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Confucian Teachings
Asian Lesson Plan #1

Lesson Plan: Students will read, discuss and analyze Books One and Two of *The Analects* and will write about the values they find inherent in the writing. They will then journal on how these values do or do not reflect their own beliefs, discuss the values as a class, and then write similarly pithy instructions on how they believe others should behave. They will examine the “aphoristic fragments” for values.

Level/Class: Ninth grade students of above-average ability who are taking year-long Ninth Grade English classes.

Time: This lesson should take one 70 minute period.

Objectives: The students will learn about Confucius and his teachings, to contextualize the wisdom inherent in *The Analects*. They will think deeply about what the different messages mean, and determine how they do or don’t correlate with their own values. The students will journal on their own beliefs, and write aphorisms or short anecdotes which best demonstrate what they believe.

Materials Needed:

Handouts—introduction to Confucius, Books One and Two of *The Analects*
Journal
Pen

Assessment:

The students will be formally graded on the aphorisms that they write and turn in (completeness, clarity of the value they’re trying to express, word choice), and will also be informally assessed on the strength of their contributions to the class discussion.

Procedure:

- A. Ask students what they know about Confucius, or what they think he might have said.
- B. Brainstorm on board what students think of when they think of Confucius.
- C. Read introduction to Confucius together.
- D. Cross out any ideas on board which don’t apply to Confucius.
- E. Read a few of *The Analects* together, ask students what they think.
- F. Together, read one aphorism, and ask the students what values they think it endorses.
- G. When confident that the students have the idea of how to tease out a “value,” have students paraphrase the main idea in their journals, and compare paraphrases. (Be prepared for many different answers, or contradictory answers.)
- H. Give students time to read the rest of *The Analects* by themselves.

I. Once students have read, give class time to discuss and give reactions to what they've read.

J. Students write in journals their reactions to the ideas—whether agreeing or disagreeing, thoughts on the language and brevity, etc.

K. Students choose three aphorisms which appealed to them or made them think.

L. Students write corollary aphorisms which show THEIR ideas.

M. Students exchange aphorisms and see if their classmates can discern which values they are trying to convey.

References:

Ivanhoe, Philip J., and Bryan Van Norden. "Confucius: 'The Analects.'" Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy. 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Hackett Company, 2001. 1-7.