

Character Education and Confucius  
NCTA – Oxford, 2009  
Laurie Marks  
Wyoming Middle School  
[marks1@wyomingcityschools.org](mailto:marks1@wyomingcityschools.org)  
Miami University Banner ID +00262683



# Character Education and Confucius

## Lesson Overview

In the seventh grade Social Studies curriculum, students study the history of China from 1027 B.C. to 220 A.D., including the study of Confucius and his philosophy, Confucianism. Confucianism has an undeniable relationship to the values that educators are always trying to impart to middle school students. Art students will design posters to be displayed in the school that communicate Character Education values through the teachings of Confucius.

## Historical Perspectives

Confucius (551-479 B.C.) had a profound influence on the development of Chinese culture through his teachings. The *Analects of Confucius* is a collection of writings that relates discussions with his disciples and his sayings in short passages. A Confucian was taught to behave in a manner that was morally responsible regardless of time and place. Confucian principles continue to be evident today in China and other countries of East Asia. Rulers serve as models, exhibiting the virtues of filiality, loyalty, righteousness and selflessness. Although it could be argued that his thoughts and beliefs are very different from Western culture and ideas, his emphasis on behaving correctly from a moral, social and political standpoint, ring true with students today. Character Education focuses on how people treat one another. Confucius' Five Relationships: ruler (benevolent) to subject (loyalty), parents (benevolent) to children (filial piety), older siblings (benevolent) to younger siblings (respect), husband (benevolent) to wife (submissive) and friend (faithfulness) to friend (faithfulness) were believed to result in a harmonious society.

## Artistic Perspectives

Historically, posters have been used to communicate social and political viewpoints, advertise products and events. Character Education posters adorn the walls of our middle school building, but are often not artistically designed or displayed. Students will have the

opportunity to research Confucius' sayings, discuss them in a class setting, and decide which have relevance to our Character Education program. Our Character Education focuses on the following: **Attitude, Compassion and Kindness, Common Courtesies, Honesty and Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork and Decision Making.** Students will employ their knowledge of graphic design and use culturally correct colors to design something with both meaning and visual impact.

## Instructional Objectives

### Students will:

- discuss their knowledge of Confucius and Confucianism as a result of their work in their 7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies class
- discuss the impact of Confucianism on Chinese society past and present
- draw comparisons between the tumultuous society in China during the time of Confucius and society today
- research Confucius and Confucianism and discuss sayings from the *Analects of Confucius* that could possibly relate to our Character Education program
- discuss the *five relationships* and compare their impact in China and the U.S.
- discuss the pros and cons of adopting some principles of Confucianism into their own lives
- research historical Chinese motifs and symbols for possible use in their poster design
- research the cultural meaning behind the choice and use of colors
- develop several designs through the use of thumbnail sketches
- execute their strongest design using the computer and Adobe Photoshop

***Ohio Academic Content Standards, Fine Arts, Grade 7. Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts, Benchmark A-1; Benchmark B-3; Benchmark D-6, Creative Expression and Communication, Benchmark B-3; Benchmark D-5; Benchmark E-6; Analyzing and Responding, Benchmark A-1,2; Benchmark B-3; Benchmark C-4; Valuing the Arts, Benchmark B-2,3***

***Ohio Academic Content Standards, Fine Arts, Grade 8. Historical, Cultural and Social Contexts, Benchmark A-1; Benchmark B-3; Benchmark C-4; Creative Expression and Communication, Benchmark A-1; Benchmark B-3; Benchmark D-5; Benchmark E-6;***

*Analyzing and Responding, Benchmark B-3; Benchmark C-4; Valuing the Arts, Benchmark A-2; Benchmark B-3*

## Supplies

- bibliography of sources, both Internet and books written on a middle school level
- use of a computer lab for conducting research
- books and visuals depicting Chinese subjects, designs, motifs etc.
- drawing paper for sketching
- pencils, colored pencils
- computer lab for executing their chosen design using Adobe Photoshop
- large format color printer for printing posters 11” X 17”
- assorted books on graphic arts for the purpose of selecting fonts, placement of information
- a variety of posters on all topics to critique in terms of the successful communication of an idea

