



Oregon
Shakespeare
Festival.

2018 Study Guide

GHOST MONTH



Hungry Ghost

Ghost Month falls generally in the seventh lunar month (late summer), with the Ghost Festival (Zhongyuan Festival) usually occurring on the 15th day of the month.

Don'ts of Ghost Month:

- Do not stay out late at night
- Do not travel by land, air, or sea
- Do not step on or kick an offering made for the ancestors or ghosts by a road
- Do not move into a new house or get new furniture
- Do not curse or swear
- Do not place your child on the offering altar
- Do not whistle or sing at night
- Do not swim
- Do not get married

Common Traditions in Chinese Funerals

- Burn paper versions of items such as cars, electronic devices such as iPads, money, or food for the dead to receive in the afterlife.
- Entertainment is sometimes provided to help guide or please the spirit.
- Traditional garb is worn during the funeral and burned after.



Traditional Chinese funeral clothing

Snow in Midsummer

by Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig

Based on the classical Chinese drama *The Injustice to Dou Yi That Moved Heaven and Earth* by Guan Hanqing



Guan Hanqing (ca.1245-ca. 1322)

GUAN HANQING

- He wrote the zaju (a form of Chinese drama or opera) play *Gan Tian Dong Di Dou E Yuan*, translated to *The Injustice to Dou Yi That Moved Heaven and Earth*, or sometimes published as *Snow in Midsummer*.
- Guan Hanqing was born in the thirteenth century, approximately 1245. He lived in the Yen-ching district, now known as Beijing.
- Hanqing wrote *Snow in Midsummer* to consist of four sequences of song sets, and like traditional zaju, it holds about a dozen songs with dialogue interwoven.



Frances Ya-Chu Cowhig

FRANCES YA-CHU COWHIG

- She was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and raised in Northern Virginia, Okinawa, Taipei, and Beijing.
- She received an MFA in Writing from the James A. Michener Center for Writers at UT Austin, a BA in Sociology from Brown University, and a certificate in Ensemble-Based Physical Theatre from the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre.
- Cowhig is currently a member of the Theater and Dance faculty at UC Santa Barbara.
- Cowhig was commissioned under the Royal Shakespeare Company to adapt Hanqing's *Snow in Midsummer*, which premiered in February 2017 in the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.

Before seeing the play

1. Research the Chinese symbol of “double happiness” and its meaning. These and other websites provide information:
<https://www.thoughtco.com/story-behind-the-double-happiness-symbol-4077077>.
<http://gotheborg.com/glossary/doublehappiness.shtml>



Double Happiness Symbol

2. Dou Yi mentions she wove dragons and phoenixes for her wedding. Research what dragons and phoenixes represent in Chinese culture. Research the association between dragons and water in Chinese culture. These and other websites provide information:
http://en.chinaculture.org/chineseway/2014-07/31/content_553822.htm#:~:text=In%20China%2C%20the%20fictional%20dragon,the%20%22Four%20Supernatural%20Spirits.%22&text=During%20times%20of%20drought%2C%20dragons,rain%20and%20cleared%20the%20skies
[https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/dragon_dance.htm#:~:text=Chinese%20Dragons%20\(%E9%BE%8D%20\(%E9%BE%99\)%3B,to%20scare%20away%20evil%20spirits](https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/dragon_dance.htm#:~:text=Chinese%20Dragons%20(%E9%BE%8D%20(%E9%BE%99)%3B,to%20scare%20away%20evil%20spirits)



Chinese Dragon

3. Research what locusts represent in Chinese culture. These and other websites provide information:
<https://asia.si.edu/cicadas/#:~:text=The%20cicada's%20role%20in%20Chinese,such%20as%20rebirth%20and%20immortality>
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/invertebrates/facts/locusts>

4. *Snow in Midsummer* takes place in New Harmony, a fictional factory town in China. Research the conditions of factory workers in China. This and other websites provide information:
<https://www.npr.org/2013/11/15/243717512/what-are-the-lives-of-chinese-factory-workers-really-like>
<https://www.cnn.com/2015/02/23/asia/china-migrant-worker-photographer/index.html>

5. Research ghost month. What is forbidden during ghost month? What is encouraged during ghost month? What is the purposes of burning paper items and paper money? These and other websites provide information:
<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/china-ghost-festival-burning-money>
<https://says.com/my/lifestyle/things-you-should-not-do-on-hungry-ghost-festival>
<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/cosmos/bgov/intro.htm>

6. Research some of the effects of the Cultural Revolution. This and other websites provide information:
<https://www.history.com/topics/cultural-revolution>

7. Research ischemia. This and other websites provide information:
<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/about-heart-attacks/silent-ischemia-and-ischemic-heart-disease>

8. Research organ trafficking of executed prisoners in China. These and other websites provide information:
https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/in-the-face-of-criticism-china-has-been-cleaning-up-its-organ-transplant-industry/2017/09/14/d689444e-e1a2-11e6-a419-eefe8eff0835_story.html?noredirect=on
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/china-still-gathering-organs-executed-prisoners>
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/does-china-harvest-organs-from-living-prisoners>

