



# The Exploration of Li Bai's Carefree and Loneliness from "Night Thoughts"

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## Abstract

Li Bai spent most of his life traveling far away from home, during which time he wrote a large number of poems about homesickness. These poems, along with the poet's activities and the trajectory of his life, truly reflected the poet's life journey, reproduced the poet's instinctive desire to return and his deep and irrepressible homesickness, reflected the poet's rich inner emotions, and also contained an endless spiritual power. It has become an indispensable spiritual home for the Chinese nation, which loves its homeland and values family affection. "Night Thoughts" also serves as a way for Li Bai to express his inner feelings, making Li Bai the most persistent guardian of this spiritual home.

## Subject Areas

Literature

## Keywords

"Night Thoughts", Carefree, Loneliness

## 1. Research on Semantic Analysis of Sentences

Do you remember this poem which called "Night Thoughts". "Before my bed the moonlight glitters; Like frost upon the ground. I look up to the mountain moon, Look down and think of home" (By Stephen Owen). There are many different translations of this poem online. I chose this version of translation because it adopts the method of word by word translation, which not only describes objective scenes and actions to intuitively express the author's emotions, but also makes it easier to understand the emotions expressed in the poem. It is very familiar and easy to understand. This poem is written by the Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai.

Li Bai, whose courtesy name was Taibai, was known as the Hermit of Green

Lotus, was a great romantic poet in the Tang Dynasty, and was praised by later generations as the “knight poet”. Throughout Li Bai’s life, his poems are full of personality and have a strong subjective lyrical color. The content shows the rebellious spirit of despising vulgarity, resisting and not flattering the powerful, and praising knights and immortals, so he is also known as the “fairy poet”. Li’s poems are rich in imagination, peculiar in structure, extremely exaggerated, vivid in metaphor, and use a lot of myths and legends. Li’s poems sing the majestic nature, are good at describing and singing about mountains and rivers, and are bold and unrestrained. He disdains subtle carving and parallel arrangement, and uses bold and unpredictable techniques and lines to write the impressions and feelings in his mind, creating a vivid image of art and an unparalleled style.

However, this five-character quatrain is extremely plain and simple, as if an old friend is telling you about his homesickness in a foreign country. In this poem, the poet changed his bold and heroic style, and his strong emotional expression became implicit. “He used metaphors and contrasts commonly used in traditional Chinese poetry to express his homesickness” [1]. The moonlight shines through the window and sprinkles white frost on the ground. How quiet and beautiful. The word “yi” indicates that the poet is lost in a certain thought. Suddenly, he glimpsed the “frost” and mistakenly thought that the weather was getting colder. The author wrote this poem in Yangzhou on September 15, which was around the time of the frost, but he still had “doubts”. It can be seen that the author was not paying attention to the solar terms at the time, but was thinking about the following “lowering his head and thinking about his hometown”. The distance between “raising his head and lowering his head” is the distance between the foreign land and the hometown. Du Fu has a similar line in “Recalling My Younger Brother on a Moonlit Night”: “Dew turns into frost since tonight; The moon viewed at home is more bright.” Although both poems describe the bright moon and hometown, Li’s poem is more simple, more colloquial, and can better evoke the reader’s emotions. Putting aside the background, the poem neither specifies the time or place, nor specifically states who the poet is missing. This leaves room for imagination and has a certain degree of popularity, suitable for any traveler who is “Being alone in a strange place as a visitor.”

The Chronological and Annotated Complete Works of Li Bai edited by An Qi believes that this poem was written in the autumn of the 15th year of the Kaiyuan reign (727) at Shoushan, Anlu. Zhang Yimin and Wang Caiqin believe that it was written in the autumn of the 14th year of the Kaiyuan reign (726), when Li Bai fell ill in Yangzhou. Not long after writing “Night Thoughts”, he also wrote “Autumn Evening Travel Thoughts”: “The cool breeze blows across the autumn sea, blowing my homesickness away. The mountains are endless, when will the flowing water return? My eyes are filled with the color of floating clouds, and my heart is cut off from the bright moonlight. The fragrant grass has stopped being soft and beautiful, and the white dew urges me to wear winter clothes. I dream of the Milky Way falling, and when I wake up, the stars are sparse. I miss my old country with

sadness, and who can stop me from crying?”

