**Classic Poetry Series**

# Mao Zedong

## - 33 poems -

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## Against the First Encirclement Campaign

Forests blaze red beneath the frosty sky,
The wrath of Heaven's armies soars to the clouds.
Mist veils Lungkang, its thousand peaks blurred.
All cry out in unison:
Our van has taken Chang Hui-tsan!
The enemy returns to Kiangsi two hundred thousand strong,
Fumes billowing in the wind in mid-sky.
Workers and peasants are wakened in their millions
To fight as one man,
Under the riot of red flags round the foot of Puchou !

Mao Zedong

**Ascent of Lushan**

Perching as after flight, the mountain towers over the Yangtze;
I have overleapt four hundred twists to its green crest.
Cold-eyed I survey the world beyond the seas;
A hot wind spatters raindrops on the sky-brooded waters.
Clouds cluster over the nine streams, the yellow crane floating,
And billows roll on to the eastern coast, white foam flying.
Who knows whither Prefect Tao Yuan-ming is gone
Now that he can till fields in the Land of Peach Blossoms?

Mao Zedong

**Changsha**

Alone I stand in the autumn cold
On the tip of Orange Island,
The Hsiang flowing northward;
I see a thousand hills crimsoned through
By their serried woods deep-dyed,
And a hundred barges vying
Over crystal blue waters.
Eagles cleave the air,
Fish glide in the limpid deep;
Under freezing skies a million creatures contend in freedom.
Brooding over this immensity,
I ask, on this boundless land
Who rules over man's destiny?

I was here with a throng of companions,
Vivid yet those crowded months and years.
Young we were, schoolmates,
At life's full flowering;
Filled with student enthusiasm
Boldly we cast all restraints aside.
Pointing to our mountains and rivers,
Setting people afire with our words,
We counted the mighty no more than muck.
Remember still
How, venturing midstream, we struck the waters
And waves stayed the speeding boats?

Mao Zedong

**Chingkangshan**

Below the hills fly our flags and banners,
Above the hilltops sound our bugles and drums.
The foe encircles us thousands strong,
Steadfastly we stand our ground.
Already our defence is iron-clad,
Now our wills unite like a fortress.
From Huangyangchieh roars the thunder of guns,
Word comes the enemy has fled into the night.

Mao Zedong

**Farewell to the God of Plague**

So many green streams and blue hills, but to what avail ?
This tiny creature left even Hua To powerless!
Hundreds of villages choked with weeds, men wasted away;
Thousands of homes deserted, ghosts chanted mournfully.
Motionless, by earth I travel eighty thousand li a day,
Surveying the sky I see a myriad Milky Ways from afar.
Should the Cowherd ask tidings of the God of Plague,
Say the same griefs flow down the stream of time.

The spring wind blows amid profuse willow wands,
Six hundred million in this land all equal Yao and Shun.
Crimson rain swirls in waves under our will,
Green mountains turn to bridges at our wish.
Gleaming mattocks fall on the Five Ridges heaven-high;
Mighty arms move to rock the earth round the Triple River.
We ask the God of Plague: 'Where are you bound ?'
Paper barges aflame and candle-light illuminate the sky.

Mao Zedong

**Huichang**

Soon dawn will break in the east.
Do not say 'You start too early';
Crossing these blue hills adds nothing to one's years,
The landscape here is beyond compare.
Straight from the walls of Huichang lofty peaks,
Range after range, extend to the eastern seas.
Our soldiers point southward to Kwangtung
Looming lusher and greener in the distance.

Mao Zedong

**Kunlun**

Far above the earth, into the blue,
You, wild Kunlun, have seen
All that was fairest in the world of men.
Your three million white jade dragons in flight
Freeze the sky with piercing cold.
In summer days your melting torrents
Flood the streams and rivers,
Turning men into fish and turtles.
Who has passed judgement on the good and ill
You have wrought these thousand autumns?
To Kunlun now I say,
Neither all your height
Nor all your snow is needed.
Could I but draw my sword o'ertopping heaven,
I'd cleave you in three:
One piece for Europe,
One for America,
One to keep in the East.
Peace would then reign over the world,
The same warmth and cold throughout the globe.

