

How to Write a New Style Jueju: Vowel Parallelism

By Jonathan Stalling

A “New Style Jueju” must follow all the rules for Old Style Jueju (see the other handout for those rules), but this form must also follow sound patterns that alternate between two distinct qualities known as “*ping*” and “*ze*”

What are *Ping* and *Ze*?

Shen Yue was the first Chinese poet to hear and then arrange tonal differences into set harmonious patterns. These patterns have been handed down for over 1,500 years through generations of poets all to the present. They force poets to think about the sound of each word in relation to those before and after as well as above and below and bring them into a harmonious balance like that of yin and yang.

In short, the simple rule is that there should not be too many of the same vowel quality (no more than two) in a row, unless they fall across the word units (see rules for Old Style Jueju which require word units of two or three monosyllabic words).

But the real trick is that the poem must reverse the tones on the following line. So if a word in line one is *ping* then the one below it should be *ze*. There will be several places in the poem when the word is free to be *ping* or *ze*.

While Chinese has four tones, they were grouped into two categories known as Ping (represented by an empty circle ○) and Ze (represented by a full, dark circle ●). Today Ping refers to the first and second tones while Ze refers to the third and fourth.



In earlier times, *ze* also referred to something called the “entering tone” or “rushing” which included words that ended in unvoiced consonants like /p,t, and k/, which shorten or “clip” the vowel sound so that it sounds shorter than the others. Middle Chinese shares this same phenomenon with modern English monosyllabic words which is why we can use the ancient patterns to arrange modern English Jueju, just like the ancients.

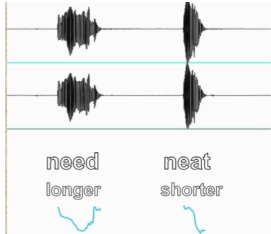
How is this possible?

English is not a tonal language but its monosyllabic vowels also split roughly between two categories we can call “full” or “clipped” (or long and short, but this can be confusing given that we use these terms to teach native English students reading phonics).

English is a stress time language, which means the duration of vowel sounds is usually determined by the stress lengthening within multisyllable words and sentence rhythms. However, in monosyllabic English, there is a phenomenon called "Allophonic lengthening and shortening" which will lengthen or shorten the duration we pronounce a vowel based upon whether the vowel is followed by a voiced or unvoiced consonant (or whether the vowel is not followed by a consonant at all).

What is a voiced or unvoiced consonant?

A voiced consonant is one that requires the vocal chords to vibrate in order to say it. An unvoiced /t/ for instance becomes voiced when we vibrate our larynx and say it again as /d/.



When a monosyllabic English word ends in a voiced consonant like /d/, it will sound longer than when the same vowel is followed by its unvoiced cousin /t/

While all of this sounds complicated up front, composing jueju that follows a set pattern of English Ping and Ze is not. One merely must pay attention to the patterns and what letters your words end with.

What are the patterns?

- The empty circle requires a monosyllabic word that ends in an open vowel (sky, flow) or a voiced consonant b, d, g, z, j, v, 3, and voiced /th/. Examples: ta(b), ta(d), ta(g), ta(z), wage (j-sound), and lo(v)e and voiced th (bathe) or the (3) of usual (u3ual).
- The black circle requires a monosyllabic word that ends in an unvoiced consonant p, t, ck, p, t, s, ch, f, and unvoiced /th/. Examples: ta(p), ta(t), ta(ck), mi(ss), ma(tch), lea(f), and unvoiced (th) as in shea(th).
- ⊙ The circle with a dot refers to an "open position" and while it must be a monosyllabic word but can have any vowel.

Seven-Syllable Jueju Vowel Pattern 1

⊙	●	⊙	○	⊙	●	○ Rhyme
⊙	○	⊙	●	●	○	○Rhyme
⊙	○	⊙	●	○	○	●
⊙	●	○	○	⊙	●	○Rhyme

Student Example of pattern #1 Kylie Hawley 2020

Stones lurch waves swirl sea salt sprays
 Fish jig boat drifts cliff line sways
 Cold hands wet cheeks worn bones ache
 Ice heart tears stream all thought strays.