The artistic conception of “Night Thoughts” seems to be autumn. If it is a cool autumn night, is it reasonable for the poet to sit or lie down outdoors or even fall asleep? Bai Juyi’s “Inviting the Eastern Neighbor”: “Two liters of wine in a small room, a new mat and a six-foot bed. Can you come to chat at night? The autumn is getting cooler by the pool.” This is a scene of inviting guests to drink and chat on the bed by the pool in autumn. “Alone in Early Autumn”: “The cool leaves of the wellwood tree are shaking, and the neighbor’s pestle makes autumn sounds. I sleep alone under the eaves, and wake up to see the half-moon on the bed.” This is a scene of Bai Juyi sleeping alone on the bed outdoors in autumn. Moreover, the first sentence of the Song Dynasty version, “Watching the moonlight in front of the bed,” shows that the poet did not fall asleep in the quiet night, which is reasonable no matter what season it is. Therefore, the “bed” in the Song Dynasty version can be fully interpreted as “a simple and light bed in the Tang Dynasty that can be used for sitting or lying down and rest, and can be placed indoors or outdoors” [2].

## 2. Research on Background to Analyze the Sentences

Li Bai left Sichuan with a sword in the 13th year of the Kaiyuan reign (725), sailing down the Yangtze River, sending greeting cards and making friends along the way. In the 14th year of the Kaiyuan reign, he was still an unknown young man. Although he was generous and charitable, he still did not have many close friends or fans. It was his first Mid-Autumn Festival away from home, he had no friends around him, and he was also ill, so he felt lonely and wrote such a poem [3].

In the 15th year of Kaiyuan, when he arrived in Anlu, he was already a little famous, so someone helped introduce him to a date, and at the end of that year he married the granddaughter of Xu Yushi, the left prime minister of the early Tang Dynasty. I think that during this Mid-Autumn Festival, Li Bai should have been drinking with his friends until dawn, so even if he had written a poem, he would not have been so sad.

The hometown mentioned in the poem is Qinglian Township, Zhangming County, Sichuan, not Anxi Protectorate of the Tang Dynasty (in Tajikistan today), because Li Bai moved to Qinglian Township with his father when he was very young, where he grew up, studied and learned swordsmanship. This is the hometown in his memory, not the place he left soon after he was born. What He Zhizhang called “I left home young and not till old do I come back” also refers to his youth after he finished his studies, relative to his advanced age of more than 80 years old.

In this poem, Li Bai has endless thoughts and endless suffering. I believe there are more and more. It is a poem that is hard to describe in words. When he looked up at the bright moon, he might have already burst into tears. He lowered his head to wipe away his tears, but he was still stubborn. With Li Bai’s free and uninhibited character, he would rather “Toast to invite the moon, on the film into three” than

“Look down and think of home.” Facing the frustration in officialdom, he just “leaving home laughing with head holding high. I am never Peng Hao generation.” Why did he miss his hometown for no reason when he was free of worries? Without wine, songs, and nowhere to talk about desolation, a sense of loneliness arises spontaneously, and this loneliness is given by his hometown.

What is so good about this poem by Li Bai? It is good because of its universality and eternity! He used the moon to write about his homesickness, and he expressed the universality and eternity of the world. For thousands of years, the moon has been the most likely medium for people who have been away from home to feel homesick. Why? We often say, “Seeing an object makes one miss its owner.” Seeing the same scenery as my hometown is the easiest way to think of my hometown. Moreover, in the dead of night, when the fatigue of life is slightly relieved, in a moment of tranquility, a sudden glimpse of the moonlight can trigger people’s homesickness. No matter where you are, the moon is so quietly hanging high in the sky, silent, but full of affection.

