

Asian Odyssey

A National K-12 Interdisciplinary Curriculum Model

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CONFUCIUS, SHOTOKU, AND THE GOLDEN RULE

Introduction

Confucian thought, Prince Shotoku's Constitution, and the Golden Rule provide an opportunity for teachers and students to develop a shared vision for learning and classroom relationships. By looking at these ancient sayings, modern-day students can formulate their own rules of conduct.

Grade Level

This lesson was created for a 3rd grade classroom; it can be adapted for grades 4-6.

Objectives

- Students learn about the influence of Confucian thought and will compare and contrast the ideas of Confucius and Prince Shotoku.
- Students will develop a set of classroom rules.

Concepts

- Confucius (BCE 551-479): a philosopher, political thinker, and teacher whose ideas greatly influenced not only the Chinese but also the ideas of the whole world.
- Confucianism: the central idea is that there is a basic order in the universe and this order should be reflected in all human relationships. The family is seen as the model for society and relationships within the family are based on each person having a clearly defined role in relation to the other family members.
- Filial piety: devotion and caring for one's parents and family members is a basic concept of Chinese life and thought.
- Buddhism: a religion based on ideas and teachings of an Indian prince named Siddhartha Gautama, who lived about the same time as Confucius and who became known as the Buddha or Enlightened One; Buddhism seeks to free the individual from the suffering of life.
- Prince Shotoku (574-622 CE), regent for the Japanese empress; responsible for Buddhism becoming an established religion in Japan
- Seventeen Article Constitution (*Kenpo Jushichijo*) of Prince Shotoku: the earliest writing on the philosophic and religious principles that formed the basis for the Japanese government; combining ideas from Confucianism and Buddhism, it outlined the acceptable behavior of people.

- The Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would want done to you."

Key Ideas

- Confucius believed that there was a fundamental order in the universe and that man, nature, and the cosmos (heaven) were linked by a natural harmony. This natural order and harmony should also be the basis for all human relationships.
- Confucius believed that all people were basically the same; each person was capable of becoming a "superior person" by developing the virtues of kindness, goodness, wisdom, trustworthiness, and proper behavior and that when these were achieved there would be harmonious relationships between individuals on all levels of society.
- Confucianism is based on ideas about moral behavior and human relationships that Confucius believed existed during the golden age of the Zhou dynasty (1050-226 BCE), which he believed was the perfect era and government in China.
- Buddhism originated in India and was brought to Japan by way of China and Korea in the 6th century by wandering monks. In 592, Prince Shotoku made Buddhism the state religion, creating a strong relationship between the religion and the emperor, the nobility, and the clergy; Buddhism became an important unifying force in Japanese society.
- Moral virtues, as laid out by Confucius and Prince Shotoku, are deeply important to the Chinese and Japanese people; they are guiding principles that give structure and focus to the Chinese and Japanese sense of what it means to be a successful human being.

Materials

Mirror with Confucian Maxim, 15th century, CMA 1995.395

Shotoku Taishi as a Child, early 14th century, CMA 1989.76

www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/ANCJAPAN/SHOTOKU.HTM

www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/ANCJAPAN/CONST.HTM

http://gc2000.rutgers.edu/GC2000/MODULES/RELIGION/Confucian_Sayings.htm

Freedman, Russell. *Confucius: the Golden Rule*. New York: Arthur A. Levine Books, 2002.

Handout (Confucian Sayings)

Handout (17 Article Constitution)

Chart paper or posters

Procedure

1. Have students describe their experiences with fortune cookies, which have inside them Confucian-like sayings.
2. Ask them if they know what a maxim is. (Tell them it is a kind of shorthand—a general truth stated in a commonplace way; for example: "a stitch in time...saves nine"—if you make a small repair, you won't have to make a big one.)
3. Display *Mirror with Confucian Maxim*. Discuss inscription: "Joy in performing good deeds!" Ask what it means. Why it might be an important message to keep in mind for daily living--and in the classroom?