Mao Zedong

**Loushan Pass**

Fierce the west wind,
Wild geese cry under the frosty morning moon.
Under the frosty morning moon
Horses' hooves clattering,
Bugles sobbing low.
Idle boast the strong pass is a wall of iron,
With firm strides we are crossing its summit.
We are crossing its summit,
The rolling hills sea-blue,
The dying sun blood-red.

Mao Zedong

## March From Tingchow To Changsha

In June Heaven's armies chastise the corrupt and evil,
Seeking to bind roc and whale with a league-long cord.
Red glows the far side of the Kan,
Thanks to our wing under Huang Kung-lueh.
A million workers and peasants rise up,
Sweeping Kiangsi straight towards Hunan and Hupeh.
To the Internationale's stirring strains
A wild whirlwind swoops from the sky.

Mao Zedong

## Militia Women Inscription on a Photograph

How bright and brave they look, shouldering five-foot rifles
On the parade ground lit up by the first gleams of day.
China's daughters have high-aspiring minds,
They love their battle array, not silks and satins.

Mao Zedong

**Mount Liupan**

The sky is high, the clouds are pale,
We watch the wild geese vanish southward.
If we fail to reach the Great Wall we are not men
We who have already measured twenty thousand li
High on the crest of Mount Liupan
Red banners wave freely in the west wind.
Today we hold the long cord in our hands,
When shall we bind fast the Grey Dragon?

Mao Zedong

## New Year's Day

Ninghua, Chingliu, Kueihua
What narrow paths, deep woods and slippery moss!
Whither are we bound today?
Straight to the foot of Wuyi Mountain.
To the mountain, the foot of the mountain,
Red flags stream in the wind in a blaze of glory.

Mao Zedong

## Ode to the Plum Blossom

Wind and rain escorted Spring's departure,
Flying snow welcomes Spring's return.
On the ice-clad rock rising high and sheer
A flower blooms sweet and fair.
Sweet and fair, she craves not Spring for herself alone,
To be the harbinger of Spring she is content.
When the mountain flowers are in full bloom
She will smile mingling in their midst.

Outside the post-house, beside the broken bridge, Alone, deserted, a flower blooms.
Saddened by her solitude in the falling dusk,
She is now assailed by wind and rain.
Let other flowers be envious!
She craves not Spring for herself alone.
Her petals may be ground in the mud,
But her fragrance will endure.

Mao Zedong

**Peitaiho**

A rainstorm sweeps down on this northern land,
White breakers leap to the sky.
No fishing boats off Chinwangtao
Are seen on the boundless ocean.
Where are they gone?
Nearly two thousand years ago
Wielding his whip, the Emperor Wu of Wei
Rode eastward to Chiehshih; his poem survives.
Today the autumn wind still sighs,
But the world has changed!

Mao Zedong

**Reascending Chingkangshan**

I have long aspired to reach for the clouds
And I again ascend Chingkangshan.
Coming from afar to view our old haunt, I find new scenes replacing the old.
Everywhere orioles sing, swallows dart,
Streams babble
And the road mounts skyward.
Once Huangyangchieh is passed
No other perilous place calls for a glance.
Wind and thunder are stirring,
Flags and banners are flying
Wherever men live.
Thirty-eight years are fled
With a mere snap of the fingers.
We can clasp the moon in the Ninth Heaven
And seize turtles deep down in the Five Seas:
We'll return amid triumphant song and laughter.
Nothing is hard in this world
If you dare to scale the heights.

Mao Zedong

**Reply to a Friend**

White clouds are sailing above Mount Chiuyi;
Riding the wind, the Princesses descend the green hills.
Once they speckled the bamboos with their profuse tears,
Now they are robed in rose-red clouds.
Tungting Lake's snow-topped waves surge skyward;
The long isle reverberates with earth-shaking song.
And I am lost in dreams, untrammelled dreams
Of the land of hibiscus glowing in the morning sun.

