

Argumentative Analysis of “The Lesson of the Master” by Emily Wu

Name

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## Introduction

Emily Wu is a Chinese-American writer who was born in Beijing in 1958. She is known for her short stories, which have been featured in various newspapers and magazines, as well as in compilations of prose and poetry. In “The Lesson of the Master” we meet Tung-ming alongside his supporter who is unnamed. Tung-ming is not only a Buddhist monk, but a marvelous painter. We are told that Tung-ming’s paintings of plum branches were excellent, but when the merchant, who is his supporter, requests Tung-ming to paint him a carp, he vanishes till the duo meet again after some months later. Though the merchant is thrilled at the sight of a stunning carp painting he had asked for earlier, he is astonished by the countless sheets of utilized paper that he sees falling from the painter’s cabinet. The merchant notices that every one of the used papers has an image of the carp. This remarkable and exceptional plot not only shows the reader that with constant practice, one can perfect his/her skills, but also that both the merchant and Tung-ming share a commendable friendship where they count on each other for both happiness and success. This paper presents an argumentative analysis of Emily Wu’s “The Lesson of the Master”.

## Analysis

People respond differently to various situations. For instance, when people fail in various undertakings (i.e. a business), some get discouraged, while others persist until they succeed. It is vital to note that Wu does not let the reader into the mind of Tung-ming, and consequently, we are left to wonder how the painter must have felt the initial time he attempted and failed to make a carp painting for the merchant, or his feeling when he finally managed to paint the carp rightly. This leads me to question why Tung-ming was attempting so hard to provide a marvelous

painting for the merchant. It is apparent that the relationship that Tung-ming and the merchant had been remarkable. This ought to act as an example of the way friendships ought to be. It seems the merchant was an extremely significant person to Tung-ming, to push him to practice so hard in order to produce a perfect carp painting. Can this scenario be a possible lesson that every person needs someone who believes in their greatest skills and dreams to push them to success? It is my strong opinion that the merchant was the driving force behind Tung-ming's persistence to paint continuously till he eventually mastered the skill perfectly. Therefore, it is proper to say that the merchant drove Tung-ming to succeed in acquiring a new expertise of painting carps.

Because of the close relationship that both Tung-ming and the merchant shared, the merchant must have gotten worried about his friend's whereabouts when he suddenly vanished, and stopped communicating with him. On the other hand, the countless number of carp paintings, which Tung-ming produced indicate that he was concerned about pleasing his friend. This shows that these characters both relied on each other for love, care and happiness. Could the author be giving the reader an instance of a loving and caring relationship? We see at the conclusion of the plot that the two friends are happy and enjoy the company of each other.

The revelation at the conclusion of Wu's story is without doubt, a valuable moral lesson that everyone ought to learn from: that, with constant practice, everything is attainable. The character, Tung-ming in the story, represents the perfect example of this great lesson. From the beginning of the plot, the reader is presented with Tung-ming as a talented painter who has an excellent painting of plum branches to show for it. However, he suddenly vanishes when his friend requests him to paint for him an image of a carp. It is my opinion that the painter realized that he could not paint the carp perfectly as he did with the plum branches, and that is why he

vanished to master the skills of the task. The satisfaction and happiness on the merchant's face when he saw the carp, indicates that Tung-ming managed to master the task of painting carps as was expected of him. As I imagined the images of numerous carp paintings dropping on the floor, I could not help admiring the sincerity and hard work of Tung-ming. In my opinion, the author was attempting to demonstrate to the reader that attaining perfection requires hard work, perseverance and time. The initial attempt of a task will not always turn out as desired; a person has to be willing to repeat a task time and again in order to master the skills of doing it well. Through Tung-ming, Wu is telling the reader that nothing is unachievable; we only need to put our hearts to whatever we do.

#### Conclusion

“The Lesson of the Master” by Emily Wu is a well-written story with a valuable message to everybody that with constant practice, everything is possible. People should not give up on their dreams, but should pursue them constantly till they come true. Tung-ming is a perfect example that is worth emulating, especially by those who feel defeated in whatever they do. The plot's deeper meaning, however, lies in the relationship between the merchant and Tung-ming. Through their friendship, Wu is stressing on the fact that relationships should provide love, support, drive, inspiration and happiness. Without Tung-ming's need for the approval of the merchant, I do not think he would have been inspired to produce a perfect painting as he did.