



# The Teaching Path of “Will” in Poetry

## Taking “Jiangnan” and “Lang Tao Sha” as Examples

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**Abstract.** The “will” in “poems expressing wills” has two connotations of emotion and ambition. In the teaching of ancient poetry, where does “will” come from? How can teachers lead students to deeply grasp “will”? Teachers can “read” through “demonstrating reading”, “reading together”, “self-reading”, and “performing reading”, or “appreciate” through “appreciating alone”, “guiding to appreciate” and “appreciating equally”, or “discuss” through “knowing the people and discussing the world” and “talking a lot without scruple”, or “perform” through “role-playing” supported by the theory of embodied cognition. They can “read”, “appreciate”, “discuss” and “perform” the “will” in the poems in multiple ways so as to make the teaching of ancient poetry increasingly living, gamified, contextualized, and profound.

**Keywords:** Poems expressing wills · Poetry teaching · Appreciating reading · Performing reading · Knowing the people and discussing the world

## 1 Introduction

Poetry is a movement that expresses the author’s aspirations, which needs to be sung for a long time. Poetry is a form of expression of people’s emotional will, it is emotional will when embraced in the heart, and it is poetry when expressed in language. Therefore, “will” in “poems expressing wills” has two connotations of emotion and aspiration. In the teaching of ancient poetry, where does “will” come from?

## 2 “Will” Comes from Reading

“Reading” means to read according to the text, to read a book, to study, etc. The “will” in poetry teaching can be “read” from various paths such as “demonstrating reading”, “reading together”, “self-reading”, and “performing reading”.

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## 2.1 Demonstrating Reading

Demonstrating reading is to demonstrate reading. In the lesson “Jiangnan” in the first volume of the first grade, the teacher used the incidental music to demonstrate reading after explaining the new words. With the beautiful incidental music as the background, the teacher displayed photos of Jiangnan on the big screen, making the students feel as if they were in the lotus leaves in the south of the Yangtze River to watch and play with fish, which could be beneficial for students to enter the situation created by the text and better feel the “will”. In the lesson “Lang Tao Sha”, after the teacher guided the reading, he demonstrated reading with incidental music, let the students close their eyes to feel and imagine and asked the students to talk about what pictures they thought of and where they experienced the majestic breath of the Yellow River. Demonstrating reading can be performed by the teacher personally demonstrating to the students, or teachers can play the audio and video of the famous scholars’ reading for the students to imitate and learn. Demonstrating reading should be carried out in a recital way, paying attention to rhythm, emphasizing emotions, and paying attention to the artistic conception. It pays attention to the rhythm, requires accurate pronunciation and pauses, emphasizes emotions and pays attention to the artistic conception, and requires corresponding expressions and actions. Teachers can play appropriate video materials, create a recitation field, impact students’ senses, and stimulate interest in imitation. Being in a specific situation, students can imitate the reading vividly, so as to obtain a more realistic learning cognition and help to develop the habit of reciting.

## 2.2 Reading Together

Reading together means that students read jointly. Reading together helps students feel the rhythm of poetry and the rhythm of reading aloud. In the lesson “Lang Tao Sha”, teachers used the method of reading together many times. First, students read the text for the first time, and then the teacher demonstrated to read. The students thought about where the majestic momentum of the Yellow River was written in the text. Finally, after the teacher cleared the main idea of the poem, the students read the text together in understanding. The biggest advantage of reading together is that students dare to read aloud under the influence of their peers in a group reading atmosphere. “Reading aloud can make people concentrate their thoughts, integrate into the situation, and feel awe; if they are familiar with memorization, they can imprint documents into their memory, which is effective for understanding the original text, accumulating knowledge, improving Chinese literacy and writing ability, and can achieve lifelong learning beneficial” [1]. Teachers can also choose students to read aloud in groups and students can supervise each other to improve the reading efficiency, and jointly find an accurate reading direction and reading method.

## 2.3 Self-reading

“Let the students learn by themselves, let the text material fully stimulate the students’ sensory organs, and allow the students to fully perceive and fully obtain information.