<input checked="" type="radio"/> Stones	<input checked="" type="radio"/> lurch,	<input checked="" type="radio"/> waves	<input type="radio"/> swirl	<input checked="" type="radio"/> sea	<input checked="" type="radio"/> salt	<input type="radio"/> sprays
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Fish	<input type="radio"/> jig,	<input checked="" type="radio"/> boat	<input checked="" type="radio"/> drifts	<input checked="" type="radio"/> cliff	<input type="radio"/> line	<input type="radio"/> sways
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Cold	<input type="radio"/> hands	<input checked="" type="radio"/> wet	<input checked="" type="radio"/> cheeks	<input type="radio"/> worn	<input type="radio"/> bones	<input checked="" type="radio"/> ache
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Ice	<input checked="" type="radio"/> heart	<input type="radio"/> tears	<input type="radio"/> stream	<input checked="" type="radio"/> all	<input checked="" type="radio"/> thought	<input type="radio"/> strays

New Style Jueju Vowel Pattern Two:

⊙	○	⊙	●	●	○	○ Rhyme
⊙	●	○	○	⊙	●	○ Rhyme
⊙	●	⊙	○	○	●	●
⊙	○	⊙	●	●	○	○Rhyme

Example 2

⊙ white	○ stones	⊙ soft	● moss	● fast	○ stream	○ flows
⊙ Clear	● path	○ bent	○ reeds	⊙ quick	● gust	○ blows
⊙ aged	● eyes	⊙ vast	○ sky	○ dawn	● white	● frost
⊙ Cold	○ hands	⊙ breathe	● out	● tense	○ mind	○ slows

The 2019 Newman Prize for English Jueju Elementary School Winner Tobin Bosse and he employed the second vowel pattern)

Hot sand	dry gust	quick rough wheeze	
Pale earth	warm air	swift crisp breeze	
Pure light	deep joy	worn soft heart	
Lost pool	still grass	stout green trees	

Rules Summary for New Style English Jueju with Vowel Parallelism

All the rules that apply to Level one (Old Style) jueju still apply to New Style Jueju (those that follow sound or meaning parallelism).

1. Only use monosyllabic words and try to avoid unstressed particles.
2. Chose between a quatrain (four line poem) of either five-word or seven-word lines but both will end in a “AABA” rhyme scheme.
3. Pair your imagistic monosyllable words into two- and three-word units.

If you are composing a seven-word-line jueju (七绝), you should have two two-word units followed by a three-word unit: For example:

Stones lurch waves swirl sea salt sprays

In every case your word units should “stick together” more in their groups than they do between groups. The break between units creates a natural cesura which one can further emphasize in oral recitation.

4. Follow the traditional thematic progression: A 起, line one introduces external scene; B 承 line two deepens and extends the external scene, C 转, line three turns the poem inward toward emotional resonance and D 合 the fourth line resolves the poem, and brings it to a close revealing a wider or deeper frame of reference wherein the external (natural) scene and internal feeling are revealed to be inter-resonant extensions of one another.

Example:

1. The first line 起 introduces a scene of nature:

Stones lurch waves swirl sea salt sprays

2. The second line 承 extends and deepens the scene:

Fish jig boat drifts cliff line sways

3. The third line 转 introduces a turns toward the human world, often beginning an inward movement to poet’s inner feelings (which can extend into the final line):

Cold hands wet cheeks worn bones ache

4 and the fourth line 合 concludes the poem, brings it to a conclusion:

Ice heart tears stream all thought strays.

So the final quatrain reveals a single wholistic scene that blends the natural and human worlds (*qing & jing*) into an inter-resonant whole: The only difference between the Old Style and New Style lies in the added constraint of alternating (yin/yang) Vowel Qualities.

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Stones lurch waves swirl sea salt sprays
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⊙	●	⊙	○	⊙	●	○ Rhyme
⊙	○	⊙	●	●	○	○ Rhyme
⊙	○	⊙	●	○	○	●
⊙	●	○	○	⊙	●	○ Rhyme

⊙ Stones	● lurch,	⊙ waves	○ swirl	⊙ sea	● salt	○ sprays
⊙ Fish	○ jig,	⊙ boat	● drifts	● cliff	○ line	○ sways
⊙ Cold	○ hands	⊙ wet	● cheeks	○ worn	○ bones	● ache
⊙ Ice	● heart	○ tears	○ stream	⊙ all	● thought	○ strays

For more rules about how to compose a New Style Jueju (近体绝句) that includes rules for semantic and prosodic parallel and antithetical parallelism, please visit <https://link.ou.edu/english-jueju> and <https://link.ou.edu/english-jueju-resources>