4. Introduce *Confucius: The Golden Rule*. Read aloud to provide biographical and contextual background.
5. Focus on sayings such as “Don’t worry when people fail to recognize your merits, worry when you fail to recognize theirs.” “An exemplary person should be slow to speak yet quick to act.” “To study quietly, to remain always hungry for knowledge, to teach others without growing weary.” “Above all, be loyal to others and trustworthy in what you say. Befriend only those who are kindred spirits. And when you are wrong, don’t be afraid to change.” Discuss why these sayings or qualities are worthy and why they would be valued in the classroom.
6. Display image of *Shotoku Taishi as a Child*. Ask students to describe the figure. How old do you think the figure is? What is the figure doing? What do you think this figure is like?
7. Provide background on Prince Shotoku and his Constitution for Japan (see Washington State University web sites cited above). Focus on principles such as:
 - (1.) “Harmony is to be value...”
 - (6.) "Chastise that which is evil and encourage that which is good...."
 - (7.) “In this world, few are born with knowledge: wisdom is the product of earnest meditation.”
 - (10.) “...refrain from angry looks...all men have hearts...”
 - (11.) "Give clear appreciation to merit and demerit..."
 - (17.) “Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone...They should be discussed with many.”
8. Compare and contrast Confucius (see #11 on Handout), Shotoku, and the Golden Rule. Explore how these principles would apply in the classroom.
9. Brainstorm a class constitution. Record on chart paper or poster.
10. Display constitution as a set of classroom rules.

Evaluation

- A. Student responses during discussions and read-aloud.
- B. Student input toward class constitution.

Enrichment

- A. Students could research and write a short report on the U.S. constitution as compare to Confucian sayings and Shotoku’s Constitution.

State of Ohio Standards

Language Arts

1. Compare and contrast information between texts and across subject areas.
2. Identify stated and implied themes.

Social Studies

1. Demonstrate effective citizenship traits including: a. Civility; b. Respect for the rights and dignity of each person; c. Volunteerism; d. Compromise; e. Compassion; f. Persistence in achieving goals; g. Civic-mindedness.
2. Compare the cultural practices and products of the local community with those of other communities in Ohio, the United States and countries of the world.

Art

1. Identify and compare similar themes, subject matter and images in artworks from historical and contemporary eras.
2. Connect various art forms and artistic styles to their cultural traditions.
3. Use details to describe the characteristics of subject matter in artworks (e.g., subtle facial expressions, distinctive clothing or stormy weather).
4. Discuss different responses to, and interpretations of, the same artwork.

This lesson plan was developed by Jim Sweeney, 3rd grade teacher, Shaker Heights City Schools, Shaker Heights, Ohio.

CONFUCIAN SAYINGS

1. To govern is to correct. If you set an example by being correct, who would dare to remain incorrect?
2. Encourage the people to work hard by setting an example yourself. Do not allow your efforts to slacken.
3. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man is, perhaps, the root of a man's character.
4. Simply by being a good son and friendly to his brothers, a man can exert an influence upon government.
5. Everyone speaks up for his own son whether he is talented or not.
6. In serving your father and mother you ought to dissuade them from doing wrong in the gentlest way. If you see your advice being ignored, you should not become disobedient but remain reverent. You should not complain even if in so doing you wear yourself out.
7. When your parents are alive, you should not go too far afield in your travels. If you do, your whereabouts should always be known
8. Make it your guiding principle to do your best for others and to be trustworthy in what you say. Do not accept as friend anyone who is not as good as you. When you make a mistake do not be afraid of mending your ways.
9. Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?
10. A gentleman makes friends through being cultivated, but looks to friends for support in benevolence (goodwill).
11. What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.
12. I will not grieve that others do not know me. I will grieve that I do not know others.
13. Do not wish for quick results, not look for small advantages. If you seek quick results, you will not attain the ultimate goal. If you are led astray by small advantages, you will never accomplish great things.
14. To go too far is as bad as to fall short.
15. Wealth and rank are what people desire, but unless they be obtained in the right way they may not be possessed.
16. Feel kindly toward everyone, but be intimate only with the virtuous.
17. Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.
18. I hear and I forget. I see and I remember, I do and I understand.
19. Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change.
20. By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection which is the noblest; second, by imitation which is the easiest; and third, by experience which is the bitterest.
21. Hold faithfulness and sincerity as first principles.
22. When you have faults, do not fear to abandon them.
23. When we see men of worth, we should think of equaling them; when we see men of contrary character, we should turn inwards and examine ourselves.
24. A heart set on love will do nothing wrong.
25. Gentlemen cherish worth; the vulgar cherish dirt. Gentlemen trust in justice; the vulgar trust in favor.
26. A gentleman considers what is right; the vulgar consider what will pay.
27. A father's and a mother's age must be borne in mind; with joy on the one hand, fear on the other.
28. Good is no hermit. It has ever neighbors.

