Order and Example

Confucian ethics and the continuity of Chinese government

AWH.C.8.5 "Examine significant aspects of Confucian philosophy and its role in the continuity of Chinese civilization, focusing on the life and teachings of Confucius, the significance of individual ethics, and maintenance of order, hierarchy..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two links between personal conduct and public order, circle two ways Confucian teachings endured across dynasties, and number two different effects the teachings could have on a ruler's power.

How Conduct Became a Guide to Government

1. In the fifth century BCE, the state of Lu was part of a China divided among rival rulers. Confucius, a teacher from Lu, traveled to advise leaders about governing wisely. He did not command an army or found an empire. Instead, he argued that a ruler's conduct shaped the conduct of others. After his death, students and later followers preserved conversations attributed to him in the Analects. These sayings ask what makes a person worthy of trust, not simply how to win a contest for power. His ideas offered a response to political disorder: begin with the behavior of people who hold responsibility.

2. Confucius taught that ren, often translated as humaneness, should guide how people treat one another. Li, proper conduct in rituals and everyday life, gave that concern a visible form. A child might show respect to a parent, while a parent should care for the child. These duties were not identical: age and position shaped each person's responsibilities. Confucius also expected rulers to set a moral example and officials to advise them honestly. If leaders relied only on threats and punishment, people might obey without learning to act rightly. Personal ethics thus connected households to public order.

3. During the Han dynasty, rulers supported study of Confucian texts to train officials and strengthen the authority of the state. In later centuries, civil service examinations helped make those texts central to education and government. Dynasties changed, but shared teachings about family duty, learned officials, and virtuous leadership remained influential. This continuity had costs: hierarchical expectations could restrict opportunities, and women were largely excluded from official posts. Confucian ideals could justify a ruler's power, yet they also gave advisers a standard for criticizing a ruler who failed to care for the people. The tradition supported order without making every ruler's actions right.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Confucius's work as a teacher offer a response to the political disorder of his time?

2. Why did Confucius expect a ruler's moral example to do more than threats and punishment?

3. How did government practices help Confucian teachings remain influential after dynasties changed?

4. How could Confucian teachings both strengthen a ruler's authority and give officials a reason to criticize that ruler?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A student council must set rules for sharing a crowded study room. Write 5 or 6 sentences proposing a Confucian-inspired approach: give leaders and members a duty, explain how example and proper conduct could keep order, and identify one risk of treating roles as fixed.

ANSWER KEY

Order and Example

HIGH SCHOOL · AWH.C.8.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two links between personal conduct and public order, circle two ways Confucian teachings endured across dynasties, and number two different effects the teachings could have on a ruler's power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Confucius's work as a teacher offer a response to the political disorder of his time?	**He advised leaders that their own conduct could influence others, making responsible behavior a starting point for restoring order.**
2	Why did Confucius expect a ruler's moral example to do more than threats and punishment?	**Example could teach people to act rightly, while threats might produce obedience without changing their conduct.**
3	How did government practices help Confucian teachings remain influential after dynasties changed?	**Han rulers supported study of the texts to train officials, and later civil service examinations kept the texts central to education and government.**
4	How could Confucian teachings both strengthen a ruler's authority and give officials a reason to criticize that ruler?	**The teachings supported rule by a virtuous leader, but they also expected leaders to care for the people. Officials could use that expectation to criticize a ruler who failed to do so.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Council leaders should sometimes take the least popular study times to show that they follow the rules too. Members should sign up for a time and leave the room ready for the next group. Leaders can explain the schedule calmly instead of starting with threats. Their example may make members more willing to respect the plan. However, fixed roles could silence younger students who notice problems. The council should invite their criticism and change rules that are unfair.

Accept other accurate links between individual ethics, hierarchy, political authority, and continuity. For the open task, look for distinct duties, an explanation of how conduct supports order, and a plausible concern about fixed roles.