

What Did Confucius Say?

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Purpose

My students are very much the “Me” generation. If “it” doesn’t have to do with them, they aren’t interested. I try at every opportunity to tune them into the concept of interdependence on others; that the world needs all of us to participate in it to keep it healthy and balanced. The principles of Confucius, though top down, still focus on there being a need for balance. That everyone has a part to play to achieve harmony. With this year being so focused on government and government officials, I was particularly interested in Confucius’ concept of government and the need for government workers to be tested with the Civil Service Examinations.



Kongzi
(Confucius)

State of Ohio Social Studies Standards

History:

9th- 20th Century Conflict: 12. Analyze the impact of conflicting political and economic ideologies after World War II that resulted in the Cold War including: d. The Chinese Communist Revolution.

Analyze primary source material to see if historical interpretation is supported. 3. Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation including the influence of ideas, the role of chance and individual and collective action

Government 9:

Systems of Government: 1. Explain how various systems of governments acquire, use and justify their power. 2. Analyze the purpose, structures and functions of various systems of government including: a. Absolute monarchies.

Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities

9th- Participation: Describe and compare opportunities for citizen participation under different systems of government including: a. monarchies. 3. Analyze how governments and other groups have used propaganda to influence public opinion and behavior

10th- Participation: 1. Describe the ways in which government policy has been shaped and set

by the influences of ...the media and public opinion with and emphasis on: G. educational policy. 2. Explain how civil disobedience differs for other forms of dissent and evaluate its application and consequences.

Economics 11:

Scarcity and Resource Allocation: 2. Explain ways that the people respond to incentives when allocating their scarce resources in their roles as producers, consumers, savers, workers and investors.

Social Studies Skills and Methods 9:

Thinking and Organization: 3. Analyze the reliability of sources for: a. accurate use of facts, b. adequate support of statements, And c. date of publication.

Essential Questions

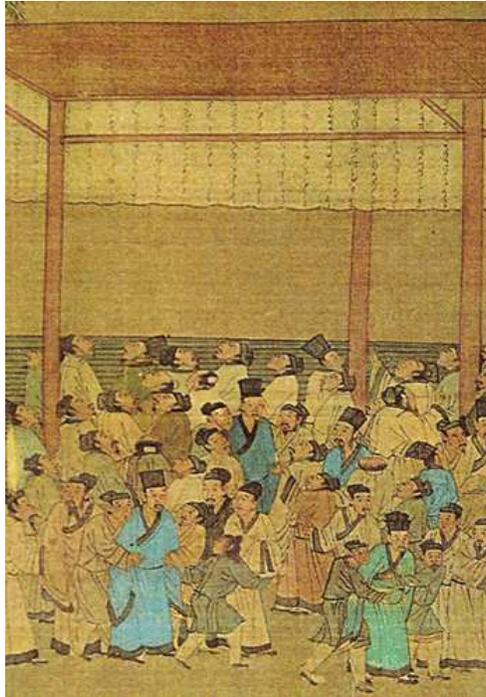
1. What stereotypes are there about Confucius and his sayings?
2. What effect did Confucius have on ancient Chinese government?
3. How did Confucius' Civil Service Exam change how modern Western countries choose government workers?
4. Is the Civil Service Exam a fair way to choose civil servants? Why or why not? Past vs. Present?
5. How can governments safeguard the Civil Service Exam so that its' intent remains intact?
6. How is the Chinese peoples' belief in Confucianism and Confucius' moral principles exhibited on a daily basis?

Rationale

Students do not know much about Confucius except the stereotypes that have been presented to them in commercials. They do not understand what a wealth of thought that he contributed to the world and that it is still having a profound effect on that world. To this day many countries, including our own, use some sort of Civil Service exam to see where in government people should be placed. The purpose behind the exam is very similar to Confucius' rationale: we need an intelligent and talented group of people representing all parts of our country in place to support the government in its effort to govern. The jobs of people who serve should be based on merit not on social background, wealth or who you know.

