

## Lyric

Please read the following five sets of poems :

Book of Songs (1000-600 B.C.E.) Chinese  
Egyptian Lyrics (1290-1078 B.C.E.) Egyptian  
Hebrew Psalms (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) Hebrew  
Sappho (6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) Greek  
Catullus (1<sup>st</sup> century B.C.E.) Roman

Analyze, compare and contrast the main themes of those five sets of poems. In the lyric, the author him or herself is the main character, telling you his or her feelings, pointing out this or that about the world, or generally venting emotions. In other words, a lyric poem is about the feelings of the person who creates it? This is in contrast to the epics where the main character of is normally the 'hero' or 'protagonist,' in whom the author (frequently a collective author, in oral traditions), invests his main points and critical narrative actions. When we read the *Iliad* we are likely to pay attention to the character of Achilles, rather than of Homer. When we read The Book of Songs we are reading the mind of the creator of the poem in question.

### Optional themes for consideration

**Friendship** Compare and contrast the feelings of friendship dominant in the poems above. Is it easy to distinguish praise and love from friendship in the examples you choose?

**Love** Compare and contrast the feelings of physical longing and lust, in the poems above. Are physical desires and love kept separate in these works?

**Duty** Some of the poems in *The Book of Songs* deal with dignity, gravity, mature virtues. Compare and contrast these poems, in *The Book of Songs*, with treatments of duty in the other sets of poems? Has Catullus a sense of duty?

**Worship** Contrast and compare the view of worship that can be found in the above poems. Is the worship you find here all 'religious,' or is it of different kinds?