

## CONFUCIANISM IN KOREA: ANCIENT AND CONTEMPORARY

**GRADES:** 10th

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**TOPIC/THEME:** History, Culture, World Religions

**TIME REQUIRED:** Two 50-minute periods

### **BACKGROUND:**

Kung Fu-Tzu, known in Western nations as Confucius, was born in China around 551 BC. He was a teacher and philosopher who stressed the need to develop responsibility and moral character through rigid rules of behavior. Confucianism was made official in Korea during the early Chosŏn period (approx. 1392) when the entrenchment of Confucian ideals and doctrines was established in Korean society. Confucianism is not strictly a religion but a social code of behavior and a belief system that permeates government, society, and justice and today is evident in Korea more than in any other nation in Asia. The lesson will explain the basic tenets of human relationships as taught by Confucius and how they bridge the centuries and are relevant in contemporary Korean society.

### **CURRICULUM CONNECTION:**

Confucianism in Korea will be taught in World History during the World Religions unit. Typically lessons on Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Christianity are included; therefore, knowledge of Confucianism will broaden understanding of other belief systems that originated in the Mideast and Asia and how they are interconnected. This lesson will serve as an introduction to Korea which will be interjected into other units throughout the curriculum such as industrialization, the enlightenment, and government.

### **CONNECTION TO STUDENT'S LIVES:**

Students in 10th grade World History will compare their personal relationships with those of a Korean student. They will discuss the pros and cons of both systems and contemplate how any adaptations of Confucian principles can affect their lives.

### **OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS:**

1. Students will be able to explain the origins of Confucianism and the effect on the lives of Koreans today.

**NCSS Standard:** Theme I: CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Learners will understand and apply cultural concepts that functions and interactions of traditions, beliefs, values and behavior patterns.

**IL Standard: 18.A.4.** Analyze the influence of cultural factors including customs and traditions in developing pluralistic societies.

### **Common Core Standards:**

SL 1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

SL 4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning  
 RH 1 Cites specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources  
 WHST 1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content  
 WHST 4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience

### **MATERIALS REQUIRED:**

1. Handouts #1 & #2: Biography and pictures of Confucius
2. Handout #3 Passages from the Analects of Confucius
3. Handout #4 & #5 "Virtue of Hyo" preface and stories
4. Handout #6 Writing rubric
5. Handout #7 5 Key Relationships
6. Fortune cookies and small slips of paper
7. Butcher paper and markers
8. Map of Korea

### **INTRODUCTION AND EXPLORATION:**

The lesson on Confucianism will be taught as the culmination of the World Religions unit. Students will be familiar with the background of Hinduism and Buddhism, religions that originated in Asia, and will be able to correlate the teachings and history of the three belief systems. At the conclusion of the lesson, they will gain an understanding of the ways in which Confucianism transcends religion in Korea, especially Christianity and Buddhism, and provides a common value system for all Koreans which extends into government, education, business and social relationships, and the family.

### **PROCEDURE:**

#### **THE DELIVERY OF THE CONTENT:**

##### **Day 1**

1. Each student will be presented with a fortune cookie with the explanation that they originally contained a Confucian quote.
2. Teacher led discussion about the background of Confucius and the spread of Confucianism to Korea. This will include a drawing of Confucius and a map of Korea. Handouts #1 & #2
3. Display a chart of the Five Principle Relationships as taught by Confucius and explain filial piety, which is respect for ones parents and ancestors
4. Explain and give examples of the Analects of Confucius, which were many of his teachings. Handout #3
5. Distribute small slips of paper and have students write their own fortune using one of the Five Principle Relationships or Analects and share with the class.

##### **Day 2:**

1. Divide the class into groups of four and distribute Four Korean Folk Tales About Hyo: The Confucian Tradition of Filial Piety, one story to each student in a group Handouts #4 & #5.
2. Each student in the group will silently read their story and will jigsaw it to the other members.
3. Distribute a large piece of butcher paper and markers to each group. Give the groups the following prompt: "*Rewrite any one of the stories but make it about life in the United States. Record your story on the butcher paper and illustrate.*" The teacher may provide some examples of possible scenarios to get them started.
4. Students mount their stories on the wall and circulate to read their peers' work.

