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<i>Module Code: SICH3012</i> <i>Module title: A Brief History of British Sinology</i>	<i>Student number: 2503167</i>
<i>For completion by marker:</i> <i>Comments:</i>	
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To Carry on the Family's Learning and Pass It On

Hello everyone! Today I'm going to share the story of a great woman—the story is called To Carry on the Family's Learning and Pass It On.

My presentation is split into three parts: First, I'll cover an introduction to key figures and background information; second, I'll walk through the story itself; and finally, we'll explore what this story wants to tell us.

Let's move on to the first part: An introduction to key figures and background information

The primary protagonist is Ms. Song 宋氏(dates unknown).It is unknown which county she came from. She was born into a family with a Confucianism heritage. Her mother passed away when she was just a child. As she grew up, she inherited the family learning.

Another figure is Fu Jian 苻堅(337-384),the King of the Former Qin during the Sixteen Kingdoms period. During his reign, he promoted Confucianism.

Finally, there is Shi Hu 石虎(?-363), the King of the Later Zhao. He was an autocratic and immoral

monarch, and during his reign, his subjects lived in dire misery.

Based on the birth and death years of the two individuals mentioned before, this story took place around the 4th century AD, when China was fragmented and in the era of the Jin Dynasty and the Sixteen Kingdoms. The two coexisted for roughly two hundred years.

In simple terms, the unified Western Jin Dynasty was weakened by an internal conflict (historically known as War of the Eight Princes), after which northern ethnic minorities gradually established separate regimes—collectively shortened to the Sixteen Kingdoms.

Okay, that's all the introduction, we may proceed to the story itself.

There was a person named Wei Cheng(dates unknown). His mother was called Ms. Song. Her family was famous for studying Confucianism for generations. When Ms. Song was a child, her mother passed away, so her father raised her personally. As she grew up, her father taught her the phonetic and

semantic commentary on *Zhouguan* 周官(Offices of Zhou) — this book was also known as *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou). And her father told her: ‘Our family has been studying the *Offices of Zhou* for many generations. I only have a daughter who is you. You must inherit this learning, and never let it disappear from the world.’

At that time, the whole of China was in chaos. Ms. Song kept reciting the learning her father taught her before. Later on, she and her family(her husband and her son), along with many other commoners, were forced to move to Shandong Province by Shi Hu — the King of the Later Zhao Kingdom.

On the way, Ms. Song and her husband pushed a deer-drawn cart, and they carried the books her father had given her. When they finally reached Jizhou 冀州 — which is roughly parts of today’s Hebei and northern Shandong Province— they went to seek shelter with a wealthy man from Jiaodong County named Cheng Anshou(dates unknown).

Cheng was kind to take them in. Back then, Ms. Song’s son Wei Cheng was still young. During the day,

Ms. Song cut and collected firewood. And During the night, she would teach her son. Furthermore, she still kept spinning.

Cheng, seeing this situation, often remarked: ‘A family that pursues learning is mostly officials, is that so?’

As time went by, Wei Cheng finished his studies and became well-known for his knowledge. Later, he served as a Chamberlain for Ceremonials under Fu Jian.

One day, Fu Jian visited the National University. There, an Erudite named Yu Hu(dates unknown) said to him: ‘At present, there’s no one who can teach the *Offices of Zhou*. But Wei Cheng’s mother is different — she inherited her father’s learning even though she’s a daughter. Now she’s eighty years old, but neither her eyesight nor her hearing has faded. She’s the suitable person to pass the learning of *Offices of Zhou* down to the younger generation.’

So Fu Jian ordered: Set up a lecture room in Ms. Song’s home, and let one hundred and twenty students go there to study. The students studied through a

gauze curtain. Fu Jian also honored Ms. Song with the title ‘Xuan Wen Jun’ and bestowed upon her ten female attendants.

Thanks to her, the learning of *Offices of Zhou* prevailed in that era. And from then on, people called her Mother Song of the Wei clan.

That’s the entire story. Obviously, the theme of this story is about filial piety. Because Ms. Song did not want to waste the efforts of her ancestors. She studied the *Offices of Zhou* and pass it on. What does this concept, filial piety mean? Regarding this story content, this can be explained by this sentence from *Zhongyong* 中庸(Doctrine of the Mean):‘Now filial piety is seen in the skilful carrying out of the wishes of our forefathers, and the skilful carrying forward of their undertakings.

In addition, the characters in this story offer many inspirations. We can analyse them one by one.