Teacher Preparation Prior to the Lesson

1. Look at the sites listed in the resources. These sites give a good overview of Confucius, his philosophy and intent with the Civil Service Exam.
2. Be familiar with Confucius' teachings in general.
3. Make sure to create background notes for the students so they can grasp the basic teachings of Confucius and understand his concept of education and the five relationships in society.
4. Collect a variety of excerpts from the Analects which focus on government and how it should be conducted. Make sure each excerpt is on separate paper for student group activity.
5. Collect images which focus on Confucius and the Civil Service Exam; post around room.
6. Collect any videos and books on Confucius and his teachings for student exploration.
7. Get a practice Civil Service Test. See if you can find one of the Imperial Exams.



Posting of the Examination Results
Qui Ying 1494, National Palace Museum

List of Activities: These can be done separately or collectively

1. (10 mins) Ask students if they believe humans are interdependent and inter-related to each other. Listen to responses and have students give examples of why or why not.
2. (15 mins) List on the board two columns with the five relationships. Ask students to explain their views on what each pair “owes” each other, or what their relationship is to each other.
3. (60 min) Give background notes and introduce Confucius to the students. Explain his views on society; particularly his ideas on education and the five relationships in society.
4. (2-60 min periods) Have students group into 2-3. Give each group a different excerpt from the Analects which have to do with government and governing. In their groups they need to discuss the meaning within their group. Each group should come up with 3 questions that come to mind when reading it. Prepare a skit for the class where one of them is the questioner, one is Confucius and the other or all create the scenario. Then they are to ask their questions of the audience and see what everyone comes up with as a form of discussion. Have a guided reading sheet with all the scenarios on it and space for notes so you can debrief as a class what Confucius was getting at and why.
5. (30 mins.) Have students group again and look at Chih Chung Tsai’s The Analects of Confucius. (Modern Publishing House 2005). Have them choose 2 cartoons on government and respond with their thoughts.
6. (60 mins) Have students take the practice Civil Service Test and have them evaluate it. What are its strengths and weaknesses? Will it/did it help guarantee a well educated and moral government?
7. (30 min) Have students create a political cartoon of their own based on what they have learned about the Imperial Civil Service Exam, Philosophies of Confucius, Confucius, or the five key relationships.

Teacher Resources

- Ames, Roger T. and Henry Rosemont, Jr. Tran. The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation. New York: Ballantine, 1998.
- Brians, Paul. Confucius: Analects (5th Century BCE) Department of English Washington State University (1998) 20 March 2009 <www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/confucius.html>
- Cohen, Myron and Stephen Teiser. Confucian Classics and the Civil Service Examination: Living in the Chinese Cosmos Understanding Religion in late-Imperial China. Asia for Educators, Columbia University. 21 March 2009 < <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/cosmos/irc/classics.htm>>
- Confucianism and the Chinese Scholastic System: Confucianism and the Chinese Scholastic System. Cal Poly Pomona. 20 March 2009 <www.csupomona.edu/~plin/l201/confucian3.html>
- Confucianism and the Chinese Scholastic System: The Chinese Imperial Examination. Cal Poly Pomona. 20 March 2009 <www.csupomona.edu/~plin/l201/confucian2.html>
- Gan, He. Chinese Education Tradition-Imperial Examination System in Feudal China. Jagiellonian University, Poland. 20 March 2009 <biztek.edu.pl/downloads/researche/jmss_v4_n2/5%20chiness%20Education%20Tradition%201.pdf>
- Jordan, D.K. The Canonical Books of Confucianism (Canon Literati). University of California San Diego. Department of Social Sciences. 20 March 2009 <weber.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan/chin/hbcanonru-u.html>
- Kopel, David B. Self Defense in Asian Religions. Journal of Management and Social Sciences. 20 March 2009 <www.davekopel.com/religion/self-defense-in-asin-religion.pdf>
- Myazaki, I. Examination Hell. Yale University Press, 1976.
- Pan, Dr. Yihong. An Introduction to Confucianism. Power point. March 2009.
- The Morals of Confucius (1691 First English Edition). Reading Revolutions Lecture Series. University of Maine at Farmington and the Remnant Trust. 20 March 2009 http://hua.umf.maine.edu/reading_revolutions/confucus.html
- The Writings of Confucius-KongZi. China the Beautiful. 21 March 2009 <<http://www.chinapage.com/confucius/confucius.html>>

