

Across Centuries, Across Oceans: Connecting to Ancient and Modern China

Overview

“Do a Chinese person’s eyes slant up or down?”

“Do you think that chino (Kim Jong Il of North Korea) really has nuclear weapons?”

“¡Que suerte que no tiene pelo chino!” (You’re so lucky you don’t have Chinese (curly) hair!)

“Why do we need to know about things that happened before we were born?”

Middle-schoolers can be curious and honest, if a bit limited, in their perceptions of the world. As a middle school ESL social studies teacher, one of my most important roles is to help students make connections between cultures, giving them the communication skills and knowledge to navigate life in the United States, encouraging them to preserve their own values and traditions, and engaging them in developing the knowledge needed to respect and understand unfamiliar cultures.

As their statements above suggest, making these connections is not always easy, especially when students are isolated from authentic experience with new cultures. Longmont, Colorado is overwhelmingly bicultural. Until this year, my students have all been Spanish-speaking, and mostly from Guanajuato or Chihuahua, Mexico. In much of Latin America, “chino” is generalized to refer to any Asian, and can be used in a derogatory manner to describe one’s appearance or indicate deceptiveness (Although some etymologists suggest that many of the offensive uses of “chino” come from the Quechuan word, which means “woman” or “servant.”). Ironically, in China, similar stereotypes and misconceptions exist in reverse. I discovered a chain of leather goods stores called *Mexican*, their signs emblazoned with a sombrero-wearing cartoon character sleeping under a cactus, and a Mexican restaurant serving only pizza and pasta. In China, English is considered the most important foreign language, and few students, even at the university level, have the opportunity to study another language and culture. In both cases, limited exposure to and engagement with other cultures leads to unchallenged assumptions and decreased ability to function in an increasingly multicultural community and world.

Traveling to China with the 2007 Fulbright-Hays delegation facilitated my growth as a multicultural individual and, more importantly, gave me tools to engage my students in understanding China. This project, designed as part of a 7th grade ESL World History class, incorporates activities for multiple intelligences and strategies for second language learners with the aim of introducing students to ancient China, part of the 7th grade social studies curriculum in our school. Also, several activities are intentionally designed for students to connect ancient and modern China with their own lives and to develop their ability to understand and relate to Chinese culture.

As a culminating assessment, students will create a museum exhibit with an “artifact” they have created and a paragraph explaining its importance. Since my students sympathized with the situation of migrant students in China, they have decided to add a service-learning component to the project, benefiting the Dandelion School (www.dandelionschool.org), a school for migrant students we visited on the trip. On a specified day next month, for a small donation, visitors (parents, teachers, and other students) will be able to come during lunch, sample Chinese food (donated by a local restaurant), and take a tour of the exhibit.

Special thanks to our scholar-escort Richard Bodman, both for the insight he provided during our delegation’s visit to China and for his assistance with this curriculum project. In addition to providing the quotes on Confucius and the extra background information for teachers, his commentary enriched many of the captions in the gallery walk.

Colorado Content Standards

GEOGRAPHY STANDARD 2: Students know the physical and human characteristics of places, and use this knowledge to define and study regions and their patterns of change.

GEOGRAPHY STANDARD 6: Students apply knowledge of people, places, and environments to understand the past and present and to plan for the future.

HISTORY STANDARD 3: Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.

HISTORY STANDARD 4: Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.

HISTORY STANDARD 6: Students know that religious and philosophical ideas have been powerful forces throughout history.

READING AND WRITING STANDARD 1: Students read and understand a variety of materials.

READING AND WRITING STANDARD 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.

READING AND WRITING STANDARD 3: Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.

READING AND WRITING STANDARD 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Key Question

- What accomplishments of ancient China affect our lives today?

Content Objectives

- Students will identify major accomplishments of the Qin, Han, Tang, Song, and Ming Dynasties.
- Students will evaluate the teachings of Confucius and their effect on Chinese society.

Language Objectives

- Students will read a variety of materials (maps, websites, books, etc.) to identify important information and complete research on a subject of interest to them.
- Students will use new vocabulary related to the study of ancient China, orally and in writing.
- Students will listen to identify important information and work effectively in small groups.
- Students will speak to present information, ask and answer questions, and work effectively in small groups.
- Students will write a well-organized paragraph.

Materials

Handouts and pictures (at end of document)

Maps and research materials (see Resources section for some materials I used)

Poster Paper

Markers

Computers with Internet access

Soft ball

Yarn

Tacks

Overhead transparencies

Lesson 1

- Using a detailed map of China, students use latitude and longitude to identify the places Ms. C traveled this summer. They are:

31° N 121° E (Shanghai)

32° N 118° E (Nanjing)

39° N 116° E (Beijing)

43° N 125° E (Changchun)

22°N 114°E (Hong Kong)

Then, they use the scale to figure out how far I traveled in China.

For the sake of finding locations on a map, I used Changchun instead of Yanji and then showed my students where Yanji would be on a map. We used this to begin a basic discussion about Chinese geography – Where are important rivers? Mountains? Where do most people live?

