### Classic poems

The well-known poems of China are written in classical Chinese. But although they were written long ago, because they are written in characters, they can be given a modern pronunciation – whether Mandarin, as below, or Cantonese, Shanghainese or some other regional pronunciation. The following selection includes poems by four of the best known poets of the Tang dynasty. Memorizing poems, of course, makes them your own, which is exciting in itself; but memorizing them also provides good practice in both pronunciation and character writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>静夜思</td>
<td>Jìng yè sī</td>
<td>Quiet night thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>李白</td>
<td>Lǐ Bái or Lǐ Bó</td>
<td>701-762, native of Sichuan, served the Tang court briefly, wandered through the S and SE, incarcerated for a time after the An Lushan rebellion. He was pardoned, but never regained full favor, and died soon after.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>床前明月光</td>
<td>Chuáng qián míng yuè guāng</td>
<td>Bed front bright moon light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>疑是地上霜</td>
<td>yí shì dì shàng shuāng</td>
<td>suspect is ground on frost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>举头望明月</td>
<td>jǔ tóu wàng míng yuè</td>
<td>raise head look bright moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>低头思故乡</td>
<td>dī tóu sī gù xiāng</td>
<td>lower head think-of old country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鹿柴</td>
<td>Lù Chái</td>
<td>Deer Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>王维</td>
<td>Wáng Wéi, 699-759, a Buddhist, and a landscape painter, rather mystical in his outlook.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
杜甫
Dù Fǔ, 712-70, a friend of Li Bo’s, who also suffered as a result of the An Lushan rebellion. Often ill, he clung to civilized values as his world collapsed around him.

国有山河在
Guó pò shān hé zài
State ruined mountains-rivers survive

烽火连三月
Fēng huǒ lián sān yuè
Beacon-fires continue 3 months

春眠不觉晓
Chūn mián bù jué xiǎo
Spring slumber not notice dawn

孟浩然
Mèng Hăorán, 689-740, failed at politics and returned home to Hubei to lead a reclusive life. He was also a friend of Wang Wei and Li Bo.

春望
Chūn Wàng
Spring view

烽火连三月
Fēng huǒ lián sān yuè
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白头搔更短
Bái tóu sāo gèng duǎn
white hair scratch even shorter

浑欲不胜簪
Hún yù bù shēng zān
whole will-be un equal-to hatpin.

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春晓
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Spring Dawn

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