

Document 9.4: “The Long March,” a poem by Mao Zedong, October 1935

“The Long March” is the best known of Mao Zedong’s many poems written during the Red Armies’ retreat from the Guomindang (1934–1935). Mao is widely regarded as one of the most significant twentieth-century Chinese poets. He wrote in the classical style of Chinese versification, which he used to dramatically capture expansive landscapes and grand movements of the period.

The Red Army fears not the trials of the Long March,
Holding light ten thousand crags and torrents.
The Five Ridges¹ wind like gentle ripples
And the majestic Wumeng roll by, globules of clay.
Warm the steep cliffs lapped by the waters of Golden Sand [River],²
Cold the iron chains spanning the Dadu River.
Minshan’s³ thousand *li* of snow joyously crossed,
The three Armies⁴ march on, each face glowing.

Source: Mao Zedong. *Mao Zedong Poems*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003. 37.

¹ Both the Five Ridges and Wumeng are high mountains in southwestern China.

² Golden Sand River or Jinsha Jiang is another name for a section of the Yangzi River.

³ Minshan is Min Mountain in northwestern China.

⁴ Three Communist armies participated in the Long March: Mao’s First Red Army, Zhang Guotao’s Fourth Red Army and He Long’s Second Red Army.