

秋瑾

Autumn Gem

A Documentary on
Modern China's First Feminist



STUDY GUIDE

Last Updated: February 3, 2011

Rae Chang and Adam Tow
studyguide@autumn-gem.com
<http://autumn-gem.com/>

*With all my heart I beseech and beg
my two hundred million female compatriots
to assume their responsibility as citizens.
Arise! Arise! Chinese women, arise!*¹
- Qiu Jin

余願嘔心滴血以拜求之，
祈余二萬萬女同胞
無負此國民責任也。
速振！速振！女界其速振！
- 秋瑾



Explore the extraordinary life of modern China's first feminist Qiu Jin (1875-1907). A radical women's rights activist, Qiu Jin boldly challenged traditional gender roles and demanded equal rights and opportunities for women.

She attempted an armed uprising against the corrupt Qing Dynasty and became the first female martyr for China's 1911 Revolution. Compared to a "Chinese Joan of Arc," Qiu Jin emerged as a national heroine who is celebrated in the country today.

Using scholar interviews, archival materials, and dramatic recreation scenes based on her original writings, AUTUMN GEM brings the story of this remarkable woman to life. Qiu Jin left behind a large body of literary work, including nearly two hundred poems, essays, speeches, letters to family and friends, and an autobiographical novel. These works are used to create a more intimate portrait of the subject and provide deeper insight into her personal life.

Learn about the oppressive conditions imposed upon women during Qiu Jin's time and her struggle to break free of them. Follow her path from childhood as a privileged daughter of a gentry family, to a young woman forced into the traditional roles of marriage and motherhood, to her rejection of those roles and her transformation into a radical women's rights activist. See how she became involved in a rebellious plot to overthrow the last dynasty in China. Study the impact of her revolutionary sacrifice and the mythology that arose after her death.

In examining the life and work of Qiu Jin, AUTUMN GEM offers a fresh perspective on women in China and their struggle to achieve equality.

¹ Dooling, Amy and Torgeson, Kristina. *Writing Women in Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press 1998) p. 44.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the beginning of the twentieth century, China underwent a series of dramatic social and political changes. It saw an end to the dynasty system that had ruled for thousands of years and the emergence of a new republican form of government. Also during this period, for the first time in the country's history, small but vocal groups of women rose up and demanded equal rights and opportunities.

Qiu Jin was a seminal leader in both the revolutionary movement and the struggle for women's emancipation. An impassioned writer, orator, and educator, she dedicated herself to the fight for gender equality and the struggle to free the country from imperialism.

At a time when women's lives were marked by oppressive practices such as footbinding, arranged marriages, and denial of education, she envisioned a future where women would free themselves from the confines of tradition and arise as strong and active citizens of a new and modern nation.

Her radical ideology eventually led to her involvement in an attempted armed uprising against the government. Captured before she could carry out the plot, she was accused of treason and executed at the age of thirty-two, becoming the first female martyr for the revolutionary cause.

Qiu Jin is currently celebrated as a national heroine in China. Over a hundred years after her death, she remains a compelling and controversial figure who continues to inspire Chinese women today.

DVD CONTENTS

AUTUMN GEM is a 56-minute long HD video documentary featuring interviews with scholars from the U.S. and China, historical images, documents, and other archival materials, and dramatic recreation scenes based on Qiu Jin's original writings. The documentary is narrated in English and includes scholar commentary and dialogue in Chinese with English subtitles.

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. DOMESTIC DESPAIR: 1896 - 1903 Hunan
3. A COUNTRY IN CRISIS: 1903 Beijing
4. DAWN OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT: 1903 Beijing
5. SEEDS OF REVOLUTION: 1904 Japan
6. HEROINE RISING: 1906 Shaoxing
7. LEGACY

TIMELINE

1842 First Opium War - Great Britain defeats China in major military conflict. First of several Unequal Treaties signed. The war marked the end of the country's isolation from the Western world and is often used to signify the beginning of modern Chinese history.



1844 First school for girls in China started by foreign missionaries.

1860 Second Opium War - China defeated by Great Britain and France.



1875 Qiu Jin is born in Fujian Province.

1895 Japan defeats China in Sino-Japanese War.
Qiu Jin moves to Hunan Province where her father serves as official.

1896 Qiu Jin is married to Wang Tingjun in Hunan Province.



1897 Qiu Jin's son is born.

1898 Hundred Days' Reform Movement - Major social and political reform movement initiated by the Guangxu Emperor to modernize and strengthen the country. Reformers questioned the oppressed status of women and linked it to China's weakness. There was a push to ban footbinding and expand women's education. The movement came to a quick end when when the Empress Dowager Cixi, who opposed the changes, staged a coup against the Guanxu Emperor.



First school for girls established by the Chinese opens in Shanghai.

Boxer Rebellion - Domestic uprising led by Fists of Righteous Harmony (also called the Boxers) begins.

1901 Defeat of Boxer Rebellion by Eight-Nation Alliance. Foreign armies occupy Beijing.



Qiu Jin's daughter is born.

1903 Qiu Jin and her family move to Beijing.



1904 Qiu Jin leaves her family to study in Japan. Revives Humanitarian Society (共愛會) - women's organization promoting education and political engagement. Publishes articles in *Vernacular Journal* (白話報), devoted to radical politics.

1905 Qiu Jin is introduced to revolutionary leader Xu Xilin. Sun Yat-sen establishes Revolutionary Alliance in Tokyo. Qiu Jin meets Sun Yat-sen in Japan. Joins Revolutionary Alliance and is elected leader of Zhejiang Province chapter. Begins writing semi-autobiographical novel *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* (精衛石).



1906 Qiu Jin returns to China. Works with women's organizations and revolutionary groups in Shanghai and Shaoxing. Teaches Japanese and physical education at Nanxun Girls' School in Zhejiang Province. Meets fellow activist Xu Zihua.



