

Objective:

What was the context for the founding of Confucianism? What are the major beliefs and practices of Confucianism?

Contextualize the founding of Confucianism.

Identify and **describe** the major beliefs, practices, and sacred texts of Confucianism.

Introduction

➡ Directions: Read the quotes below and answer the questions that accompany them.

"The superior man thinks of virtue; the ordinary man thinks of comfort." -Confucius

"The noble person is concerned with rightness; the small person is concerned with profit." -Confucius

"I have heard that the superior man helps the distressed, but he does not add to the wealth of the rich." -Confucius

"What you do not want done to yourself, do not do unto others." -Confucius



Sources: Selections from the Confucian Analects: General Selections on Filial Piety and Humaneness, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/confucius_analects.pdf; *The Ethics of Confucius*, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cfu/eoc/eoc06.htm>; Image source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Konfuzius-1770.jpg>



1. Based on the quotes above, how might someone who follows the teachings of Confucius act?

Predict

What is Confucianism?

Confucianism is a belief system that was founded by **Confucius** (sometimes referred to as Kongzi, Kong Fuzi, or K'ung Fu-tzu) in **China** in the 400s BCE. Confucianism's sacred text is called **The Analects** and contains the teachings of Confucius.

Confucians believe that we should strive to **peace and harmony with OTHERS IN SOCIETY**.

Confucius was not as interested in the big mysteries of existence such as the origin or the universe, God, or the afterlife.

This peace, harmony, and social order can be achieved through the proper behavior of each member of a family or society by following these three concepts:

- **Five Constants:** humaneness, justice, proper rite, knowledge, and integrity
- **Filial Piety:** virtue of respect for one's father, elders, and ancestors
- **Five Relationships:** Particular duties arise from one's particular situation in relation to others.



What was the context for the founding of Confucianism?

➡ Directions: Watch [the Discovering China Video, “Confucius”](#) (start-1:26), and read the text and transcript below, then answer the questions that follow.

Contextualize

(0:18) Confucius is thought to have lived from 551- 479 BCE during the so-called Spring and Autumn Period when China's Zhou Dynasty was gradually splitting up.

(0:28) This later turned into the Warring States period before China was unified again in around 200 BC. Confucius was born in the state of Lu, in modern-day Shandong Province now.

(0:40) At the time when Confucius was born, China was kind of like Medieval Europe. Different states were competing with each other for power. Confucius saw morality deteriorating and the aristocracy [wealthy people] turning their back on the traditions the Zhou Dynasty.

(0:53) Confucius viewed the Zhou as a kind of Golden Age. Confucius felt he had a mission to return China to its former glory, to return to the way of the Dao. Today, the Dao refers to China's traditional culture self-cultivation and an emphasis on the way of virtue.

(1:15) Confucius felt that people in his age had lost true respect for the established rituals and norms of society and merely carried out the formalities without really understanding the true essence. To use the words of the time, the world lacked the Dao.



The map above shows the ruling families that competed for control over China during the Warring States period, during which Confucius lived. Eventually, the Qin won and consolidated power in China. For an animated gif that shows the changes the competition for territory in the Warring States Period, [click here](#).

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:EN-WarringStatesAll260BCE.jpg>

1. When and where was Confucius born?

2. Describe what China was like during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods.

3. How might the context in which he lived affect philosophy of Confucius?

What are the major beliefs and practices of Confucianism?

➡ Directions: Watch [Use Zoller Video for Beliefs and Practices](#) (0:41-end), and examine the images below, then answer the questions that follow.

Filial Piety- the idea that people should **respect their parents and elders.**

Confucius believed that filial piety should be the basis for structure in families and society.



The image above comes from an 1846 reprint of book entitled *The Twenty-four Filial Exemplars* which was originally written by Guo Jujin (1260-1368 CE). In it, a son kneels to honor his father.

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kindespiet%C3%A4t.jpg>

1. Based on the video and the information to the left, what is filial piety?

2. Describe an example of filial piety you have witnessed in your life.

3. Confucius believed that his teachings could bring peace and harmony to society. If everyone followed the concept of filial piety, would that help bring peace and harmony to society? Why or why not?

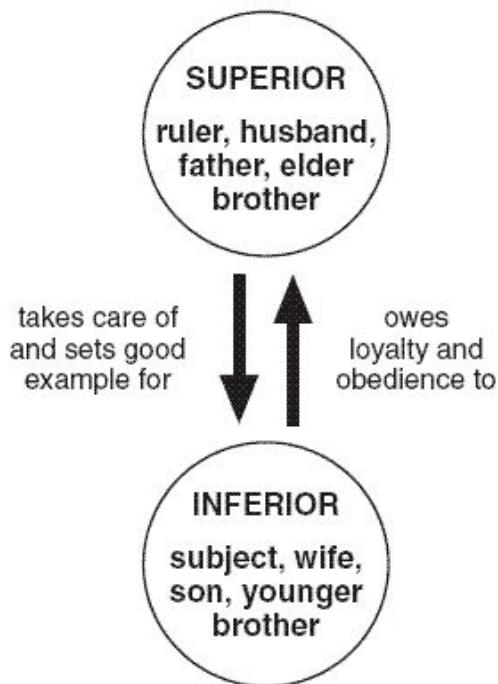
The Five Relationships

Confucius believed that there were five fundamental relationships in society:

1. Ruler to Subject
2. Father to Son
3. Husband to Wife
4. Older Brother to Younger Brother
5. Friend to Friend

Each of these relationships showed who had more power over others. The only relationship that is equal is between friends.