- Post color pictures from China around room (see separate PowerPoint presentation). Students circulate and find ten pictures that interest them. They begin by looking closely at the picture, writing words that describe it in detail. Then, they make an inference and ask a question about the picture. For fun, in the style of a gallery opening, I served Eight Treasures tea (a tea for special occasions with eight special ingredients – ours had chrysanthemum, black tea, longan, red dates, wolfberry, crystal sugar, orange peel, and lily) and gave them a new Chinese pencil to use.
- Distribute the captions among the students. Students must read their caption and tape it next to the appropriate picture.
- Students return to the pictures they selected, read their caption, and complete the “I Learned” column in their own words. During this time, I circulate, answering questions about what I saw and emphasizing important information found in the captions.
- In small groups, give students a poster paper with one of these questions on top. They should use their recording sheets to discuss with other group members and add to the posters. After a few minutes, ask groups to leave their posters on the table and rotate, giving a different group a chance to reflect on the question and add new information. Rotate until all groups have answered all questions.

What are some similarities between China and the U.S.?

What are some interesting differences between China and the U.S.?

What parts of ancient Chinese culture are still important today?

What questions do you still have?

You may want to reflect on certain discoveries as a class, or post the posters and refer back to them later.

Lesson 2

- Show students a picture of Confucius and explain that he was a philosopher who lived from 551 BC-479 BC, but whose ideas still affect Chinese society today. Give each student 2-3 Confucius quotes. Students should have 3-4 minutes to practice reading the quotations fluently, asking any needed clarification questions to understand what the quotes mean, and deciding if they agree or disagree with the philosophy.
- Play Last Word, a listening game. Throw a soft ball to a student. That student reads one of their quotes aloud, then throws the ball to another student. That student summarizes the quote in their own words and throws it to another student. The third student states if they agree or disagree with the philosophy and why. The third student then throws the ball back to the reader, who gives his/her opinion on the students’ comments and throws it to another student, who reads his/her quote and begins again.

- As a class, discuss “What is Confucianism?” and add it to a chart on poster paper. Themes that arise should include a respect for authority/maintaining order in society, fair treatment of others, and one’s place in society being based on merit, not just tradition. Present the idea of society being based on the relationships of Ruler and Ruled, Father and Son, Husband and Wife, Older Brother and Younger Brother, and Friend and Friend.
- Before leaving, ask students to write a short response on an exit slip/small sheet of paper: If you were emperor of your own civilization, would you follow Confucian philosophy, why or why not? How would people treat each other in your civilization?
- * Due to the fact that most of my students read at an elementary-school level, I used quotes from <http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Confucius/>. Though these quotes do allow students to get a taste for some of Confucius’ philosophies, not all of these quotes can be verifiably traced to Confucius. If your students can handle a more advanced reading level, I would recommend using the attached quotes, assembled by our scholar-escort Richard Bodman. At the very least, I recommend discussing with your students some of the possible pitfalls of interpretation (to which most second-language learners can relate firsthand).

Lesson 3

- Individually, have students place the Chinese dynasties we will be studying on a timeline they create in their notebook, using the chart at http://www-chaos.umd.edu/history/time_line.html. Then, using tacks and yarn, create a color-coded timeline on the wall of the classroom.
- Set up a quick simulation so that students have a sense of China’s cultural diversity and the Qin Dynasty’s attempts to unify the country. Tell students that they have been given some money and need to decide on a treat for the class. In groups of 3, students have 4 minutes to decide on a treat they can afford. Students must follow the following roles.
 - Person 1 – Must speak only their native language (in my class, Spanish or Russian). Has a small amount of one currency (For example, 10 pesos).
 - Person 2 – Must speak only English. Has a small amount of another currency (For example, 10 yuan).
 - Person 3 – Does not care about the treat. Is responsible for distracting the others from planning (Some 7th graders are really good at this role ☺ – some groups were ready to build a Great Wall in our classroom!)
- The Qin Dynasty was the first to unify China. Discuss the word “unify” with students, pointing out un=one. Why was it so difficult to make a unified decision in their groups? What are some things that would have made it easier? Show students images from China’s minority groups. How can a leader unify people with different ideas and cultures? Would different leaders make different decisions/accomplish different things? Write students’ predictions on board.
- Divide students into groups of two, assigning each group a dynasty (For my class, I picked Qin, Han, Tang, Song, and Ming). Using links on <http://k12east.mrdonn.org/China.html>, students researched their dynasty and identify what they believe to be its five greatest accomplishments, recording them on the dynasty recording sheet.

Lesson 4

- Students finish researching their dynasty and create a poster with visuals representing its accomplishments. They prepare to teach other students about their dynasty’s accomplishments.

Lesson 5

- Post students’ dynasty posters around the classroom. Students should stand at their posters and quickly label themselves Person A and Person B. Person A stays at their poster; Person B

rotates one poster clockwise. Person A is responsible for teaching the Person B at their poster about their dynasty's accomplishments, while Person B records the information on their dynasty recording form. After 3-4 minutes, person B gives their teacher a grade and rotates again, repeating until they have visited all posters. When person B arrives back to their poster, students switch roles; Person B becomes the teacher and Person A becomes the student.