Publishes *Chinese Women's Journal* (中國女報) in Shanghai.

Becomes principal of Datong School in Shaoxing, a recruiting and training center for revolutionaries.



1907 Qing government creates charter for first public girls' schools. Qiu Jin and Xu Xilin plan armed uprising against Qing government.

July 6: Xu Xilin assassinates Governor of Anhui Province.

July 13: Qiu Jin arrested at Datong School.

July 15: Qiu Jin executed in Shaoxing.



1911 Revolutionary Alliance succeeds in overthrowing Qing Dynasty, ending over 2000 years of imperial rule in China.

1912 Government of the Republic of China established. Sun Yat-sen elected provisional president.

Formal funeral for Qiu Jin conducted by Sun Yat-sen held at West Lake, Hangzhou.



1930 Memorial to the Martyr Qiu Jin built at execution site.

1950's Qiu Jin's family home converted to historical museum.

1981 Statue of Qiu Jin built at West Lake tomb site.



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Qiu Jin lived during the end of the Qing Dynasty, a period of great social and political change in China. Wars and conflicts against foreign powers created massive chaos. Domestic rebellions further disrupted the country. Yet during this time of uncertainty and upheaval, opportunities arose for women to challenge their traditional place in society.

KEY CONCEPTS/FIGURES

1. Women warriors

Hua Mulan - Legendary heroine who joins the army to fight in her father's place. Disguised as a man, she serves for several years in battle while her comrades remain unaware of her true gender. The story of Mulan, originally written in the 5th or 6th century, has since become a classic folk tale in China.



Qin Liangyu (1574 - 1648) - Late Ming Dynasty woman general, considered one of the highest ranking female officials in Chinese history. She accompanied her army commander husband during several battles and took over his post after his death. Promoted to Commander in Chief of Sichuan Province and Grand Protector of the Crowned Prince by the Southern Ming Emperor, with a military career spanning over 40 years.



Shen Yunying (1624 - 1660) - Ming Dynasty female commander in the imperial army. The daughter of a military official, she took her father's place in command after he was killed in battle. Known for her exceptional military skill in battle, she eventually retired from service and founded a school for girls in both academics and martial arts.



2. **Family background** - Qiu Jin was the second child and eldest daughter of an elite scholar family from Shaoxing. Her grandfather and father were officials in the Qing government. Her mother was a highly educated woman.

3. **Gender segregation in education** - Boys and girls from gentry families would traditionally be separated at a young age and taught different subjects. Boys would study classic literature, history, and philosophy. Girls would learn rules of moral behavior and domestic skills such as cooking, sewing, and embroidery.

4. **“Nuzi wucai bianshi de (女子無才便是德)”** - Traditional proverb translated as “A woman without talent is virtuous.” Originating in the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644), the saying is used to define proper feminine behavior. Literary talent was considered unnecessary and distracting for women, who should focus on their domestic duties instead. Qiu Jing-wu mentions this phrase in explaining the traditional attitude towards educating girls.

5. **Footbinding** - Chinese custom imposed on young girls involving breaking the arch of the foot and binding with increasingly tight bandages. The process was repeated on a regular basis for ten to fifteen years to stunt the growth of the foot and achieve the smallest size possible. Infection, rotting flesh, and in some cases even death resulted. Footbinding was initially practiced by the elite class, as women with bound feet were free from manual labor and could afford servants to do the work instead. The practice became highly desirable as a symbol of elevated status and eventually spread to the lower classes and even among peasant families.

WRITINGS

A gifted and talented writer, Qiu Jin began composing poetry as a young girl, inspired by her love of reading. Her influences ranged from classical poets such as Qu Yuan and Du Fu to martial arts novels featuring swordsmen and women warriors.

Joy at Meeting - 相見歡

For books I set aside my golden sewing needle,
Reading with smiles and observation;
Unaware that outside the window,
The crimson sun has fallen.

因書拋卻金針，笑相評，
忘了窗前，紅日已西沉。

QUESTIONS

1. Who were Qiu Jin's childhood heroes?
2. Describe her family background.
3. Qiu Jin's education differed from traditional female learning. What was unusual about her experience?
4. What types of activities did she enjoy as a child?
5. Qiu Jin's upbringing was both traditional and unconventional for girls in China. Which of her childhood experiences were more typical?
6. According to Amy Dooling, what was the purpose of footbinding?
7. Compare the custom of footbinding with other practices of altering the female body for beauty or status (eg. genital mutilation, cosmetic surgery).

CHAPTER 2: DOMESTIC DESPAIR (1896 - 1904)

KEY CONCEPTS AND FIGURES

1. **Arranged marriages** - Marriage in China was a family business arranged by one's parents or a matchmaker, who based their decisions on factors such as wealth and social standing. Individuals from similar backgrounds would be matched together. Young people would often not see their betrothed until the wedding day. Qiu Jin was married at the age of twenty-one, considered unusually late for someone of her class.
2. **Literati daughter** - Hu Ying uses this term to describe the small elite class of highly educated women that Qiu Jin belonged to.
3. **Wang Tingjun** (1879-1909) - Husband of Qiu Jin. The son of a wealthy merchant from Hunan Province, his father was a friend of Qiu Jin's father. They arranged for the two to be married in 1896.
4. **Wang Yuande** (1897-1955) - Son of Qiu Jin. He was raised by his paternal grandmother after Qiu Jin left her family.
5. **Wang Canzhi** (1901-1967) - Daughter of Qiu Jin. She was raised by a family friend after her mother left when she was two years old. She grew up to be very similar to her mother, engaging in martial arts and sharing a talent for poetry. She came to the U.S. in her teens to study aeronautics and later wrote several biographies of her mother.

