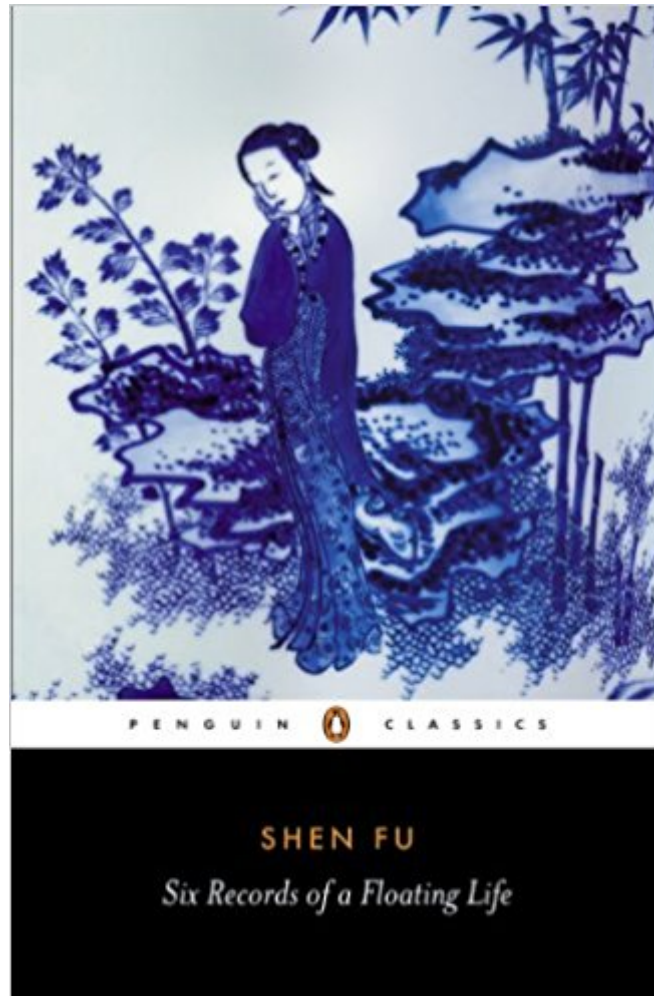




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# Six Records Of A Floating Life (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Six Records of a Floating Life (1809) is an extraordinary blend of autobiography, love story and social document written by a man who was educated as a scholar but earned his living as a civil servant and art dealer. In this intimate memoir, Shen Fu recounts the domestic and romantic joys of his marriage to Yun, the beautiful and artistic girl he fell in love with as a child. He also describes other incidents of his life, including how his beloved wife obtained a courtesan for him and reflects on his travels through China. Shen Fu's exquisite memoir shows six parallel "layers" of one man's life, loves and career, with revealing glimpses into Chinese society of the Ch'ing Dynasty. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Shen Fu's exquisite memoir shows six parallel "layers" of one man's life, loves and career, with revealing glimpses into Chinese society of the Ch'ing Dynasty.

Shen Fu brings late 18th and early 19th century China to life. Reflections on a time of empire, when

the barbarian west was developing a presence in southern China and pirates and brigands still terrorised the local population. Shen Fu is a self-described unsuccessful scholar, but still made a life in government and business, despite frequent extended bouts of unemployment. And what a life he lived and enjoyed. A failed scholar, but a wonderful poet: On love - "I went into our room and Yun rose to greet me. She held my hands without saying a word. Our souls became smoke and mist. I thought I heard something, but it was as if my body had ceased to exist"; On life - "There is dung in every house. The only question is whether one eats it" and "Burning incense in a quiet room is one of the refined pleasures of leisure"; The sublime - "As soon as he opened the temple gate we saw the face of the Buddha, its golden reflections mingling with the green shade. The steps of the hall and the stone foundations were covered with moss as delicate as embroidery" and "Their temple on Pu Mountain was covered by, indeed was hidden in, this Sea of Fragrant Snow. The plum flowers were in full bloom at the time and even our coughing and spitting were perfumed by them". Shen Fu lived a wonderful life to the full - finding true joy in the company of family and friends. The approach taken by Shen Fu in covering his life from different perspectives (the 'six records' - of which two are unfortunately lost) is a real pleasure to read, with the texture deepening through each new perspective. Highly recommended for anyone planning to visit Suzhou or Hangzhou - this book resounds with the delights of the gardens, the scenery and a sense of history for this region of China. The Kindle version does not include the beautiful cover of the paperback, but it does include the fine drawings of scenery and maps which illustrate the story.

Bought for a class, but enjoyed the reading. The book provides a lot of insight into various themes present in Chinese history, going into detail about class and social structure as well as societal pressures of the time. Shen Fu is telling a beautiful story about the life he shared with his wife, though there are times where the story is slow and a bit dry. Overall good read, and very quick to pass the time!

There are so many contradictions within this quirky memoir that it could only possibly be true. This is a memoir of life right around the start of the 19th century. It recounts the adult life of Shen Fu, a man who appears to have been ordinary in the extreme. Although educated, he did not pass the literary tests of the civil service. At best, his career could have been a secretary under one of the successful examinees, but his times weren't always the best. His positions never lasted, and his business attempts failed. Often, he sold his possessions and his wife's down to the clothes on their backs (or less). He fell out with his family, in a time when filial duty was enforced by law, and became outcast

in almost every sense. But his life never wholly failed, either. Perhaps it was the glow of nostalgia, but his twenty-three years of marriage were always a joy to him, even when his wife's health failed, and even when she may have been the source of some of his problems. They had their times of poverty, but never to the point of starvation. He was honorable enough to quit a corrupt position when it offended his honor too deeply. He was devoted enough to heal the familial rifts. His joys and Yun's were simple - travel, each other, the beauty of the full moon, and maybe a little too much wine shared with happy company. Shen Fu and his devoted Yun never demanded much from their lives, and usually got enough to enjoy. The text wanders. The first three chapters chart the ups and downs of the marriage to his beloved wife. She died early, from some frightening disease. Still, she and he accepted it stoically, or mostly did. The fourth chapter collects a few decades of moments together, the sights and sounds of travel. With his wife and after her, Shun Fu visited temples, sacred caves, and pleasure districts, reported in some drifting collage of personal history. Despite the "six" promised in the title, we have only four. It's probably better that way, according to the appendices. I really think I would have liked Shun Fu. He was honest enough, loving enough, and devoted enough to his children. Even when his own situation deteriorated badly, he fostered his son as best he could and sheltered his daughter with people who could marry her well. He never wholly succeeded or failed, but muddled through the chances that appeared to him. He was no grand hero, nor villain, nor idle dreamer, nor driven workaholic. He was just a guy, living some guy's life pretty well. Maybe he dressed up his memories just a bit, but don't we all?//wiredweird

great

A wonderful, romantic, thoughtful and sometimes tragic account of a life from 200 years ago in an alien land. When you read it, the author seems to be at your shoulder and could be your contemporary. Very intimate and revealing, and a profound experience to read.

Thanks

The book was in good condition. It was actually better than I thought it would be. Thank you so much.

Exquisite!

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