

HANDOUT 1 (PAGE 1 OF 2)

Introduction to Confucius, Confucianism, and *The Analects*

SECTION 1

Life and Times of Confucius

Confucius, who probably lived from 551 BCE–479 BCE, was most likely born in the state of Lu, now part of Shandong province, in China. The Chinese knew him by the name Kung Fu-tzu, which has been Latinized by Europeans to *Confucius*. Based upon the little evidence available, it is believed that Confucius was of good birth born into a family who had fallen upon hard times. According to legend, Confucius aspired to advise several rulers, but unsuccessful at this endeavor, became a teacher and moral exemplar.

Confucius lived during a critical time in Chinese history called the *Warring States* period (475–221 BCE) during which several states fought against each other in an attempt to expand their influence over what is now China. It was out of this period that the China known today emerged in the third century BCE under the unification of the Qin Empire. While several important schools of thought emerged at this time, the ideas developed by Confucius had lasting impact for China and the entire region.

After his death, varying successors and adherents contributed to the spread of the Confucian tradition. It is believed that his ideas were documented in writing by a successor known as Mencius. As with many great schools of thought, continued debate and discussion about Confucius' ideas have kept his teachings alive.

What did Confucius believe?

Introduction

Confucianism is rooted in the belief that familial relationships are the foundation for society. The basis of the relationship between children and their parents is the concept of *filial piety*. This means that children will demonstrate devotion and dedication to their parents in both thought and actions—beginning in childhood and lasting throughout adulthood. In addition, interactions within a family based on proper conventions and rituals (*li*) serves more than just the purpose of creating harmony within the family. Strong emphasis is placed on the role of the family for inculcating children in proper behavior to prepare them for life in a society that is based on hierarchy, respect, and education.

Education

Confucius's teachings center on the importance of education in the formation of a person's character. Confucius felt that education was paramount in the development of just leaders. Those shaped by an education that stressed moral behavior and those mentored by benevolent individuals would be best suited to rule.

Five Key Relationships

The teachings of Confucius advocated behavior that showed obedience and respect for superiors, be they elder family members, ancestors, or leaders. Confucius believed that humans are inherently social beings. Adherence to conventions or rituals (*li*) would ensure harmony. Correct behavior within the framework of a set of relationships was necessary to advance harmonious interactions. The subordinate person was always to defer and learn from the superior person in the relationship. At the same time, the superior person had a responsibility to act as a custodian for the subordinate person. This expectation extended from relationships among family members to leaders and their subjects. The 5 key relationships are listed in the table below:

<i>Superior</i>	<i>Subordinate</i>
Ruler	Ruled
Husband	Wife
Parent	Child
Elder brother	Younger brother
Friend	Friend

What role does Confucianism play today?

Confucius is one of the world's most influential philosophers. Today, his philosophy continues to influence large groups of people across Asia and throughout the world. Countries that show the most significant imprint of Confucianism are China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. Confucianism manifests itself in the way children defer to their elders and parents (filial piety) and in the hierarchical structure within offices among employees of different ages and levels of experience. Confucianism also plays a role in the expectations people place upon government and upon its legitimacy.

Important Texts

The ideas of Confucius may be found in *The Analects of Confucius*. While not written by Confucius himself, the book is considered the foundation of Confucianism.

Sources

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

Murphey, Rhoads. *East Asia: a New History*. New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc, 2001.

<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>

This Web site includes many excellent resources for educators and students about the life and philosophy of *Confucius*. *There is an overview of his life, his philosophy, and excerpts from The Analects.*

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Introduction to Confucius, Confucianism, and *The Analects*

SECTION 2

The following is an actual passage from *The Analects of Confucius* accompanied by a suggested set of questions that provides a basic method for analyzing the meaning.

Passage

7.22 The Master said, “In strolling in the company of just two other persons, I am bound to find a teacher. Identifying their strengths, I follow them, and identifying their weaknesses, I reform myself accordingly.”

Analysis Model

Which of the five key relationships from the table is referenced in this passage?

Using your own words, restate in one or two sentences the lesson Confucius expresses in the passage.

Give a contemporary example of the situation that Confucius describes.

Example of the application of the Analysis Model using 7.22

The relationship referred to is friend/friend.

It is always possible to learn from our friends; when a friend is skilled at doing something, adopt those characteristics. At the same time, when negative behaviors or characteristics are displayed, be sure to rid oneself of them.

Three friends (A, B, and C) hang out together. Friend A notices how friend B is always positive and makes a point to try and be more positive. However, friend C is often pessimistic.

Friend A thinks about his own behavior and realizes that he is sometimes pessimistic like friend C. He decides that he will make more of an effort to be less pessimistic.