Firstly, it was Ms.Song’s filial devotion to her father and her ancestors that prompted her to inherit the family learning. At the same time, she ensured the *Offices of Zhou* was passed down. Because she was in

the times of chaos, her hardships can be imagined. Whether settling at Cheng Anshou's place or being already eighty years old, Ms. Song remained busy all along. As a woman in that era, her unwavering determination is admirable.

Filial piety was the driving force for Ms. Song to carry forward family's learning, which gives us an inspiration. When we want to do something, we can find a noble and meaningful motivation—that will help us achieve our goal. Just as stated in *Geyan Lianbi* 格言聯璧(The Collection of Maxims): Where ambition leads, no distance is unreachable; even mountains and seas cannot stand in our way.

Furthermore, Ms. Song proved a truth throughout her life: Responsibility and a sense of mission do not belong to any single gender or identity. Women can also become the backbone of cultural inheritance. To connect this with our life, when you face major responsibilities, don't immediately limit yourself by your identity—thinking that you are just a child or that you have no influence in this society, etc. At first time, we can think about how to actually do it. Let's

take an example. The environmental protection: Do we think this topic is too grand and distant from us? Actually, it's not the case. For instance, when travelling, you can bring a reusable bottle to reduce the use of disposable plastics, and take eco-friendly rubbish bags to dispose of waste properly —— which is pollution control; Remember to turn off the lights when leaving a room, which conserves resources; take public transportation, ride a bike, etc, which helps mitigate global warming.

Speaking of this, a quote from *Xunzi* 荀子 comes to my mind: Without accumulating small steps, one can never cover a thousand miles; without gathering tiny streams, which can never form a river or a sea. If everyone is deterred by the thought that ‘something is too grand’, then on changes will ever get started, let alone make a positive impact.

Having talked about Ms. Song, now we can discuss other characters.

Take Cheng Anshou, he generously took in the Song family and let them settle down. In doing so, he indirectly provided a stable learning environment for

Ms. Song's son, enabling him to excel academically. Her son was able to serve Fu Jian, so the Erudite under Fu Jian could learn of the profound knowledge of Ms. Song and invited her to give a lecture. From Cheng Anshou's action, we can conclude that this is a virtue of lending a helping hand. *Lunyu* 論語(The Analects)said: 'The gentleman calls attention to the good points in others; he does not call attention to their defects. '

Finally, Fu Jian and the Erudite Yu Hu, truly attached importance to the transmission of knowledge and took the initiative to seek out a teacher for the younger generations. For us, as younger generations, we also need to lay emphasis on our studies, seize learning opportunities, actively ask our teachers questions, and participate in discussions with classmates. Just as the sentence from the *Analects* said: 'Learn as if you were following someone whom you could not catch up, as though it were someone you were frightened of losing.'

That's all the content of my presentation. After analysing this story, we've learned a lot from the

characters. These virtues are quite valuable for us, and we can apply them in our daily lives, making life better and better. Finally, these are the bibliographies and image sources I have used.

Thank you for your attention.