Lesson 6

- Students begin work on their Ancient China Museum Project (see instructions below), using books from the library and the Internet to find information on a topic they found interesting in prior activities or scanning the books for new ideas. Students complete the planning sheet and then begin work on the rough draft of their paragraph, referring to reminders from prior lessons on organizing paragraphs (topic sentence, details, concluding sentence).

Lesson 7

- Students are divided into two groups, based on 2 of the six traits of writing: Organization and Conventions (Spelling, Capitalization, and Grammar). Each student is given the paragraph I have written about the Silk Road, cut into individual sentences.

The Organization group is responsible for getting the paragraph in an order that makes sense, with a topic sentence, detail sentences, and concluding sentence, and removing or changing anything that doesn't fit.

The Conventions group is responsible for correcting any problems with spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation.

- Then, students form pairs, with one student from each group. They use the editing guide to check the paragraph, and then copy a final draft onto a half transparency.
- Pick two copies of the final drafts on the overhead to compare and contrast. Are there different ways to organize the same paragraph? Is there anything your group forgot?
- Students trade rough drafts of their paragraphs with another pair. Students check the paragraphs in their expert areas (Organization or Conventions) and provide suggestions for the final drafts, which will be turned in with their artifacts later in the week.

Enrichment Activities

- My students loved learning Chinese numbers; we practiced them as warm-ups. Then, we used them to do Chinese eye exercises, which students do twice each day in school. These helped students focus before they began work on their project and were a fun cultural connection. Each exercise is done in 8 sets of 8, counting in Chinese as you go (i.e. 12345678, 22345678, 32345678, 42345678, 52345678, 62345678, 72345678, 82345678). The exercises are:
 1. Place your thumbs under your eyebrows and rub in a circle.
 2. Place the index and middle fingers from one hand on the bridge of your nose and rub up and down.
 3. Place your thumbs on your chin and two fingers on each cheek. Rub in a circle.
 4. Rub your temples.
- Meaningful and engaging practice with vocabulary is an important part of any ELL content class. Students selected dynasty, philosophy, philosopher, civil service, silk, currency, and unify as important words for our Word Wall, and we practiced these through warm ups at the beginning of class and creating our own "Old Maid" style matching game, as well as intentionally using them throughout the unit.

Resources

For student research, I used a range of books at appropriate reading levels from our local library. The following are some especially unique or useful resources I discovered.

JWM Productions (Producer). (2004). *Ancient China*. [Videocassette]. Wynnewood, PA: Schlessinger Media.

This short and engaging video is an excellent tool for building background knowledge on ancient China, highlighting a variety of accomplishments and making connections to modern life.

Zu, Kang. (2005). *Four Inventions in Ancient China*. Dolphin Books, Beijing.

This book, part of the *Science Stories of Ancient China* series, is a comic book detailing the history of papermaking, movable printing, the compass, and gunpowder. Great for reluctant readers! Other useful titles in the same series are *Stories of Scientists in Ancient China*, *Distinguished Doctors of Ancient China*, and *Architecture of Ancient China*.

<http://www.ancientchina.co.uk/menu.html>

The British Museum offers this great student-friendly website, with good timelines and maps for general information as well as interesting, easy-to-read information on tombs, traditional crafts, legends, and writing.

<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/prehistory/china/>

The exhibits at the Minnesota State University e-museum are at a more difficult reading level, but with neat interactive timeline and maps highlighting the accomplishments of each dynasty.

<http://www.dpm.org.cn/>

The Palace Museum in Beijing has great pictures of a variety of artifacts, but unfortunately the links to information are all broken. It looks promising if repaired.

Gallery Walk Recording Sheet

Name _____

Picture #	What I See	Question(s)	Inference(s)	I Learned...

Name _____

Dynasty Notes

Qin	Han	Tang	Song	Ming
1.	1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.	5.
Teacher: Grade:	Teacher: Grade:	Teacher: Grade:	Teacher: Grade:	Teacher: Grade:

China Museum Project

Paragraph Rough Draft due Tuesday, November 13th

Final Project due Friday, November 16th



You are an archaeologist who studies ancient China. In order to help others learn about your discoveries, you will create a project for a museum. The project will have two parts – an “artifact” that could have been found in ancient China (re-created using information from books or the Internet), and a paragraph that explains what your artifact is, important details about your artifact, and why it was important to Chinese civilization and the world

To get a 4, you need artifacts that are:

- Neat
- Historically accurate

You also need a paragraph with:

- Good sentences (capital letter, period, subject, and predicate)
- Good paragraph organization (indent, topic sentence, details, concluding sentence)
- Accurate spelling (All “No Excuses” words are correct; 90 percent of other words are correct)
- 5 details about your artifact and its importance in China and the world today
- 2 new vocabulary words

Ideas for Museum Project:

Art: - Make a replica of a painting, porcelain bowl, terracotta warrior, or other ancient treasure.

Cities: - Make a model of an important building, structure, or garden in China, such as the Forbidden City, the Great Wall, or the White Horse Pagoda.

Government: - Create a sculpture or portrait of a famous emperor and write about his accomplishments.

