monkey on his way to Heaven. When the Stone Monkey arrives at Lao Tzu's alchemical studio, Lao Tzu believes the Monkey is there for only trouble. The Stone Monkey quickly explains the situation in full to Lao and asks for a thousand pills to bring the Emperor back from the dead. Lao refuses and so the Monkey asks for less and less until Lao finally tells him he shall have none. Lao gets worried realizing the Monkey will only come back to steal the pills so Lao Tzu sends for the Monkey and gives him one single pill for the Emperor.

Upon returning to the Emperor's body, the Stone Monkey is able to get him to swallow the pill and then gives him one big breath, and the king is alive again. Tripitaka, Monkey, the Emperor, Pigsy, and Sandy start their journey to the city of Crow-cock disguised and transformed to look like common priests. Upon arriving, they demand an audience with the false king. Before long Monkey is able to trick the false king, and the wizard flies into the sky with Monkey following close behind. The wizard and Monkey battle for a while but then the wizard comes back to the town and takes the form of Tripitaka. No one can tell the difference between the two, and Tripitaka has to recite the spell that causes pain to the Stone Monkey before anyone can tell who is who. Pigsy, Sandy, and Monkey are about to destroy the wizard when the Bodhisattva, Manjusri, stops them. The Emperor had treated Manjusri badly when he came to the king in the form of a poor beggar. He had been overthrown by the wizard as punishment from Buddha. The wizard is Manjusri's pet blue-haired lion.

The Emperor entreats them to stay and rule the kingdom, but Tripitaka refuses and they continue on their journey. As their journey continues, they come upon a place where they hear loud noises that scares Tripitaka. Monkey finds there is a city called Cart Slow where Buddhist priests are put into slavery, and the city is ruled by three immortals who have impressed the king. Monkey and the other travelers go to the city and the Immortals challenge them to see who is more powerful. Monkey and Tripitaka win each test that is set forth. On the last three trials Monkey is able to outwit the Immortals, and they die revealing their true forms as nothing more than animals. The Buddhists are set free and Tripitaka's group continue on their way.

They leave Cart Slow and travel until they come to a river. It is dark and even with Monkey's keen eyesight they cannot find the other end of the river. They find a village to rest and find that the deity that cares for the town requires them to sacrifice a boy and a girl to him before he will give them rain and make them prosper. Monkey and Pigsy take over the forms of the girl and the boy to trick the deity and are set upon platters to wait for the hungry god.



Chapter 21-25 Analysis

Pigsy and Monkey are much alike in many ways. Their childish behavior often gets them and Tripitaka into trouble, but the readers see that monkey is beginning to act differently in the story. He seems to be enjoying his new found business of helping people. He volunteers to help the small children. Pigsy does take a little more convincing but ultimately, he wants to do good as well. The reader doesn't know much about Sandy; it seems he may be more mature or at least quieter than the other two.

Monkey and Pigsy are doing penance for things that were more horrendous crimes than Sandy as all he did was break one dish. It would seem that while he does help Tripitaka, he has less to make up for than the other two. Tripitaka is the one that is trying to teach the three of them on their journey in the ways of Buddha and enlightenment, but the reader sees that often Tripitaka is at the mercy of Monkey who seems to be the one that makes a lot of decisions for the group. He obeys whatever Tripitaka says but neither of them seem to have full leadership. Regardless of the uneven balance of things, the pair seems to work very well together at this point.

The reader will see at the end of the journey that all Tripitaka's disciples are given a reward. Pigsy has had an overwhelming appetite in the story that cannot be filled. The reader will see that his appetite and the fact that he is still so ugly will be the main reasons he is not given the title of Buddha when Monkey and Tripitaka are. Tripitaka isn't supposed to be doing penance during this journey, but the reader sees at the end that in a past life he failed at a task given and this was his chance to make that right.



Chapter 26-30

Chapter 26-30 Summary

Pigsy and Monkey wait for the monster. When he arrives they wait until he is close enough and then show their true forms and begin fighting. The monster is taken aback and quickly flees from them. They go back to the village and tell Tripitaka what happened. The monster goes back to his castle under the water and is told by a perch that she knows how to catch Tripitaka to eat him. This appeals greatly to the monster because one bite of Tripitaka's flesh and the monster would live forever. The perch tells him to cause it to snow heavily and Tripitaka will be in a great hurry to get to the scriptures and will try to cross the great lake on the water. When Tripitaka attempts to cross the monster will reach up and grab him through the ice.