SEVENTEEN ARTICLE CONSTITUTION

1. Harmony is to be valued, and an avoidance of wanton opposition to be honored. All men are influenced by class-feelings, and there are few who are intelligent. Hence there are some who disobey their lords and fathers, or who maintain feuds with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are friendly, and there is concord in the discussion of business, right views of things spontaneously gain acceptance. Then what is there which cannot be accomplished!
2. Sincerely reverence the three treasures. The three treasures: the Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood, [The Buddha, the Law of Dharma, and the Sangha, or order of male and female monks, are the three treasures, or key elements, of Buddhism] are the final refuge...and are the supreme objects of faith in all countries. What man in what age can fail to reverence this law? Few men are utterly bad. They may be taught to follow it. But if they do not go to the three treasures, how shall their crookedness be made straight?
3. When you receive the Imperial commands, fail not scrupulously to obey them. The lord is Heaven, the vassal is Earth. Heaven overspreads, and Earth upbears. When this is so, the four seasons follow their due course, and the powers of Nature obtain their efficacy. If the Earth attempted to overspread, Heaven would simply fall in ruin. Therefore is it that when the lord speaks, the vassal listens; when the superior acts, the inferior yields compliance. Consequently when you receive the Imperial commands, fail not to carry them out scrupulously. Let there be a want of care in this matter, and ruin is the natural consequence.
4. The Ministers and functionaries should make decorous behavior their leading principle, for the leading principle of the government of the people consists in decorous behavior. If the superiors do not behave with decorum, the inferiors are disorderly: if inferiors are wanting in proper behavior, there must necessarily be offenses. Therefore it is that when lord and vassal behave with propriety, the distinctions of rank are not confused: when the people behave with propriety, the Government of the Commonwealth proceeds of itself.
6. Chastise that which is evil and encourage that which is good. This was the excellent rule of antiquity. Conceal not, therefore, the good qualities of others, and fail not to correct that which is wrong when you see it. Flatterers and deceivers are a sharp weapon for the overthrow of the State, and a pointed sword for the destruction of the people. Sycophants are also fond, when they meet, of speaking at length to their superiors on the errors of their inferiors; to their inferiors, they censure the faults of their superiors. Men of this kind are all wanting in fidelity to their lord, and in benevolence toward the people. From such an origin great civil disturbances arise.
7. Let every man have his own charge, and let not the spheres of duty be confused. When wise men are entrusted with office, the sound of praise arises. If unprincipled men hold office, disasters and tumults are multiplied. In this world, few are born with knowledge; wisdom is the product of earnest meditation. In all things, whether great or small, find the right man, and they will surely be well managed: on all occasions, be they urgent or the reverse, meet but with a wise man, and they will of themselves be amenable. In this way will the State be lasting and the Temples of the Earth and of Grain will be free from danger. Therefore did the wise sovereigns of antiquity seek the man to fill the office, and not the office for the sake of the man...
10. Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men. How can anyone lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all, one with another, wise and foolish, like a ring which has no end. Therefore, although others give way to

anger, let us on the contrary dread our own faults, and though we alone may be in the right, let us follow the multitude and act like men...

11. Give clear appreciation to merit and demerit, and deal out to each its sure reward or punishment. In these days, reward does not attend upon merit, nor punishment upon crime. You high functionaries, who have charge of public affairs, let it be your task to make clear rewards and punishments...

15. To turn away from that which is private, and to set our faces toward that which is public—this is the path of a Minister. Now if a man is influenced by private motives, he will assuredly feel resentments, and if he is influenced by resentful feelings, he will assuredly fail to act harmoniously with others. If he fails to act harmoniously with others, he will assuredly sacrifice the public interests to his private feelings. When resentment arises, it interferes with order, and is subversive of law...

16. Let the people be employed [in forced labor] at seasonable times. This is an ancient and excellent rule. Let them be employed, therefore, in the winter months, when they are at leisure. But from Spring to Autumn, when they are engaged in agriculture or with the mulberry trees, the people should not be so employed. For if they do not attend to agriculture, what will they have to eat? If they do not attend the mulberry trees, what will they do for clothing?

17. Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone... They should be discussed with many. But small matters are of less consequence. It is unnecessary to consult a number of people. It is only in the case of the discussion of weighty affairs, when there is a suspicion that they may miscarry, that one should arrange matters in concert with others, so as to arrive at the right conclusion.

Source: W.G. Aston, trans., Nihongi: *Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, 2 vols. in 1 (London: Keagan and Co., 1896), vol. 2, pp. 128-133.