WRITINGS

In contrast to her happy childhood, Qiu Jin's life as a married woman was marked by feelings of loneliness and despair, expressed by the melancholy tone in her poems.



To 200 Million Chinese Women - 敬告中國二萬萬女同胞

When it is time to get married,
there is a sedan chair decorated in red and green.
While sitting inside,
I feel like I am suffocating.

到了過門的時候，用一頂紅
紅綠綠的花轎，坐在裏面，
連氣也不能出。

Written on Double Ninth Day - 九日感賦

Title (poem to older brother) - 思親兼柬大兄

Knots full of sorrow left untied inside.
For woe is the life transplanted to this strange place.

百結愁腸鬱不開，
此生惆悵異鄉來。

No kindred mate in my chamber;
Who's to keep me company counting the wee hours?
Few are those with the same temperament,
But plentiful are the tears shed upon this sad
thought.

閨中無解侶，誰伴數更籌？
却憐同調少，感此淚痕多。

QUESTIONS

1. Marriage was traditionally considered the key to a woman's happiness in life. What was Qiu Jin's attitude towards marriage?
2. According to Hu Ying, what outlet did young wives unhappy in their marriages have?
3. Lingzhen Wang describes the "huge disappointment" Qiu Jin felt in her marriage. What were the reasons for her feelings?
4. What major life change did Qiu Jin experience in 1903?

CHAPTER 3: A COUNTRY IN CRISIS (1903)

China faced a series of tumultuous historical events in the late 19th century. Foreign encroachment and domestic rebellions threatened the country, creating massive social chaos. The Qing government was unable to deal effectively with these threats and began losing power.

KEY CONCEPTS AND FIGURES

1. **Qing Dynasty** - Established in 1644 by the Manchus, a tribal group originating from northeast China. The country initially prospered under its rule during the 17th and 18th centuries, growing in territory and population. However, confronted with several external and domestic crises, the dynasty began to decline during the 19th century.
2. **Empress Dowager Cixi (1835-1908)** - De facto ruler of the Qing Dynasty during Qiu Jin's time. Known for "ruling behind the curtains," Cixi established control over the government through her nephew whom she installed as the Guangxu Emperor.

3. **Opium Wars** - The First and Second Opium Wars (1839-1842, 1856-1860) began over trade disputes between China and the United Kingdom/France. The United Kingdom initiated war in order to gain more access to China's heavily restricted markets (including the trafficking of opium). The British, with their superior military, won a decisive victory against China and opened the way for other Western nations to take advantage of the country's weak status.
4. **First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895)** - Conflict between China and Japan over control of Korea, which was a tributary state under the Qing Dynasty. China was defeated and forced to end its influence over Korea, as well as ceding Taiwan and other territories to Japan.
5. **Unequal treaties** - Following its defeat by Britain in the Opium War, China signed the first of several unequal treaties which forced the country to pay huge reparations, cede or lease territories, and open up its ports for trade. Foreigners residing in the treaty ports were not subject to Chinese laws and could establish their own regulations. Over a dozen unequal treaties were imposed upon China between 1842 and 1901.
6. **Boxer Rebellion** - In 1900, shortly before Qiu Jin moved to Beijing, the city was invaded by the Fists of Righteous Harmony (also called the Boxers), a secret society group opposed to the foreign domination of the country. They attacked the foreign embassies, killing missionaries and others associated with Western influence.
7. **Eight-Nation Alliance** - International force sent to Beijing to suppress the Boxer Rebellion. The Alliance consisted of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Russia, United Kingdom, and United States.
8. **Foreign occupation** - In the aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion, troops from the Eight-Nation Alliance occupied Beijing and other cities in Northern China for over a year. Allied soldiers looted and pillaged the capital, destroying buildings and ransacking historical treasures. They raided the countryside, collecting indemnities and punishing those suspected of supporting the Boxers, often killing innocent civilians in the process.

WRITINGS

The events unfolding in Beijing left a strong impression on Qiu Jin. Many of her poems during this time feature patriotic and feminist themes, reflecting her fears for the state of the country.

Stones of the Jingwei Bird is Qiu Jin's semi-autobiographical novel composed in a lyrical narrative form (*tanci*). The title refers to a mythical bird who tries in vain to fill up the ocean with tiny twigs and pebbles.



A Call to Action - 感事

Danger threatens our homeland,
Our country mournfully weak.
From the East the invasions continue on,
While the West plots further incursions.
Scholars, throw down your brushes!
Maidens, take up arms!
Who can save us?
Together we must hold back the waves of
despair.

竟有危巢燕，應憐故國駝！
東侵憂未已，西望計如何？
儒士思投筆？閨人欲負戈。
誰為濟時彥？相與挽頽波。

Song of the Sword - 寶刀歌

Again and again to my home city I turned,
And cried for the lost country with tears and sad
songs.
The soldiers of the eight allied nations charged
northward,
Raiding our homes and seizing our lands.
If only Heaven and Earth could be the furnace,
Yin and Yang be the charcoal, and steel gathered
from the six continents,
To forge thousands upon thousands of swords,
To drive out the foreigners from our land.
We shall follow our ancestor's legendary prowess
To cleanse the shame our nation has endured for
years.

幾番回首京華望，
亡國悲歌淚涕多。
北上聯軍八國眾，
把我江山又贈送。
願從茲以天地為爐、
陰陽為炭兮，鐵聚六洲。
鑄造出千柄萬柄寶刀兮，
澄清神州。
上繼我祖黃帝赫赫之威名兮，
一洗數千數百年國史之奇羞！

Excerpt from *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* - 精衛石

Look at those cowardly, contemptible men,
who surely cannot match up to a high-spirited
woman!
Husbands who are frivolous rogues,
wasting away in debauchery, gambling, and
prostitutes.
If you make even the slightest protest,
your husband will be rude and outsiders will all
deem you an unvirtuous wife.