The extent to which students can perceive is completely determined by their own accumulation, and teachers do not have to force consistency” [2]. The most important part of stimulating reading experience is self-reading, because self-reading is both a process of inquiry learning and a process of discovery learning. Students’ self-reading is a necessary blank time in the classroom. During self-reading, students can annotate, excerpt good words and sentences, compare different poems, and earnestly understand the background of poem creation. In the lesson “Lang Tao Sha”, the teacher compared and analyzed the language characteristics after showing Li Bai and Wang Zhihuan’s famous ancient poems describing the Yellow River. Then, the students pondered why the common feature of these poems about the Yellow River was their majestic momentum. What rhetorical devices were used in these verses? What was the purpose of writing like this? Through self-reading and comparing different verses, students not only felt the language characteristics of this poem, but also learned the writing skills of ancient poems.

## 2.4 Performing Reading

The intuitive “performing reading” of the text will help students to deeply perceive and experience the “will” in the poem. “Performing reading requires prerequisites and it is an improvement process from externalization to internalization and then to externalization. In essence, performing reading is the process of converting the situation described in the text into an inner picture on the basis of the students’ familiarity and internalization of the external text, and then performing this picture as an active scene. This is performatively a process from reading to emotional experience and then externalizing the situation” [3]. In the lesson of “Jiangnan”, the teacher asked the students to discuss in groups and choose their favourite performance style to read. The first group was students clapping their hands to read, and after one student finished reading, the other three students clapped their hands for encouragement. The second group consisted of two students clapping their hands and two students pretended to swim as if they were little fish. This novel, unique, contagious and flexible way of performing reading enables students to have a deeper understanding of the “will” of this poem.

## 3 “Will” Comes from Appreciating

Poetry is a concise language art with extremely high aesthetic value. Every single word or phrase in the poem uses verbs to make the whole picture lively and flexible from point to area, or uses rhetorical devices to describe the shape and demeanor of the scene, or uses rhetorical questions to express the author’s helpless and sorrowful will. In order to fully comprehend the poet’s “will”, teachers need to lead the students step by step in appreciating word, sentence, tone, meaning, emotion, etc. Appreciating word is inseparable from appreciating sentence, and appreciating sentence involves the intonation and tone of the sentence, as well as the “will” that fills the words. How does “will” come from appreciating?

### 3.1 Appreciating Alone

Appreciating alone is to appreciate poems by students alone as the main body. Before class, students appreciate the poem alone and teachers need to guide students to combine after-class annotations and learning guides, etc. In the class, the teacher gives the students a certain amount of time after clearing the main idea of the poem, so that the students can understand the artistic conception with the help of their senses. “At this time, teachers can use various advanced teaching techniques, such as allowing students to listen to poetry recitation audio, appreciate poetry and calligraphy, use multimedia courseware, and enjoy movies, TV, and dramas related to the poem, etc. With the help of various methods, students can better feel the beauty of artistic conception and rich emotions in poetry, and then they can strengthen their understanding of the aesthetic aspects of poetry, making the whole Chinese teaching method more flexible and diverse, and giving the teaching content more delights of life” [4]. The emotions and aspirations of poems require students to recite and appreciate them repeatedly during or after class. Students should realize the reorganization of the knowledge structure based on the existing life experience, combined with the pictures and images presented in the classroom, in order to comprehend the “will” highlighted in the poetic artistic conception.

### 3.2 Guiding to Appreciate

Guiding to appreciate refers that teachers need to give students some guidance on appreciation methods. “Appreciating word” means to appreciate and refine the word and to grasp its connotation from the aspects of literal meaning, contextual meaning (deep meaning), part of speech, rhetoric and expression effect. The methods of comparison and substitution can be used to appreciate the expression effect of a certain word. Poets often empathize with objects. Teachers should also guide students to appreciate the expression techniques such as borrowing scenes to express emotions, blending feelings with the natural setting, and integrating emotions into scenes and to appreciate the “will” with the help of the beauty of pictures and artistic conception. In the lesson of “Jiangnan”, the teacher grasped the word “戏” (play) in “鱼戏莲叶间” (fish playing among the lotus leaves) and led the students to appreciate the “will” in the poem. What was good about the word “戏”? How about replacing “戏” with other words such as “鱼游莲叶间 (fish swimming among the lotus leaves)” or “鱼在莲叶间 (fish among the lotus leaves)”? After the students analyzed in a comparative way, they determined that the word “戏” could best illustrate that the fish drifted happily and easily in the water, swimming freely to all directions, instead of a group of fish chaotically shuttling and skittering around in the water. As a result, the poet’s joyful “will” was naturally realized in the teacher’s “guiding to appreciate”.

