

The Power of Mind and Body

Kung fu is practiced around the world and is one of the most recognized aspects of Chinese culture. Originating many centuries ago, it was developed in part by Buddhists living and studying at the Shaolin Temple. Learn more about this fascinating martial art and explore the life of its most famous star.

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Upper Intermediate
2200 headwords

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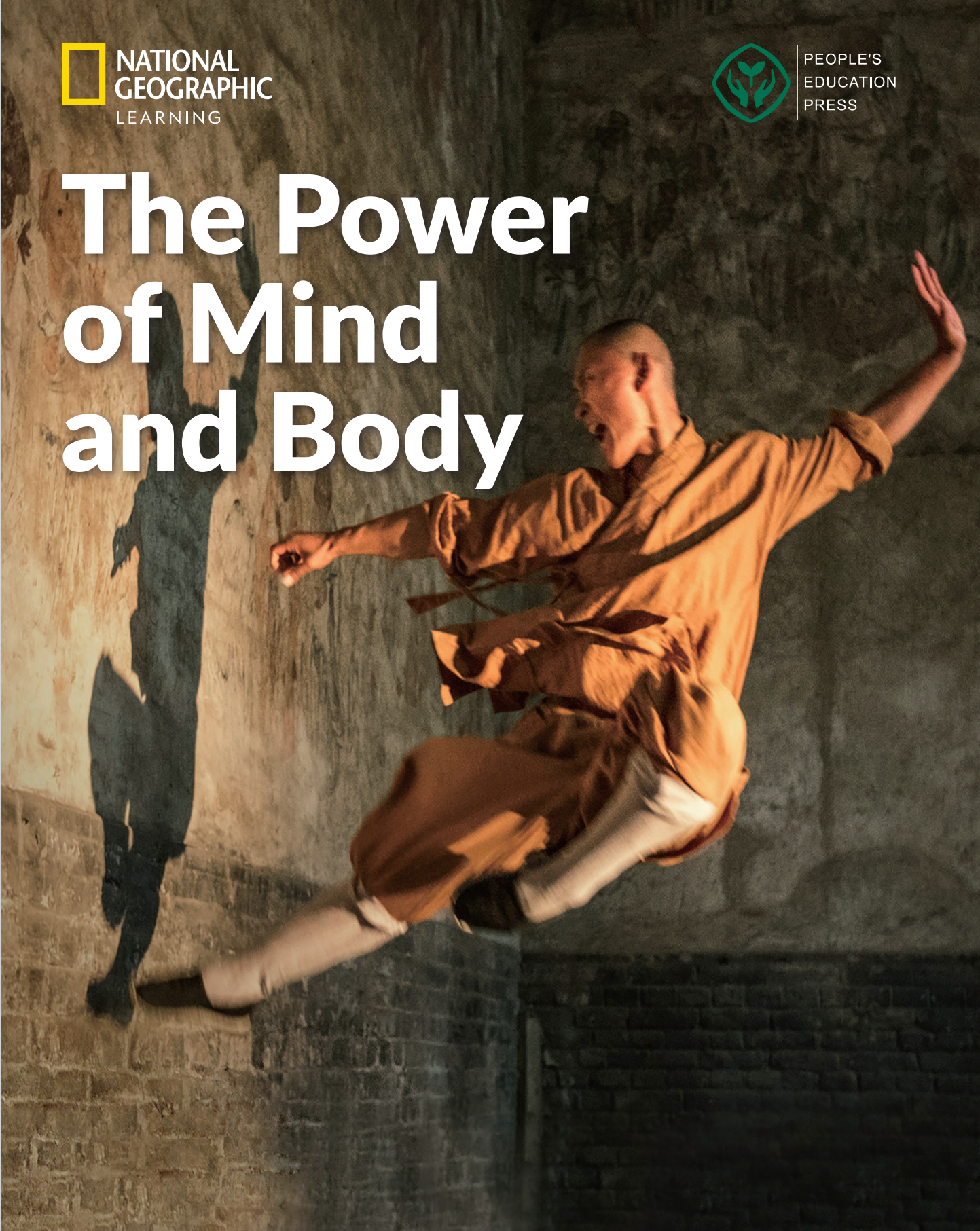
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For Review Only

Before You Read

This story is about Chinese martial arts. It begins in Hong Kong, and then moves to Oakland, in central California, and then Long Beach, in southern California. The story then introduces Shaolin Temple in Henan **Province**,¹ in east-central China; Fujian Province, on the southeast coast of China; and the Wudang Mountains, in central China's Hubei Province.