Everyone had duties and responsibilities, depending on his or her position in a relationship.



Source: Guide to the Essentials of World History, Prentice Hall, 1999 (adapted) from the NYS Global History Regents Exam.

4. Based on the Five Relationships of Confucianism, if you were the eldest child in your family, who would have authority over you? What would their responsibilities to you be?

5. Based on the Five Relationships of Confucianism, if you were the eldest child in your family, who would you have authority over? What would your responsibility to them be?

6. Confucius believed that his teachings could bring peace and harmony to society. If everyone obeyed the Five Relationships, would that help bring peace and harmony to society? Why or why not?

Supplemental Activity:
Selections from *The Twenty-four Exemplars of Filial Piety*

➡ Directions: Read the context below and excerpts from *The Twenty-four Exemplars of Filial Piety*, then answer the questions that follow.

Historical Context:

The Confucian classics provide the sophisticated reader with a wealth of moral teachings and examples. However, they are not well adapted to telling ordinary people how to [live like a good Confucian]. With the advent [beginning] of printing in the Song dynasty (960-1276), writers had an opportunity to rectify this by composing books of moral instruction meant for a mass audience. The excerpts below are from a popular tract widely circulated from the Yuan through the Qing dynasties in many different editions.

1. Who was the intended audience of these stories? Who were they written for?	2. Why were these stories written?

11. Mosquitoes Gorged Freely on His Blood

Wu Meng of the Jin dynasty was eight years old and served his parents with extreme filiality [respect for one’s parents]. The family was poor, and their bed had no mosquito net. Every night in summer many mosquitoes bit him, gorging on his blood. But despite their numbers he did not drive them away, fearing that they would go and bite his parents. This is the extreme of love for parents.

17. Playing in Colored Clothes to Amuse His Parents

Old Master Lai of the Zhou dynasty was extremely filial. He respectfully cared for his two parents, preparing delicious food for them. He was over seventy, but he never mentioned the word “old.” He wore five-colored motley [clothes that did not match] and played children’s games at his parents’ side. Often he carried water into the room and pretended to slip and fall; then he would cry like a baby to amuse his parents.

22. Carving Statues to Serve As Parents

When Ding Lan of the Han dynasty was young his parents passed away. He was unable to care for them, and yet was aware of how they had toiled to bring him up. So he carved wooden statues of them and served them as if they were alive. After a long time his wife ceased to revere [honor] them, and in jest she pricked one of their fingers with a needle. It bled, and when the statues saw Lan, they wept. Lan discovered the reason and brought forth his wife and divorced her.

23. Weeping on Bamboo Made Them Sprout

Meng Zong of the Three Kingdoms period had the honorific [title showing high status in society] Gong Wu. When he was young his father died, and his mother was old and very sick. In the winter she wanted to eat soup made of bamboo shoots. Zong, not knowing how to get them, went into a bamboo grove, leaned against a big bamboo, and wept. His filial piety moved Heaven-and-earth. Instantly the ground broke open and several bamboo shoots appeared. He picked them and took them home to make soup for his mother. When she had eaten it she was cured.

Source: From Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century, compiled by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Richard Lufrano, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 139-141. © 2000 Columbia University Press. http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/ps/cup/twentyfour_exemplars.pdf

3. Claim: *Filial piety was important to Confucians.*

Write two pieces of evidence from this document to support this claim.

4. Is it likely that anyone would actually act the way the characters in these stories do? If not, then what is the point of the stories? Why not write something more realistic?

5. These stories were written by elite men at the top of the social hierarchy in China. Why would they take the time and effort to produce stories like this for the instruction of commoners? Why should they care whether commoners understand filiality?

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Supporting Question 15: What was the context for the founding of Confucianism? What are the major beliefs and practices of Confucianism?

➡ **Directions:** Use the information you learned about Confucianism to complete the tasks below by filling them in on the [Belief Systems Chart](#) to keep track of this information.



Contextualize

Contextualize the founding of Confucianism by completing the following tasks:

- Identify where the belief system was founded
- Identify when the belief system was founded
- Identify who founded the belief system
- Describe how the belief system was founded

Identify and describe Confucianism's

- Major beliefs and practices
- Sacred texts