

A photograph of Bruce Lee from the chest up. He is wearing a white tank top and has his arms chained to a dark, textured wall. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

Brains and Brawn

A Multigenre Project on
Bruce Lee

By Sara Tin-U
Period 4
E. Chapman
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Dear Reader,

About forty-two years ago lived a man who changed the face of the Western film industry with the flick of his finger. His moves were awe-inspiring, and although his film career came to an end due to his death, there's no doubt that he has left an incredible footprint on the world, leaving many to chase his footsteps. This man's name is Lee Jun Fun, but you probably know him better as Bruce Lee, the kung fu fighting action star.

See, the reason I decided to make this entire set of writing pieces about Bruce Lee is that I admire Bruce Lee, and I admire him because it's so easy to relate to him. He doesn't seem so far-fetched like a lot of film stars nowadays. Although his incredible movements seem almost alien like, he's just a human being, and he never let the fame get to him. He just saw it as another success, not as a way to obliterate his real self, the way some people in the film industry to nowadays in order to harness attention. Also, I personally connect to him since I also do kung fu. Seeing and hearing his words makes me feel understood since most people don't really know what kung fu is. Everyone thinks it's all about fighting when it's not, and Bruce Lee echoes my thoughts perfectly.

In the duration of completing this project, I realized I didn't know everything there was to know about Bruce Lee. I went from admiring him to truly understanding him. When I read biographies on him, read sections of his books, and listened to his one interview, I realized how much thought process went into his martial arts. I had always thought that he was so strong and skilled in martial arts only because of his physical bodice. I learned that it was how he trained his physical bodice, and how he thought about the meaning behind each movement that propelled him into stardom. In addition to that, I found out that he had suffered a back injury, and wrote a book, which I found fascinating. Reading snippets of the book he wrote, it's clear how much he thinks about martial arts. Bruce Lee has made not only an impact on me, but an impact on the world, and has allowed the Asian culture to seep its way through the Western film industry like never before.

When you're reading my pieces about Bruce Lee, I want you to keep in mind how hard martial arts is to train for. Martial arts was one of the keys to Bruce Lee's fame, and in order to master it, it requires not just a specific part of your body to be the strongest, but every single part of your body strong, including your mind. Bruce Lee fully understood that, and I hope you understand that too because martial arts is part of what made Bruce Lee, Bruce Lee.

Please enjoy what's ahead of you because it's packed with everything Bruce Lee.

"Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it." –Bruce Lee

Sincerely,

Sara Tin-U ☺

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Bruce Lee: Man of Perception

A film star since an infant, Lee Jun Fan, more famously known as Bruce Lee, is an action film star legend. Indeed, Bruce Lee is a fighting legend, but was it only strength that enabled him to go to the lengths of creating his own unique style and leaving an eternal footprint in the Western industry as one of the first to bring light upon kung fu? That is to say, is Bruce Lee all muscles without a trace of thought? In contrast to his supposed violent characters, Bruce Lee is not only a man of brawn, but also a man of perception.

To go back to Bruce Lee's beginning, he was born in San Francisco, California to Lee Hoi Chuen, a well-known Hong Kong opera singer, and Grace Li. He grew up in Hong Kong, as his family moved back there when he was only three, and as an infant, according to *Great Athletes* (Salem Press), "was almost immediately thrust into the early career path that would make him a child film star." Growing up, he wasn't an ideal student, and "was extremely mischievous, aggressive, hot-tempered, and fierce." (Lee, p.34) Eventually, his mother let him learn martial arts in order to learn how to defend himself; when he reached the age of 18, he had already "become a martial arts master and had appeared in some twenty Chinese-language films." (Cortes, Keo, and Anderson) Bruce Lee went from an audacious teenager who got into fights to a man who used fighting for defense and for his roles on film.

In 1959, he returned to the United States for better opportunities, and enrolled himself into the University of Washington as a philosophy major which baffled his relatives since "everybody thought I [Bruce Lee] had better go into physical education since the only extra-curricular activity that I [Bruce Lee] was interested in [...] was Chinese martial arts." Most people see martial arts and philosophy as two completely unrelated subjects, but Bruce Lee managed to meld the two together. Bruce Lee believed that "every action should have its why and wherefore; and there ought to be a complete and proficient theory to back up the whole concept of Chinese martial arts." (Lee, p.35) With this intention, Bruce Lee delved into the art of philosophy and questioned everything to be questioned.