見那般縮頭無恥諸男子，
反不及昂昂女子焉。
亦有夫本輕薄子，
嫖游賭博盡來之，
稍行抗拒夫無理，
外人盡道不賢名。

QUESTIONS

1. Qiu Jin's concern for China's fate was influenced by both personal and historic events. Discuss some of the experiences that shaped her perspective.
2. Study the examples of Western illustrations of China during this time. What sort of image is being depicted?
3. Compare the Western depictions of China with Qiu Jin's vision for her country in "Song of the Sword."
4. Qiu Jin specifically calls upon women to join the fight to save the country. How does this differ from traditional attitudes regarding women's place in society?
5. Describe Qiu Jin's attitude towards men in the excerpt from *Stones of the Jingwei Bird*.



CHAPTER 4: DAWN OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT (1903)

The early women's movement was closely tied to the rise of patriotic feelings following the country's humiliating defeats. Reformers felt that a major reason for China's weakness was the harsh oppression of their women. With their bound feet, lack of education, and limited economic opportunities, women were unable to contribute much to society. If their conditions were improved, they could take a more active role in strengthening the country.

KEY CONCEPTS AND FIGURES

1. **Confucius** (551 B.C. - 479 B.C.) Ancient philosopher whose teachings have deeply influenced Chinese culture and values. A central element of Confucianism is social relationships, expressed by particular duties towards one another according to hierarchy (child/parent, student/teacher, wife/husband, ruler/subject). Ideally, each individual would know his or her place in the social order and play that part accordingly.
2. **Men's and women's realms** - Confucianism dictated a strict separation of the sexes in order to maintain social harmony. The men's realm consisted of the outside world of public affairs, while the women's realm was defined by the home. Women were legally barred from participating in political affairs and had few career opportunities in public.
3. **Anti-Footbinding Movement** - The movement against footbinding was initiated by Western missionaries and closely linked to efforts to expand women's education. Girls entering school were often required to unbind their feet. Reformers began organizing "Natural Feet Societies" in which parents vowed not to bind their daughters' feet and young men promised to marry only those with natural feet.
4. **Female education** - Education for girls was strongly pushed by Western missionaries, who were entering China in increasing numbers following the Opium Wars. The first girls' schools in China were opened in the mid-1800's by foreigners, followed by private Chinese organizations. Public funding for girls' education began in 1907, the year of Qiu Jin's death.
5. **Xunxi Girls' School** - Qiu Jin taught Japanese, science, and hygiene at the school from March - August 1906. She eventually left the school to focus on her revolutionary activities.
6. **Xu Zhihua (1873 - 1935)** - Principal of Xunxi Girls' School. A poet and women's rights advocate, she and Qiu Jin became close friends and created the *Chinese Women's Journal*.
7. **Feminist publications** - Books and journals played a key role in promoting the feminist movement, disseminating new knowledge, highlighting the achievements of Western and Chinese role models, and mobilizing women to participate in public affairs. Women worked as writers, editors, and distributors. Over thirty publications focused on women's issues were launched between 1898 and 1911.

女學報 / *Nuxue bao* (*Journal of Women's Studies*) by Shen Jingying, 1898

東歐女豪傑 / *Dong'ou nuhaojie* (*Female Heroes of Eastern Europe*), 1902

女學報 / *Nuxue bao* (*Journal of Women's Studies*) by Chen Xiefen, 1903

女子世界 / *Nuzi shijie* (*Women's World*) by Ding Chuwo, 1904

法國女英雄彈詞 / *Faguo nuyingxiong tanci* (*Tale of a French Heroine*) by Wanlan Ciren, 1904

北京女報 / *Beijing nubao* (*Beijing Women's Journal*) by Zhang Yunxiang, 1905

中國女報 / *Zhongguo nubao* (*Chinese Women's Journal*) by Qiu Jin and Xu Zhihua, 1906

天義 / *Tianyi* (*Heavenly Justice*) by He Zhen, 1907

中國新女界雜誌 / *Zhongguo xinnujie zazhi* (*New Chinese Women's Magazine*) by Yan Bin, 1907



二十世紀中國女子 / *Ershi shiji zhi Zhongguo nüzi (Chinese Women of the Twentieth Century)* by Tian Tong, 1907

中國婦女界雜誌 / *Zhongguo funü jie zazhi (Chinese Women's Magazine)*, Tokyo Society for the Chinese Women's Magazine, 1907

女報 / *Nubao (Women's Journal)*, by Chen Zhiqun and Xie Zhen, 1909

女學生 / *Nuxuesheng (Women Students)* by Yin Ruizhi, 1910

8. **Cross-dressing** - Chinese history features many examples of women dressing as men, the most famous being Hua Mulan. Lingzhen Wang notes that in most of these cases, the act is a temporary performance and there is always a return to the female role in the end (in Mulan's case, for example, after serving in the army she returns to her family and dons women's clothes and makeup). Qiu Jin's cross-dressing is unusual in that there is no such return.



9. **Heroic Model** - Qiu Jin strongly identified with the image of the martial hero (俠 - xia). She adopted the names “竞雄” (Jing Xiong - Able to Compete with Men) and “鑑湖女俠” (Jianhu Nüxia - Heroine of Mirror Lake) and had a seal carved with the characters “讀書擊劍” (Dushu Jijian - Read Books, Practice Sword). She often referenced traditional Chinese heroes as well as figures from Western history including Joan of Arc, Russian revolutionary Sophia Perovskaya, and French political activist Madame Roland in her work.

WRITINGS

Excerpt from *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* - 精衛石

Bound feet have always been a disgrace!
You torture your own body to make lotus-petal feet.
With such painful broken bones and withered muscles,
how can you walk anywhere freely?
What's the use of a pair of pointy feet?
One day, civilization will spread throughout our land,
and people will absolutely spurn little feet
and regard them as a thing for animals.