### **THE APPLICATION OF THE CONTENT:**

The class will discuss some of the traditional elements of Confucianism in Korea today such as respect for superiors and the value of education. Students will consider how traditional Korean attitudes towards parents differ between Korean and American youth and how Confucian philosophies affect education in Korea. Would American students be able to adapt to the rigid educational standards in Korea? How would they accept Korean practices of bowing to superiors and caring for aging parents? The group assignment of writing an American version of respecting elders will help them in making the connection.

### **ASSESSMENT:**

The students will write an individual essay describing three of the Five Principle Relationships as outlined by Confucius. They will describe how people in Korea relate to one another and if they would be applicable to American culture.

They will address the question: Would the United States benefit by incorporating more Confucian philosophies into our culture? Any information learned in class may be used but it will be necessary for them to conduct some research using some of the sources provided in the Resources section. The attached rubric will be used in grading the essays. The essay must be two double-spaced pages. A third day may be allocated for research.

### **RESOURCES:**

Ames, Roger and Henry Rosemont, Jr. *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*. New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1998.

Asia-Pacific Connections. *Korean Confucianism*. Retrieved July 27, 2011, from <http://www.asia-pacific-connections.com/confucianism.html>.

Ask a Korean! *Confucianism and Korea-Part IV: Confucianism in Modern Korea*. Retrieved July 27, 2011, from <http://askakorean.blogspot.com/2011/04/confucianism-and-korea-part-iv.html>.

Bahn, Jaesik. *Hyohaeng Baekseon (A Hundred Selected Stories of Hyo)*. Seoul: Baek Jung Dang, 2004.

Clark, Donald. *Culture and Customs of Korea*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

Peterson, Mark with Phillip Margulies. *A Brief History of Korea*. New York: Facts on

File, 2010.

## HANDOUT 1: BIOGRAPHY AND PICTURE OF CONFUCIUS



Confucius, the great Chinese sage, was born June 19th, 551 B.C. at Shang-ping, in the country of Lu. His own name was Kong, but his disciples called him Kong-fu-tse, (i.e. Kong the Master, or Teacher,) which the Jesuit missionaries Latinized into Confucius. His father died when Confucius was only three years of age, but he was very carefully brought up by his mother, Yan-she, and from his earliest years, displayed an extraordinary love of learning, and veneration for the ancient laws of his country. When only 19 Confucius married, but divorced his wife four years after marriage that he might have more time for study and the performance of his public duties. The death of his mother, which occurred in his 23rd year, gave occasion to the first solemn and important act of Confucius as a moral reformer. The solemnity and splendor of the burial ceremony with which he honored her remains, (an old custom which had fallen into disuse,) struck his fellow citizens with astonishment, and they determined for the future to bury their dead with the ancient honors. Their example was followed by the neighboring states, and the whole nation, except the poorest class. Confucius did not end here. He shut himself up in his house to pass in solitude the three years of mourning for his mother, the whole of which time he dedicated to philosophical study. We are told that he reflected deeply on the eternal laws of morality, traced them to their source, imbued his mind with a sense of the duties they impose indiscriminately on all men, and determined to make them the immutable rule of all his actions. Henceforth his career is only an illustration of his ethical system. He commenced to instruct his countrymen in the precepts of morality, exhibiting in his own person all the virtues he inculcated in others. Gradually his disciples increased, as the practical character of his philosophy became more apparent. His disciples generally were not the young and enthusiastic, but men of middle age, sober, grave, respectable, and occupying important public situations. This fact throws light both on the character and design of his philosophy. It was moral, not religious, and aimed exclusively at fitting men for conducting themselves honorably and prudently in this life. Confucius travelled through various states, in some of which he was well received, while in others he was not much appreciated. His later wanderings were very unpropitious: state after state refused to be improved. He was in some instances persecuted; once he was imprisoned and nearly starved, and finally seeing no hope of securing the favorable attention of the mass of his countrymen while alive, he returned in extreme poverty to his native state, and spent his last years in the composition of literary works, by which posterity at least might be instructed. He died 479 B.C., in the 70th year of his age. Immediately after his death, Confucius began to be venerated and his family was distinguished by various honors and privileges.

