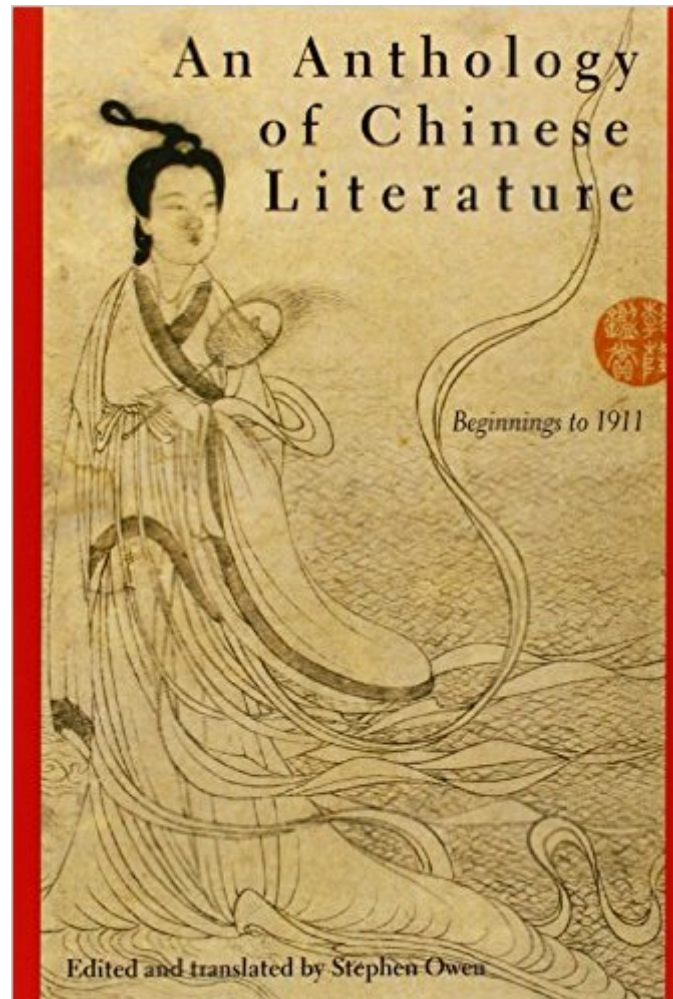


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An Anthology Of Chinese Literature: Beginnings To 1911



Synopsis

Hailed as a groundbreaking text in Chinese Studies, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* brings together representative works from the first millennium B.C. to the end of the imperial system in 1911. This collection of over 600 pieces, translated with great clarity and sense of the original, presents the tradition in historical and aesthetic context. Moving roughly chronologically through the tradition, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature* gathers texts in a variety of genres—songs, letters, anecdotes, poetry, political oratory, plays, traditional literary theory, and more—to show how the essential texts build on and echo each other. Coupled with highly readable commentary, this innovative structure uniquely highlights the interplay among Chinese literature, culture, and history.

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Customer Reviews

As a westerner who studies ancient Chinese Culture, I've "palled around" with this anthology for about two years. My first Chinese literature teacher taught out of it, but as an introductory text it fell short and most of the class couldn't get into the material as it's presented here. The translations, as far as I know, are accurate, or at least as accurate as you can expect, though they're also quite lifeless. I'll be amazed if the students reading the poems in this book actually come away with the feeling that they've just read poetry-- I certainly didn't. What doesn't help is that Owen provides the bare minimum in terms of supplementary annotations. He gives most of the literary eras a measly three-or-so paragraphs of "explanation" before spamming the reader with his impressive collection of literal yet glossless translations. For a work of this magnitude, from a scholar who's written

captivating works about Chinese literature in the past, there is simply no excuse for this. And here's the rub: if you want to learn more about Chinese literature, you can read the numerous, far superior translations of the great novels, the philosophers, the histories, the most famous poets Li Bai and Dufu, etc, by Arthur Waley, Burtson Watson, and so on. If you want to delve even deeper, you can try Cyril Birch's anthology. And if you want to take learning about Chinese literature seriously, you'd better start learning classical Chinese. In short, this book is, sad to say, pretty darn useless. It's not fit for casual readers, and unfortunately due to the lack of deeper effort, it's not going to be helping any scholars either.

This anthology is amazing and really beyond belief - rich in poetry and commentary that is deep and intelligent. This book (at over 1,200 pages) is virtually an encyclopedia of traditional Chinese culture, and it's fascinating to read the poems in the context of the world in which they were written. The range of work is vast to say the least, and is utterly absorbing; this is far and away my favorite of the larger anthologies of traditional Chinese poetry.

The book indeed has many mistranslations and wrongly spelled pinyin, which really surprise many of our students majoring in Chinese literature. As many comments have said, considering Owen's name and Tian Xiaofei's part, and given that the book has been in the market for more than ten years, it's indeed a wonder why they never paid effort to wipe out the errors and publish a new version.

1. Should include a list that tells readers the original Chinese titles, names, nouns of works, authors, concepts discussed but doesn't. This the most annoying issue.
2. Quality of translation uneven.
3. Doesn't include political-oriented works.
4. Introduction and notes extremely insufficient.
5. It took Norton five tomes (World Masterpieces, English Lit 1 & 2, and American Lit 1 & 2) to include the important works for Anglo-Saxon lit, but one for Chinese lit? We need more people to help Owen and the study of Chinese lit in general.

Stephen Owen personally collated and translated nearly all of the texts in this work, allowing the reader to get a sense of the nuances between differing texts without the anxiety that they are getting the nuances between differing translators. His translations are not only precise, but demonstrate a genuine love not only of the Chinese language, but the English language as well. This anthology takes the reader from the beginnings of poetry to historical essays to literary criticism to drama, all

with the same exacting eye on detail and lyricism. What a pleasure to read.

One of the best translations of classical Chinese literature. The author knows the Chinese well: not just the superficial kind knowledge about the Chinese language, but a deep understanding of the Chinese culture, the Chinese literary tradition. The works are not only arranged in a chronological order (with useful background introductions) but also grouped under themes and motifs with succinct but illuminating critical introductions, or a seductively told story that adds to the pleasure of reading beautiful literary writings. The another great thing about this anthology is, of course, the fact that it is put together by one person, not coming out of diverse hands. This is a significant accomplishment, one that enables the reader to see the styles and nuances of the original works much better than otherwise.

As expected; it's a required textbook.

Owen's anthology is no less than a work of a genius. What makes this work so great on the one hand is its scope as it covers chinese literature from its beginings up to the twentieth century, the various genres of literature and poetry that existed along the Chinese history and the fact that it provides excellent introductions to each and every subject it deals with (including historical introductions), and on the other hand, it's greatness lies in the fact that all the works in it were translated by Owen himself and in the most beautifull way. absolutely recommended!

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