A. Taijiquan. Read the paragraph. Then match each word with the correct definition.

Perhaps the most common form of Chinese martial arts is Taijiquan (often spelled t'ai chi chu'an in English). To an outsider watching old people doing Taijiquan in a park, it may not look like a martial arts form—it looks more like a dance. However, even though they may be practiced quite slowly, all the movements in Taijiquan are in fact fighting moves. The ideas behind Taijiquan owe a lot to Taoism, which holds that the universe has an energy running through it. With Taijiquan, this energy can be focused and brought into proper balance through the slow flowing of movements. This slow and gentle flowing of movements shows the way the universe always changes, emphasizing the mixing of the hard and the soft. Taoism sees energy in terms of *yin* and *yang*, or hard and soft, light and dark, fast and slow—forces that complete rather than fight against each other. This is shown in a Taiji circle. While Taijiquan places emphasis on the inner spiritual being, it is useful for improving physical strength and balance, and reducing stress. And of course, it also teaches self-defense.

1. balance

2. emphasis

3. focus

4. inner

5. spiritual

6. strength
- a. special importance placed on something

b. of or about the non-physical part of a person

c. existing within

d. to concentrate on something

e. power and energy

f. when things are kept equal in power or weight

¹**province**: one of the districts that some countries are divided into with its own local government

B. Interesting Kung Fu Facts. Look at the table and the photos in this reader. Then answer the questions below.

Interesting Kung Fu Facts	
Name	In the West it is most often called kung fu—or <i>gong fu</i> —meaning superb skills and much practice. It is known in China as <i>wushu</i> (martial arts).
History	Kung fu can be traced to the Shang Dynasty ² (around 1600–1046 BCE), and even earlier in the legendary stories of the Yellow Emperor.
Weapons	More than just hand-to-hand fighting; 18 traditional weapons used, including the staff, the spear, and the sword, though historically just about anything could be a weapon.
Famous schools	Usually named after temples or mountains: the most famous ones include Shaolin, Wudang, Emei, Kongtong, Tianshan, etc.
Famous boxing styles	Baguazhang (Eight Trigram Palm), Xingyiquan (Shape & Intent Fist), Taijiquan, etc.
Famous kung fu masters	Yang Luchan (1799–1872), Huo Yuanjia (1868–1910), Huang Feihong (1856–1925), Ip Man (1893–1972)
In Competition	
Sanda or Sanshou	Fighting
Taolu	Performance of choreographed ³ routines
In Movies	
Famous kung fu movies	<i>The Way of the Dragon</i> (1972), <i>Enter the Dragon</i> (1973), <i>The Shaolin Temple</i> (1982), <i>Tai Chi Master</i> (1993), <i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i> (2000), <i>Hero</i> (2002), <i>Ip Man</i> (2008)
Top kung fu stars	Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li

1. What do you know about kung fu?

2. Why do you think people learn kung fu?

3. What is an example of another kind of martial art? What do you know about it?

²**dynasty**: a period of time when members of the same family rule a country

³**choreograph**: to design and arrange the steps and movements in dances or in a show



Two men face off in a tropical country. One is an evil drug lord named Xiao Mi. The other is an ordinary worker from China named Cheng Zhao'an, out to get revenge for the murder of his family. They circle each other, eye-to-eye. Suddenly our hero launches a flying kick at his enemy. He misses, and a **fist**⁴ fight begins. Xiao takes out a hidden knife and throws it, hoping to stab Cheng. But with incredible speed, Cheng kicks the knife away, directly into Xiao's stomach. He has defeated his enemy. Shortly afterwards, the police arrive, and Cheng gives himself up, to receive whatever justice the law affords.

The lights of the movie theater come up. For a long moment, the audience sits completely silent and still. The star of the movie, sitting towards the back of the theater, becomes nervous. "No one likes it!" he thinks. But then a few people begin to clap. Slowly, they are joined by others, and then others. Soon, the whole audience is on its feet clapping and cheering. Then someone notices the star of the movie trying to leave the back of the theater. Immediately, he is surrounded by fans. They lift him on their shoulders and carry him to a crowd waiting outside. It is 2 a.m., October 24, 1971, Hong Kong, the world **premiere**⁵ of *The Big Boss*: Bruce Lee's first starring role in a kung fu movie, and ground zero for the kung fu craze that would soon sweep the world.

The Big Boss was far from the first kung fu movie that was ever made, and Bruce Lee was far from

Track 1

⁴ **fist**: a closed hand

⁵ **premiere**: the first public performance of a film or play

For Review Only

Main Idea

1. What is the main idea of the second paragraph on page 4?
2. What did Bruce Lee think when nothing happened after the lights went up? Why?

the first kung fu star. However, Lee was the man who made kung fu into an international sensation, and even today he is the most recognizable icon of the kung fu **genre**.⁶

Bruce Lee was born Lee Jun Fan, also known as Li Xiaolong, on November 27, 1940 in San Francisco, California, but grew up in Hong Kong. He was a child actor and was in at least 20 Hong Kong movies before he was 20. When he was 13, Bruce Lee began studying Wing Chun kung fu in a school run by Ip Man (1893–1972). With this training, Bruce became one of the best fighters in Hong Kong.