Mao Zedong

**Reply to Comrade Kuo Mo-Jo**

A thunderstorm burst over the earth,
So a devil rose from a heap of white bones.
The deluded monk was not beyond the light,
But the malignant demon must wreak havoc.
The Golden Monkey wrathfully swung his massive cudgel
And the jade-like firmament was cleared of dust.
Today, a miasmal mist once more rising,
We hail Sun Wu-kung, the wonder-worker.

Mao Zedong

**Reply to Comrade Kuo Mo-Jo**

On this tiny globe
A few flies dash themselves against the wall,
Humming without cease,
Sometimes shrilling,
Sometimes moaning.
Ants on the locust tree assume a great-nation swagger
And mayflies lightly plot to topple the giant tree.
The west wind scatters leaves over Changan,
And the arrows are flying, twanging.
So many deeds cry out to be done,
And always urgently;
The world rolls on,
Time presses.
Ten thousand years are too long,
Seize the day, seize the hour!
The Four Seas are rising, clouds and waters raging,
The Five Continents are rocking, wind and thunder roaring.
Our force is irresistible,
Away with all pests!

Mao Zedong

**Reply to Li Shu-Yi**

I lost my proud Poplar and you your Willow,
Poplar and Willow soar to the Ninth Heaven.
Wu Kang, asked what he can give,
Serves them a laurel brew.
The lonely moon goddess spreads her ample sleeves
To dance for these loyal souls in infinite space.
Earth suddenly reports the tiger subdued,
Tears of joy pour forth falling as mighty rain.

Mao Zedong

**Reply to Mr. Liu Ya-Tzu**

I still remember our drinking tea in Kwangchow
And your asking for verses in Chungking as the leaves yellowed.
Back in the old capital after thirty-one years,
At the season of falling flowers I read your polished lines.
Beware of heartbreak with grievance overfull,
Range far your eye over long vistas.
Do not say the waters of Kunming Lake are too shallow,
For watching fish they are better than Fuchun River.

Mao Zedong

**Shaoshan Revisited**

Like a dim dream recalled, I curse the long-fled past
My native soil two and thirty years gone by.
The red flag roused the serf, halberd in hand,
While the despot's black talons held his whip aloft.
Bitter sacrifice strengthens bold resolve
Which dares to make sun and moon shine in new skies.
Happy, I see wave upon wave of paddy and beans,
And all around heroes home-bound in the evening mist.

Mao Zedong

**Snow**

North country scene:
A hundred leagues locked in ice,
A thousand leagues of whirling snow.
Both sides of the Great Wall
One single white immensity.
The Yellow River's swift current
Is stilled from end to end.
The mountains dance like silver snakes
And the highlands* charge like wax-hued elephants,
Vying with heaven in stature.
On a fine day, the land,
Clad in white, adorned in red,
Grows more enchanting.

This land so rich in beauty
Has made countless heroes bow in homage.
But alas! Chin Shih-huang and Han Wu-ti
Were lacking in literary grace,
And Tang Tai-tsung and Sung Tai-tsu
Had little poetry in their souls;
And Genghis Khan,
Proud Son of Heaven for a day,
Knew only shooting eagles, bow outstretched
All are past and gone!
For truly great men
Look to this age alone.

Mao Zedong

**Swimming**

I have just drunk the waters of Changsha
And come to eat the fish of Wuchang.
Now I am swimming across the great Yangtze,
Looking afar to the open sky of Chu.
Let the wind blow and waves beat,
Better far than idly strolling in a courtyard.
Today I am at ease.
'It was by a stream that the Master said
'Thus do things flow away!' '
Sails move with the wind.
Tortoise and Snake are still.
Great plans are afoot:
A bridge will fly to span the north and south,
Turning a deep chasm into a thoroughfare;
Walls of stone will stand upstream to the west
To hold back Wushan's clouds and rain
Till a smooth lake rises in the narrow gorges.
The mountain goddess if she is still there
Will marvel at a world so changed.

