

the second tone marker always indicates some sort of falling tone. In fact, the high falling tone is the “norm” with this tone marker; it produces a high falling tone with both middle and low consonant-initial syllables.

Now, before you take a well-earned break from all this tone rule stuff (we’re almost finished, we only have the high consonants to consider still!), go through all the signs, book covers, etc. in Chapters One and Two, and all your sight word sets so far from both chapters. Focus on all syllables that begin with low consonants, and try to predict the tone of the word. This may take a while; divide up the activity into sections if you like. When you’re done, take that break

Life of the Buddha: The Oral Version

Multimedia Lesson Six

Here’s a short excerpt from a key episode of the life of the Buddha, where he leaves the palace and encounters the four types of people, told by a Lao monk in Elgin, Illinois.

Specifically, he relates the process of Sidhhartha’s gaining permission from his father to leave the palace, the four types of people he encounters, how this leads to him pondering

the condition of humankind upon his return to the palace, and finally, his decision to leave. Mention is made in the story several times of Sidhhartha’s servant, Channa, who kind of serves as the foil in the story to the young Prince’s bewilderment about all that is human and perishable. That is, Channa is the voice of experience in everyday, worldly matters about which Sidhhartha at this time was not yet aware.

Try to write down in Lao the Lao pronunciation of Channa’s name when you hear it, and bring it to class to see if you got it right! Also, try to write down other unfamiliar words you hear in the monk’s version of the story, and bring them to class to ask your instructor what they mean. This process of concentrated listening linked to writing will also help you tackle the written version of this episode in the Buddha’s life later in this chapter!

One interesting point about the monk’s oral version of the tale: in the “classic,” or official



Buddhist doctrinal version of the story, Sidhartha sees four specific types of people, which sets him on his process of pondering the nature of death, rebirth and suffering. In the monk's version on this video, however, one of the types of people is different than the "official" story...which person? And to what do you attribute this difference? Do you think the story makes sense in both versions? Come to class ready to discuss your observations and opinions.

Life of the Buddha: the Written Version

This excerpt from the life of the Buddha (beginning on the next page) describes the same episode the monk did in the oral version you listened to: Siddhartha's journey outside the palace for the first time to see the world at large, and his encounter with the four key types of people: a sick person, an old person, a dead person and a monk. Note that in the story here, he encounters a few extra types of people, but all of their conditions serve as an indicator to him of the nature of the suffering of humankind.

If you're a beginning literacy learner, this story can look quite scary! Don't worry, you're not expected to be able to plow your way through it at this point. However, you should try the following: first scan the story, paragraph by paragraph, for sight words you know. Next, read through all the explanatory notes for each paragraph, and then go back to the beginning of the notes and systematically try to locate each word or phrase explained. And pay special attention to the phrases. Don't worry about understanding the meaning of each word in a phrase, but rather get a feel for the shape, contours of the phrase as a whole unit, and use that feeling as a guide in locating the phrase. This may not be especially "fun," but it's extremely useful practice for building your reading skills.

If you're already an intermediate or advanced reader of Lao, of course, you should try reading the story, though you will undoubtedly encounter lots of new vocabulary. Follow the steps given to you on page 12 in the introduction to the Textbook as you read. Try working your way through the story several times before turning to the explanatory notes (or dictionary).