Three Paths to Order

Ideas that shaped government and daily life in ancient China

SS24.7.13a "Compare and contrast the philosophies of Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism and explain how they influenced dynastic cycles, politics, and society in China."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way each philosophy proposed keeping order, then circle two details showing how these ideas shaped rulers or dynastic change.

How Should a Dynasty Rule?

1. When a Chinese dynasty grew weak, people might blame rulers for disorder and support a new family on the throne. This repeating rise and fall is called a dynastic cycle. Thinkers offered different ways to keep order. Confucianism taught that leaders should set a moral example and care for their people. Children should respect parents, and officials should act with honesty. During the Han dynasty, rulers promoted Confucian learning to train officials. A ruler who ignored duties could lose public trust, making rebellion more likely.

2. Daoism offered a different answer. A Daoist might see a government packed with rules as part of the problem. Daoism urged people to live in harmony with the Dao, or the natural way, and value simplicity. Its thinkers often favored rulers who interfered less in everyday life. Unlike Confucianism, which stressed social duties and learning, Daoism questioned whether strict plans could produce peace. These ideas influenced Chinese art, religious practices, and views of nature. In troubled times, they also offered a way to question rulers who tried to control every choice.

3. Legalism took another path. It argued that clear laws, rewards, and harsh punishments, not a ruler's kindness, would keep order. Qin rulers used Legalist policies to strengthen the state and unite China in 221 BCE. Their strict rule and heavy demands helped fuel resistance; the Qin dynasty fell soon after its first emperor died. Han rulers kept a strong government and written laws but also promoted Confucian values. Across dynastic cycles, rulers could borrow different ideas: strict control might build power, while moral leadership could help a dynasty keep support.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Confucianism and Daoism differ in what they wanted rulers to do?

2. How did Legalism and Daoism differ in their views of rules and government control?

3. Compare Qin and Han approaches to governing. How does the passage connect each approach to a dynasty's ability to last?

4. How could Confucianism and Daoism each shape people's lives outside government?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a new dynasty after people have turned against its rulers. In four sentences, propose actions drawn from at least two philosophies, compare what each could do for government or society, and explain how your plan might help the dynasty avoid another fall.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 7 · SS24.7.13a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way each philosophy proposed keeping order, then circle two details showing how these ideas shaped rulers or dynastic change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Confucianism and Daoism differ in what they wanted rulers to do?	**Confucianism wanted rulers to set a moral example and care for people. Daoism often favored rulers who interfered less in everyday life.**
2	How did Legalism and Daoism differ in their views of rules and government control?	**Legalism relied on clear laws, rewards, and harsh punishments. Daoism questioned too many rules and favored less interference.**
3	Compare Qin and Han approaches to governing. How does the passage connect each approach to a dynasty's ability to last?	**Qin rulers used Legalist policies, but their strict rule and heavy demands helped fuel resistance before the dynasty fell. Han rulers kept laws and a strong government while promoting Confucian values that could help a ruler keep support.**
4	How could Confucianism and Daoism each shape people's lives outside government?	**Confucianism taught children to respect parents and people to fulfill social duties. Daoism encouraged simplicity and shaped art, religious practices, and views of nature.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ask rulers to follow Confucian duties by caring for people and setting an honest example. I would keep clear laws, as Legalists favored, but avoid the heavy demands that helped turn people against the Qin. I would also follow Daoist advice to interfere less with ordinary village life. Together, these choices could keep order while earning public trust, making rebellion and another dynastic change less likely.

Accept different plans that accurately compare at least two philosophies and connect proposed actions to government or society and the risk of dynastic change.