Mao Zedong

**Tapoti**

Red, orange, yellow, green,
blue, violet, indigo:
Who is dancing with these
rainbow colours in the sky?
Air after rain, slanting sun:
 mountains and passes turning blue
 in each changing moment.
 Fierce battles that year:
 bullet holes in village walls.
 These mountains so decorated,
look even more beautiful today.

Mao Zedong

**The Double Ninth**

Man ages all too easily, not Nature:
Year by year the Double Ninth returns.
On this Double Ninth,
The yellow blooms on the battlefield smell sweeter.

Each year the autumn wind blows fierce,
Unlike spring's splendour,
Yet surpassing spring's splendour,
See the endless expanse of frosty sky and water.

Mao Zedong

## The Fairy Cave Inscription on a Picture Taken by Comrade Li Chin

Amid the growing shades of dusk stand sturdy pines,
Riotous clouds sweep past, swift and tranquil.
Nature has excelled herself in the Fairy Cave,
On perilous peaks dwells beauty in her infinite variety.

Mao Zedong

## The Long March

The Red Army fears not the trials of the March,
Holding light ten thousand crags and torrents.
The Five Ridges wind like gentle ripples
And the majestic Wumeng roll by, globules of clay.
Warm the steep cliffs lapped by the waters of Golden Sand,
Cold the iron chains spanning the Tatu River.
Minshan's thousand li of snow joyously crossed,
The three Armies march on, each face glowing.

Mao Zedong

## The People's Liberation Army Captures Nanking

Over Chungshan swept a storm, headlong,
Our mighty army, a million strong, has crossed the Great River.
The City, a tiger crouching, a dragon curling, outshines its ancient glories;
In heroic triumph heaven and earth have been overturned.
With power and to spare we must pursue the tottering foe
And not ape Hsiang Yu the conqueror seeking idle fame.
Were Nature sentient, she too would pass from youth to age,
But Man's world is mutable, seas become mulberry fields.

Mao Zedong

## The Warlords Clash

Sudden veer of wind and rain
Showering misery through the land,
The warlords are clashing anew
Yet another Golden Millet Dream.
Red banners leap over the Ting River
Straight to Lungyen and Shanghang.
We have reclaimed part of the golden bowl
And land is being shared out with a will.

Mao Zedong

## Three Short Poems

Mountains!
I whip my swift horse, glued to my saddle.
I turn my head startled,
The sky is three foot three above me!

Mountains!
Like great waves surging in a crashing sea,
Like a thousand stallions
In full gallop in the heat of battle.

Mountains!
Piercing the blue of heaven, your barbs unblunted!
The skies would fall
But for your strength supporting.

Mao Zedong

**Two Birds : A Dialogue**

The roc wings fanwise,
Soaring ninety thousand li
And rousing a raging cyclone.
The blue sky on his back, he looks down
To survey Man's world with its towns and cities.
Gunfire licks the heavens,
Shells pit the earth.
A sparrow in his bush is scared stiff..
'This is one hell of a mess!
O I want to flit and fly away.'
'Where, may I ask?'
The sparrow replies,
'To a jewelled palace in elfland's hills.
Don't you know a triple pact was signed
Under the bright autumn moon two years ago?
There'll be plenty to eat,
Potatoes piping hot,
Beef-filled goulash.'
'Stop your windy nonsense!
Look, the world is being turned upside down.'

Mao Zedong

## Winter clouds

Winter clouds snow-laden, cotton fluff flying,
None or few the unfallen flowers.
Chill waves sweep through steep skies,
Yet earth's gentle breath grows warm.
Only heroes can quell tigers and leopards
And wild bears never daunt the brave.
Plum blossoms welcome the whirling snow;
Small wonder flies freeze and perish.

Mao Zedong

## Yellow Crane Tower

Wide, wide flow the nine streams through the land,
Dark, dark threads the line from south to north.
Blurred in the thick haze of the misty rain
Tortoise and Snake hold the great river locked.

The yellow crane is gone, who knows whither?
Only this tower remains a haunt for visitors.
I pledge my wine to the surging torrent,
The tide of my heart swells with the waves.

Mao Zedong