Trade: - Make a box of items that Marco Polo or another traveler on the Silk Road could have brought back from a trip to China.

- Make a model of transportation during ancient China.

- Make a working replica of an invention from ancient China.

Social Class: - Make a children’s book of social classes in ancient China showing jobs, clothes, and other important parts of daily life.

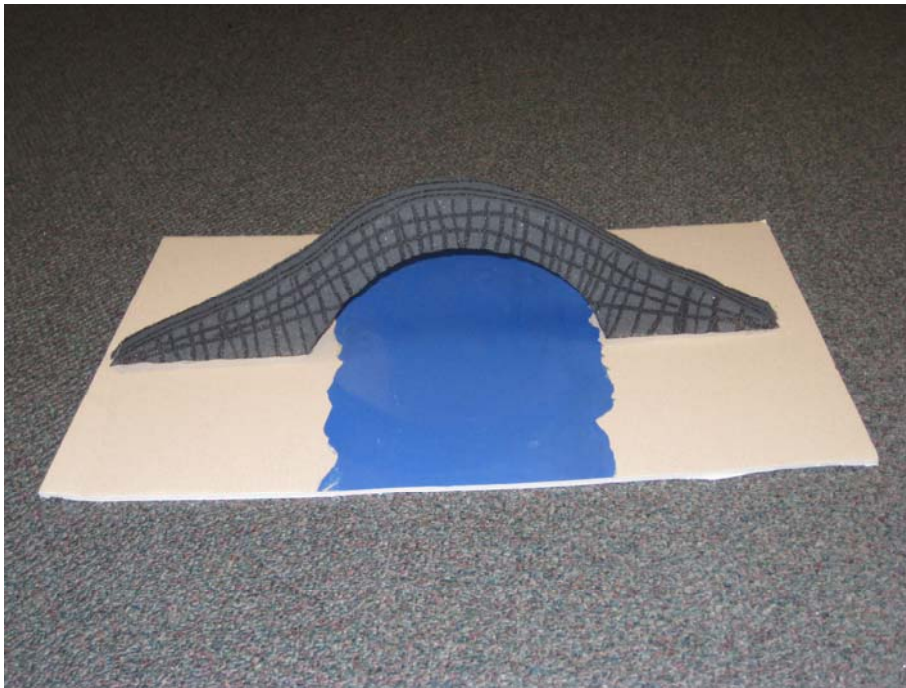
Writing: - Create a scroll with Chinese characters and their English translations.

Beliefs: - Make a poster teaching others to follow one of the “three ways” – Confucianism, Daoism, or Buddhism.

Other: - Lead a Chinese tea ceremony for the class.

- Make a poster showing ideas from Chinese medicine.

Sample Museum Project



Rainbow Bridge

Before the Rainbow Bridge, the bridges in China, always broke because they were made with many arches which washed away when there was a flood. This made a lot of boat traffic and many boats could not go under the bridges. The Rainbow Bridge was the first kind of bridge to span the river in a single arch. This is a stronger bridge and the flood waters can't break it. It is called the Rainbow Bridge because it was shaped like a rainbow. China made bridges so people could cross the rivers to learn about the people in other areas, trade with them, and make the cities grow.

Name _____

Topic _____

China Museum Project
Planning Sheet

Artifact Description (words or sketch):

Important Information for Paragraph (at least 5 details):

Materials and Sources:

Bibliography:

Timeline:

Friday, November 9th – Planning Sheet Due

Tuesday, November 13th – Turn in rough draft of paragraph

Friday, November 16th – Final Project Due

Silk Road Paragraph for Lesson #7

during the Ming Dynasty, a doctor named Li Shizhen wrote a book with 1,892 kinds of herbs that could be used for medicine.

The Silk Road was a group of roads that merchants traveled to trade between Asia and Europe during the Yuan Dynasty

The roads were very dangerous because they traveled over 4,000 miles through desert and mountains

camels were used because they were the only animals that could survive the trip.

however, the emperors of the Yuan Dynasty made sure that traders were safe from robbers

Many Chinese became rich by trading tea, silk, and porcelain.

Marco Polo and other Europeans also traveled the Silk Road and learned about noodles and other Chinese inventions.

The Silk Road was the first connection between China and Europe

Name _____

Museum Paragraph Editing Guide

Organization:

Editor Name _____

___ Has a topic sentence that states main idea

___ Has at least five detail sentences that all relate to main idea

___ Has concluding sentence that restates main idea

___ Order of paragraph is clear and makes sense

Something great!:

Something to improve:

Conventions:

Editor Name _____

___ Spelling is correct, especially “No Excuses” words

___ All sentences have a capital, period, subject, and predicate and make sense

___ Paragraph is indented

Something great!:

Something to improve:

Selections from the Confucian *Analects*

With commentary by R. Bodman.

© 2008

The translations that follow are those of James Legge, chosen in part because they are now free of copyright. Crucial Chinese terms are indicated in parentheses. The numbering of passages in the *Analects* follows Legge; not all translators number the passages identically.

1.1 The Master said, “To learn, and to practice what one has learnt from time to time, is it not pleasant?

‘When friends come from far places, is it not delightful?’