9. Research the one-child policy in China, why it was established and the effects it had on the citizens of China. These and other websites provide information:
<https://www.npr.org/2018/07/16/629361870/despite-the-end-of-chinas-one-child-policy-births-are-still-lagging>
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/20/opinion/china-women-birthrate-rights.html>

10. Research the Goddess of Mercy and what it represents. These and other websites provide information:
http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/Chinese_Customs/Guan_Yin.htm
<https://mythopedia.com/chinese-mythology/gods/guanyin/>

11. Research the origin and roles of Horse-Face and Ox-Head. These and other websites provide information:
http://research-china.blogspot.com/2006/04/chinese-underworld_22.html
<https://ferrebeekkeeper.wordpress.com/2012/09/05/horse-face-ox-head/>



Ox-Head and Horse-Face costume rendering by Helen Q. Huang.

After seeing the play

1. The play mentions the drought many times. Why do people believe the drought exists? What are some of the results of the three-year drought? What are the many consequences of drought?
2. Refer to your research on ischemia. In what ways is the heart a metaphor in the play? Who has “heart”? Who is led by their heart, and who has no heart? What are the pros and cons of having or not having heart? Why does Rocket have his heart ripped from him? What does it symbolize? What are the results of these conditions of the heart?

3. In what ways is New Harmony harmonious, and in what ways is it not?

4. Who has the most privilege or status in New Harmony? What gives them their status or privilege? Who benefits in this community, and who suffers because of it? What is the status of Rocket? Handsome? Nurse Wong? Master Zhang? How do they benefit or suffer because of their status? How does Dou Yi suffer in her community because of her status?

5. Who or what is responsible for the drought? In what ways are the characters responsible? Dou Yi? In what ways is Dou Yi not responsible? Who has the ultimate responsibility for the drought?

6. Refer to your research on organ trafficking of prisoners. Why does Rocket feel like he should not be alive anymore? How does knowing about Dou Yi’s heart affect him for the rest of the play? Why is Rocket upset about not giving consent to Handsome for the heart transplant? How is the concept of consent explored through Rocket’s heart transplant? In what ways are Handsome’s actions justified? In what ways are they not?

FACTORY WORKERS IN CHINA TODAY:

- The average factory worker makes about \$1.38 an hour and works an average of 68.3 hours a week.
- Depending on the size of the factory, it can employ between 2,700 and 4,200 people.
- Factory workers make about \$429 a month and work about 88 hours of overtime in a month.



Factory workers in China

7. What does it mean in the play for a person to not be buried when they die? Who is buried in the play? Who is not buried? In what ways is Dou Yi buried? Not buried? Rocket? Handsome? What is the community buried under? In what ways is the community not buried?

8. Why is it hard for some of the members of the community to let go of their roots? In what way is the notion of roots symbolic in the play? How does the drought contribute?

9. Refer to your research on factories in China. What responsibilities does Tianyun have to save her workers? Who else is she responsible for? What responsibility does she have to save the town? How does her responsibility change through the course of the play and why?

10. What is the relationship between Tianyun and Fei-Fei? What is the relationship between Fei-Fei and Dou Yi? In what ways does the relationship Tianyun has with Fei-Fei help with the relationship she has with Dou Yi?



Dou Yi costume rendering
designed by Helen Q. Huang.



Fei-Fei and Tianyun costume renderings
designed by Helen Q. Huang.

11. What does Doctor Lu do to justify his actions? In what ways is he justified? In what ways is he not? What are the consequences of his actions?

12. How is the bond between mother and child presented in the play? Who are the mothers in the play? Who are their children? How far are mothers willing to go to protect their children? Why does Nurse Wong betray Dou Yi?

13. How far are the characters willing to go for the people they love? Who goes too far? How far does Dou Yi go? Fei-Fei? Tianyun? Handsome? Rocket? Nurse Wong?

14. If you have seen a play performed live before, how was your experience different watching a video recording? Were there things you missed about a live performance? Were there things you discovered about the play and your experience as an audience member while watching a video recording?

15. If you have never seen a play performed live before, what do you think might have been different about your experience watching this production on a screen?



Goddess of Mercy designed by
Laura Jellinek.

GODDESS OF MERCY

- Known as Guan Yin, or Kuan Yin
- Name means “Observing the sounds or cries of the human world”
- Patron of seamen and goddess of kindness, mercy, and compassion
- Goddess is genderless

YIN AND YANG



Yin energy can represent (but is not limited to) negative, moon, dark, earth, passive, water, below, cold, and growth, etc.

Yang energy can represent (but is not limited to) positive, sun, light, heaven, active, fire, above, heat, generation, etc.

During ghost month it is believed one must keep the Yang energy strong in order to avoid interference from ghosts. Some ways to keep the Yang energy strong include not shaving or clipping one’s nails.

Below: 2018 *Snow in Midsummer* set model. Scenic design by Laura Jellinek.



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