To Carry on the Family's Learning and Pass It On

Module code: SICH3012

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Date: 7 Jan 2026

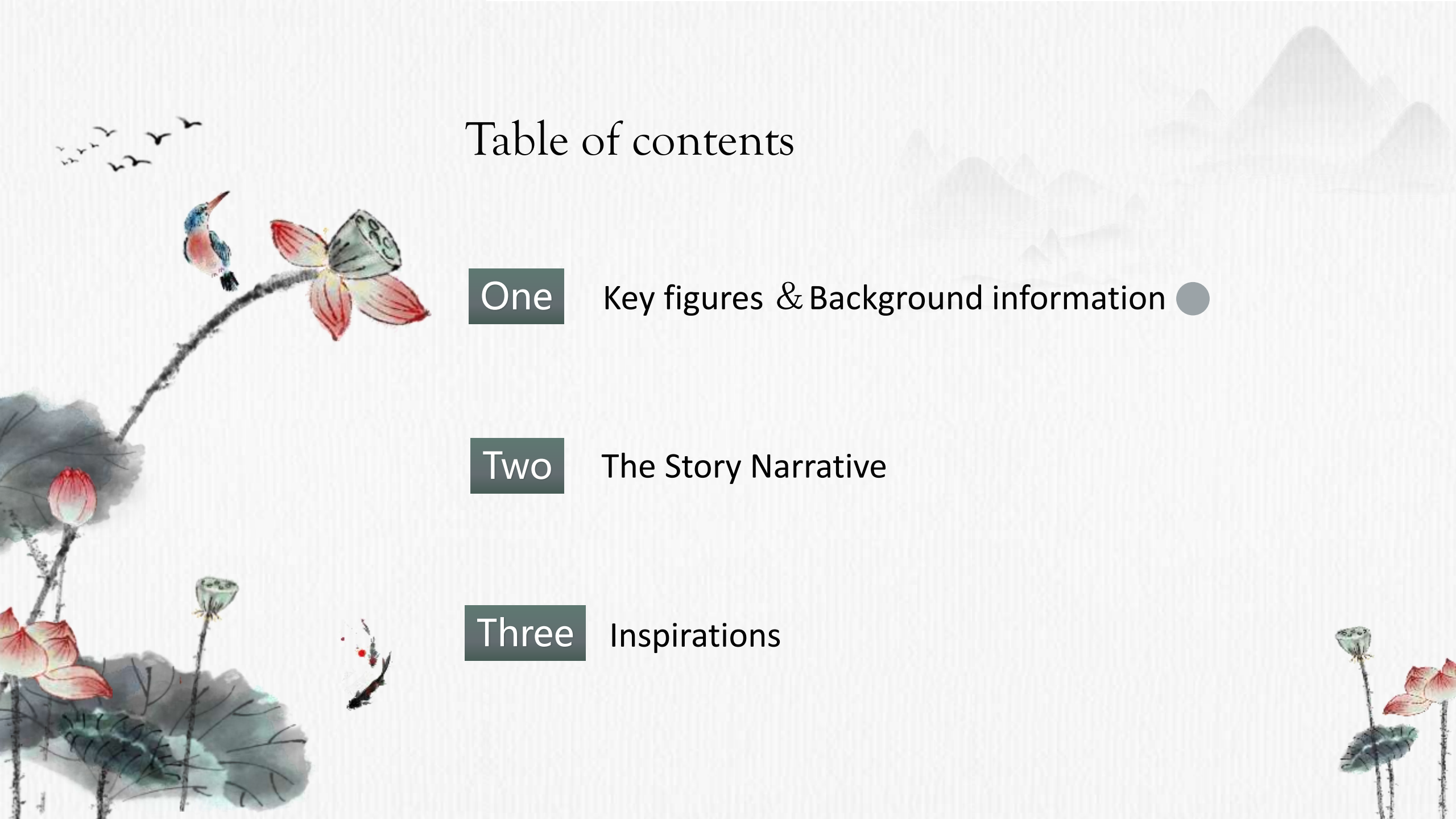
The background of the slide is a traditional Chinese ink wash painting. It depicts a pond scene with several lotus flowers in various stages of bloom, some with vibrant red petals and others as green seed pods. A kingfisher bird with a blue crest and red breast is perched on a dark, gnarled branch that extends from the left. In the upper left corner, a small flock of birds is shown in flight. At the bottom center, a small black fish is visible near the water's surface. The overall style is minimalist and elegant, with soft, misty mountains visible in the background.

Table of contents

One Key figures & Background information ●

Two The Story Narrative

Three Inspirations

One —— An introduction to key figures

Ms.
Song
(?-?)



Fu
Jian
(337-
384)



The King of the Former Qin
During the Sixteen Kingdoms period

Promote Confucianism¹

¹ Zhang Huizhi 張勃之, Shen Qiwei 沈起煒 and Liu Dezhong 劉德重, *Zhongguo lidai renming dacidian* 中國歷代人名大辭典 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), p.1420.

Image source: https://guancang.xafa.edu.cn/_mediafile/guancang/2016/05/10/2igij0u7ji.jpg
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One——An introduction to key figures

Shi

Hu

(?-
363)

the King of the Later

*Zhao*²

*Autocratic and
immoral*



² Zhang Huizhi, Shen Qiwei and Liu Dezhong, *Zhongguo lidai renming dacidian*, p.361.

When Did the Story Take Place?

Around the 4th century AD

the Jin Dynasty and the Sixteen Kingdoms³



³ Zhongguo dabaike quanshu 中國大百科全書, Lishixue 歷史學 <<https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/subject?SiteID=1&ID=42421>> [accessed 6 January 2026].

