

Iron and silk essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

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Chapter 1

The first chapter describes the hassles four people have to go through to get to Changsha, China. Within the train stations and airports, they are trampled by different people clearly looking to make money off the ignorance of foreigners. The narrator is the main character and his motivation for being there is unclear. He did state the other three people were there to teach English. It is assumed that they are all from the states. Many people in the train station want to take advantage of them and prohibit them to get where they want to go with different regulations and clearly made-up rules.

Eventually, they do arrive in Changsha and get a warm greeting from people in charge of foreign affairs at the university they are working with. They took an eye-opening van ride to the university where they were greeted by top-notch university administration. For the rest of the chapter, the narrator and his friends get acclimated with the university and went out into the city for a small historical tour.

Chapter 2

In chapter two, the only main character is introduced and spoken upon. He is there to teach English at Hunan Medical College in Changsha for 2 years.

We learn how he got there and that he had always been in love with Chinese culture since he was a little kid. Chapter two outlines the daily life of the narrator. He is a teacher and teaches many different age groups but usually older people. Within the chapter, he develops a close relationship with the

other teachers and faculty members. He really enjoys his job and the students he teaches.

Chapter 3

From chapter three on the book is divided up into different small segments within each chapter.

As you read you realize that each section is a different story or different experience he had in China that taught him a lesson on culture or various other things. For example, one of the stories in chapter three was told about a woman in the community who had committed suicide and the community was trying to figure out who was at fault. Was it solely the person who committed suicide's fault or did the family life have something to do with it. Eventually they found that it was personal and none of the family was punished.

But just a story like this is told by the narrator to show different aspects of Chinese culture.

Chapter 4

In chapter 3 we are introduced to a character named Pan who is a martial Arts teacher and after not being impressed by the narrator's martial arts skills, he agreed to teach him. As the lessons carried on through chapter 4 it was evident that Pan was serious about his work and teachings. Pan was a legend in the area for his skills in his respective field. He invited the narrator over for dinner one day and told him the only thing he asked of him was to learn English.

Pan had his own way of learning English and while it was not the English teachers normal way of teaching, he copped with it. It was a good chapter because it showed the bond Chinese people can have with Americans of two people trying to achieve two different goals through the same median. There was also a story about the short story “ the lottery” in chapter 4 where a young girl questioned the motives of American authors and their imaginations. It sparked a heavy and opinionated conversation.

Chapter 5

In chapter 5 the training exercises are on the back burner because of different agencies in China that did not agree with the lessons. Also, Pan was world renowned and traveled a lot so it hindered practice time. They were booted out of the training facility because he was a foreigner and the deep caliber of their lessons no longer really existed. We find out that the narrator loves to return home during the summer in New York where he resides when he is in the states. he is also introduced to a man by the name of Teacher Hei or teacher black.

Teacher Hei is a wushu teacher just like Pan is, and would be happy to assist the narrator in his studies and training. In the remainder of the chapter Teacher Hei begins to instruct Wushu to the narrator and eventually the narrator ends up going to teacher Hie’s home with him.

Chapter 6

In chapter six we have a strange encounter which is somewhat hard to interpret. The narrator met a man at a meeting that wanted to borrow some books for the purpose of translation. He took old American novels and translated them into Chinese.

He wanted some novels that the narrator had but returned them quickly and said they are not considered suitable for Chinese culture. A lot of them were inappropriate and could get the translator in a lot of trouble. He did find one novel though, by the name of *The World according to Garp*, and upon reading it, said it was the most inappropriate novel he had ever read. But upon the narrator asking him if he liked it, the man asked if he could keep it. There was also another encounter on a train where a man was talking about seeing his mom after not being able to see her for a long time.

The man's friend told him it was rude to talk about seeing family around foreigners because they were far from home. I think it was a hint on how homesick the narrator might be.

Chapter 7

In chapter seven we learn that Pan has many health issues that he has decided to ignore. He continues on with training the national team as well as training the narrator. Pan sits down with the narrator and asked him one thing he wanted to learn before he left. The narrator responded a type of wushu he had seen Pan using one day with a long sword. Pan agreed, but told him if he messed it up it would make Pan very very sad.

Also in chapter 7 we are introduced to a man that is very sickly but loves calligraphy. We were told at the beginning of the story that the narrator himself was very interested in calligraphy. The sickly wrote the narrator a letter and started teaching him calligraphy. After a couple lessons though, the man fell into a coma and was in the hospital at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 8

In the final chapter the story ends with his last training session with Pan. As he was packing up the last night Pan showed up in his room and they departed for their last training sessions.

Pan presented him with the long sword, and they trained for many hours. At the end, Pan's final gift to him was the long sword and they both were going back home. The teacher's time in China had come to an end and Pan was returning to his home land in North China. I think the book overall was the narrators experience in China and how much he learned about them and about himself. He had always loved the culture, but was scared and never wanted to travel there. After he finally did, he had the experience of a lifetime.