

Read the Chinese story and answer the following questions.

Going Three-tenths of an Inch into the Wood

1. Wang Xizhi was one of the greatest calligraphers in the Eastern Jin Dynasty*. He mastered all forms of Chinese calligraphy. He was especially keen on the running script, a cursive style of Chinese characters. His running script brought life and energy into words. After many years of practice, he produced a lot of masterpieces which influenced calligraphers from generation to generation. Because of his achievements in calligraphy, he was honoured as the “Sage of Calligraphy”.

2. When Wang Xizhi was young, he loved calligraphy very much. He was determined to excel in calligraphy. He learnt calligraphy from Lady Wei, a famous calligrapher of the Eastern Jin Dynasty. He always thought about brush stroke movements and practised day and night. No matter whether he was taking a rest or walking in the street, he kept practising on his clothes with his fingers. Besides, he enjoyed watching geese playing in the river. He was inspired by their neck movements. He learnt how to turn his wrist while writing so that he could further improve his calligraphy skills.

3. Wang Xizhi once served as a general in the army. One day, the Emperor of Jin planned to hold a worshipping ceremony in the countryside. To prepare for the ceremony, the emperor asked Wang Xizhi to write words of blessing on a woodblock for an engraver to carve it. When the engraver saw the woodblock, he exclaimed, “General’s handwriting is so powerful and all the characters have gone three-tenths of an inch into the wood. I have never seen words that could go so deeply into the wood before! It is so impressive!” The amazing deed was soon spread throughout the entire capital and people admired the breadth and depth of his calligraphy.

4. “Going three-tenths of an inch into the wood” became a well-known Chinese saying. It refers to powerful calligraphy works as well as a profound knowledge of something. To achieve “Going three-tenths of an inch into the wood”, passion, commitment and hard work are indispensable.



*The Eastern Jin Dynasty refers to a dynasty in ancient Chinese history that ruled from 317 AD to 420 AD.