Student Resources

- Tsai, Chih Chung. Brian Bruya, translator. Confucius Speaks: The Message of the Benevolent Modern Publishing House 2005.
- Tsai, Chih Chung. Brian Bruya, translator Confucius Speaks: Words to Live By. Anchor 1996.
- Tsai, Chih Chung. Brian Bruya, translator Great Living; The middle Path, The Pinnacle of virtue, Living with a Life of Harmony. Modern Publishing House 2006.
- Tsai, Chih Chung. Brian Bruya, translator The Analects of Confucius. Modern Publishing House 2005.

The Five Relationships of Confucius

Ruler	subjects
Parents	children
Older siblings	younger siblings
Husband	wife
Friend	friend

For Government Scenarios from the Analects, go to:

Ames, Roger T. and Henry Rosemont, Jr. Tran. The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation. New York: Ballantine, 1998.

Brians, Paul. Confucius: Analects (5th Century BCE) Department of English Washington State University (1998) 20 March 2009 <www.wsu.edu:8080/~wldciv/world_civ_reader/world_civ_reader_1/confucius.html>

Kopel, David B. Self Defense in Asian Religions. Journal of Management and Social Sciences. 20 March 2009 www.davekopel.com/religion/self-defense-in-asin-religion.pdf

For #4 Above: Confucius on Government divide statements for discussion

1. The Master said, "To rule a country of a thousand chariots requires reverent attention to business, sincerity, economy in expenditures, and love for men, as well as the employment of the people only in the right seasons."

2. Ji Kang Zi asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing those who are unprincipled [i.e., the immoral] for the good of those who are principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your obvious desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass: the grass is bound to bend when the wind blows across it."

3. Zigong asked about government. The Master said, "The requisites of government are that there are sufficient food, sufficient military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler." Zigong said, "If one had to dispense with one of those three, which should be given up first?" "The military equipment," said the Master. Zigong again asked, "If one had to dispense with one of the two remaining, which should be given up?" The Master answered, "Give up the food. From of old, death has always been the lot of men; but if the people have no faith in their rulers, they cannot stand."

4. In one passage of the *Analects*, a man asked the Master, "Can a man be called virtuous if he keeps his talents to himself while his country is going astray? I do not think so. Can a man be called wise if he is eager to act, yet misses every opportunity to do so? I do not think so" Master K'ung replied, "All right, I shall accept an office."¹²

5. Master K'ung extolled moderation in all things, including statecraft. The ideal state was of middle size, and was protected by men who did not spend all

their time in the military.

“To govern a state of middle size,” the ruler should, among other things, “mobilize the people only at the right times.”¹³ The advice about mobilization suggests that the state is not to be protected by a standing army, because a standing army is mobilized at all times.

The proper militia would be composed of people who were mobilized only some of the time. Such a militia would require training and cultivation, as did everything else: “The Master said: ‘The people need to be taught by good men for seven years before they can take arms.’ The Master said: ‘To send a people to war that has not been properly taught is wasting them.’”¹⁴

6. It is true that Master K’ung placed tremendous emphasis on respect for parents as the foundation for society, on benign paternalist government, on temperate and polite behavior, and on religious ritual. But the conservative values hardly mean that Master K’ung believed that people should meekly bow to rapacious government.