The moon’s tranquility and clarity can attract people’s attention for a longer time than other photos and landscapes that can “remind people of people”. And her feminine beauty can touch people’s hearts more than the sun that can also be seen in hometown. From the perspective of media application, Li Bai uses the moon as the theme, which is the most common scene fusion, and uses the sensory touch to create the feeling of missing his hometown.

Almost everyone who recited this poem for the first time had no experience of leaving their hometown, nor had they ever thought of their hometown when they saw the moon. However, as they grew older, some people lived in exile for the sake of studying, even across the ocean; some people served in the army and guarded under the moonlight, even wandering all their lives; and now many people travel around the world for business, and spend less time in their hometown. Whether young or old, when you leave your homeland, you will often miss your hometown unintentionally under the moonlight. “The moon is much more brighter in the hometown” (Du Fu’s “Recalling My Younger Brother on a Moonlit Night”), “Looking at moon, we should all be shedding tears. Longing for home is same at five places this night.” (Bai Juyi’s “Since the chaos in Henan, the famine in the interior of the country, my brothers have been separated and are each in a different place. I am inspired by looking at the moon, and write down my thoughts to my eldest brother in Fuliang, my seventh brother in Yuqian, my fifteenth brother in Wujiang, and to my brothers and sisters in Fuli and other places.” Looking at the moon and missing home is a deep feeling in many people’s lives [4].

Thousands of miles away, the distance from home, and the dangers of traveling are the biggest regrets of wanderers. But there is always the possibility of reunion in this world. In the ever-changing life, the only thing that remains unchanged is the bright moon. As Li Bai said in another poem “Asking the Moon, a Cup in Hand”: “People today can’t see the moon of yore; The moon today did light people before. People before, people today, all flow; As ever, they have seen the moon like

so.” It implies a quiet thought. Although it is a momentary feeling to appreciate the moon in the dead of night, it is also the same thing in people’s hearts throughout the ages.

### 3. Research on Character to Analyze Emotion

As a genius, he was destined to be lonely because of his pride that “I was born to be useful”. This is the so-called “highbrow” and “highbrow music is appreciated by few”. Ye Zhentang sang in “Who Knows My Heart” that “the most sad thing is that the world has mistaken me, only you truly understand me, and the end of darkness is dawn.” Qingya Kuangke believed that there was nothing special about famous mountains and rivers. The key was who to travel with. Was there someone to “point out the mountains and rivers, write inspiring words, and despise the marquis of the past.” In his hometown, Li Bai obviously did not meet a person of the same level to communicate with, or in other words, Li Bai never met one in his life. Li Bai left his hometown to find a soulmate. It could be a Bole who recognized a good horse, or a way to learn from each other and make progress together. The night was quiet, which just matched Li Bai’s loneliness and also triggered his thoughts of sharing the moon with the world [5]. Li Bai thought of his hometown. What was there in his hometown? A home! Home is always a safe haven for people. When you are frustrated, you will naturally have the idea of going back home.

Li Bai spent most of his life wandering away from his hometown. He was always separated from his parents, wife and children. Not only did the poet leave home at a young age, but he also never returned home in his life and finally died in a foreign land. It is precisely because of this special life experience that the poet has a special emotional experience of his hometown that ordinary people do not have, and home has a richer connotation for the poet. Because “home - the root of the self, becomes the guarantee of human survival, and is the place where comfort and protection are obtained.” Once you are away from home, you will naturally feel deep affection for it. As a talented poet, he left us many moving songs of homesickness in those days away from home.

Perhaps a person has spent his whole life traveling the world with a sword, and when he looks back at his hometown, he is reluctant to leave! When we were young, we always had dreams, left our hometowns, and longed to make a great career in the outside world. Little did we know that when we returned home in defeat, the land of our hometown could still heal the scars and loneliness in our hearts. Even so, wave your hand and move forward again towards freedom and ideals...

### 4. Conclusion

The charm of this poem lies in its simplicity and profundity, using the simplest language to express a common emotion shared by humanity, which is the longing for everyone’s hometown. No matter who you are or where you are, you can find resonance in this poem. We can understand Li Bai’s emotions from poetry, but

we can also understand his poems from his life experiences.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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