



World History

Confucius Reading

Name:

Section:

Score: ____/5

Directions: Read the following description of Confucius and answer the thought questions below.

Confucius

Confucius was born about 551 BC. with the family name K'ung. The respect he gained for his teachings led to his being referred to as Grand Master K'ung — K'ung Fu-tzu. The Western version of his name comes from this. He said that at fifteen he bent his mind to learning, and he continued to express a deep admiration for learning throughout his life. Confucius married at 19, his son being born a year later. Subsequently he had two daughters, one of whom died when she was quite young.

In his twenty-second year, Confucius started his career as a public teacher, and his house became a gathering place for young people who wished to learn from the lessons of the past. He was concerned with opening up education to all, with an emphasis on character building rather than vocational training. In his fifties he became a magistrate and a minister of justice. At 56 he sought to spread his doctrines by traveling extensively with some of his students. After 13 years he returned somewhat disappointed to his own state, where he is believed to have written down his philosophy and compiled the Chinese Classics. He died in 479 BC.



Confucius lived in times when there was constant warfare between neighboring states and local warlords had little concern for the high moral principles enunciated by an itinerant teacher. While his goal was to bring peace and order to states his words had little effect during his lifetime. His ideas subsequently became the foundation for most of the concern for humanity found in subsequent Chinese philosophy. Unfortunately, his name has often been used as a cloak for despotic rule, by a false analogy between a dictator and the head of a family.

Some primary aspects of Confucius's thought are to be found in *The Great Learning* and in *The Doctrine of the Mean*).

Thought Questions:

1. How was Confucius impacted by his surroundings, and how did this impact his teachings?
2. Why would it be fair to say that Confucianism is a philosophy and not a religion?
3. In the following passage what does Confucius reveal about the nature of learning?
"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."