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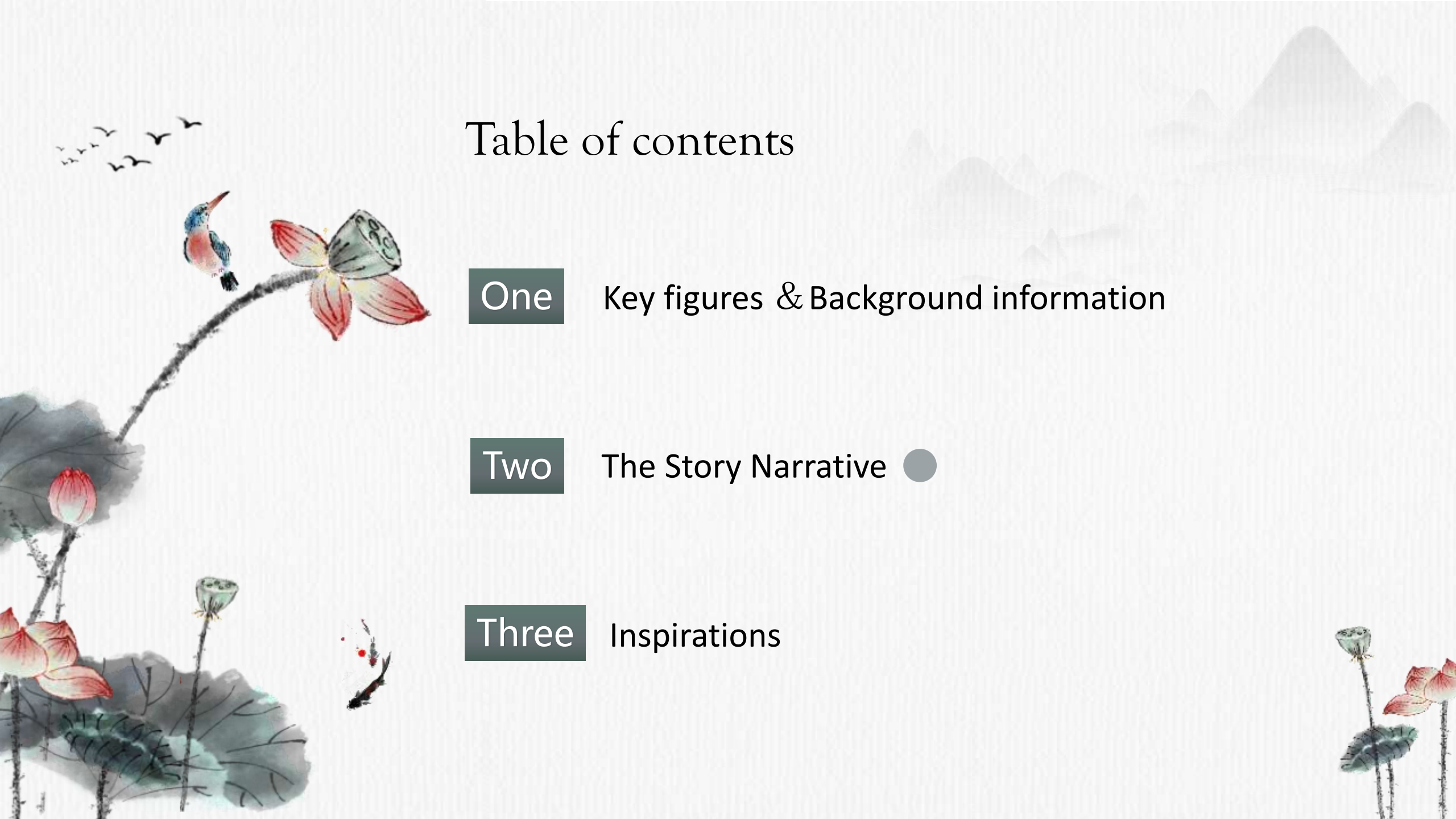


Table of contents

One Key figures & Background information

Two The Story Narrative ●

Three Inspirations

Two——The Story Narrative

韋逞母宋氏，不知何郡人也，家世以儒學稱。

宋氏幼喪母，其父躬自養之。

及長，授以《周官音義》，謂之曰⁴：



⁴ Fang Xaunling 房玄齡 and others,
Jin Shu 晉書(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 2521.