‘When no one takes note of him, yet he feels no resentment, is he not a man of complete virtue [junzi 君子]? *Comment: The gentleman or junzi devoted his lifetime to learning how to serve as a minister to a worthy ruler, yet he could not be certain of getting such a job. For Confucius, the gentleman should cultivate his character so that he would feel no resentment if not recognized or appointed to office. One strong point of Confucius’ philosophy is that it advises both those who are successful and those who are unsuccessful, showing them how to live happily in either public or private life. The gentleman not chosen for office has many consolations, including the pleasures of scholarship and friendship.*

1.2 The philosopher Yu said, “They are few who, being good sons [xiao 孝] and good younger brothers, are fond of offending against their superiors. There have been none, who, not liking to offend against their superiors, have been fond of stirring up rebellion.

‘The superior man [junzi 君子] pays attention to the roots. When the root is established, the Way [dao 道] grows from it. Being a good son [xiao 孝] and a good younger brother – are these not the root of all benevolent actions [ren 仁]? *Comment: The virtues learned in the family, of humble service to one’s older brothers and parents, are considered the basis for political relations when one is grown up. Someone who knows how to be a good son will also find it easy to become a good minister to a ruler. Hence the learning of filial piety [xiao] is the root of learning benevolence, which is the reason for the importance placed on moral self-cultivation. While filial piety may sound old-fashioned, Chinese today continue to socialize their children to be obedient, and there is virtually complete submission to the teacher in the schoolroom, something almost unimaginable in America. Similarly, Chinese expect to take care of their parents in their old age, and it is considered shameful if children send parents to an old-age home.*

2.1 The Master said, “He who exercises government by means of his virtue [de 德] may be compared to the north polar star, which keeps its place and all the stars turn towards it.’

Comment: The pole star is motionless at the center of the heavens. Chinese felt it had its own kind of “de” or power which attracted the other stars to circle around it, without it having to exercise compulsion. Hence the pole star is an appropriate metaphor for a ruler who rules by virtue rather than by physical force. While the ruler remains motionless at the center, his ministers circle around him, performing the necessary duties of state. The ideal ruler exemplifies “non-action.” His “de” or charisma attracts upright people, endowed with the knowledge of the rites, to carry out the duties of the state. In his palace on earth, the ruler sits facing south, with his back to the north, hence he is a symbolic pole-star. In addition, the stars that circle the pole star form a “clock” that can tell the hour of the night. Anyone who has watched the stars at night knows that those farther from the pole star must rotate faster, those closer to it rotate slower, while the pole star is itself motionless. Chinese felt

that time stopped at the pole star, and that anyone living there would be immortal, just as the ruler that models himself on the pole star is long-lived. Similarly, they also felt that time slows down or stops on the tops of mountains, where immortals dwell. The slow growth of trees on mountain tops would have been additional proof that time slows down there. When creating gardens with bonsai and artificial or miniature mountains, Chinese were attempting to bring this timeless world of the immortals into their backyards.

2.3 The Master said, “If the people be led by laws [zheng 政] and kept in line by punishments, they will try to avoid the punishment, but have no sense of shame.

“If they be led by virtue [de 德] and kept in line by the rules of propriety [li 礼], they will have a sense of shame, and moreover will reform themselves [格].”

Comment: Laws and punishments may create order, but in themselves they do not make people moral. Moreover, they require the use of force. The ruler’s charismatic virtue [de] combined with an education in propriety [li] would however make a people moral, so that the use of force would be unnecessary. The spirit of the li is yielding to others; when everyone performs his or her role in society and internalizes the spirit of li, then society should function without friction. This quotation would seem to be aimed at the proponents of Legalism.

2.4 The Master said, ‘At fifteen, I set my heart on learning. At thirty, I stood firm. At forty, I was clear-headed. At fifty, I knew the decrees of Heaven. At sixty, I could listen to them obediently. At seventy, I could follow what my heart desired, without overstepping the line.’ *Comment: For Confucius, the task of self-cultivation is long and gradual, but it slowly becomes more effortless and ends in delight.*

3.7 The Master said, ‘Gentlemen [junzi 君子] never compete. The nearest thing to it is perhaps archery. They bow and yield [rang 让] to each other when they go up, and they drink together when they come down. Even in their competition, they are gentlemen.’ *Comment: Presumably competition was discouraged because it would lead to discord, to children competing for their father’s favor, or to princes and ministers competing for the ruler’s favor, which could lead to disorder in the state. The prohibition on competition, however, means that there is no sanction in the Chinese tradition for an opposition party organized around a set of differing principles. Factionalism always existed at court, but it was focused on persons, not principles, and factional leaders were vulnerable to charges of treason. Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan to a greater or lesser extent have opposition parties, but there are none in mainland China today.*

4.8 The Master said, ‘If a man in the morning hear the Way [dao], he may die in the evening without regret.’ *Comment: Confucius defines “hearing the Way” as the ultimate fulfillment. Knowledge of the way is not merely useful for rulers and for gentlemen seeking to serve the state; it provides a transcendent experience as well. Other passages describe the pleasure of the wise and the tranquility and longevity of the benevolent [ren]; and Confucius’ reaction to hearing the Shao music, which left him stunned and unable or unwilling to eat meat for three months.*

