

Culture Notes

The Analects: *An Illustrated Edition*

By Confucius

Adapted and Illustrated by C.C. Tsai Translated by Brian Bruya
Princeton University Press, 2018 Non-Fiction, Set in China
2018 of Note, Freeman Book Award for Young Adult / High School Literature

"The *Analects* is indeed a truly great philosophical work...It portrays Confucius as a figure striving to be good, trying to educate his disciples, and hoping to create a better world. It is a philosophy focused on the art of living."

-----Michael Puett

1. Historical background

The most essential historical context for understanding Confucius is the Spring & Autumn Period (770-481 BCE) and Warring States Period (481-221 BCE). What was changing socially that led to Confucius's status as a teacher?

It is important for students and teachers to understand Confucius' teaching in this historical and political context. This is an extended period of political conflict in China's early history. Michael Puett and Brian Bruya both provide detailed explanations of this historical background in the introduction to the English edition. Bruya writes, "As social roles were changing during the Spring & Autumn Period and rulers were turning to talent outside the nobility, there arose a need for teachers to instruct aspiring leaders" (xii). The change enhanced the mobility of literate elite (*shi* 士 pronounced: "she") who traditionally served Zhou court and regional rulers.

- Zhou Dynasty (c. 1050-256 BCE)
The Zhou (pronounced: "joe") Dynasty was the longest dynasty in China's history, and was divided into the Western Zhou (c.1050-771 BCE) and the Eastern Zhou (770-221 BCE). The dynasty established a feudal-type system with semi-independent rulers in different regions. Towards the end



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THE ANALECTS
ILLUSTRATED BY
C. C. TSAI
FOREWORD BY
MICHAEL PUETT
AUTHOR OF THE PATH



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of the Zhou these rulers began to fight among themselves, ultimately leading to its collapse.

- Spring and Autumn Period (770-c.480 BCE)
The Eastern Zhou period (770-221 BCE) was one of political fragmentation with the breakdown of central authority power of the Zhou. It is divided by historians into two sub-periods: the Spring and Autumn Period (770-c.480 BCE), and the Warring States Period (c.480-221 BCE). During this time, as more power was distributed among the city-states in China, they began to fight for control, resulting in chronic warfare. The two most powerful city-states were the Qin (pronounced: "chin") and the Chu (pronounced: "chew").
- China at the Time of Confucius (551-479 BCE)
Confucius lived at the end of the Spring and Autumn Period. Many philosophical schools of thought emerged during this period of political and social turmoil, a time known as the "100 Schools of Thought." Several of these philosophical schools have had lasting impact on Chinese civilization and political order, among them, Confucianism, Daoism and Legalism.

2. Explanation of key terms

- **Confucianism**
Confucianism is based on the writings of Confucius (551-479 BCE), a philosopher and teacher who developed a system of thought that explained an individual's place in society and a ruler's responsibility to his people. Confucianism defined the necessary hierarchy of duties and responsibilities between individuals to achieve harmony and stability in social and political relationships. Confucius maintained that when family relationships are in order, that is when each person performs his duties and responsibilities and shows proper respect, society will be in order and function smoothly.



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For Confucius, this model of proper relationships within the family could be translated to the political sphere where a wise and virtuous ruler acts as a father. An individual could improve himself and become a superior person by cultivating five constant virtues: **benevolence** (*ren* 仁 pronounced: "ren"), **righteousness** (*yi* 义 pronounced: "yee"), **propriety** (*li* 礼 pronounced: "lee"), **wisdom** (*zhi* 智 pronounced: "she"), and **trustworthiness** (*xin* 信 pronounced: "sheen"), which are the fundamental traditional virtues of China. It also emphasizes **filial piety** (*xiao* 孝 pronounced: "shaow") in family structure, the respect for one's elders and ancestors.

- **Daoism**

Confucianism is in contrast to other philosophical schools such as Daoism. Daoism developed in the 6th century BCE as a way of thinking about man's relationship to nature and the universe. The Dao means "path" or "way" that leads a person to live a virtuous life in harmony with nature. Daoism celebrates the "oneness" of all nature and advocates a natural course of action, or in some cases, inaction. A person who acts this way has been compared to water, which flows everywhere and seems weak but is actually one of the strongest forces in nature.

3. Confucianism in Chinese History

- Scholar's Confucianism: Confucius (551-479 BCE) & disciples
- Ruler's Confucianism: Confucianism endorsed by the Han Dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE) as a nation-building ideology to sustain control of a diverse empire.
- Cosmological Confucianism:
 - *Yin-yang* cosmology ("dark-bright," "negative-positive") is a concept of dualism, describing how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world.



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- *Wuxing* (pronounced: “woo-shing”) cosmology refers to a fivefold concept including wood, fire, earth, metal, and water as dynamic, interdependent modes or aspects of the universe’s ongoing existence and development.
- Neo-Confucianism
 - Fall of Han regime parallels the introduction of Buddhism and rise of Daoism.
 - Song 宋 dynasty (960-1279 CE) embraces Neo-Confucianism as part of renewed ethnocentric social order.
 - Neo-Confucianism focuses on cosmic patterns in nature (*qi* 气 energy; pronounced: “chee”) and society (*li* 理 ritual propriety; pronounced: “lee”)
- Persecuted Confucianism
 - Qing 清 (pronounced: “ching”) dynasty (1644-1911 CE) collapsed after Western incursions. Some intellectuals blamed the traditional values of Confucianism for China’s decline beginning in the late 19th century. This view among intellectuals began to gain political momentum in the early 20th century.
 - The May Fourth Movement (1919) was an anti-imperialist, cultural, and political movement which grew out of student protests in Beijing. Prior to May 4, 1919, various radical teachers and students had been engaged in the New Culture Movement (1915-1923) which questioned and challenged tradition, including Confucianism. In fact, Mao Zedong was influenced by the New Culture Movement as a young man.
 - Cultural Revolution (1949-1976) led by Mao Zedong targets all pre-modern culture to “shatter the old world, build the new.”