[Wei Cheng's mother, Ms. Song, no one knows which county she belonged to. Her family had been renowned for Confucianism for many generations. When Ms. Song was a child, her mother passed away. Her father raised her personally. As she grew up, her father taught her the phonetic and semantic commentary on *Zhouguan* 周官(*Offices of Zhou*) [also known as *Rites of Zhou* 周禮], and said]:

Two——The Story Narrative

「吾家世學周官，吾無男，汝可受之，勿絕世。」

天下喪亂，石季龍徙之山東，宋氏與夫在徙中，推鹿車，負父所授書。



‘Our family has been studying the *Offices of Zhou* for many generations. I only have a daughter. You can inherit this learning, and don’t let it die out in the world.’

At that time, the whole of China was in chaos.[Ms. Song kept reciting the learning her father taught her before],The Song family [and other commoners] were forced to move to Shandong Province by Shi Hu石虎(?-363)the King of the Later Zhao Kingdom. Ms. Song and her husband pushed a deer-drawn carriage on the way, carrying the books that her father had given her.

Two——The Story Narrative

到冀州，依膠東富人程安壽，安壽養護之。逞時年少，宋氏晝則樵採，夜則教逞，然紡績無廢。壽每歎曰：「學家多士大夫，得無是乎！」



When they arrived in Jizhou [about parts of today's Hebei and northern Shandong in China], they sought refuge with a wealthy person named Cheng Anshou (dates unknown) from Jiaodong County.

Cheng took them in. At that period, Song's son Wei Cheng (dates unknown) was still young. By day, Song cut and collected firewood and at night she taught her son. Also, she still persisted in spinning.

Cheng, seeing this situation often remarked: 'A family that pursues learning is mostly officials, is that so?'

Jizhou [about parts of today's Hebei and northern Shandong]



Jizhou [about parts of today's Hebei and northern Shandong]



Two——The Story Narrative

逞遂學成名立，仕苻堅爲太常。堅幸太學，博士虞壺曰：「周禮未有其師。韋逞母女傳父業，今年八十，視聽無闕，可以傳授後生。」



As time went by, Wei finished his studying and became renowned for his knowledge. He served as a Chamberlain for Ceremonials, under Fu Jian(337-384).

Fu once visited the National University. Yu Hu(dates unknown),an Erudite, said: 'There is no teacher who can teach the *Offices of Zhou* yet. But Wei's mother, as a daughter, inherited her father's learning. Now she is eighty years old, and neither her eyesight nor her hearing has faded. She can pass on the learning of *Offices of Zhou* to the younger generation.'

Two——The Story Narrative

於是就宋氏家立講堂，置生員百二十人，隔絳紗幔而受業，號宋氏爲文宣君，賜侍婢十人。周官學復行於世，時稱韋氏宋母焉。



Hence,[Fu commanded] the setting up of the lecture room in Ms. Song' s home with 120 students.

[The students]listened and studied through a gauze curtain.[Fu]addressed Ms. Song as 'Xuan Wen Jun' and bestowed upon her ten female attendants. The learning of *Offices of Zhou* prevailed in that era. At that time,[Ms. Song] was known as Mother Song of the Wei clan.