纏足由來最可羞？
戕殘自體作蓮鈎。
骨斷筋縮多痛苦，
行走何能得自由。
尖尖雙足成何用，
他日文明遍我洲，
小足斷然人唾棄，
賤觀等作馬而牛。

Letter to First Girls' School in Hunan - 致湖南第一女學堂書

For women to be free from men's oppression, we must be independent.

To be independent, we must seek education and skills to make a living.

When everyone is productive, with neither men nor women being idle, then our country will be strong again!

欲脫男子之範圍，非自立不可；

欲自立，非求學藝不可，非合群不可。

人人皆執一藝以謀身，

使男女無坐十之人，其國焉能不強也？

Excerpt from *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* - 精衛石

My fellow sisters! If you are still dependent, quickly make up your mind to struggle for your independence; if you are independent, you should strive to save other sisters from the sea of bitterness. We cannot be obedient any longer.

Revolution will have to start from the family, with the achievement of equal rights between women and men.

我的同胞姊妹呀！不能自立的，

快些立志圖自立；能自立的，

須發個救天下苦海中姊妹的心，

不可再因循了。

吾謂革命當自家庭始，

所謂男女平權是也。

Introduction to *Chinese Women's Journal* - 中國女報發刊辭

Today we shall unite 200 million women together as a single entity to express our voice daily. This journal will serve as the headquarters for action, rousing women's spirits and encouraging them to lead a vibrant life, leaving their old ways behind and charging forward to a bright new world.

吾今欲結二萬萬大團體於一致，通全

國女界聲息於朝夕，為女界之總機

關，使我女子生機活潑，精神奮飛，

絕塵而奔，以速進於大光明世界。

Ta Suo Xing - 踏莎行

A fort of worries mounted in my heart,
Such misgivings with no one to impart.
My resolve may be heroic, but my choices are few.
In vain I keep inside all my lofty aspirations.

愁城一座築心頭，
此情沒個人堪說。
志量徒雄，生機太窄，
襟懷枉自多豪俠。

Regret: Lines Written en Route to Japan - 有懷, 游日本時作

The pale sun and moon have cast the earth in
darkness.
Who can save our wretched female world?
I pawned my jewelry to travel abroad,
Separated from my children,
I left my native land.

日月無光天地昏，
沉沉女界有誰援？
釵環典質浮滄海，
骨肉分離出玉門。

QUESTIONS

1. What were the two symbols of China's sickness mentioned by Hu Ying?
2. Describe Qiu Jin's view towards footbinding.
3. The feminist movement in China was strongly inspired by Western figures. Who were some of their influences?
4. Education for women in China traditionally consisted of learning moral behavior such as proper virtue, speech, appearance, and conduct. What did Qiu Jin believe the purpose of women's education was?
5. Discuss Qiu Jin's belief that "Revolution will have to start from the family."
6. An interesting aspect of the women's movement in China was its strong support among men, who took up the causes of anti-footbinding and girls' education. Why do you think Chinese men would support women's causes? Compare this attitude with male reactions to feminist movements in other countries.
7. What subjects did Qiu Jin address in *Chinese Women's Journal*?



8. The historical photo of Qiu Jin shows her dressed as a *Western* man. This is a double transgression of gender and culture. Why do you think she did this?
9. What was the name Qiu Jin gave herself?
10. What is carved on Qiu Jin's seal?
11. Lingzhen Wang notes that of the nearly two hundred poems written by Qiu Jin, she barely refers to her children (the exception is the above poem "Regret: Lines Written en Route to Japan." Hu Ying also mentions that Qiu Jin's close friend Xu Zihua, whom she worked with intimately for six months, did not even know she had any children. Why do you think the subject of motherhood is absent from her writing?
12. Discuss Qiu Jin's decision to leave her family. Do you believe her reasons were justified?

CHAPTER 5: SEEDS OF REVOLUTION (1904 - 1905)

After its victory in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, Japan began attracting Chinese intellectuals who admired the country's military strength and ability to resist Western imperialism. Chinese students began traveling to Japan to learn from its successful modernization. The country also became a prime destination for political rebels escaping persecution by the Qing government.

A small number of Chinese women also made the journey overseas. Exposed to the radical political environment, these women became active as writers, educators, and organizers. They played a key role in forging a new identity for women: as citizens prepared to serve the country. No longer confined to the domestic sphere, women began participating directly in political affairs.

KEY CONCEPTS/FIGURES

1. **Gender Integration** - Female students in Japan had more opportunities to interact with their male peers, engaging in speaking, debating, and petitioning activities together. Political meetings and organizations were open to both men and women, and women were able to attain prominent positions. The higher social interaction created a sense of gender equality; women were seen on an equal footing with men in terms of serving their nation.
2. **Humanitarian Society 共愛會 (Gong'ai hui)** - First modern political organization for women, founded in May 1903 by Chinese female students in Japan to promote women's education and civic participation. Qiu Jin became head of the society in 1904. The group organized petitions, engaged in rallies and protests, supported overseas female students through fundraising, and urged Chinese women to participate in the revolutionary movement abroad and at home.
3. **Sun Yat-sen (1886-1925)** - Known as the "Father of Modern China," Sun was an instrumental figure in the overthrow of the Qing Dynasty. As a young man he had studied in the U.S. and was strongly influenced by Western ideas of democracy. He saw the Qing government as

backwards and unwilling to adopt more advanced Western ideas. In 1894 he began organizing to abolish the Qing government and transform China into a republic. In 1895 he attempted a coup that ended in failure, forcing him into exile. For the next sixteen years he traveled to Europe, the U.S., Canada, and Japan to raise money and support for the revolution.