When Bruce was 18, he went to school in the US. However, his first love was kung fu, and so he started his own school teaching what he called Jun Fan Kung Fu in Oakland, California in 1964. That same year, he made an appearance at the Long Beach **Karate**⁷ Championships, where he amazed the crowd with his two-finger push-ups and his one-inch punch. The one-inch punch was just that: a punch delivered from one inch (about 2.5 cm) away from its target. An old Wing Chun training technique, it was nearly unknown in the US at the time. While it may seem impossible to deliver much force in a punch from so close, such was Bruce's power and speed that he sent the man he punched—another

⁶**genre**: a specific type of literature, movie, or art form

⁷**karate**: a form of martial arts developed in Japan

fighter who was prepared for the blow—several meters backwards and then onto the ground.

Through his martial arts demonstrations in Long Beach, Bruce met some popular actors and Hollywood figures who became his students. In 1967, he also developed his own style of kung fu, which he called Jeet Kune Do (the way of **intercepting**⁸ fists). He described this style as “Using no way as way.” By this he meant that Jeet Kune Do rejected the fixed style that was typical of so many schools of kung fu, where there were set patterns of defense and attack. Rather, the concept behind Jeet Kune Do relied on a fighter’s feelings, to react naturally with a minimum of wasted movement or energy. With this style, Bruce advised that we should be like water and flow around barriers, not fight against them. In Jeet Kune Do, every move and every weapon used in any kind of martial art should be available for use without any limit. That being the case, a person practicing Jeet Kune Do should have good all-around conditioning to meet any kind of challenge and respond accordingly.

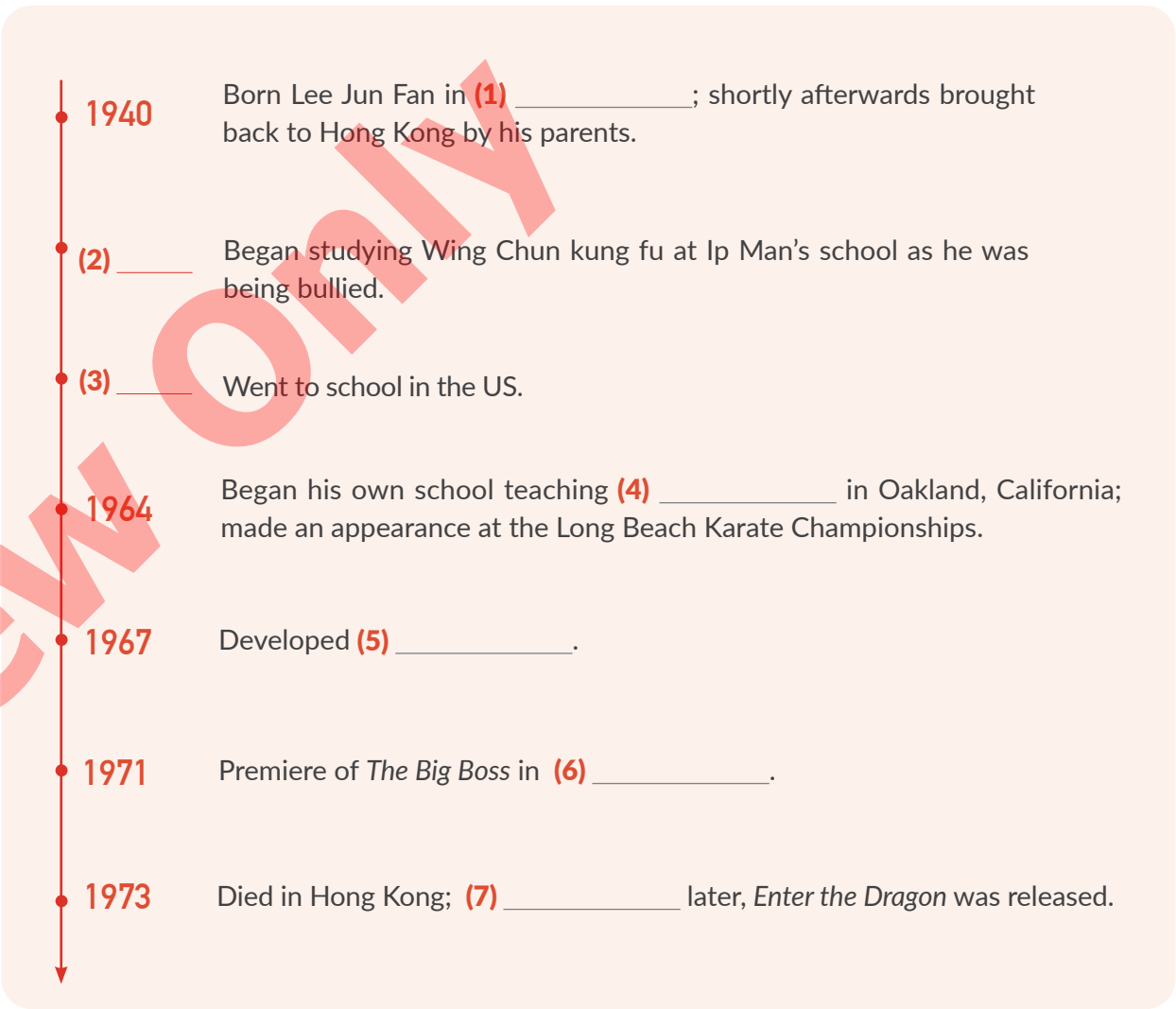
⁸**intercept:** to catch something while it is in the air or moving towards something else



