

These Mahjong tiles depict a famous Chinese historical or literary reference, and the characters translate to an idiom or proverb.



Tile Translations and Depictions

The four tiles, read from right to left (as is traditional for Chinese writing and in this context, telling a story), contain the characters 形 (Xíng), 現 (Xiàn), 陽 (Yáng), and 端 (Duān), along with the numbers 4, 3, 2, and 1.

1. 端 (Duān)

- **Character Meaning:** Beginning, start, or upright.
- **Depiction:** A female figure, possibly a court lady or celestial being. She appears poised and elegant.
- **Translation in Context:** The beginning.

2. 陽 (Yáng)

- **Character Meaning:** Sun, *yang* (the bright, active principle), or open.

- **Depiction:** A structure that looks like a **doorway** or a **screen/gate** opening up to a bright or open space.
- **Translation in Context:** Sun/Open, referring to light or the open way.

3. 現 (Xiàn)

- **Character Meaning:** Appear, manifest, or current.
- **Depiction:** A male figure, likely a common person or possibly a scholar in distress, **falling backward** or being thrown out.
- **Translation in Context:** To appear, often suddenly.

4. 形 (Xíng)

- **Character Meaning:** Form, shape, or figure.
- **Depiction:** A person's silhouette or form being **blocked by a structure**, like a **screen** or **wall**. This suggests being blocked or hidden.
- **Translation in Context:** Form/Figure, often referring to physical appearance.



The Proverb and Story

When combined, the four characters form the four-character idiom (chengyu):

端陽現形

Duān Yáng Xiàn Xíng

This is the Mahjong tile version of a well-known proverb that has two main interpretations:

1. "The Dragon Boat Festival Reveals its True Colors"

- **Literal Meaning of the full proverb:** The phrase "端陽" (Duān Yáng) is a classical name for the **Dragon Boat Festival** (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month). "現形" (Xiàn Xíng) means "to reveal one's true form/nature."
- **Story Connection (The White Snake):** This proverb is directly associated with the famous Chinese legend, **The Legend of the White Snake** (白蛇傳).
- The story is about a white snake spirit, Bái

Su-zhen (白素貞), who transforms into a beautiful woman and marries a mortal man.

- During the Dragon Boat Festival (**Duān Yáng**), it is customary to drink **realgar wine** (雄黃酒).
- When Bái Su-zhen drinks the wine, she cannot suppress her true snake form (**現形**), revealing her terrifying appearance to her husband.
- **Interpretation of the Tiles:** The tiles visually represent this moment:
- **端 (1) & 陽 (2):** Set the stage—the Dragon Boat Festival/Sun/Open way.
- **現 (3):** The shock and appearance (her husband is often shown in shock or falling).
- **形 (4):** The snake form/true nature (the block/form being shown).

2. "To Reveal One's True Colors" (General Meaning)

- **General Usage:** The idiom is widely used

to mean that a person's **wickedness or true nature is finally exposed**, similar to the English phrase "to show one's true colors" or "the cat's out of the bag."

These tiles are part of a special set of **Flower Tiles** in Mahjong, usually known as "**The Four Flowers**" or "**The Four Seasons**," but sometimes a special set like this, depicting a folk story, is used instead.

Would you like me to find out more about the **Legend of the White Snake**?