Then next morning when the travelers awake in the village they find it has snowed outside and the lake is thickly frozen over. They begin their trip over the iced water with the monster waiting until Tripitaka is at a point where he can be easily taken. The monster grabs Tripitaka and Pigsy, Monkey, Sandy, and the horse manage to make it back to the village. They devise a plan to get the monster but are unable to get him. Monkey goes to ask Kuan-yin for help but finds that she is in her garden making a basket and can't be bothered. When she is done making her basket, she takes it to the lake where the monster lives. She puts the basket in the water and chants several times. When she pulls her basket up there is a fish in it that came from Kuan-yin's pond. The fish learned magic from her and then got out of the pond when there was a great flood. Once Tripitaka has been recovered from the underwater palace, they manage to get across the lake on the back of a giant turtle who asks that they ask Buddha when he will be made into human form and they bid him farewell.

After traveling for many more months they come to the place where they see Buddha's citadel. They travel up the mountain to a place where they take a ferry boat with no bottom across a raging river. They watch as their earthly forms are washed down stream and realize they have been illuminated. They get the scriptures from Buddha and begin their journey homeward on a magical wind. Kuan-yin realizes as they are going home that they need to have one more calamity to reach the perfect number of nine times nine so she sends word to the magical winds to drop them. The winds drop them at the lake that the turtle had helped them cross, and the giant turtle comes back to help them across again. When they are half way between the shores the turtle asks them if he had asked Buddha when he would get to receive human form. Upon realizing that they didn't ask, the turtle dives quickly leaving them to swim for shore. When they reached the shore the people in the village that had been saved from the monster eating their children invite them to eat and give a shrine to them. They are forced to break out and leave in the middle of the night, but the winds return to take them back to the Emperor at T'ang. They leave the scriptures with him and the winds take them back to Buddha's paradise.



When their quest is done they are given new names. Tripitaka is given the title of Buddha of precocious Merit; Monkey is called Buddha Victorious in Strife. Piggy still has a gluttonous appetite and looks like a pig so he is not given the title of Buddha but is given the title of Cleanser of the Altar, and Sandy is given the title of Golden Bodied Arhat. The dragon that Tripitaka rode upon was promoted to one of the eight senior Heavenly Dragons.

Chapter 26-30 Analysis

The reader sees that the religious basis of the story really comes into play in the last chapters. Even when the journey to India is complete and Tripitaka only has to return the scrolls to China, there is more that they have to go through to appease Buddha. Kuan-yin looks at the list of things that they have gone through and realizes they haven't completed the correct number of catastrophes. She forces them to be dropped in a spot where bad things will once again happen to them so the number on the account of the journey will equal the "perfect" number.

Also the number of days they have taken to finish the journey must equal a perfect number, so they only have eight days to return home and make it back to paradise where they receive their new titles. The new titles they receive reveal to the reader that Tripitaka was reincarnated and was in fact atoning for his sins. The reader isn't told any of this and there isn't any hints about that, but it does put Tripitaka in a different light realizing that he had failed at a task that was given him and this was his way to redemption.

The story focuses largely on the story and the journey up to this point, but the reader sees at the end that there are explanations given as to why the story is told. The credit and the focus is then changed to the religion of Buddha and the need to turn toward that. This isn't brought out until the last few passages of the story, which explains why the story is considered "religious" in many ways.



Characters

Stone Monkey

The Stone Monkey was born of a stone that was worked upon by Heaven and Earth. He is a mischievous animal that looks to religion for gaining Immortality. The story encompasses his journey to enlightenment and the trouble he gets into along the way. The Stone Monkey is often very focused on himself and is childish in his manner. The fact that he is childish becomes a problem to Monkey when he gains his powers. He is so unable to control himself that he is soon in a lot of trouble with the Jade Emperor.

The Stone Monkey wants power, and the reader sees that the Monkey wants to be king of the monkeys. When he gains that, then he wants to be Immortal. When Monkey achieves this, he wants to be named the King of Heaven. Even after Monkey is placed under the Mountain of the Five Elements for five-hundred years, it is clear he hasn't truly repented of his nature. He is an interesting character that grows and changes as the story continues until at last he is able to reach Buddha's paradise. While Monkey is not the only character on the journey and is not found in several chapters of the book, he is a pivotal character and much of the focus is on him.

