**MULAN**

The original story of *Mulan* comes from the Chinese tale the *Ballad of Mulan.*While the real-life Mulan was speculated to have lived during the Northern Wei dynasty (386CE–536CE) her story was first transcribed in the 6th century. Although the poem is great in itself, it's also pretty short and lacking in detail.

Since Mulan's story has become one of epic and near-mythical proportions, there have been countless retellings and additions to her story. The version we are most familiar with today, and the model for Disney's version, likely stems from Xu Wei's play *The Heroine Mulan Joins the Army in Place of her Father* (1368-1644).

Probably the biggest difference between the Disney movie and the source material is that Mulan had to learn to fight. A large portion of the film was spent showing Shang Li teaching Mulan how not to die on the battlefield. In the play, Mulan grew up as a tomboy with her father teaching her to fight at a young age. By the time she enlisted in the Chinese army, she already knew martial arts, how to wield a sword, and how to competently use a bow and arrow.

In the film, Mulan isn't really great at anything when we first meet her. Part of the reason why Mulan goes to war in the first place is to prove her worth and redeem herself to seemingly dishonored family.

In the poem, Mulan is honest with her parents about wanting to go to war. She puts down her womanly duty of weaving, goes out and buys a horse, saddle, and bridle and off she goes! Although her parents are bummed that Mulan will be away fighting in the war, it just seems like the most natural decision for her to go in place of her father or little brother (yes, she has a little brother in the poem as well not just a dog named "Little Brother"). They're kind of like "Bye, we'll miss you!" but there's definitely no dramatic scene of her leaving in the dead of night.

When movie Mulan returns home to her proud family a war hero, she goes on to shirk gender norms and teach other young girls in China how to be equally cool - but not what really happened. In the play, Mulan's only request upon returning from battle was to go home to be with her family. It wasn't until she was home that she *voluntarily* revealed her gender to her brothers in arms.

How long do you think the war took in the movie? Maybe a year or two? They don't really make it clear, but whatever the timeline it doesn't even come close to the play in which Mulan spent *12 YEARS* away from home.

Believe it or not, Mulan was able to fight in the army for over a decade without anyone ever finding out she was a woman.