In addition to entering the philosophy major, Bruce Lee had already created his own style, Jeet Kune Do, a mix of various martial art styles. He input his own practicality to make the movements useful to him, and it was the mixing pot of his philosophical principles and original style, Jeet Kune Do, that made Bruce Lee, Bruce Lee. According to Lee, "Philosophy brings my Jeet Kune Do into a new realm in the sphere of martial arts, and Jeet Kune Do brings my acting career to a new horizon." (p.35) See, this is what shaped Bruce Lee. This is what made him into the legend he's known as today. He never instigated violence as a man or depended on strength alone. He showed that martial arts isn't about who's the toughest, but about who knows the most about the meaning behind each movement.

Furthermore, the actual art of Jeet Kune Do has its own principles attached to it which Bruce Lee adhered to. Jeet Kune Do enlightened, moralized, and philosophized a human being. Jeet Kune Do means to not be "limited by attachments, confinements, partialization, complexities" (Lee, p.191). Jeet Kune Do "teaches us to not look backward once the course is decided upon." (Lee, p.191) "Jeet Kune Do is not to hurt, but it is one of the avenues through

which life opens up its secrets to us.” (Lee, p.191) Looking at Bruce Lee’s creation of Jeet Kune Do, we have an insight to what really went on in his mind, and his style shows that his mind wasn’t the way he appeared. His mind wasn’t vicious and out of control. He didn’t have paroxysms of anger that led him to beat up others. He used martial arts to exercise his mind, and with this, “remade the image of an Asian man in the West.” (Bowman, p.176)

As has been mentioned, Bruce Lee has a clear conviction of the way he applies himself to life. Seen as a brute, muscular kung fu man who was awe-inspiring in his quick movements, Bruce Lee was actually a veritable philosopher who let every opportunity in his life teach him more about who he is. Bruce Lee wasn’t a legend because he could take down any person who dared cross him. Bruce Lee was a legend because when on screen, he never lost the true aspect of who he was: a man of perception.

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POWER OF THE MIND

FISTS DRIBBLING AGAINST THE OSCILLATING BAG

EVERY HIT EXERTING EXTREME POWER

POWER IS DEFINED AS STRENGTH

BUT STRENGTH ROOTS FROM THE MIND

STRENGTH ROOTS FROM PERCEPTION

STRENGTH ROOTS FROM INTUITION

RENOUNCE THE FAKE WISDOM THAT MUSCLES MAKE UP STRENGTH

ALLOW THE THOUGHT THAT THE MIND IS STRENGTH TO PREVAIL

ALLOW YOUR BODY TO MOVE WITH CONSIDERED CONSEQUENCES

ALLOW EVERY PRETENSE YOU HAVE HAD ABOUT MARTIAL ARTS ABANDON YOU

AND WITH THOSE ACTIONS DONE

WISDOM HAS BEEN ACQUIRED

DO NOT THINK ONLY ABOUT BECOMING OFFENSE

DO NOT THINK ONLY ABOUT BECOMING DEFENSE

BECOME A MIXING POT OF EVERY STYLE

EVERY MOVE

EVERY ACTION

EVERY STEP

BE OPEN TO CHANGE

AN OPEN MIND IS THE KEY TO TRUE STRENGTH

AN OPEN MIND IS LIKE WATER

WATER CAN BECOME ANYTHING

AN OPEN MIND CAN BECOME ANYTHING

IT IS NOT ONLY ABOUT PHYSICAL POWER

IT IS ABOUT THE POWER OF THE MIND

The Philosophy of Martial Arts

By Sara Tin-U

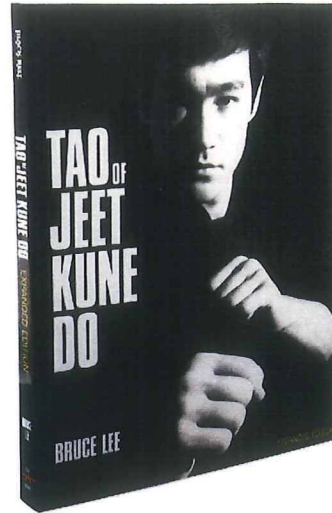
FEBRUARY 19, 1975

Hong Kong martial artist and philosopher, Bruce Lee, has just passed away. He will be missed, but his way of looking upon life will never be forgotten. His wife, Linda Cadwell, has allowed for his book about Jeet Kune Do, Bruce Lee's own unique style, to be publicized.

His new book explains all about his new style he likes to call, Jeet Kune Do, a martial arts that is a mix of martial arts styles that heavily focuses on incorporating morals into the thought process of learning Jeet Kune Do.

In the time that Bruce Lee was forced to take a break from his normally intense training because of his back injury, he sat himself down and decided to write a book. Normally, the public views martial arts as a quite violent sport, but in reality, martial arts isn't. Bruce Lee said, "You can call it the art of fighting without fighting."