Tripitaka

Also called Hsuan Tsang which is his religious name; the name given when he was a baby floating in the river was River Float. Tripitaka has several chapters of the book where he alone is the focus. After he teams up with Monkey the reader sees that Monkey is a larger part of the story than Tripitaka is. Tripitaka has overcome a great many things since his father was killed and he is forced to save his mother; however, the reader sees that when Tripitaka takes the journey to India to recover the scrolls there are many times where Tripitaka breaks down crying and sometimes it is hard for his companions to console him.

Tripitaka's birth is foretold by Kuan-yin as a birth of someone that is more than mortal, but on his journey the reader will see he lacks many attributes that most look for in a hero. The only thing about Tripitaka that makes him different from other people seems to be the fact that he is pure in spirit. This fact is what keeps ogres from eating him, but when he encounters a monster that is eating children in a village the monster recognizes what Tripitaka is and wants to eat his flesh so the monster will live forever. It is very likely that Tripitaka wouldn't have made it to India if he hadn't had help along the way, but it is clear that none of those traveling with him would have received enlightenment if they hadn't had him to teach them the way.



Jade Emperor

The Jade Emperor is the King of Heaven who tries to control the Stone Monkey but is unable.

Buddha

Is called to Heaven by the Jade Emperor to help with the Stone Monkey. He is the one that has the Stone Monkey trapped into the mountain.

Kuan-yin

She is a Bodhisattva. She helps Tripitaka on his journey and sets his disciples out along the road to help him on his way.

Sandy

He had been a Captain of Spirits but was banished to earth for breaking a dish in Heaven. He was killing people to eat when he was made into a disciple of Tripitaka.

Pigsy

Was a marshal of the watery hosts of Heaven but was banished for his conduct with a fairy maiden. Was eating people and living in a mountain when he was found and made into a disciple of Tripitaka.

Emperor of T'ang

The Emperor dies and goes to the city of the dead but is sent back. He is the one that sends Tripitaka on his journey to India to get the sacred scrolls.

Ch'en O

The father of Hsuan Tsang, also called Tripitaka. He was killed, but his soul was returned when his murderer was sacrificed to his spirit.

Wen-ch'iao

The mother of Hsuan Tsang, also called Tripitaka. She saves her son by sending him down the river so her impostor husband won't have him killed. She bites off a piece of one of his toes so she will recognize him if she can ever find him again.



Objects/Places

Mountain of the Five Elements

The mountain that the Stone Monkey was imprisoned in for five-hundred years. He was placed here by Buddha.

Mountain of Fruit and Flowers

This is the place where the Stone Monkey is king of the other monkeys. He does battle with a great number of the Hosts of Heaven from the cave in this mountain.

Ch'ang-an

The city where Tripitaka left to begin his journey to retrieve the scriptures from India.

Holy Iron Staff

A magic weapon given to the Stone Monkey by the dragon king. Monkey is able to make it as small as a sewing needle or as large as he wants.

The Peach Garden

The Peach Garden contains magic peach trees, and the fruit off of them give immortality and other mystical powers. Monkey is put in charge of these trees for a brief period of time but eats all the fruit off of some of the trees.

Crow-cock

A city that Tripitaka and his disciples encounter along the way where a king has been killed and a wizard sits on the throne in his place.

Jade Tablet

The item given to Tripitaka by the dead king of Crow-cock, that his young son might know what happened to his father.



Slow Cart

A city in which Monkey helps to free the Buddhist priests from slavery and kills three false Immortals plaguing the king.

Holy Scriptures

The holy scriptures are needed in the east to help save the lost souls of men and bring them to the religion of Buddha.

The Way

The last stage that is achieved in Buddhism. Tripitaka and his companions discard their mortal flesh and achieve this status.



Themes

The Search for Redemption

Monkey has a lot to do with the sins of the characters in the book and the journey they must undertake in order to save their souls. The search for "the Way" leads them through many dangerous lands and situations while they are going on their task to retrieve holy scriptures. Monkey had made himself a nuisance in heaven and has to atone for the trouble he caused there. The reader sees that Sandy, the dragon king's son, and Pigsy all have sins to atone for as well. The one character in the book that we are unaware of needing to atone is Tripitaka. However, at the end of the book the reader sees that Tripitaka actually had to atone for sins from his past life. He is told that he scoffed and was a poor student in a past life and has to spend this life making up for his past behaviors.

The book also makes mention of other people that have to pay for their sins and make things right such as the Emperor of Crow-cock who was put in a well for three years because of how he treated a disciple of Buddha. The author also makes a point in telling that everyone has sins of which they need to repent. The point of the holy scriptures is that once they are taken to China, there will be many people who will repent and have salvation.