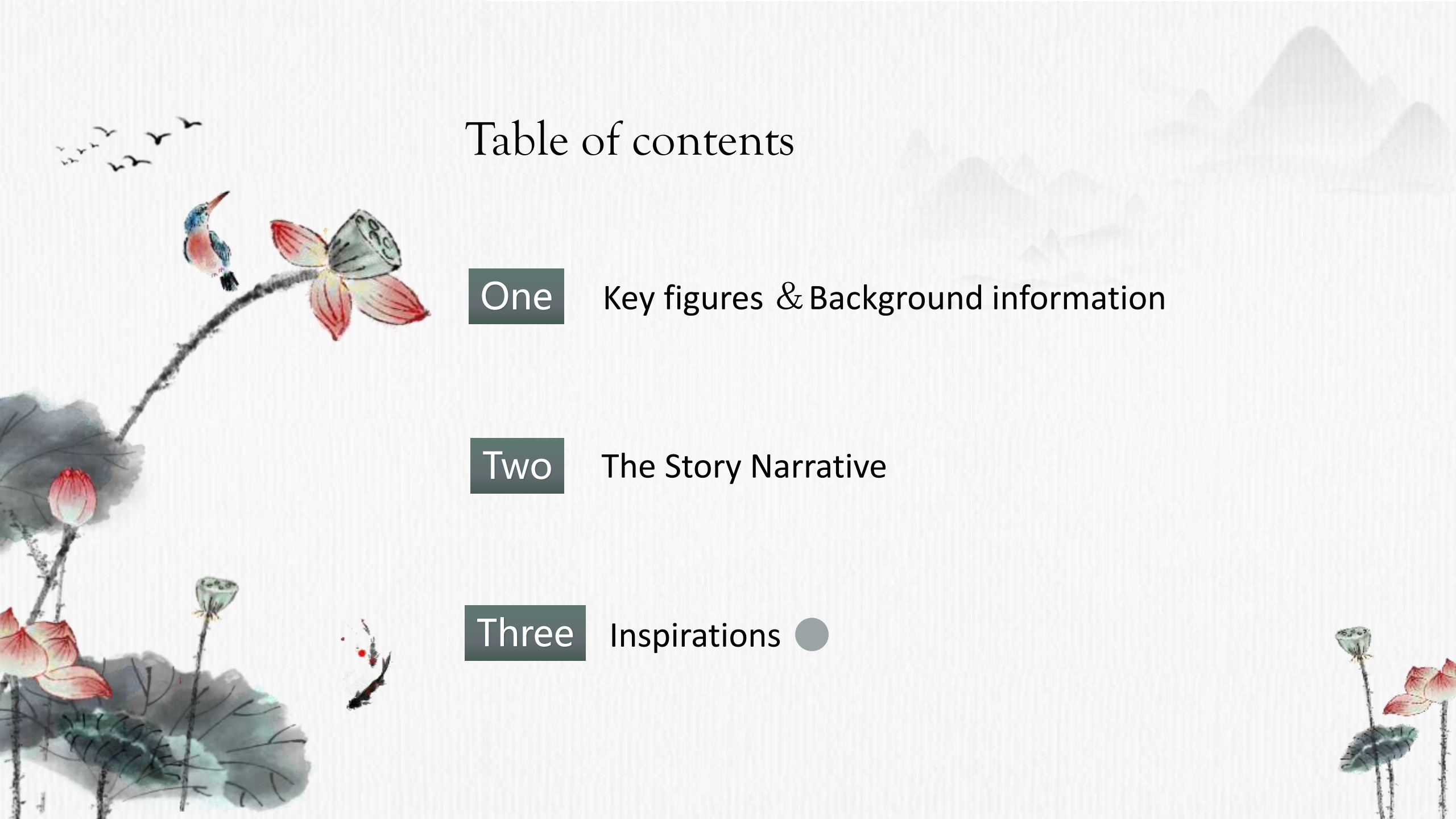


Table of contents

One Key figures & Background information

Two The Story Narrative

Three Inspirations ●

Three——Inspirations

(the theme of the story)

Filial piety

Now filial piety is seen in the skilful carrying out of the wishes of our forefathers, and the skilful carrying forward of their undertakings.

夫孝者，善繼人之志，善述人之事者也。

*“The Doctrine of the Mean”(Zhongyong 中庸),
The Book of Rites (Liji 禮記) (Trans. Legge)*



Three——Inspirations

Ms. Song



A noble and meaningful
motivation will help us
achieve our goal.

Where ambition leads,
no distance is unreachable;
even mountains and seas cannot stand
in our way.

志之所趨，無遠弗屆，窮山距海，不能限也。

“Category of Learning”(Xuewenlei 學問類),
The *Collection of Maxims* (Geyan Lianbi 格言聯璧)

Three——Inspirations

Ms·Song



Responsibility and a sense of mission do not belong to any single gender or identity.

The environmental protection:



Three——Inspirations



Without the accumulation of steps, we cannot cover the great distance; without the collection of the multitudinous rills, there will be no sea.
不積跬步，無以至千里；不積小流，無以成江海。

“Encouraging Learning”(Quanxue 勸學),
Xunzi(荀子) (Trans. Jonathan Price & 閆夢輝)

Image source: <http://xhslink.com/o/5t1cvVDkVB>、
<http://xhslink.com/o/5t1cvVDkVBW>



The environmental protection

Three——Inspirations

Cheng Anshou



The virtue of lending a helping hand.



The gentleman calls attention to the good points in others; he does not call attention to their defects.
君子成人之美，不成人之惡。

Analects 12.16
(Trans. Waley)

Three——Inspirations

Yu Hu and Fu Jian



Truly attached importance
to the transmission of
knowledge.



Learn as if you were following
someone whom you could not
catch up,
as though it were someone you
were frightened of losing.

學如不及，猶恐失之。

Analects 8.17
(Trans. Waley)

Closing Remarks



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Thank you for your attention