

Jeff Gottke – Mount Vernon High School

Area of Study: China

Title: What Would Confucius Do?

Materials:

1. Confucius, *The Analects*. Dover Publishing, New York, 1995.
2. Hoobler, Thomas, *Confucianism*, Chelsea House Publishing, New York, 2009.
3. Fan, Maureen, “Confucius making a comeback in money-driven modern China”. The Washington Post Foreign Service, 24 July 2007. Available:
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/23/AR2007072301859.html>.
4. “Confucianism Makes a Comeback” *The Economist*, 17 May 2007,
http://www.economist.com/node/9202957?story_id=9202957.

Related TIPS:

Confucius Philosophy and Understanding: Is There Relevance for Today's Students?, Mike Swank, Akron 08

Scope and Sequence:

This lesson is designed to teach the basic fundamentals of Confucianism and applying those fundamentals to modern Western situations. This lesson will be completed during a larger unit comparing major Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. A strong knowledge of Western philosophical and political thought is necessary.

Time Frame: Two Class Periods

Standards Addressed:

- Analyze primary source material to see if a historical interpretation is supported.
- Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation including the influence of ideas, the role of chance and individual and collective action.
- Identify the perspectives of diverse cultural groups when analyzing current issues.

Objectives:

- Understand Confucius’ life & philosophy
- Apply Confucius’ philosophy to modern day situations
- Compare selected Western philosophers’ theories to Confucius’

Overview:

This lesson can be used for three purposes:

1. An introduction to Confucianism's beliefs & use throughout China
2. An application of Confucian beliefs to certain situations today
3. A comparison of Eastern & Western philosophical traditions

In this lesson students will be introduced to the historical context in which Confucianism was formed, how it impacted Chinese society over time and its recent resurgence. In order to better familiarize students with the ideas, they will be given excerpts of the *Analects* divided into topics. They will then be given situations about current(ish) events in the Western world and have to decide how Confucianism would address the subject. After listing which of the *Analects* best addresses the situation, the students will then have to identify, by citing ideas and published works, how one previously discussed Western philosopher would handle the same situation.

DAY ONE:

- Have students read the “Confucianism makes a Comeback” article and answer the following questions:
 1. How old is Confucianism?
 2. What is the name of the book written with Confucius' sayings?
 3. How has the Chinese government unknowingly adopted Confucian ideals?
 4. How can Confucianism benefit the government of China?
 5. How can Confucianism benefit the people of China?
 6. Based on the reading, does it seem that Confucian ideals can be applied to modern situations?
- Students will view a PowerPoint and take notes culled from resource #2 about Confucius' life and philosophy.
- Give the student homework that has selections from the *Analects* that covers Confucius' main philosophies. At the end of the selections are modern day political, economic and ethical situations from around the world. Students will have to decide which of the selections applies to situations and note the number of the appropriate *Analect*.

DAY TWO:

- Using the previous day's news, find three situations and have the class tell the teacher what advice Confucius would give about each.
- Teacher should review the answers to the homework with students to ensure mastery
- To compare Confucius with famous Western philosophers, teacher should then give students the same list of situations they used for the homework they just reviewed.
- Students will then, using their class notes and textbooks, apply the same situations to previously discussed Western philosophers. (Machiavelli, Locke, Plato etc.)
- When students are finished, teacher should review student answers to ensure understanding.