

**SELECTION FROM THE CLASSIC OF ODES:  
I BEG OF YOU, CHUNG TZU (ODE 8)**

**Introduction**

The *Classic of Odes* (also known as the “Book of Songs”) is a compilation of popular and aristocratic songs dating from the early Zhou period. The popular songs are said to have been collected on the orders of the early Zhou kings as a way of gauging the feelings of their subjects. Thus, even the songs that are thought to have their roots in folk songs and poetry are likely to have been modified by a scholarly official and may not be in their original form. Nonetheless, the songs give us a rich and varied view of the lives and concerns of commoners and of the elite of the Zhou dynasty. The compilation had taken on roughly the form that we see today by 544 BCE.

**Selected Document Excerpts with Questions**

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*Selection from the Classic of Odes:  
I Beg of You, Chung Tzu (Ode 8)*

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,  
Do not climb into our homestead,  
Do not break the willows we have planted.  
Not that I mind about the willows,  
But I am afraid of my father and mother.  
Chung Tzu I dearly love;  
But of what my father and mother say  
Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,  
Do not climb over our wall,  
Do not break the mulberry-trees we have planted.  
Not that I mind about the mulberry-trees,  
But I am afraid of my brothers.  
Chung Tzu I dearly love;  
But of what my brothers say  
Indeed I am afraid.

**Primary Source Document, with Questions (DBQs) on  
SELECTION FROM THE CLASSIC OF ODES: I BEG OF YOU, CHUNG TZU (ODE 8)**

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,  
Do not climb into our garden,  
Do not break the hard-wood we have planted.  
Not that I mind about the hard-wood,  
But I am afraid of what people will say.  
Chung Tzu I dearly love;  
But of all that people will say  
Indeed I am afraid.

*[Translated by Arthur Waley]*

**Questions:**

1. What is the point of view of the speaker in this poem? What can you deduce about the speaker's gender, age, and family status?
2. What is the speaker most afraid of? Why? What does this indicate about the nature of the speaker's culture and society?
3. What do you think would happen if Chung Tzu did not heed the speaker's entreaties and did climb over the wall, breaking willows, mulberry trees, and hardwoods in the process?
4. Does the situation described in the poem have any resonance with or relevance to contemporary situations?