First of all, he stated that governors should rule by setting a good personal example, not through coercion or guile: “Lead them by political maneuvers, restrain them with punishments: the people will become cunning and shameless. Lead them by virtue, restrain them with ritual: they will develop a sense of shame and a sense of participation.”²²

7. Master K’ung specifically sanctioned popular revolution:

The Head of the Ji Family was richer than a king, and yet Ran Qiu kept pressuring the peasants to make him richer still. The Master said: “He is my disciple no more. Beat the drum, my little ones, and attack him: you have my permission.”²³

8. Master K’ung was an admirer of the Duke of Chou (or Zhou), who is frequently shown as a good example in the *Analects*. The Chou house had wrested control of China away from the House of Yin. The Chou acknowledged that a ruling house enjoyed the Mandate of Heaven: that the ruling house had a heavenly right to rule. But as Chou’s *Book of Odes* put it: “The Mandate of Heaven is not immutable.”²⁴

By asserting that the House of Yin fell because it had forfeited the Mandate of Heaven, the Duke of Chou was imposing a high standard of conduct on his own house. Should the Chou Dynasty fail to live up to the standards of heaven, its mandate too would be lost. The Duke’s recognition of heavenly judgment on his conduct, and his acknowledgement that his own power depended on righteous conduct, made him an object of Confucian admiration.

9. Mencius viewed rapacious governors as equivalent to ordinary robbers: “Now the way feudal lords take from the people is no different from robbery.”

Accordingly, accepting a gift from a feudal lord was like accepting stolen property from a robber.³³

Mencius told King Hsüan of Ch'i that royal ministers should remove a king who repeatedly ignored their warnings and made serious mistakes.³⁴ Further, said Mencius, a good subject could banish a bad ruler, if the subject had good motives.³⁵

10. In a discussion of two previous emperors, who had been overthrown, Mencius was asked "Is regicide permissible?"

He replied:

A man who mutilates benevolence is a mutilator, while one who cripples rightness is a crippler. He who is both a mutilator and a crippler is an "outcast." I have heard of the punishment of the "outcast Tchou" [one of the overthrown emperors; not the good Duke of Chou], but I have not heard of any regicide.³⁶

In other words, killing a wicked king was not "regicide," but merely punishing a criminal.

11. As a Confucian, Mencius believed that removing a bad king was especially necessary because the king's influence would corrupt the whole people: "Only the benevolent man is fit to be in high position. For a cruel man to be in high position is for him to disseminate his wickedness among the people."⁴⁰

Although China did not have a democracy, the ruler's continuing legitimacy depended on the support of the people: There is a way to win the Empire; win the people and you will win the Empire. There is a way to win the people; win their hearts and you will win the people.⁴¹

12. Mencius considered the people more important than the state. Quoting from the *Shu Ching* ("Classic of History," one of the Five Classics of Confucianism), Mencius wrote, "Heaven sees as the people see; Heaven hears as the people hear."⁴² Thus, the dissatisfaction of the people could remove the mandate of Heaven from a ruler, and place it on another ruler. Mencius considered revolution to be morally imperative in some cases.

Mencius quoted

Confucius' story in which Confucius gave permission for the people to overthrow an oppressive, overtaxing regime of Ch'iu. Mencius elaborated: because Confucius rejected unbenevolent, self-enriching rulers, How much more would he reject those who do their best to wage war on their behalf? In wars to gain land, the dead fill the plains; in wars to gain cities, the dead fill the cities. This is known as showing the land the way to devour human flesh. Death is too light a punishment for such men. Hence those skilled in war should suffer the most severe punishments⁵²

13. Yet Mencius still saw war as necessary to liberate an oppressed nation. He told King Hsüan of Ch'i that it was legitimate for the King of Yen to be attacked and overthrown, because the government "practiced tyranny over its

people.” After Yen’s king was removed by King Hsüan’s invading army, the people greeted their new king with “baskets of rice and bottles of drink.” But King Hsüan failed to practice “benevolent government,” so Mencius told Hsüan to “take your army out after setting up a ruler in consultation with the men of Yen.”⁵³

Independence was also just cause for war. Duke Wen of T’eng explained that his state was small, “wedged between Ch’i and Ch’u.” He asked to which larger neighbor he should be subservient. Mencius told him to submit to neither, but to build “deeper moats” and “higher walls and defend them shoulder to shoulder with the people. If they would rather die than desert you, then all is not lost.”⁵⁴