4. Connection to culture today

The Analects addresses moral and civic education, as well as presenting some foundational values in East Asian culture. Contemporary Confucianism is still



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influential in East Asia, especially in Japan, Korea, and China. Jeffrey Richey's publication, *Confucius in East Asia: Confucianism's History in China, Korea, Japan, and Viet Nam* (Key Issues in Asian Studies, 2013) would be a good resource for teachers to use to expand their students' cultural competency.

- Post-Maoist Confucianism in China
 - Confucianism became popular again in the late 20th and early 21st centuries in the PRC. In his 2010 book *China in the 21st Century: What Everyone Needs to Know* Jeffrey Wasserstrom suggests, "This is partly because it is in the regime's interest for people of Chinese descent in Taiwan, Australia, the United States, and other parts of the world [...] to identify with, travel to, and invest in the PRC" (12). In addition, recent Chinese leaders seem to value the emphasis that Confucius placed on social harmony. For example, President Hu Jintao promoted the slogan: "harmonious society" or héxié *shèhuì* (和谐社会) (pronounced: "hu-shay | shu-way").
 - In addition, China's Ministry of Education began establishing educational partnerships with foreign universities in 2004. These partnerships were named Confucius Institutes after the traditional Chinese philosopher. Furthermore, China established the "Confucius Peace Prize" in 2010 as an alternative to the Nobel Peace Prize after the Nobel committee recognized Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo.
 - Finally, Confucius been resurrected in education and popular culture for both children and adults. For example:
 - Elementary students recite Confucian texts in the local Confucian Temple.
 - Young Confucius is depicted in a cartoon series, 2009-present
 - Adult Confucius as portrayed in *Confucius*, a 2010 film.



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- Confucianism remains significant in East Asian societies. The success of the Tsai's Chinese classics reflects the influence. "C.C.Tsai is one of Asia's most popular cartoonists, and his editions of the Chinese classics have sold more than 40 million copies in over twenty languages. This volume presents Tsai's delightful graphic adaptation of the *Analects*, one of the most influential books of all time and a work that continue to inspire countless readers today." (Publisher's Overview, 2018)

5. Selected quotes that you may want to use in the classroom

As Michael Puett said, "This is a philosophy to be lived, a philosophical text to learn from and laugh with, and a version that captures such a sensibility delightfully." The following quotes are among the most well-known because they are used in writing, conversation, textbooks, and examinations in China today.

- **Benevolence**

P.96 (6:23) The Wise and the Benevolent

Wise people enjoy the water. They understand the happenings of the world and so take pleasure in the smooth flowing of the water.

Benevolent people enjoy the Mountains. They are unwavering in their virtue and so take pleasure in the steadfastness of the mountains. Wise people enjoy being active; Benevolent people enjoy keeping still. Wise people find their own joys; Benevolent people live long in tranquility.

P.154 (15:10) Cultivating Benevolence

Zigong asked Confucius how to cultivate benevolence in oneself.

Confucius said: Before an artisan does his job, he must grind his tools first. Here in the state, one should serve under a capable and virtuous minister, and make friends with benevolent young men.

P.158 (15:24) Be Thoughtful

Zigong asked Confucius: Is there one word that can act as a standard of conduct for one's whole life? Confucius said: Perhaps it would be "thoughtfulness." What you do not like, do not impose on others.



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- **Learning**

P. 46 (1:1) Pleasure and Dignity

Isn't it a pleasure to study and then put into practice what you learn? Isn't it a delight to have friends come from far? Isn't he a gentleman who remains dignified though he goes unrecognized?

P.61 (2:15) Study and Reflection

Confucius said: Study without reflection is folly, reflection without study is risky.

P.109 (7:22) Learning from Others

If there are three people walking along, there will certainly be one I can learn from. I notice their strong points and work to emulate them; I also notice their defects and try to change if I find them in myself as well.

- **Self-cultivation**

P.56 (2:4) Stages of Life

Confucius said: When I was fifteen, I set my mind on learning; by thirty I was well established; at forty I was imperturbable; at fifty I understood my mission in life; at sixty I could easily judge people by their words; at seventy I was able to act spontaneously, without ever crossing the line.

P.58 (2:11) Becoming a teacher

Confucius said: If you are well-versed in the ancient and understand the modern, you may become a teacher of others.

P.78 (4:17) Seeing Yourself in Others

When you see someone who is capable think about trying to be like him. When you see someone who is neither capable nor virtuous, look at yourself and see if you share any qualities with him.



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P.138 (13:23) Harmonize

A Gentleman harmonizes with others but does not conform; A lesser man conforms with others but does not harmonize.

- **Filial piety**

P. 79 (4:19) Traveling

While your parents are still living, do not travel far away. If you have to no choice but to travel far away, let your parents know your whereabouts so that they won't worry.

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