A. Multiple Choice. Answer the questions below by choosing A, B, C, or D.

- In the second paragraph of page 4, what does the word *it* refer to?
A. The audience.
B. The fight.
C. The movie.
D. The movie theater.
- What did Bruce Lee mean when he described Jeet Kune Do as “Using no way as way”?
A. Jeet Kune Do has no single set style.
B. Through Jeet Kune Do, you can achieve the impossible.
C. There is no way that most students could ever learn Jeet Kune Do.
D. When you reach a point in Jeet Kune Do when you cannot go farther, you must try harder.
- What is one way that Wudang *wushu* differs from Shaolin *wushu*?
A. They originated in different countries.
B. One was created by Taoists, while the other was created by Buddhists.
C. One only trains the spirit, while the other only trains the body.
D. Unlike Shaolin *wushu*, Wudang *wushu* is less useful for learning how to fight.
- According to the passage, why are street fights in many ways against the spirit of *wushu*?
A. Because *wushu* is just used for physical exercise.
B. Because most people practice Taijiquan, and so they do not know how to fight.
C. Because most people do not like to fight.
D. Because *wushu* is not taught for the purpose of attacking or dominating others.
- In what way was Bruce Lee’s use of Wing Chun very much in the spirit of Wing Chun’s development?
A. He first learned it to protect himself against bullies.
B. He liked to use short blows, often with a shout.
C. He learned it in South China.
D. He used it for conditioning.

B. Bruce Lee Timeline. Complete the timeline with information from the passage.



C. Answer the Questions. Use information from the passage to answer the questions below.

- Can nearly anyone learn *wushu*? Why or why not?
- What does *wushu* tell you about Chinese culture?
- Is there anything you learned about *wushu* that surprised you? What was it?

The Master of Wuxia Novels

Track 2

When Chinese people think of *wushu*, what often comes to mind is *wuxia* (martial chivalry) novels, a kind of historical novel that involves *wushu* warriors. Most often, there are some fantastic elements to these novels. For example, the characters may have superhuman strength or the ability to fly. They may also be able to focus their inner spiritual strength and send it through the air, knocking people over or breaking down walls. And of course, who can forget the Five Point Palm Exploding Heart technique popularized in the Hollywood movie *Kill Bill*? It is something that very well could have come from a *wuxia* novel and was in fact borrowed from a Hong Kong *wuxia* movie.

Wuxia has a long literary history dating back as far as Sima Qian (ca 145–86 BCE). However, by far the most popular author in this genre was Louis Zha Liangyong (1924–2018) who used the pen name Jin Yong and sold over 300 million books worldwide. His novels have also been translated into many languages and some have been made into movies and TV series.

Wuxia stories most often take place in the *jianghu*. This is the world where different groups of *wushu* warriors live and fight among themselves. They also meet other members of society. Typically, *wuxia* stories begin with a hero who experiences personal trouble, and then goes off to learn *wushu*. After becoming a *wushu* master, the hero begins traveling the *jianghu*, fighting evil wherever it may be found, and proving to be an example of justice, kindness, courage, loyalty, truth, and honesty. Central to the idea of the *wuxia* hero is the concept of *xia*, which refers to a person who holds back the strong and helps the weak. A *wuxia* hero always puts friends, his people, and his country first and is willing to battle to help those in need and make a better society. Jin Yong's stories follow a different pattern to many stories of the genre. They often begin when the main character is a young *wushu* student who is having great trouble learning martial arts. Through hardship and self-discipline, the hero becomes a *wushu* master. Eventually, the hero discovers an evil scheme, and through superior martial arts skills and personal qualities they save the day.

While this outline is like many others, Jin's novels are usually quite complicated and more realistic. A master storyteller, he wove fact and fiction in such a way that readers of his books often have a difficult time telling what is true and what is made up. So, while Jin followed many of the conventions of *wuxia* novels, he was also able to elevate the genre. Jin Yong is one of the rare authors whose books are both popular and considered works of art.

 Word Count: 475
Time: _____