**HANDOUT 2: PICTURES OF CONFUCIUS**



**HANDOUT 3: SELECTED ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS**

1. Be not ashamed of mistakes and thus make them crimes.
2. I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.
3. When anger arises, think of the consequences.
4. He who exercises government by means of his virtue may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.
5. What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.
6. Study as if you were never to master it; as if in fear of losing it.
7. In education, there should be no class distinction.
8. If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.
9. If there be harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
10. If there be order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.
11. The superior man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions.
12. The cautious seldom err.
13. He who speaks without modesty will find it difficult to make his words good.
14. Exemplary persons understand what is appropriate; petty persons understand what is of personal advantage.
15. Exemplary persons make demands on themselves, while petty persons make demands on others.

## HANDOUT 4: PREFACE AND “THE VIRTUE OF HYO” FROM CHUNG HYO YE

### PREFACE

Korea is a nation that has always loved peace and has done everything in its power to preserve it. Based on the teachings of Hongik Ingan which means one should “live and act for the benefit of all mankind,” reverence for the Heavens and respect for human life is deeply rooted in the spirit of the Korean people.

Traditionally, large family households consisting of more than three generations were very common in Korean society. Within these large families, elder family members looked after younger family members, and children learned to treat their elders with respect. They also learned to put the interests of others first and take care of their younger siblings. Such an upbringing serves as the basis for an attitude that places the good of one’s neighbor and society above one’s own. It also serves as a foundation for the willingness to sacrifice oneself for one’s country.

Today we are reading stories about love and devotion to parents, many of which are taken directly from historical records and classic folktales. They show the spirit that puts “us” before “me.”

### THE VIRTUE OF HYO

*There are numerous kinds of virtuous deeds; the root of all is filial piety.*

*There are numerous kinds of sinful deeds; the root of all is filial impiety.*

*- Korean maxim*

The virtue of Hyo, or filial devotion, has a long history in Korea, and was traditionally considered to be the foremost measure of person’s character and worth. Koreans throughout the ages have believed that since our parents brought us into this world and raised us, being grateful to them and serving them well is the most basic of all human virtues.

Among the East Asian countries that have been influenced by Confucianism, Korea is the country where filial devotion is most deeply rooted and where the tradition remains strongest. Because the root of Japanese culture is in the Samurai, loyalty to the king was traditionally given greater emphasis than loyalty to one’s parents. Whereas a Korean woman will never change her last name, which her parents gave to her, in Japan a woman always takes her husband’s last name, as the duty of a wife to her husband is held to be more important than filial duty.

...According to Korean custom, one should be humble before others, and speak and behave in a respectful manner to one’s parents. Koreans use different words according to the level of respect owed to the person addressed. A parent’s birthday, for example, was called saeng-sin, an older sibling’s birthday saeng-il, and one’s own birthday dol. When Koreans refer to themselves in front of their parents, they use the word “jeo” or “je” – the humble word for “I.” When conversing with parents, they use formal sentences ending in “sub-ni-da.” Among all the peoples in the world, Koreans are the only people who have such strict and detailed honorific expressions.

...As well as speaking respectfully, bowing is an important part of the decorum of filial devotion. Children express their respect for their parents by lowering their head, which is the most important part of the body, to the floor. According to custom, when a devoted son or



daughter was traveling to distant place, they would bow in front of their parents before departing for the journey, and again upon their return.

Traditionally in Korea, children did not allow their parents to live by themselves when they became old. Instead, they supported them with good food and clothes until the end of their lives. Until the 1950s, there were many Koreans who performed daily memorial services for their parents for a period of one to three years after they had died. While this tradition is not practiced to the same extent nowadays, many Korean families still perform such memorial services at least three times a year, on New Year's day, the festival of Autumn Moon (August 15th in lunar calendar), and the date on which their parents passed away. On performing the memorial service, respects are paid not only to parents, but also to ancestors, going back three, sometimes as many as five, generations. Without our parents, we could not have existed, nor could our parents have existed without our grandparents, and so on. It is thanks to our ancestors that we are here today.

