

The Bamboo Painter 胸有成竹 Xiōng yǒu chéng zhú by Tak Cheung

Jason is an excellent chess player in his high school, probably one of the best in the state, being crowned twice as the state champion of his age group, and winning the regional tournament last year. He is now a senior in a local college, studying to be an electrical engineer, continuing to improve his chess game, and aiming to be a national champion one day. During his high school homecoming last year, he was invited to give a talk to the high school chess club. He started the talk with a Chengyu story **The Bamboo Painter (胸有成竹 Xiōng yǒu chéng zhú)**. He said: "I learned this story from my Chinese grandmother. She encouraged me to work hard by telling me this story when I first started to play chess. This has been my guiding principle till today".

In the eleventh century during the Song Dynasty, there was a famous painter by the name of Wen Tong (文同), who excelled in painting bamboos with lifelike representation, swaying in the wind, being shrouded in the fog, bathing in early morning sun, or being covered by a coat of fresh snow. He could sit down to paint bamboos anytime and anywhere, right from his mind, without ever seeing the bamboos, directly from his imagination. His father once told the story of how his son achieved this extraordinary skill, how he observed the bamboos under every conceivable condition--sunny days, rainy days, windy days, and snowy days, painting the bamboos with unyielding diligence, cementing all possible appearances of the bamboos, and creating a set of mental images for him to draw from anytime he wants.

Jason said: "This story shows me if I want to be a great chess player, I need to put in the work." This chengyu story prompted him to study as many famous chess strategies as possible, looking at examples of famous chess matches from the past, memorizing the outcomes, and rehearsing as many chess moves as he could in his head. He is the Wen Tong of chess, being able to see the chess moves in his mind's eye, with an understanding that this is what it will take for him to become the best chess player that he could ever be.

The End

Tak Cheung's Wok With Tak YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCP5IL4yyiwYxKZUyZEeyRlg>

Oportuno Podcast - Audio of this Story:

<https://pnc.st/s/oportuno/ade18c57/037-story-time-the-bamboo-painter->