Faith

Tripitaka is taking the journey from China in the east to India where Buddha has his holy scriptures so the religion of Buddha can spread and people can come to the light. Throughout the story, the reader sees people worshiping in many ways, but they all have faith in their particular beliefs.

At one point in the story Buddha tells Tripitaka about how important and sacred the scriptures are and tells him that many religions come from this one religion. While reading the story the reader will see that the narrator takes you to different villages and cities and in each one there is a different god, deity or Immortal that is in control in that place. There are times when it is found to be a false idol, or god but each group has their own and worships faithfully whatever they choose as their belief.

Tripitaka and the others on the journey to the Buddha must have faith to believe they are doing the right thing. They must hold to the faith many times when they encounter difficult situations where it would be easy to give up their quest and return home.

Striving for Perfection

In the story the author uses several characters who are far from perfect to gather the sacred scriptures and bring them to China. The author never suggests they are perfect,



and Buddha doesn't expect them to be perfect but to strive for perfection. When the Stone Monkey is released from the Mountain of the Five Elements by Tripitaka, he kills several men that jump out of the forest to attack them. When he kills the men Tripitaka is upset with him but points out very clearly that the Stone Monkey has the ability to do better and must try.

Each of the characters have things about them that are flaws. Even Tripitaka, who is the religious leader of the group, has flaws and is quick to break down and despair when things go badly. Even after they are accepted into paradise by Buddha the reader sees that they are not "perfect" but are able to work toward that goal. It becomes especially evident with Pigsy when he asks as to why he was not given the title of Buddha when their quest was complete. Even though he is not labeled as perfect at this point he is given credit for the attempt towards perfection that he makes.



Style

Point of View

The story is told in third person in the past tense. The author gives the reader a point of view that is both limited and omniscient. It is omniscient when it is necessary to give the reader a clear view of the intentions and meaning of what is occurring. For instance Pigsy and Monkey are often playing tricks on each other and planning them out in their heads. When they go to the city of Crow-cock, Monkey tricks Pigsy into going down into the well telling him there is a treasure to retrieve when in fact it was a dead body. On the way back the author gives the reader insight into Pigsy's thoughts so the reader will be aware of the trick that Pigsy is planning for Monkey when they return. The plan unfolds so quickly once it starts that the reader would have had a hard time realizing what was happening had the author not given some insight into the thought process.

The author doesn't make the main characters omniscient but for the most part the readers are aware of what Tripitaka and the Stone Monkey are thinking. The point of view is very helpful to the reader in understanding drive and emotion for each of those involved in the tale.

Setting

The story takes place on both the normal plane of existence on Earth and in Heaven, as well as some other mythical places. The places on Earth that the story takes place that are real are given a fantasy makeup that make them surreal and at times hard to understand. The main characters start on their way to India from China to get the sacred scrolls from Buddha. They are beset by ogres, dragons, Immortals and other monsters. Even things that should have normal qualities, such as water, will prove to be very different from our reality. There are a number of instances of "non-reality" such as when Monkey is able to go down and have a cup of tea with the dragon king that lives in the ocean and when Tripitaka is taken captive by a sea monster and is able to breath, even though he has no magical powers.

The book was written as a folk novel in Chinese and the setting incorporates much of the far eastern culture and beliefs. While the setting creates a world unfamiliar to the reader, it is very colorful and entertaining.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning in the story are very formal which at times it is a little stiff. The author wrote the book in the 1500's in China. There are points in the story where the reader may have to look at the notes provided by the translator to understand what has been said. There are jokes that are not caught by the reader without the notes, and



if the reader is unfamiliar with the legends, beliefs, and customs of the people in the east, there will be words and phrases that are lost to understanding.

While the language is formal it becomes easier after the reader has spent some time reading part of the book. The meanings in the book will constantly refer back to terms associated with Buddhism and other culture references as well as social situations that may be hard to understand. There are times when the characters explain that they didn't bow properly or something that may appear very minor to the reader but that causes a seemingly harsh reaction. For instance there is a man in the story that speaks harshly to his wife for standing outside, and because he spoke harshly to her, she went and hung herself leaving him with two small children. He begins to feel bad for talking harshly to her and drinks some poison. If the reader doesn't understand the culture and the place that women occupied and the honor associated with family, it is difficult to understand why she killed herself. Meaning revolves around the social culture and the times.