*Hyo* is the act of repaying the love and grace of another person. Koreans believed that the love of their parents was as precious as the grace of the Heavens. Thus, they lived their lives by repaying that love with gratitude and devotion to their parents. Filial devotion to parents is learned by children, and handed down by them to their own children.

Gratitude and respect for one's parents is the root of the greater love and understanding that embraces the whole of humanity – since everyone is the parent or child of someone else.

## HANDOUT 5: FOUR FOLK TALES ABOUT *HYO*

### The Poor Scholar and the Minister's Daughter

In Choson Korea, there was once a government minister who had a beautiful daughter. When she came of age, the minister began to look for an intelligent young man to be her husband. Shortly afterwards, a young scholar came to see the minister to seek his daughter's hand in marriage. The minister, seeing his poor and shabby appearance, refused him immediately.

However, as it was just past midday, he asked the young man to stay for lunch, and had a table prepared for him, laden with sumptuous dishes and expensive wines.

The poor scholar's eyes opened wide at the sight of delicacies, which he had never eaten or even seen before. However, he did not eat, but began to wrap up the food and put it in a bag he was carrying.

Greatly surprised, the minister asked the young scholar why he was storing the food away instead of eating it.

The young man replied, "I have never seen such fine dishes before, and so I am taking them home to give to my mother."

The minister, deeply touched by the man's devotion, instantly changed his mind and gave him permission to marry his daughter.

The young scholar was the famous Yi Wonik (1547~1634), and went on to become a government minister like his father-in-law.

### Under the Burning Sun

A brush seller once arrived in a village, and went to the village school to sell his wares. When he got there, he found several young children reading books on the veranda of the schoolhouse. Most of the children were in the shade, but one child was sitting reading his book under the burning sun. The man thought this strange, and asked the boy,

“How old are you?”

“I am seven years old,” the boy replied.

“Why are you reading under the sun, while other students are on the cool floor?”

The boy, wiping the sweat from his forehead, answered,

“My family is poor, and my father works as a day laborer<sup>2</sup> in order to pay my school fees. My books, brushes and papers are all the result of my father’s hard work and sweat. I feel guilty reading on the cool floor while my father is working in a field in the summer heat. That is why I am reading this book under the burning sun.”

Deeply moved, the brush-seller praised the boy for his thoughtfulness towards his father, and gave him his best brushes as a reward.

## A Visit to Seoul

Some hundreds of years ago, a young scholar who lived in a remote village married a woman from Kwachon. After the wedding ceremony, he went to live with the bride's family. His father, worried about his son, said to him, "There is only one hill separating Kwachon and Seoul. When you arrive in Kwachon, you must take care never to visit Seoul."

"Why not, father?" the young scholar asked.

"If you set eyes on a bustling, flourishing capital city, your mind will become unstable and you will be unable to concentrate on your studies. Please promise that you will remember this."

The scholar was a devoted son, and he always did whatever his father asked of him.

Therefore, he promised that he would follow his instructions, and left for his wife's house. After he had been living there for some time, however, it occurred to him that it would be a shame not to go and visit Seoul, since it was so close by. He felt that if he did not go and see Seoul then, he would be unlikely to have the chance to do so in the future. Therefore, in spite of his father's advice, he climbed over the hill and made his way to Seoul.

Once on the other side, however, he felt so uncomfortable going against his father's wishes that he turned back to Kwachon after reaching the South Gate. When he returned to his wife's house, however, he reasoned with himself that it would be acceptable for him to go Seoul provided that he could keep it a secret from his father. Again, on the next day, he made his way as far as the South Gate. However, he again remembered what his father had said to him, and being unable to pass further, went back to his wife's house.

He repeated this several times, going to the South Gate in the morning and then returning to Kwachon. A soldier on guard at the gate thought the scholar's actions suspicious and reported him to the authorities. He was arrested and interrogated by the head of the police.

"Why do you appear at the South Gate every day? What are you planning to do?"

The timid scholar replied in a faltering voice.

"I recently moved to Kwachon after getting married, and had never been so close to Seoul before. It was my father's words that made me behave in this way."

"Your father's words? Explain what you mean."

The scholar related the whole story, and begged the officer to pardon him.

