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# The Monkey King: A Superhero Tale Of China, Retold From The Journey To The West (Ancient Fantasy)



## Synopsis

If you think Superman or Spiderman has been around a long time, think about Monkey. He has been China's favorite superhero for at least five centuries. He's amazingly strong, he can fly, and he has a few tricks those other superheroes never heard of. And he's always ready to do battle with demons, dragons -- sometimes even the gods. Monkey stars in *The Journey to the West*, an epic comic fantasy from the sixteenth century. The part retold here is about Monkey's origin and early career -- and the one time he didn't come out on top. For ages 10 and up. Not illustrated!

////////// Aaron Shepard is the award-winning author of "The Baker's Dozen," "The Sea King's Daughter," "Lady White Snake," and many more children's books. His stories have appeared often in *Cricket* magazine, while his Web site is known internationally as a prime resource for folktales, storytelling, and reader's theater. Once a professional storyteller, Aaron specializes in lively retellings of folktales and other traditional literature, which have won him honors from the American Library Association, the New York Public Library, the Bank Street College of Education, the National Council for the Social Studies, and the American Folklore Society.

Cover artist Xiaojun Li, a native of Inner Mongolia, was an award-winning children's book illustrator and art director in China before moving to the United States.

SAMPLE "Here I am, only four hundred years old," said the Monkey King, "and I've already reached the heights of greatness. What is left to hope and strive for? What can be higher than a king?" "Your Majesty," said the gibbon carefully, "we have ever been grateful for that time four centuries ago when you hatched from the stone, wandered into our midst, and found for us this hidden cave behind the waterfall. We made you our king as the greatest honor we could bestow. Still, I must tell you that kings are not the highest of beings." "They're not?" said the Monkey King. "No, Your Majesty. Above them are gods, who dwell in Heaven and govern Earth. Then there are Immortals, who have gained great powers and live forever. And finally there are Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who have conquered illusion and escaped rebirth." "Wonderful!" cried the Monkey King. "Maybe I can become all three!" He considered a moment, then said, "I think I'll start with the Immortals. I'll search the earth till I've found one, then learn to become one myself!"

## Book Information

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I'm reading this weekly with my third grade students. I personally enjoy the story, but can't believe how much they're into it. I thought without pictures I'd be in for some trouble because this is my first time with a Kindle book on the projector. Yet, it works. Initially, I began reading the story with my booming stage voice to keep them interested, but I looked around and saw ten hands raised. I thought they were just going to bug me about getting water so they could get away so I ignored them for a bit. Then, one student blurted, "Can I read?" Well...sure. This continued until just about everyone in the room read a page. Now, I read first and the others read it after I've completed a few pages. They're really into it and learning some huge words at the same time. But I don't have to

define too much so it works out. My class loves this. On a more personal note, I had no clue how much Dragon Ball ripped from Sun Wukong. I was amazed and thrilled to read it. It keeps me entertained with or without the kids. I get a little upset when they ask me a question while we're reading it.

Short read, of course, but a classic. Shepard's info at the back regarding his adaptation and the research that went into this version is interesting...perhaps as interesting as the tale itself. As he says, this is a condensation or just a part of the whole story (probably by 袁珂), which is available to read, but this is certainly able to stand on its own. Great thing about these tales is that the hero doesn't always come out on top...or come out as a hero. There are lessons to learn, we just have to seek them out.

The universally known stories in a culture have a profound and lasting influence in the mindset of growing children they are told to, and mark the continuity of tradition when repeated to their own children. This is true in every culture and this story is the ultimate in Chinese children stories. Not only does this story contain numerous character studies, conflicts and scenes that have entered into linguistic/world view idiom, but hidden inside this story are cryptic allusions to deep Buddhist and Taoist training. The full version of this story has 100 books and some authors have considered this story on par with such classics as the Tao-Te-Ching. This version is a good introduction to this story, the sort to give you a taste or to read to a child. I have a dozen versions of this story and while this is not my choice as the best short-popular version, it is close. Further, this author has released this text for the Kindle for 1 penny! This is the world's greatest bargain. Absolutely everyone should load this on their reader...As an aside...I hope that many like myself will purchase his dead tree version of the book and put it on their shelf, prove to publishers and that this is a good economic model. May many more authors release inexpensive e-book versions of texts as a promotion of their work. There is presently a vast quantity of high quality free audio books by authors trying to break in or grow their base, for traditionally published material. I regularly purchase texts that I have listened to or heard for free on the NPR Radio Reader program. I personally have been less than enthused with the universal \$10 price for kindle books, the overall reading experience and utility is not the equivalent of a paper book. Given that 99.9% of the infrastructure costs such as printing, ink, paper, transport and warehousing are nonexistent for e-books, \$10 is exorbitant. I generally feel that if the paper back version of a book is available for \$15 compared to a \$10 Kindle e-book, I would unhesitatingly go with paper. There is a lot of inexpensive e-book content "notably - Author

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This is a humorous retelling of a 16th century Chinese tale, or at least this is what we are told. Monkey is a kind of superman, but he doesn't seem all that bright. His parent was a magic stone, which being a stone could not talk and never gave him a name. He served as a king for some four hundred years but became bored and wanted a higher position. He went to learn with the Patriarch who taught him magic arts and made him immortal. Then he decided he wanted to be a god. His adventures are sometimes ridiculous but always funny and many readers will enjoy them.

I enjoy reading myths from other countries and this is one of the most well known in the Chinese culture.

This book was okay, it was not anything great, but the story was somewhat cute. It was worth the penny that I paid for it but no more. Many of the words would be hard to pronounce for a child under ten years old. It was a Chinese/Buddhist story that I am not sure a child would understand. That being said I do not think anyone over fourteen would even enjoy it, unless they were reading it to a child and then they would probably have to explain everything to that child. It had a slight moral to the story, but unless you looked hard to find one, it was just a cute mythological story. It was not a "superhero tale of China" China wasn't even really mentioned in the book, and the monkey wasn't much of a superhero! Overall, it was a cute book that you might have to read a few times to understand.

As a westerner, I didn't grow up with Monkey and Journey to the West, only coming across it as an adult. It's a great story, though, and as fundamental to Chinese culture as the Grimm fairy tales are to Euro-American culture. I got this short book to read to my grandchildren so they wouldn't have to wait as long as I did to encounter this entertaining rascal.

A great introductory book to the many fables of the Monkey King. It is fun. It is exciting. It is everything a little boy with special needs wanted. Not having any inkling of the Monkey King, this boy was introduced to its fables by word. Stories were told to him through memories and it is such a

great feeling for him to actually have a book where his own mother could read and read again the fables.

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