4.18 The Master said, ‘In serving his parents, a son may remonstrate with them, but gently; when he sees that they do not incline to follow his advice, he shows an increased degree of reverence, but does not abandon his purpose; and should they punish him, he does not allow himself to feel resentment.’ *Comment: Just as a son may argue gently with his parents, so too a minister of state may argue with his king. But if he is ignored or punished, he is supposed to keep quiet. While Confucius suggests that kings may be criticized, he doesn’t go so far as to justify rebellion against them when they are in the wrong.*

4.25 The Master said, ‘Virtue [de 德] is not left to stand alone. He who practices it will have neighbors.’ *Comment: Virtue is seen as a force of attraction, like magnetism. The ruler who has it will naturally attract other virtuous people to him.*

6.21 The Master said, ‘The wise [zhizhe 智者] find pleasure in water; the virtuous [renzhe 仁者] find pleasure in mountains. The wise are active; the virtuous are tranquil. The wise are joyful; the virtuous are long-lived.’ *Comment: A hierarchy of values is suggested, in which knowledge or wisdom is not as good as virtue. Virtue is still and motionless; it exemplifies non-action, and it leads to a long life. Most Chinese gardens include both mountains and water, and hence symbolize two of the most important Confucian virtues. We could go farther to say that the mountain represents ren, or benevolence, the virtue of the ruler, while water represents knowledge and wisdom, the virtue of the educated man who serves the ruler. Hence the garden also represents the harmonious relationship between the ruler and the scholar-official in Confucian society.*

7.15 The Master said, ‘With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow – I still have joy in the midst of these things. Wealth and status acquired by immoral means are to me as a floating cloud.’ *Comment: Success in an official career is by no means guaranteed to the gentleman, but if he has cultivated himself properly, he can endure poverty and even enjoy it. Confucius makes a similar comment about his favorite disciple, Yan Hui in 6.9.*

8.7 The philosopher Tseng said, ‘The officer [shi 士] may not be without firmness and endurance. His burden is heavy and his road is long. Perfect virtue [ren 仁] is the burden [ren 任] which he considers it is his to sustain – is it not heavy? Only with death does his road end – is it not long?’ *Comment: The officer is the lowest rank of official; Confucius himself served in this position. Most commentators equate the officer with the gentleman. Here there is an apparent pun on the words “perfect virtue” and “burden”. Elsewhere, in 12.3, he defines “ren” by using yet another homophone meaning “cautious and slow in speech.” Confucius uses a similar technique to define “government” [zheng 政] relating it to the word “upright” or “correct” [zheng 正].*

8.13 The Master said, ‘Be of good faith; love learning; be prepared to die for the Way. Do not enter a state that is in danger; do not reside in one that is in rebellion. When the Way [dao 道] prevails in the empire, then show yourself; when the Way is absent, then stay hidden. When a country is well-governed, to be poor and lowly is shameful. When a country is badly governed, wealth and high status are things to be ashamed of.’ *Comment: Throughout Chinese history, the principal means of social mobility has been to acquire an education and to pursue public office. Degree-holding scholars were legally exempt from labor service and corporal punishment, and there were opportunities for corruption as well, as official salaries were low. While one could acquire wealth as a merchant, a merchant’s social status was low, and his fortune was never safe from officials or rulers who needed a loan. Hence, an official career was considered safest, even throughout most of the 20th century. Yet in many periods there were also well-known scholars who refused public office, thereby implicitly criticizing the current regime.*

9.16 The Master standing by a stream, said, ‘It passes on just like this, not ceasing day or night.’ *Comment: Flowing water often symbolizes the passing of time. If moving water is time in motion, then mountains represent time frozen.*

9.27 The Master said, ‘When the year becomes cold, then we know that the pine and the cypress are the last to lose their leaves.’ *Comment: During the warm season, the pines and cypresses are hidden*

by the foliage of deciduous trees, but when cold weather comes, other trees lose their leaves, and the pines and cypresses stand out. Amongst trees, they are constant and do not vary. Similarly, in ordinary times, men of virtue may be outshone by others. It is only when hardship comes and tests the resolve of ordinary men that men of virtue prove themselves by their constancy, by their ability to stand fast in the midst of hardship. The hardy pine and cypress are thus a metaphor for the virtuous man. The gardens of the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven, and the Confucian Temple in Beijing are full of old pines and cypress trees, some of them hundreds of years old.