### 3.3 Appreciating Equally

Appreciating equally means that teachers and students are both poetry appreciators. Teachers are the leaders and organizers of students’ collective activities and are the “chiefs of equality”. They fully respect students, give students enough right to speak, and communicate with students on an equal and full scale. In the lesson “Lang Tao

Sha”, the teacher asked: Can you tell me what the Chinese Yellow River looks like? The teacher analyzed poetry with students in an immerse manner through dialogue.

## 4 “Will” Comes from Discussing

“Discussion” has the meaning of analyzing and judging the reason, evaluating, and viewing. In order to comprehend the rich “will” in Chinese cultural poetry, learn the beautiful emotions and correct values in “will”, and practice the noble sentiments and aspirations in “will”, it’s needed to know the people and discuss the world and talk a lot without scruple.

### 4.1 Knowing the People and Discussing the World

“Knowing the people” is to know the poets’ dynasties, life experiences and gains and losses, writing background and state of mind. “Discussing the world” means discussing the characteristics of the times of the poets’ social environment. The corruption, incompetence and greed for pleasure of the ruling class, the miserable lives of the common people, and the unfulfilled individual aspirations are the reasons for the poets’ laments. Therefore, Sima Qian once said that the more than 300 works in “The Book of Songs” were probably written by ancient sages and men of virtue in order to express the resentment in their hearts. If teachers fail to pay attention to “knowing the people and discussing the world”, students are likely to just learn from texts that are out of context. Students seem to be able to recite the entire text and complete the poetry dictation and even situational dictation required by the exam, but many of them fail to develop the thinking habit of “knowing the people and discussing the world”. This is not conducive to the development of core literacy such as “language construction and application”, “aesthetic appreciation and creation”, and “cultural inheritance and understanding” emphasized in the new curriculum standard. Moreover, students will not use the poems they have learned in future language expression and writing due to their uncertainty about the true meaning of the knowledge they have learned. Therefore, the poems that students have learned are often shelved, and students are unable to build a comprehensive knowledge structure and unable to learn a fuller philosophy of life from the study of ancient poetry.

How should teachers design the knowing the people and discussing the world” link to make it more conducive to trigger students’ thinking about “will”? Many Chinese teachers are accustomed to firstly introducing the poems and authors, then explaining the writing background, understanding the general idea of the poems, and finally summarizing the “will” of the poems. However, in order to have a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the poet’s “will”, teachers need to focus on guiding students to return to the source of “will” after understanding the general idea of the poem. In the lesson “Lang Tao Sha”, the students have already understood the general idea of the poem and the teacher will lead the students to compare the different descriptions of the Yellow River by different poets and investigate the reasons. After learning about Liu Yuxi’s life experience, students can feel that the scene in the poem is magnificent and the language is majestic, and these are all to set off and exaggerate the “will” is positive and optimistic. Students will know what it is and why it is.

## 4.2 Talking a Lot Without Scruple

“Talking a lot without scruple” means that in Chinese learning, teachers encourage students to talk freely. In order to fully stimulate the subjectivity of students in learning Chinese, teachers create a situation to encourage students to express independent ideas without any scruples and to interpret texts in a diversified manner.

The premise of students’ willingness to talk a lot without scruple is that students are interested in the learning content and have curiosity, and there is a learning atmosphere that encourages speaking and respects different viewpoints. To this end, teachers need to be amiable and persuasive.