4. **Revolutionary Alliance** - Resistance movement organized by Sun Yat-sen in Japan in 1905, dedicated to expelling the Qing rulers and establishing a republic. Qiu Jin joined the Alliance in August 1905 and became chapter leader for her home province of Zhejiang.
5. **Society for the Study of Oratory** - Political organization founded by Qiu Jin 1904 to train and promote public speaking. Qiu Jin was a firm believer in the power of speech to inspire action and was known as an especially talented speaker who frequently gave talks during student meetings.
6. **Vernacular Journal 白話報 (Baihua bao)** - Political journal founded by Qiu Jin as part of the Society for the Study of Oratory. The monthly publication ran for six issues between August 1904 - 1905 and featured transcripts of speeches, essays, and reports on students' activities.
7. **Nu guomin 女國民 (Female citizen), Nu tongbao 女同胞 (Female compatriot)** - New terms used during the late Qing period to define women's identity as national subjects.



WRITINGS

While in Japan, Qiu Jin was able to connect with prominent leaders and organizations in the revolutionary movement, inspiring her future actions.

Excerpt from *Stones of the Jingwei Bird* - 精衛石

I dispatch you all only To restore the order of our old homeland. Clear away the barbarian influence and stabilize the state; From the start, men and women should have equal rights. Human rights are endowed by nature with no difference, Men and women should take on the same responsibilities. Men and women, work together with one heart. Four hundred million men and women should have no differences. Awaken the dull and deaf and illuminate the sleeping country, Fear nothing, cooperating fully with one mind. Revive the beautiful land. Don't let the foreign dust and stench spread over the middle plain.	差遣爾等非為別， 大家整頓舊江山。 掃盡胡氛安社稷， 由來男女要平權。 人權天復原無別， 男女還須一例擔。 男和女同心協力方為美， 四萬萬男女無分彼此焉。 喚醒痴聾光睡國， 和衷共濟勿畏難。 錦繡江山須整頓， 休使那胡塵噪滿中原。
---	--

QUESTIONS

1. What were some reasons Chinese intellectuals were drawn to Japan in the late 19th century?
2. Compare the differences in gender relations between the overseas student community in Japan with that of traditional Chinese culture.
3. Describe the activities of Qiu Jin and her female colleagues in Japan. How do they challenge the Confucian notion of men's and women's realms?
4. What were the new gender terms used by Qiu Jin and her associates in Japan as mentioned by Amy Dooling?
5. Qiu Jin was one of several prominent women in the Chinese revolutionary movement who studied in Japan; others include He Xiangning, Chen Xiefen, Lin Zongsu. Choose another figure and briefly describe their contributions.
6. Who was Qiu Jin's strongest revolutionary influence in Japan?

7. What was the Revolutionary Alliance?
8. In addition to the Humanitarian Society, Qiu Jin started another organization in Japan. What was its purpose?
9. What skill was Qiu Jin known for amongst the overseas Chinese students?

CHAPTER 6: HEROINE RISING (1906 - 1907)

While the imperial dynasty grew weaker and more ineffective, revolutionary groups rose up to challenge it. Many of the movement's leaders had studied in Japan and were fueled by their experiences there. Returning to China with their new political knowledge, they began organizing and gaining momentum.

KEY CONCEPTS/FIGURES

1. **Restoration Society 光復會 (Guangfu Hui)** - Radical anti-Qing organization established in Shanghai in 1904. Qiu Jin was introduced to the group while in Japan and joined in 1905. The group's objective was to "Restore the Chinese race and recover the country."
2. **Xu Xilin (1873-1907)** - Restoration Society leader from Qiu Jin's home city of Shaoxing. He had studied in Japan and was influenced by the radical politics there. After returning to China, he worked closely with Qiu Jin to plan a revolt. He led a premature attack in Anhui Province after plans of their uprising were compromised.
3. **Datong School** - Military school founded by Xu Xilin in 1905. It was officially sanctioned by the government to prepare soldiers for a national army, but was secretly used as a recruiting center for revolutionaries. Qiu Jin became principal in 1907 and headed the physical education department, leading students in military drills and weapons training.
4. **Reaction to crossdressing** - Qiu Jin's masculine behavior and attire offended many conservatives in the city. On one occasion she and her students were physically attacked after returning from a training session in a park (cited from Fan Hong, *Freeing the Female Body: Inspirational Icons*).
5. **Yue Fei (1103-1142)** - A famous Song Dynasty military general revered for his patriotism. After successfully defending the country from invading northern tribes, he was betrayed by a corrupt official and executed for treason. Exonerated after his death, he has since become a model of loyalty and heroic self-sacrifice.
6. **Traditional hero** - The self-sacrificing, tragic hero was a common figure in Chinese history. Popular culture is filled with tales of brave warriors giving their lives for a noble cause. Young revolutionaries were often drawn to the notion of the romantic hero and modeled their actions accordingly. In this sense a highly traditional concept was thus adapted for a "modern" cause.



7. **Women's participation in revolutionary movement** - A number of women were involved in activities such as fundraising, gathering information, transporting weapons, and publishing radical journals. Qiu Jin was the only woman to lead an armed uprising.

WRITINGS

As her involvement in the revolutionary movement deepens, Qiu Jin turns repeatedly to the image of the tragic hero. Themes of sacrifice and willingness to die for the cause appear in her work.

Women's Rights Song - 勉女權

Equality between men and women is a given right.
Who wants to live lower than cattle?
We will lift ourselves up
From the shameful station of our past.

男女平權天賦就，
豈甘居牛後？
願奮然自拔，
一洗從前羞恥垢

Inscription on a Photograph of Myself - 自題小照

Who is this person appearing within my sight?
Such gallantry regrettably in the form of a female!
My past life was nothing but an illusion,
The future, on the other hand, promises to be real.

儼然在望此何人？
俠骨前生悔寄身。
過世形骸原是幻，
未來境界却疑真。

Excerpt from "The River Turns Red" - 滿江紅

My body is not allowed into the ranks of men,
But my heart is more passionate than any man's.