Structure

Monkey is three-hundred and six pages long and divided into thirty chapters. The chapters are in roman numerals, and within the story there are only the roman numerals labeling each chapter. If the reader looks to the front contents table, it is seen that the author put the book into groups that have very little to do with the actual chapters. For instance the author has chapter 1-7 are labeled as "The Monkey's Story" and then chapter 8 is called "Kuan-Yin's Mission."

The story was originally written in Chinese, and the author that translated the story has given us notes to help where the translation loses something for the reader. The reader may find it hard to follow some parts of the story since there are very few breaks for paragraphs in the story. If the reader is unsure which character is talking, it may be worth the time to go back because the next character to speak will not start on the next line but directly behind the preceding character. The lack of break in the dialog makes it hard to follow at times, but the overall effect of the story is enjoyable.



Quotes

"This determination it was that led him to leap clear of the toils of Re-incarnation and turned him at last into the Great Monkey Sage, equal of Heaven." Chapter 1:page 14-15

"Let us send a rescript, commanding him to appear in Heaven. We will then give him official work of some kind, so that his name will appear on our rolls, and we shall be able to keep an eye on him here." Chapter 3: page 42

"Monkey was brought to the place of execution, where heavenly soldiers bound him to a pillar and began to hew him with axes, stab him with spears, slash him with swords. But all this had no effect whatever, and presently the Southern Pole-star sent for the spirits of the Fire Stars to come and set him alight; but they were quite unable to burn him." Chapter 7:page 72

"Hearing that the Emperor T'ai Tsuang was celebrating a great Mass, and that the ceremony was being directed by that River Float with whose birth she had herself been connected, 'Who,' she asked herself, 'could be better fitted for that mission than he?'" Chapter 12:page 113

"Not long ago the Bodhisattva Kuan-yin, whom Buddha had ordered to look around for someone to fetch Scriptures from India, came here and promised me that if I would amend my ways and faithfully protect the pilgrim on his way, I was to be released, and afterwards would find salvation." Chapter 14:page 126-127

"Having put the king upon his throne, Tripitaka and his disciples were anxious to start out again as soon as possible." Chapter 22:page 211

"With him is a disciple named the Great Sage Equal to Heaven, who has great magic powers, which he uses to right the wrongs of the oppressed." Chapter 22:page 217

"We're no Blessed Trinity, but priests, from China. And what you have been drinking if not the Water of Life, but just our piss!" Chapter 23:page 225-226

"'Tripitaka,' he added, 'is of such sanctity that anyone who ate the least scrap of his flesh would live forever.'" Chapter 26:page 261

"'Considering,' said Monkey, 'how often you have insisted upon prostrating yourself at the sight of false magicians' palaces and arch impostors' lairs, it is strange that when at last you see before you Buddha's true citadel, you should not even dismount from your horse.'" Chapter 28:page 279

"He had discarded his earthly body; he was cleansed from the corruption of the senses, from the fleshly inheritance of those bygone years. His was now the transcendent wisdom that leads to the Further Shore, the mastery that knows no bounds." Chapter 29:page 282



"Meanwhile the four pilgrims and the white horse were carried back to Paradise by the eight Vajrapanis, and counting up the whole time taken by their going and coming, it proved that the whole journey had barely taken the eight stipulated days." Chapter 30:page 302



Topics for Discussion

Do you think that the Stone Monkey truly changed from his ways? Why or Why not?

Do you believe the Stone Monkey will again cause mischief and trouble since he has gained admittance to Buddha's paradise? Why?

The Emperor of Crow-cock was thrown in the well by the blue haired lion by orders of Buddha because of his treatment of the Bodhisattva. Do you think that his punishment was harsh? Do the customs of the story setting have an effect on your decision? Explain your answer.

Do you think Pigsy was wrong to have taken the girl at the farm as his wife even though he was helping out? Why?

Ch'en O was killed by Lui and his wife went with Lui to save the life of her child. Do you think ill of her for leaving her child in the river with the hopes that Heaven would have mercy on it? Why?

Sandy doesn't have a large part in the story, talking only once in a while. The dragon king's son never talks after he is changed into a horse and isn't called a pilgrim but the horse. Why do you think these two characters took a more subdued persona in the story?

Kuan-yin warns Tripitaka's mother that he is no normal child and that she must save his life. What do you think Tripitaka exhibits that proves that Kuan-yin was right? Why?