First, teachers can promote students to discuss through the conversation method. Both the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates and the Chinese educator Confucius advocated that teachers should not give conclusions directly to students, but should use interactive questions and answers to encourage students to use judgment, analysis, reasoning, induction and other thinking methods to draw conclusions. Because what students discover by themselves is the most impressive and it is also the easiest to understand its internal laws, properties and connections. Chinese teachers can build scaffolding through questions to encourage students to think. Second, students can be guided to discuss through student evaluations. Students’ participation in evaluating the language and movements demonstrated by their classmates can greatly facilitate students’ generation of classroom experience. For example, in the lesson “Jiangnan”, students imitate the swimming movements of little fish. Teachers should give students the space to use their imagination, so that they can express different views on the specific movements of “swimming” through rich imagination and creativity. Other students can evaluate the classmates’ performance and reading and supplement the classmates’ answers. Third, teachers can examine students’ discussions through practical activities. Poets endow the text symbol and readers endow the cultural connotation. Teachers can use the activity to create opportunities for artistic creation. Teachers can ask students to rewrite poems into small plays, add pictures to poems or sing them in their favorite way, and add background music to poems, carry out creative expression by writing letters to characters in poems, etc., and guide students to deeply appreciate the artistic appeal and vitality of poems.

## 5 “Will” Comes from Performing

Students are the subjects who experience and comprehend role-playing. The “will” in “poems expressing wills” can also be obtained from “performing”. “Performing” is role-playing, which is supported by the theory of embodied cognition.

### 5.1 Role-Playing

The process of students restoring and reproducing the characters and objects, and emotions and aspirations in poetry is the process of conducting in-depth dialogue with the poet across time and space, it is also the process of fully excavating the emotions and aspirations contained in the text, and it is to experience the process of reading with three-dimensional experience such as vision, hearing and even touch. As good directors who

promote students' immersive performances, teachers should guide the "performers" to fully understand their roles. Teachers should continue to observe whether students enter into the spirit of a "role", understand students' degree of internalization of knowledge, and take appropriate measures to keep students' emotions, attitudes and values in the right direction.

In the lesson "Jiangnan", teachers and students imitated the swimming of fish and the class suddenly became lively. Role-playing is one of the experiential learning methods. Students can effectively appreciate the fish swimming happily in all directions instead of swimming chaotically, so as to experience the joyful "will" of the poet. The role-playing method is conducive to awakening students' subject consciousness, promoting students to extract information such as the action and emotion of the characteristics in the text, connect the old and new knowledge, incorporate it into the existing cognitive structure, and then interpret the role they understand. During this process, students may not be able to perform properly in expressions or actions due to lack of understanding. Teachers should give guidance.

## 5.2 The Theory of Embodied Cognition

The theory of embodied cognition can provide theoretical support and practical guidance for teachers to use role-playing method. "Embodied cognition holds that the human mind is the result of the interaction of the brain, body and environment. The body is not the container of the mind and the environment is not the place of activity of the mind. The mind is embedded in the brain, the brain is embedded in the body, and the body is embedded in the environment. Mind, brain, body and environment are an organic unity. Furthermore, the connotation of embodied cognition can be understood from three aspects. First, the state of the body directly affects the progress of cognition; second, the special sensory-motor channels of the brain and body play a pivotal role in the formation of cognition; third, not only the body but also all aspects of the environment should be involved in cognitive processing" [5]. Based on the theory of embodied cognition, the role-playing method should also pay attention to the interaction between the body and the environment, so as to gain a deeper understanding of learning. "Scenario simulations and role-playing boosted students' situational and emotional memory. From content conception, context, mood to artistic conception, step by step, scenario simulations and role-playing stimulate students to have a relatively strong emotional experience and transform the abstract memory of knowledge into situational and emotional memory. Generally speaking, situational and emotional memory of knowledge is more effective than abstract memory" [6]. The process of role-playing also helps students develop empathy, namely, gaining the ability to feel and understand the emotions of others and achieving the goal of "emotional attitudes and values" in the three-dimensional goal.

## 6 Conclusion

In order to urge students to fully and deeply understand the poet's "will" in expressing emotions and aspirations in poetry, Chinese teachers can guide students to appreciate

ancient poems from four aspects: “reading”, “appreciating”, “discussing” and “performing”, so as to make the teaching of ancient poetry increasingly living, gamified, contextualized, and profound.

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