身上得，男兒列。
心卻比，男兒烈。

Letter to Wang Shize - 致王時澤書

Since 1900, I've devoted my life to the cause of saving our country. I will have no regrets even if I shall die trying without the final success. The mission of restoring our nation cannot be delayed, not even for a single day. There have been so many men who died trying to reclaim our country, but women have not been heard to do so. It is a shame amongst women.

吾自庚子以來，以置吾生命於不顧，即不獲成功而死，亦吾所不悔也。且光復之事，不可一日緩，而男子之死於謀光復者，不乏其人，而女子則無聞焉，亦吾女界之羞也。



Untitled

The time for action passed by in a fleeting moment,
How regrettable 'tis with ambition unfulfilled!
I wish I could cast my rod in the sea to stop the
raging waves;
But I can only lean against my sword and watch the
moon over the high cloud.
There is no mud to hinder the horses at the Hangu
pass,
But at Luoyang sad tears are shed over past glories.
To be laid to dust cannot be so extraordinary
If only for sacrifice for my country.

大好時光一剎過，
雄心未遂恨如何？
投鞭滄海橫流斷，
倚劍重霄對月磨。
函谷無泥累鐵馬，
洛陽有淚泣銅駝。
粉身碎骨尋常事，
但願犧牲保國家。

QUESTIONS

1. Describe Qiu Jin's activities in the Restoration Society.
2. While the film shows Qiu Jin training women at Datong School, in reality most of her students were men. Her attempts to bring in female recruits was met with resistance from some of her male comrades. Discuss how "modern" revolutionary men could still hold traditional attitudes towards women. Think about conflicting attitudes that appear in other social movements (e.g. issues of race in U.S. feminism, gender in civil rights movement, etc.).
3. Compare Qiu Jin's vision for the female body with the image constructed by tradition.
4. How did Qiu Jin feel about her own body?
5. Qiu Jin advocated women's rights, yet at the same time she rejected being a woman herself. Discuss these contradictory positions. How do you think this affected Qiu Jin emotionally?



6. Qiu Jin's love of talking violates the traditional feminine virtue of proper speech. Women's voices were to be confined to the inner chambers and not meant to be heard in the outside world. Discuss how Qiu Jin challenged this notion.
7. What were some criticisms Qiu Jin faced as a woman revolutionary?
8. Despite some opposition to women's political involvement, for the most part Qiu Jin was accepted by her comrades in the Restoration Society. What are some possible reasons for her acceptance?
9. What aspect of the Chinese traditional hero appealed to Qiu Jin?
10. Qiu Jin's vision of heroism was influenced by both Chinese and Western figures. Cite some examples.
11. In her "Letter to Wang Shize," what did Qiu Jin describe as "a shame amongst women"?
12. Would you consider Qiu Jin's stand at the Datong School a suicidal act? What evidence from her writings would suggest this?

CHAPTER 7: LEGACY

KEY CONCEPTS/FIGURES

1. **Public reaction to execution** - Qiu Jin's trial was considered hasty and poorly handled by the government. The officials in charge of the investigation were heavily criticized in the press, and public opinion was generally sympathetic, with many having doubts about her guilt. Her death created instant publicity for the revolution and further inflamed anger towards the government.
2. **Women's armies** - Women inspired by Qiu Jin joined the revolutionary cause and organized armies in her honor, including Women's Military Training Alliance in Shanghai, Women's Military Regiment and Women's Northern Expeditionary "Dare-to-Die" Regiment in Zhejiang (Qiu Jin's home province).
3. **1911 Revolution** - Also called the Xinhai Revolution, the uprising began on October 10, 1911 when Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance staged a coup in Wuchang against the Qing government. This eventually led to the fall of the dynasty and the establishment of the Republic of China in 1912. Today, the event is celebrated as Double Ten Day or Anniversary of the Xinhai Revolution.
4. **Burial of Qiu Jin** - After the execution, Qiu Jin's body lay unclaimed on the ground. Her relatives had gone into hiding out of fear of government persecution. She was eventually buried in a pauper's grave by a charity organization. In 1912, following the success of the revolution, a formal funeral for Qiu Jin was held at West Lake in Hangzhou. The memorial was organized by her close friend Xu Zihua and presided over by Sun Yat-sen. It was Qiu Jin's wish to be buried near her hero Yue Fei.

5. **Official Museum** - Qiu Jin's family home was converted into a museum by the People's Republic of China in the early 1950's. Located in Shaoxing, it serves as a historical landmark and houses various artifacts, photographs, and research materials.
6. **Monument to the Martyr Qiu Jin** - Erected at the site of her execution in Shaoxing and completed in 1930. The back of the pillar contains an epitaph composed by Qiu Jin's fellow revolutionary and founder of the Restoration Society Cai Yuanpei: "Looking up at the lofty memorial stele, (the emotions) cannot help but be stirred: the stubborn will be instructed, the weak fortified. For indeed, only when there are followers to continue the construction [of the nation] will the brave sacrifice of the martyrs not have been in vain." (Cited from Hu Ying, "Qiu Jin's Nine Burials: The Making of Historical Monuments and Public Memory.")
7. **Statue and Tomb of Qiu Jin** - Located at West Lake in Hangzhou, the monument was completed in 1981 and features a white marble sculpture atop a granite pedestal. Engraved on the pedestal is the title "Jinguo Yingxiong" (Long Live the Heroine), dedicated by Sun Yat-sen. On the back is an epitaph written by Qiu Jin's friend Xu Zihua.



