

Chinese Folk Dancing

Watching a person dance is to hear that person's heart. To others dance may seem like just a series of movements added to music, but to me dance is a true art drawn out by the body. Chinese folk dancing is a part of my past, present, and future. When I perform, whether on a stage or in a nursing home for the elderly, it is my chance to allow others to listen to my heart and learn my culture. This Asian art has truly influenced a prodigious part of my life.

At the age of six, my mother took me to my first Chinese folk dancing class. All the students gave me a warm welcome, and from that moment on, I knew I wanted to be a part of this class. As I grew older, I realized my teacher was not simply just teaching us a new dance with new movements, but with every new dance came a new piece of Chinese culture. Each gesture had meaning with a story behind it and the selected music reflected the emotions that were to be experienced within the dance.

My dance teacher would tell us to imagine ourselves in the lands of the Mongols, overlooking vast fields, or she would tell us to feel the burden of life as the people deep within Tibet would. Sometimes our dances would even portray a thousand-year old legend or simply the joys of New Year. No matter what dance we perform, it is the job of the new generation to tell these stories through our bodies and hearts as we dance to a piece of music.

Beyond the culture involved in Chinese folk dancing, there are many life skills to be learned. Chinese folk dancing has taught me three other things besides culture: perseverance, commitment, and leadership. Dance has taught me that nothing is easy and for one to succeed, you must try and try again. In order to advance oneself, one needs to overcome obstacles. When learning a new dance, it requires a lot of perseverance because

a person may not do it perfect the first time. I have learned to apply this life skill not only within Chinese folk dancing, but also in school and all other endeavors that I stride for.

Commitment is the most difficult to achieve. Ever since I was young, I have missed many birthday parties, get togethers, and other social events for Chinese folk dancing, but I realized that it was all worth it. Being committed to something means to not be absent from any lessons. Every time someone is absent from class, the other students must compensate for the absence. I have learned how important it is to stay with a commitment.

Last but certainly not the least, is leadership. Only a few people are destined to become leaders, but those people are the ones who choose to be. Through Chinese folk dancing I have learned to become a leader. A leader must not lead through force, but through understanding. My classmates and I have danced together for a long time, and sometimes a leader is needed to take charge of things when our teacher is busy. I have learned how to be a leader with my classmates by guiding them through exercises and helping them when they need it. Chinese folk dancing has provided this opportunity for me to learn how to become a leader through understanding.

Overall, Chinese folk dancing has not only influenced my life, but it has become ingrained into my life. Without Chinese folk dancing, many people would not have a chance to learn about the magnificent culture that we have to share. Winning competitions is not what dancing is about, although it is nice to receive a Gold medal. Dance is about the passion and the determination; like any other sport it requires endurance, stamina, and balance, but it also requires that you put your mind, body, spirit, and most important of all heart.