12.2 Zhong Gong asked about perfect virtue [ren 仁]. The Master said, ‘It is, when away from home, to behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest; to treat the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others as you would not wish done to yourself; then there will be no resentment against you in the country, or in the family.’ Zhong Gong said, ‘Though I am not quick-minded, I will make it my business to practice this lesson.’ *Comment: Here Confucius uses the metaphor of ritual to explain his political philosophy. The humility and reverence used in receiving important guests or serving the ancestors is what the scholar official should employ in dealing with ordinary people. Note that Confucius embraces the negative form of the Golden Rule.*

12.17 Ji Kang asked Confucius about government [zheng 政]. Confucius replied, ‘To govern means to make correct [zheng 正]. If you lead on the people with correctness, who will dare not to be correct?’ *Comment: Confucius is employing a play on words: the word for government is a homophone for another word meaning “to correct” or “to be upright.” Another interpretation of this line would be: ‘If you lead the people by being upright yourself, then who would dare not to be upright?’ This interpretation would emphasize the importance of the ruler serving as a model for the people. In American political mythology, we have George Washington who modeled the virtue of telling the truth, and Abraham Lincoln who was the model of honesty, as well as representing the poor boy who makes good by working hard.*

12.22 Fan Chi asked about benevolence [ren 仁]. The Master said, ‘It consists in loving people.’ He asked about knowledge [zhi 智]. The Master said, ‘It consists in knowing people.’

Fan Chi did not immediately understand.

The Master said, ‘Employ the straight and put aside the crooked; in this way the crooked can be made straight.’

Fan Chi went out, and seeing Zixia, he said to him, ‘A little while ago, I had an interview with our Master, and asked him about knowledge [zhi 智]. He said, ‘Employ the straight, and put aside the crooked; in this way, the crooked will be made straight.’ What did he mean?’

Zixia said, ‘Truly rich is this saying!’

‘When Shun ruled the world, he selected from among all the people, and employed Gaoyao, and those who lacked virtue [ren 仁] went far away. When Tang ruled the world he selected from among all the people, and employed Yi Yin, and those who lacked virtue went far away.’ *Comment: The principal role of the ruler is to select good ministers of state to assist him. When Confucius says that benevolence consists in knowing people, he means knowing whether they are fit to be appointed to office. If the ruler picks men of virtue, as did the sage-kings Shun and Tang, then everyone else in society will imitate them, and those lacking in virtue will go far away. While contemporary Americans may be skeptical about the force of good models, we rarely doubt the fact that people will copy bad models. If the people see senators and congressmen getting away with breaking the law, they will follow suit. Educated men in traditional China could not claim kinship ties with their rulers and so hoped that their learning, the most visible sign of their virtue, would entitle them to recognition and employment.*

15.4 The Master said, “To rule without action [wu-wei 无为], was not Shun the one? What did he do? He merely made himself reverent and took his seat facing due south.’ *Comment: Shun was one of the legendary sage-kings of antiquity. He has so much virtue within him that he had to take no other actions as a ruler than to sit on his throne, facing south, as Chinese rulers do. Shun’s virtue attracted everyone else to serve him. The ideal of the ruler who rules by ‘non-action’ is also developed by the Daoist philosopher Laozi.*

15.11 The Master said, ‘One who takes no thought about distant problems will find sorrow close at hand.’ *Comment: By taking care of problems when they are still small and far away, the ruler saves himself much effort and avoids bigger problems later. This is one kind of ‘non-action.’*

17.25 The Master said, ‘Of all people, it is the women and servants of one’s own household that are the most difficult to take care of. If you get friendly with them, then they are no longer humble. If you keep your distance from them, they are discontented.’ *Comments: This is one of Confucius’ few remarks on women and would appear to reveal a certain prejudice against them. On the other hand, Book 17 of the Analects is thought to be later in composition than others and so may not reflect Confucius’ own view, but rather those of later Confucians. Some of the most anti-feminist statements may be found in the Book of Rites.*

References:

Brooks, E. Bruce and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and his Successors*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

Fingarette, Herbert, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*

Confucius, *The Analects (Lun yu)*, translated with an introduction by D.C. Lau, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1979.

Confucius, *The Analects of Confucius*, translated and annotated by Arthur Waley, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938; reprinted by Vintage Books, New York,

Confucius, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning & The Doctrine of the Mean*, translated with critical and exegetical notes, prolegomena, copious indices, and a dictionary of all characters, by James Legge, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893 as volume 1 of “The Chinese Classics” series; reprinted by Dover Publications in 1971.

DeBary, William Theodore, *The Trouble With Confucianism*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Holzman, Donald, “Confucius and Ancient Chinese Literary Criticism” in Adele Rickett, ed., *Chinese Theories of Literature from Confucius to Liang Ch’i-cha’ao*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Waley, Arthur, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*

Background Information for Teachers

by Richard Bodman

What achievements of ancient China affect our lives today?

One way to answer this would be to list some of China's inventions and technological achievements. The three discoveries listed by Francis Bacon in his *Novum Organum* as changing the world, i.e. printing, gunpowder, and the magnet are all Chinese in origin. The manufacture of tea and porcelain were important Chinese exports to the world. For a very detailed list of China's scientific and technological achievements, see the article by Joseph Needham, "Science and China's Influence on the World," in Raymond Dawson, ed., *The Legacy of China*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 234-308.

But we could also list: our own civil service system, based on examinations, which was inspired by the Chinese example. Chinese coolie labor was important in completing our transcontinental railway, and in exploiting the California gold fields. Color woodblock prints and the comic book started in China and Japan. Traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese martial arts are gaining popularity in our country. Zen Buddhism, imported to the U.S. via Japan in the 1950s and 60s, had its origin in China. We have an increasing number of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Vietnamese in our country, for all of whom Confucianism was important.