To become more familiar with the teachings of Confucius, read over the following passages from *The Analects*. Use the *analysis model* from above to assist in the analysis of the passages:

The Master said, “It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of filial and fraternal responsibility to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion. Exemplary persons concentrate their efforts on the root, for the root having taken hold, the way will grow therefrom. As for filial and fraternal responsibility, it is, I suspect, the root of authoritative conduct.”

Which of the five key relationships from the table does this passage reference?

Using your own words, restate in one or two sentences the idea or ideas Confucius expresses in the passage.

Give a contemporary example of the situation that Confucius describes.

1.6 The Master said, “As a younger brother and son, be filial at home and deferential in the community; be cautious in what you say and then make good on your word; love the multitude broadly and be intimate with those who are authoritative in their conduct. If in so behaving you still have energy left, use it to improve yourself through study.”

Which of the five key relationships from the table does this passage reference?

Using your own words, restate in one or two sentences the idea or ideas Confucius expresses in the passage.

Give a contemporary example of the situation that Confucius describes.

2.3 The master said: “Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves.”

Which of the five key relationships from the table does this passage reference?

Using your own words, restate in one or two sentences the idea or ideas Confucius expresses in the passage.

Give a contemporary example of the situation that Confucius describes.

4.16 The Master said, “Exemplary persons understand what is appropriate; petty persons understand what is of personal advantage.”

Which of the five key relationships from the table does this passage reference?

Using your own words, restate in one or two sentences the idea or ideas Confucius expresses in the passage.

Give a contemporary example of the situation that Confucius describes.

15.21 The Master said, “Exemplary persons make demands on themselves, while petty persons make demands on others.”

Which of the five key relationships from the table does this passage reference?

Using your own words, restate in one or two sentences the idea or ideas Confucius expresses in the passage.

Give a contemporary example of the situation that Confucius describes.

HANDOUT 2

Passages from *The Analects*

Reproduce this page and cut into strips: one passage per strip. Each group is to receive one passage. With only three passages, there will be repetition of the passages depending on class size. However, student answers will invariably vary from group to group.

1.2 The Master said, “It is a rare thing for someone who has a sense of filial and fraternal responsibility to have a taste for defying authority. And it is unheard of for those who have no taste for defying authority to be keen on initiating rebellion. Exemplary persons concentrate their efforts on the root, for the root having taken hold, the way will grow therefrom. As for filial and fraternal responsibility, it is, I suspect, the root of authoritative conduct.”

2.3 The master said: “Lead the people with administrative injunctions and keep them orderly with penal law, and they will avoid punishments but will be without a sense of shame. Lead them with excellence and keep them orderly through observing ritual propriety and they will develop a sense of shame, and moreover, will order themselves.”

4.16 The Master said, “Exemplary persons understand what is appropriate; petty persons understand what is of personal advantage.”

15.21 The Master said, “Exemplary persons make demands on themselves, while petty persons make demands on others.”

HANDOUT 3

Examples of Hypothetical Situations

Reproduce this page and cut into strips: one situation per strip. Each group is to receive one of the situations. With only three situations, there will be repetition of the situations based on class size. However, student answers will invariably vary from group to group.

1. Chris is always in trouble in school. After stealing from the cafeteria cash register for the third time, the principal calls his home. She has called his parents many times but has never reached them and they do not return her calls. Amazingly, today she reaches his father. Chris's father tells the principal that there is nothing that he can do about his son. (Use with passage 2.3)

2. Beth has a small group of friends. One morning she walks with two of her closest friends to their English class. Approaching the class, they see an unfamiliar teacher standing in front of the door monitoring the hallway. Beth suddenly remembers that the day before their teacher had mentioned that they would have a substitute. At the same moment, her two friends make the same observation. Julie, on Beth's left, suggests that they keep walking past the class and skip this period. Leah, walking on Beth's right, warns that the substitute will most likely take role and their absence will most likely be noticed. (Use with passage 4.16)

3. Daniel loves to play basketball. He tried out for the team and with a lot of hard work made the varsity squad. The team had a great season and Daniel really enjoyed playing with his teammates. However, one of the star players, Nathan, is often hard on the other players when they lose. Daniel can usually ignore it, but after one playoff game loss, he criticized Daniel harshly in the crowded locker room for not making one free throw in the last few minutes of the game. (Use with passage 15.21)

4. Roberto comes from a large family. The youngest of five boys, he learned quickly to get along with others. Partly this came from having had to share nearly everything. But more importantly, he grew up with a father who was very strict and expected all members of the household to follow fair but firm rules. Roberto does not always agree with his father's rules. Yet, he understands that with so many people under one roof, there must be procedures that lead to cooperation. At school one day a group of students approach him about enlisting his help to organize a walk out during the class day. The students are upset and want to demonstrate against a recent crackdown by the administration on dress code violations. (Use with passage 1.2)