WRITINGS

Suicide Note to Xu Xiaoshu - 致徐小淑絕命詞

The sun is setting with no road ahead,
In vain I weep for loss of country.
The country fragments, territories shrink,
Who will call home the soul of the dead hero?
Although I die yet I still live.
Through sacrifice I have fulfilled my duty.
Let us part for good now,
The winds of history will take the heads of my
enemies.
Though my great ambition remains unfulfilled,
My heroic aspiration will remain the same,
Looking back at China, my heart is broken!

日暮窮途，徒下新亭之淚；
殘山剩水，誰招志士之魂？
雖死猶生，犧牲盡我責任；
即此永別，風潮取彼頭顱。
壯志猶虛，雄心未渝，
中原回首腸堪斷！

QUESTIONS

1. What did Qiu Jin hope to achieve by sacrificing her life?
2. Discuss Lingzhen Wang's statement "She died in man's dress, but then she emphasized that she died for women's cause."
3. According to Amy Dooling, what is Qiu Jin's most powerful legacy?
4. Compare the images of Qiu Jin from photographs to the statues created after her death. What characteristics did Qiu Jin convey in her photos? How is she represented in her monuments?
5. Looking back at the story of Qiu Jin, we see a life full of conflicting and contradictory forces. Think of the ways she challenged conventional notions of the following concepts:

Male/Female East/West Tradition/Modernity

6. In China Qiu Jin is known more for her revolutionary work than as a women's rights advocate. Would you consider her a feminist? Why or why not?



NOTES ON MUSIC

"**Man Jiang Hong - 滿江紅 (The River Turns Red)**" - A lyrical poem traditionally attributed to the famous military general Yue Fei, one of Qiu Jin's favorite heroes. The song is heard as a flute solo in Chapter 1 during Young Qiu Jin's introduction and again in Chapter 7: Legacy during the poem "Suicide Note to Xu Xiaoshu."

The version of "Man Jiang Hong" that plays over the end credits contains Qiu Jin's own lyrics.

How many heroic and wise men are there	骯髒塵寰，問幾個男兒英哲？
In this filthy world?	算只有蛾眉隊裡，時聞杰出。
Only among women have brilliant heroes risen.	良玉勳名襟上淚，
Liangyu's loyalty brings tears to my eyes,	雲英事業心頭血。
Yunying's deeds make my blood rush.	快摩挲、長劍作龍吟，
In drunkenness I stroke my sword, whistling like a dragon,	聲悲咽。
The sound filled with pain.	自由香，常思蕪。
I have always longed to ignite the incense of freedom.	家國恨，何時雪？
When can we avenge the humiliation of our country?	勸吾儕今日，各自努力。
My companions, this is the time to strive hard.	振拔亟須安種類，
Fight for peace and security for our race.	繁華莫但誇衣袂。
Prosperity should exceed the decoration of our clothes.	那弓鞋、三寸太無力，
Three-inch feet, deformed and useless, must be banished!	宜改革。

"**Girls Go To School - 女學生入學歌**" (1904) and "**Women Citizens - 女國民**" (1907) - These songs were published in the journal *女子世界 / Nuzi shijie (Women's World)* to promote women's independence and equality. They are heard in Chapter 4: Dawn of the Women's Movement during the segment on the expansion of girls' schools and the influence of Western heroines.

BOOKS/ARTICLES

Chang, Kang-i Sun and Saussy, Haun. *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

Dooling, Amy. *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth Century China*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Dooling, Amy and Torgeson, Kristina M. *Writing Women in Modern China*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

Fan, Hong. *Footbinding, Feminism, and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*. New York: Frank Cass, 1997.

Fan, Hong and Mangan, J.A. *Freeing the Female Body: Inspirational Icons*. Portland: Frank Cass, 2001.

Hu, Ying, "Qiu Jin's Nine Burials: The Making of Historical Monuments and Public Memory," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 2007), pp. 138-191, Ohio State University Foreign Language Publications.

Hu, Ying. *Tales of Translation: Composing the New Woman in China, 1899-1918*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.

Hu, Ying. Writing Qiu Jin's Life: Wu Zhiying and Her Family Learning," *Late Imperial China*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (December 2004), pp. 119-160. Society for Qing Studies and Johns Hopkins University Press.

Jie, Tao, Zheng, Bijun and Mow, Shirley. *Holding up Half the Sky: Chinese Women Past, Present, and Future*. New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York 2004.

Judge, Joan. *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.

Judge, Joan. "Talent, Virtue, and the Nation: Chinese Nationalisms and Female Subjectivities in the Early Twentieth Century," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 106, No. 3 (June 2001), The American Historical Association.

Ono, Kazuko. *Chinese Women in a Century of Revolution, 1850-1950*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

Qiu Jin Ji (Collected Works of Qiu Jin). Shanghai: Guji chubanshe 1979.

Qiu Jin Shiji (Historical relics of Qiu Jin). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1958.

Rankin, Mary Backus. *Early Chinese Revolutionaries: Radical Intellectuals in Shanghai and Chekiang, 1902-1911*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Wang, Lingzhen. *Personal Matters: Women's Autobiographical Practice in Twentieth-Century China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Wolf, Margery and Witke, Roxane. *Women in Chinese Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.

Yan, Haiping. *Chinese Women Writers and the Feminist Imagination, 1905-1948*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

FILMS/TELEVISION

Qiu Jin, the Revolutionary Heroine (1953) - Directed by Tu Guangqi. Hsin Hwa Motion Picture Company, Hong Kong.

Qiu Jin: A Revolutionary (1984) - Directed by Xie Jin. 110 min. Shanghai Film Studios.

China from the Inside, "Women of the Country" (2006) - 60 min. KQED and Granada Television.

The Great Step Forward: China Women in the 20th Century – From Confucius to Mao (2004) - 54 min. Southern Star Entertainment and Films for the Humanities.

Version History

- February 3, 2011: Introduction, music notes, and resources updated, additional graphics included, formatting corrections.
- October 31, 2010: Initial publication