

临深履薄，夙兴温清。

Like facing the deep, like treading thin ice; early to rise, warm and cool.

On caution: The Book of Poems (Xiao Ya, Xiao Min) 《诗经·小雅·小旻》 says 战战兢兢，如临深渊，如履薄冰。 "We should be apprehensive and careful, as if we were on the brink of a deep gulf, as if we were treading on thin ice. "

夙兴 above is an elliptical form of a quote from the Book of Poems (Xiao Ya, Xiao Wan) 《诗经·小雅·小宛》：“夙興夜寐、無忝爾所生。” “By evening in bed, rising at morn, don't disgrace the ones from whom you were born."

温清 is an elliptical form of a quote from Book of Rites (Qu Li chapter,) 《礼记·曲礼上》：“凡为人子之礼，冬温而夏清。” fan2 wei2 ren2 zi3 zhi1 li3, dong1 wen2 er2 xia4 qing4, ", describing the duty of a child to keep their parents "A proper thing for all children to do; in winter, warm and summer, cool,"

The San Zi Jing (三字经) tells children about the model nine-year old 黄香 of the Eastern Han who warmed his newly widowed father's bed in winter and fanned him in summer; he went on to become a noted literary scholar and high official but he is celebrated chiefly for these acts of filial devotion.

黄香是湖北江夏人，母亲死得早，母亲死后，父子二人相依为命，日子过得很清苦。黄香知书达理，对父亲十分孝敬，在炎热的夏天，他用扇子把床上、枕上的席子扇凉，让父亲睡得舒服些；到了寒冷的冬天，他先钻进被窝，把被子温热一点，再请父亲睡下。因此父亲更爱护他，帮助他学习许多知识。黄香长大以后，做了官。在他当魏郡太守期间，有一次遭到水灾，当地的百姓被洪水冲得无家可归，没吃没穿。黄香拿出自己的俸禄和家产，分给了受灾的百姓。因为黄香幼年时期勤奋好学，知识渊博，对父亲又十分孝敬，所以博得了许多人的赞美。

似兰斯馨，如松之盛。

Like an orchid is its fragrance; like fresh pines, abundant and dense.

These similes(比喻) form a metaphor that a person should improve the proper moral conduct, to make it like the fragrance of an orchid, and as abundant and strong as a pine tree.

The orchid has a deep moral meaning in Chinese history and literature.

"Confucius' Family Dialogue" says "The orchids grow in the woods and they let out their fragrance even if there is no one around to appreciate it. Likewise, men of

noble character will not let poverty deter their will to be guided by high principles and morals." and "If you are in the company of good people, it is like entering a room full of orchids. After a while, you become soaked in the fragrance and you don't even notice it."

The pine tree is a very common symbol for longevity in Chinese culture, because it is an evergreen and can endure severe winters. This is also an ideal characteristics for a proper man.

川流不息，渊澄取映。

The river flows at endless pace; in deepest pool behold the face.

川 means great river, a metaphor for the influence of virtue or morality generation after generation, and never stops. By the riverbank where the water is still, we or our children can lean over and behold the virtue from their ancestors. The Doctrine of the Mean, Ch. 30 says "小德川流，大德敦化" The smaller energies (virtues) are like river currents; the greater energies (virtues) are seen in mighty transformations. It is this which makes heaven and earth so great.

容止若思，言辞安定。

Stand solemnly and thoughtfully; speak with calm and dignity.

These lines indicate the required dignified, calm, fair and kind deportment in dealing with others. "容止" is a contraction of "容貌举止", facial expression and bodily manner. " The Classic of Filial Piety (孝经) Chapter 9 says "言思可道", "think before speaking" and "容止可觀" "be able to show your face and manner".