"Since I could neither break my promise to my father nor abandon my wish to see Seoul, I walked back and forth in front of the South Gate every day."

The officer saw that the scholar was a devoted son, and said, "Unless you yourself had told your father, nobody would have known about your coming to Seoul. But you kept your promise nevertheless, out of devotion to your parents. This is conduct worthy of a true son, and you deserve to be rewarded. Since you are already in Seoul, please take the opportunity to see the city, and then go back to your hometown."

The young scholar was rewarded by the officer and taken on a tour of the city by a military escort, before returning home to his wife. He eventually told his father what had happened, and related all he had seen in detail. Later, he passed the state examination and rose to become prime minister.

### **My Mother's Troubles**

Once, in a village, there lived a lazy delinquent. Having lost his father at a young age, he had been raised by his widowed mother, and had started to go astray early on in life. He never listened to his mother's words, and was always causing mischief and disturbing the lives of the villagers.

His mother was very worried for his future, and called him to her one day, saying,

"I cannot allow you to live like this anymore. Fortunately, I have heard that there is a scholar of some reputation who is now living in the village. You must go and study under him."

The mother took her son to see the scholar. At first, the scholar tried to teach him to study books and the teachings of the sages. However, the boy showed no signs of progress.

One day, the scholar said to him,

"The weather today is very hot. On a day like this, the best thing for us to do is to find a stream where we can bathe our feet. Also, we can eat watermelon and gold melon, having cooled them in the stream. Let us go now."

The excited student rushed to get ready. The teacher told the boy to take the fruit, giving him a large watermelon and ten gold melons to carry. Pleased to be going on a trip, the student held tightly on to them, and hurried on his way.

But before they had walked one majang (about 400m), the boy began to sweat in the summer heat. His steps became unsteady, and he was on the verge of falling over. Unable to endure the heat, he said to his teacher, "I cannot go any further. Let us rest here for a while, and then go back home."

Hearing this, the teacher scolded the boy, "You are complaining about walking only this far, carrying a watermelon? Think how your mother carried you for ten months, how she worked all day weaving cloth and tending to the farm with a heavy baby in her womb."

At that moment, the boy felt a sharp pain, as if something was piercing his chest. Still holding the watermelon, he looked up at the sky, and soon tears started to pour from his eyes. He knelt before his teacher and said,

"Teacher, I have been so foolish. I repent from the bottom of my heart."

**HANDOUT 6: WRITING RUBRIC****Name:** \_\_\_\_\_**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_**Title of Work:** \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Criteria</b>				<b>Points</b>
	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	Information in logical, interesting sequence which reader can follow.	Student presents information in logical sequence which reader can follow.	Reader has difficulty following work because student jumps around.	Sequence of information is difficult to follow.	
<b>Story Structure</b>	Student demonstrates full knowledge (more than required).	Student is at ease with content, but fails to elaborate.	Student is unable to demonstrate basic concepts.	Student does not have grasp of information; student cannot develop concepts.	
<b>Grammar and Spelling</b>	Presentation has no misspelling or grammatical errors.	Presentation has no more than two misspelling and/or grammatical errors.	Presentation has three misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Work has four or more spelling errors and/or grammatical errors.	
<b>Neatness</b>	Work is neatly done.	Work has one or two areas that are sloppy.	Work has three or four areas that are sloppy.	Work is illegible.	
				<b>Total</b>	

**Teacher Comments:**

## **HANDOUT 7: FIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

### **The Five Basic Relationships**

According to Confucius, each person had a specific place in society and certain duties to fulfill. Confucius hoped that if people knew what was expected of them they would behave correctly. Therefore, he set up five principal relationships in which most people are involved. These relationships were (1) ruler and subject; (2) father and son; (3) elder brother and younger brother; (4) husband and wife; and (5) friend and friend. All, except the last, involve the authority of one person over another. Power and the right to rule belong to superiors over subordinates; that is, to older people over younger people, to men over women. Each person has to give obedience and respect to "superiors"; the subject to his ruler, the wife to her husband, the son to his parents, and the younger brother to the older brother. The "superior," however, owes loving responsibility to the inferior.