

## Stories and Poetry

Legends associated with the moon help to explain the origins and traditions of the Mid-Autumn Moon Festival.

Poetry inspired by the moon has been written since ancient times.

### The Legend of Chang'e

The beloved husband of Chang'e, a brave archer called Hou Yi, was called upon by the Emperor to shoot down 9 of the 10 suns that had been burning in the sky and causing misery to the people on Earth. As a reward, he was given the Elixir of Immortality. Hou Yi and Chang'e hid the Elixir away until they were ready to drink it but a robber happened to overhear them talking and, when Hou Yi was out of the house, broke in to steal it. In a panic, Chang'e drank the Elixir herself so the robber would not find it. Hou Yi returned home to find his wife floating away up into the sky where she came to rest on the moon where she lives to this day. Chang'e and Hou Yi were parted forever.

Hou Yi prepared a banquet for his wife on the 15th day of every 8th lunar month when the full moon was closest to the earth, looking forward to their reunion.

### The Legend of the Jade Rabbit

Three Immortals, pretending to be beggars, went through the forest asking for food. Fox and Monkey both took pity on the beggars and gave them something to eat. Rabbit did not have any food to give so told them, "You can eat me instead!" and threw himself into the fire.

The Immortals were very moved by the Rabbit's selfless act and as a reward, made him immortal and sent him to live on the moon with Chang'e. If you look very closely at the full moon, you can see the outline of the Jade Rabbit!



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From 'A Prelude to Water Melody' (水調歌頭) by Su Shi (written in 1076)

明月幾時有？把酒問青天。不知天上宮闕，今夕是何年。

When will the moon be bright and clear? With a cup of wine in my hand, I ask the deep blue sky.

In the heavens on this night, I wonder what year it would be?