Major accomplishments of the Qin, Han, Tang and Song dynasties: Here follows my own impressionistic list of accomplishments, with a few extra dynasties added for good measure.

Qin: accomplished the unification of China, and the standardization of weights, measures, chariot axles, and the writing system; the abolition of feudalism and the institution of a bureaucratic administration based on laws; the building of the Great Wall; the distribution of land to the peasants.

Han: expanded the Chinese empire into Central Asia, Korea, and Vietnam; Chinese silk starts to be traded along the Silk Route through Central Asia to India, the Near East and the Roman Empire. A modified Confucianism is made the state ideology, which lasts until the end of the imperial era in 1911. Paper is invented, providing a new medium for writing, though not entirely replacing books written on silk or on bamboo strips.

Sui [589-618] Completion of the Grand Canal, linking north and south China, bringing tax grain from the south for use by armies on the northern frontier and in the capital city. The Sui reunifies China after a 300+ period of division and reestablishes Chinese dominance in the Korean peninsula.

Tang: Regular civil service examinations are established. Woodblock printing, in which an entire page of text is carved from a wooden block, begins. The first mechanical clocks are run by water power. Overland trade via the Silk Road resumes. Buddhism reaches a high point in China; Ch'an or Zen Buddhism becomes popular. Nestorian Christians and Jews are also present. The Tang capital of Chang'an is the largest city in the world. Japan starts to send regular embassies, and cultural exchange reaches a high point. A Chinese princess is married to the King of Tibet.

Song: This dynasty witnessed the perfection of water-powered and gear-driven astronomical clocks. The scientist and engineer Shen Gua records the use of moveable type printing, using type made of fired clay. Moveable type printing does not replace printing with woodblocks, however, as the labor for carving woodblocks is cheap, and the blocks can be conserved for printing later editions, while moveable type needs to be broken up and reused. Shen Gua also notes that a magnetized needle points "to the south"; the compass is used in navigation. The Silk Road is cut off, but Chinese ships now regularly reach Southeast Asia. Gunpowder is used in rockets, fire-lances [early flamethrowers] and possibly in cannon in the war against the Mongols. Iron and steel technology develops rapidly. Tea becomes a national drink. Porcelain manufacture reaches a high point. Chinese invent drilling bits to drill deep into salt formations and make salt from brine. Natural gas and coal are also exploited. A new strain of early-ripening rice allows the population to expand. Neo-Confucianism is established as the new orthodoxy. Urbanization increases; cities become large commercial centers.

Yuan: Invention of paper currency. Central Asian trade route reopened. Mongol armies reach far west to Russia and the Mediterranean. Catholic missionaries reach the Mongol Court; Marco Polo reaches China. Tibetan style Buddhism is adopted at court. The Black Death spreads along trade routes. Chinese opera starts to develop.

Ming: The overland silk route is once again cut off. The imperial fleet under Zheng He makes a series of five expeditions from China to South East Asia, India, and the east coast of Africa, but China does not become a colonial power. The Great Wall is rebuilt in its current location, from Shanhaiguan on the coast near Beijing to Yumenguan in western Gansu. Catholic missionaries St. Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci reach China. Popular novels are written in the vernacular tongue, including *The Journey to the West [Xiyouji]* and *The Golden Lotus [Jinpingmei]*. An imperial encyclopedia, the *Yongle dadian*, is compiled in 11,000 volumes. A major work on medicinal herbs, *The Pencao Gangmu*, is completed by Li Shizhen in 1587. Silver, tobacco, and corn from the New World all reach China.

Qing. The Qing empire incorporates Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, Taiwan, and parts of Turkestan into the empire. Korea and Vietnam are largely independent but acknowledge Chinese “suzerainty” in exchange for trade. The Russian, Spanish, and British empires now begin to encroach on China’s borders, and China tries to restrict foreign contacts and trade to a few locations on the frontiers. A rapid postal system is instituted, to speed up the distribution of imperial edicts and the collection of reports from the provinces. A private banking system begins to develop from a center in Shanxi. Chinese tea becomes extremely popular in Europe and its colonies and causes a monetary crisis, as China accepts only silver in exchange. Ultimately, the British and Americans discover that China will pay for opium. The opium habit in turn weakens China but also spreads to the west. China’s population continues to expand with the use of new world crops such as peanuts, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and corn. Chinese settlers expand beyond the Great Wall into Inner Mongolia and Manchuria and across the straits into Taiwan. The Qing court prints a major encyclopedia, the *Gujin tushu jicheng* [using moveable type] in 5000 volumes in 1728. It further compiles a major hand-written encyclopedia, the *Siku quanshu*, in 36,000 volumes by the end of the 18th century. The Chinese vernacular novel reaches a high point with the appearance of Cao Xueqin’s *Honglou meng [Dream of the Red Chamber]* in 1792. The Qing court builds a miniature Versailles palace, complete with fountains, on the outskirts of Beijing.