## Instructional Timeline

- Introduction and discussion of Confucius from a historical perspective – one 45 minute period
- Researching the sayings from the *Analects of Confucius* and listing those that have relevance to the Character Education program – two 45 minute periods
- Class discussion of possible ideas for the use of sayings – one 45 minute period
- Presentation and possible PowerPoint of Chinese symbols, motifs and subjects – one 45 minute
- Drawing of at least three ideas in thumbnail sketch format – two 45 minute periods
- Review of Adobe Photoshop basics in the computer lab – one 45 minute period

- Creating the best of the three designs in the computer lab using Adobe Photoshop – four 45 minute periods
- Printing of the finished designs on a large format printer to be done by the teacher

## Procedure

Introduce to students the concept of using the teaching and sayings of Confucius to create a new generation of Character Education posters to be displayed in a semi-permanent manner in the school.

Review with students the lessons on Confucius that are taught in the first quarter of the seventh grade.

Discuss with students how his philosophies could relate to the teaching of morals and values as they relate to our Character Education program.

Students research his sayings through books and Internet sources.

Students create a list of possible sayings to be used in conjunction with the Character Education Program.

Presentation of visuals of Chinese subjects, symbols, motifs and use of color both past and present through posters, books and a possible PowerPoint.

Review with students the characteristics of successful graphic design and its responsibility to communicate.

Students choose three ideas and work up thumbnail sketches that present these ideas.

Students clean up these designs and complete them in color using colored pencils.

Review with students the basics of Adobe Photoshop including the use of layers, text, images from the Internet, use of various tools, etc.

Students create their posters on Adobe Photoshop.

Teacher will print completed posters on a large format color printer.

## Assessment

Student work will be assessed in three ways:

- class critique where they will discuss both the historical relevance and the way in which the idea successfully imparts the Character Education philosophies.
- student/teacher evaluation rubric, the exact questions to be formulated at the time of the lesson so that they are pertinent to the actual results.
- An indirect assessment can be made by the reception that the posters receive when they are unveiled to the student body and displayed in the building

## Bibliography

### Books:

*The Analects of Confucianism.* New York: Macmillan Company, 1938.

King, Wayne and Marcel Lewinski. *World History.* Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service, Inc., 2001.

Oldstone-Moore, Jennifer. *Confucianism: origins, beliefs, practice, holy texts, sacred places.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Schoppa, R. Keith. *Revolution and Its Past.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006.

Taylor, Rodney L. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Confucianism,* Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004.

*World History, the Human Journey.* Austin, TX: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, Inc., 2005.

Yao, Xinzhong. *An Introduction to Confucianism.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

### Websites:

Crystalinks.com. "Confucianism." *Confucianism.* N.D. 23 March 2009.  
<[www.crystalinks.com/confucianism.html](http://www.crystalinks.com/confucianism.html)>.

Wikipedia.org. "Confucianism." *Wikipedia.* N.D. 23 March 2009.  
<[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confucianism)>.

Kyrnin, Jennifer. "Visual Color Symbolism Chart by Culture." *Web Design/ HTML*. 2009. 24 March 2009.  
<[webdesign.about.com/od/colorcharts/1/bl\\_colorculture.htm?p=1](http://webdesign.about.com/od/colorcharts/1/bl_colorculture.htm?p=1)>.

### Online Encyclopedia:

"Confucianism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 2009. Encyclopedia Britannica Online.  
<[http://webdesign.about.com/od/colorcharts/1/bl\\_colorculture.htm?p=1](http://webdesign.about.com/od/colorcharts/1/bl_colorculture.htm?p=1)>. 23 March 2009.

\*\* Image on the lesson plan was drawn by the author from a published image of Confucius.