Martial arts really teaches values everyone should follow. With the values that come along with Jeet Kune Do that Bruce Lee has put out there, we, as people, could exceed our fullest potentials. "Use no way as way, make no limitation, limitation." Although these words seem contradicting,



Bruce Lee's book, Tao of Jeet Kune Do.

they speak only the truth of what's holding people back, and that's people themselves.

Bruce Lee died a legend, and this book makes a quite a strong impact too. This book took a common belief that martial arts is all about fighting, and morphed it into the belief that martial arts is about thinking. Bruce Lee appeared in action movies, so it's hard to understand every little gear moving in his brain as he completed each fighting

scene. Even though a lot of his incredible physical bodice was what contributed to his sharp movements and professional fighting skills, it wasn't only his physique that let him to be able to succeed. Reading this book, it's clear that it was his way of thinking that did. "If you think a thing is impossible, you'll only make it impossible," Bruce Lee wrote. This kind of mindset is what made him to be a legend.

This book is extremely well rated, and it's easy to see why. Bruce Lee's open mindset and way of looking at life was like no other, and he will be forever remembered as not only a great martial artist, but a great philosopher. "You must be shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can drip and it can crash. Become like water my friend."



Bruce Lee in Enter the Dragon.

Bruce Lee: Memoir

To be as strong as I possibly could, I did everything to fortify my bodice. I exercised daily through a weight training exercise, but everything came crashing down when the doctor told me I had injured my back, specifically my sacral nerve.

I was grief stricken by the news of my injury, and everyone told me that I could not continue martial arts the way I had been working at it day after day. Everywhere I went, I was showered with, “Oh, I’m so sorry”. It was unpredictable that I would ever be able to do martial arts seriously again.

In the time I was forced to wear a back brace and rest for approximately six months, I sat myself down and picked up a pen. I had decided that I wanted to write a novel explaining about my own style, Jeet Kune Do. If I could not do martial arts, I thought that I may as well express myself about martial arts through the simple form of writing. Although I was able to build up a philosophical system for Jeet Kune Do during my convalescence, it was absolutely painstaking to not be able to exercise daily as I used to do.

No matter how much the world seemed to be going against me, I let my own will push me to do what I wanted to do. I wanted to do martial arts. I wanted to maintain my health for myself. I wanted to be able to learn more about how my body can move, in ways that even surprise me. Once I was able to get out of my back brace, I trained little by little each day.

Eventually, after months of attempting to regain my strength, it no longer became an attempt but it became a reality. I continued my training in martial arts, and experimented with styles, blending each one together. Later on, I appeared in a few action movies. Unfortunately, because of my rising film career, I was unable to completely finish and fully develop my disquisition on Jeet Kune Do.

Even though I was physically inhibited, I persevered, and I surpassed everyone’s expectations, even my own. Without determination, I never would’ve been able to overcome my severe back injury.

With my own will, I was unstoppable.



Notes Page

*The main unifying element in this piece is about how physical strength is not the only force that powers Bruce Lee's success, but also his incredible mental strength and philosophical ways.

Expository Keystone. This research essay is very formally written and has a major focus on Bruce Lee's background and in depth analysis on what made Bruce Lee who he was, explaining his extreme interest in philosophy, and the meaning behind his unique style Jeet Kune Do.

Poetry: This poem is written in almost a "lecture" type way, as I'm trying to convey a message about how one should live your life, and that is with an open mind. I use a simile saying, "An open mind is like water". I am referencing to one of Bruce Lee's most famous movie quotes: "Be water, my friend." This quote refers to how flexible and adaptable one should be, which is what I perceived as having an open mind, open to new opportunities.

Prose #1 (Newspaper Article): This newspaper article focuses on the legend Bruce Lee has left behind, and an in depth analysis on his book, *Jeet Kune Do*, which was only released after his death by his widowed wife. The legend Bruce Lee has left is the true meaning behind martial arts, which is unlike many presumptions most people make about martial arts being all about fighting, but through his book, Bruce Lee made it clear that philosophical thinking applies not only to martial arts, but also life itself.

Prose #2 (1st Person Memoir): This memoir is written in the imaginative voice of Bruce Lee, which explains how Bruce Lee felt during his severe back injury, and how he picked himself up by writing a book explaining about Jeet Kune Do. He managed to get back to training martial arts with hard work, showing that his mental will allowed him to further pursue his film career.

Visual (Collage): In this collage, there is a silhouette of Bruce Lee in a fighting stance, symbolic of Bruce Lee's legend as a kung fu fighter action star, and the background is of many of his pictures including film appearances and him reading a book and meditating. The combination of these images symbolizes his mental and physical power leading to his success.