Unit 5: The Early Civilizations of China

Question: How did the philosophical system of Confucianism support individuals, rulers, and societies?

In order to help her students understand the social impact of Confucianism, Ms. Aquino asks them to read "Selections from the Confucian Analects," available on the Asia for Educators website from Columbia University in short excerpts with DBQ questions by topic. Specifically, she has students read and analyze Analects 1.2, 4.16, and 12.2, on filial piety and humaneness, excerpts from the *Classic of Filiality*, and Ban Zhao's *Admonitions for Women* (the first three paragraphs) written by a woman during the Han dynasty, all on the Asia for Educators website from Columbia University.

Ms. Aquino first introduces the sources and explains the purpose of the reading is to help answer the question: **How did the philosophical system of Confucianism support individuals, rulers, and societies?** Students undertake close readings of each document one at a time. They attempt the first reading alone.

In the second reading, Ms. Aquino provides sentence deconstruction charts to show students the cause-and-effect structure of the compound sentences of these texts. As her students are reading, Ms. Aquino clarifies that "humaneness" refers both to good individual behavior and social order. Ms. Aquino then asks student pairs to discuss: **What is the relationship between individual good behavior and social order (or the greater good of society)?** Each pair writes down their answer and cites one piece of evidence from the reading to support their answer. Ms. Aquino then has pairs of students share out their answers and evidence, and points out that to Confucius nothing was more important to social order than the good behavior of all individuals.

In the third reading, students mark up the text, underline the positive things that a person should do or be, circle the negative things that a person should not do or be, and draw a box around any words they don't understand. After students have gone through the first two texts, Ms. Aquino asks students to share out the words that they have underlined while the teacher records those words on the board under the title "Men." Then she explains that the final text, Ban Zhao's *Admonitions*, was written by a woman for an audience of women, unlike the first two texts, which were written by men mostly for an audience of men. Students do the above close readings with the Ban Zhao text, and the teacher records the positive attributes they have underlined on the board under the title "Women." Next student groups fill out a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the positive features for men and those for women. As a group, they decide which are the most important similarities and differences, and write a group claim to answer the question: How was the Confucian ideal behavior different for men and women?

To help English learners with academic vocabulary, Ms. Aquino gives them sentence starters as a model, such as "While under Confucianism men were supposed to _____ and women were supposed to _____, both had the responsibility to _____." and "To maintain order in society, Confucians believed that both men and women should _____, but only men had the responsibility to _____, while women _____." Finally, each group cites and analyzes three pieces of evidence (one from each source) on an evidence analysis chart.

The Confucian Analects

1:2

Master You [You Ruo] said, “Among those who are filial toward their parents and fraternal toward their brothers, those who are inclined to offend against their superiors are few indeed. Among those who are disinclined to offend against their superiors, there have never been any who are yet inclined to create disorder. The noble person concerns himself with the root; when the root is established, the Way is born. Being filial and fraternal -= is this not the root of humaneness?”

4:16

The Master [Confucius] said, “The noble person is concerned with rightness; the small person is concerned with profit.”

12:2

Zhonggong [Ran Yong] asked about humaneness. The Master said, “When going abroad, treat everyone as if you were receiving a great guest; when employing the people, do so as if assisting in a great sacrifice. What you do not want for yourself, do not do to others. There should be no resentment in the state, and no resentment in the family.”

Citation, “Selections from the *Confucian Analects,”* from Sources of Chinese Tradition, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 45–50, 52, 54–55, and posted with permission on *Asia for Educators*, Columbia University, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/confucius_analects.pdf.



Scene from the Song Dynasty *Illustrations of the Classic of Filial Piety* (detail), depicting a son kneeling before his parents.

By AnonymousTraditionally attributed, although possibly incorrectly, to:Painting: Ma Hezhi (fl. 1131–1189)Calligraphy: Emperor Gaozong (1107–1187) - Cultural Invigoration. Dynastic Renaissance: Art and Culture of the Southern Song (exhibit). Taipei: National Palace Museum., Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=18013879

Ban Zhao, *Admonitions for Women*

Humility

On the third day after the birth of a girl, the ancients observed three customs: [first] for three days to place the baby below the bed; [second] to give her a spindle with which to play; and [third] to fast and announce her birth to her ancestors by an offering. Now to lay the baby below the bed plainly indicated that she was lowly and humble and should regard it as a prime duty to submit to others. To give her a spindle with which to play signified that she should accustom herself to labor and consider it a prime duty to be industrious. To announce her birth before her ancestors clearly meant that she ought to esteem it a prime duty to see to the continuation of the ancestral sacrifices.

These three ancient customs epitomize a woman's ordinary way of life and the teachings of the rites and regulations. Let a woman modestly yield to others; let her respect others; let her put others first, herself last….

Husband and Wife

If a husband is unworthy, then he possesses nothing by which to control his wife. If a wife be unworthy, then she possesses nothing with which to serve her husband. If a husband does not control his wife, then he loses his authority. If a wife does not serve her husband, then right principles [the natural order] are neglected and destroyed….

Now examine the gentlemen of the present age. They only know that wives must be controlled and that the husband's authority must be maintained. They therefore teach their boys to read books and [study] histories. But they do not in the least understand how husbands and masters are to be served or how rites and right principles are to be maintained.

Yet only to teach men and not to teach women – is this not ignoring the reciprocal relation between them? According to the *Rites*, book learning begins at the age of eight, and at the age of fifteen one goes off to school. Why, however, should this principle not apply to girls as well as boys?

Citation: "Excerpts from Admonitions for Women, by Ban Zhao," from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 326–329, and posted with permission on *Asia for Educators*, Columbia University, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/banzhao_admonitions.pdf.