

Annex A

About the Four Great Classic Novels (四大名著)

Book	About
<p><i>Journey to the West</i> 《西游记》</p>	<p>A 16th century late-Ming dynasty Chinese novel, whose authorship is attributed to Wu Cheng' En (吴承恩), <i>Journey to the West</i> is loosely based off the monk Xuan Zang's Records of the Western Region, which detailed his pilgrimages to the Indian subcontinent, but the novel is a fictionalised account.</p> <p>In the story, the Tang emperor and Buddha task the monk Tang Sanzang to retrieve Buddhist scriptures from Tian Zhu, a mythical location in the Indian subcontinent. Tang is accompanied by three disciples: 'Monkey King' Sun Wukong, 'Piggy' the pig demon Zhu Bajie, and 'Sandy' the river ogre Sha Wujing.</p>
<p><i>Water Margin</i> 《水浒传》</p>	<p>The novel's current version is believed to have been completed in the 16th century, around 1524 during the reign of the Jiajing emperor. It is generally attributed to Shi Nai'an (施耐庵) and Luo Guanzhong (罗贯中), with Shi credited as author of the first 100 chapters and Luo (a student of Shi) credited for the remaining 30.</p> <p>The story is set in the late Northern Song dynasty and tells of a band of 108 heroes who gathered at the marshes of Mount Liang to oppose the Song government helmed by corrupt officials.</p> <p>The 108 heroes are portrayed as reincarnations of the 108 Stars of Destiny, comprising 36 Heavenly Spirits and 72 Earthly Fiends, who were accidentally released from Dragon-Tiger Mountain and are carrying out Heaven's mandate by challenging injustice.</p>

<p><i>Romance of the Three Kingdoms</i> 《三国演义》</p>	<p>A historical novel written in the 14th century (late Yuan dynasty to early Ming dynasty), attributed to Luo Guanzhong (罗贯中). It follows a semi-fictional historical narrative set in the late years of the Eastern Han (东汉末年) dynasty and the subsequent Three Kingdoms (三国) period.</p> <p><i>Romance of the Three Kingdoms</i> showcases various power struggles among the many warlords as they vied for dominion over China, and closely depicts the political intrigues, strategies and conflicts surrounding the three kingdoms that emerged from the dissolution of the Han dynasty: the kingdom of Shu (蜀) led by Liu Bei, the kingdom of Wu (吴) led by Sun Quan, and the kingdom of Wei (魏) led by Cao Cao.</p> <p>The novel combines historical material from the Three Kingdoms Annals (三国志) with folklore and legends.</p>
<p><i>Dream of the Red Chamber</i> 《红楼梦》</p>	<p>The only work among the Four Great Classic Novels that was written in the 18th century during the Qing dynasty. It is attributed to Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹), although some scholars argue that the final 40 chapters were not authored by him.</p> <p>The story follows the rise and fall of the Jia family. It focuses on the young and aspiring scholar Jia Baoyu and his relationships with various women – Lin Daiyu, a cousin with whom he shares a close emotional bond, and Xue Baochai, a more pragmatic lady who was regarded by Baoyu's elders as his ideal match. Other women also play an important role in the plot.</p> <p><i>Dreams of the Red Chamber</i> is widely thought of as an innovative take on the 'promising scholar meets beauty' (才子佳人) literary genre, the novel is also often viewed as a social critique on Qing</p>

	materialist culture and values. The work has even sparked its own academic field, 'Redology' (红学).
--	--