

## Speed Reading 2: Confucius

The teachings of Confucius were very important for the Chinese people. Confucius was not like Jesus Christ or Mohammed. He did not bring the words of God to the people. He was just a very clever teacher. Most of his teaching was about life in this world.

His real name was K'ung Fu-tzu. He was called Confucius by foreigners because they could not easily say his Chinese name. He was born five hundred and fifty years before Christ. His family was important but they were poor. He loved history and music, and for most of his life he was a teacher. He travelled from one place to another in China. He had many students. Some of them wrote down his teachings so that we can still read them today. After he died his teachings became more famous. Many Chinese kings followed his teachings. They built temples and called him a god. His birthday was a holiday for the Chinese people.

For the Chinese, people were not the most important things in the world. They were only a part of the world around them. They had to learn to live in the world in their correct place. When a man could do this, he could become happy and clever. Confucius taught people to live in the world. Confucius taught people to live with each other. A leader and his people must learn to live with each other. A husband and his wife, a father and his son, an older brother and a younger brother, all must learn to live with each other. Confucius taught people about this. A husband must do the correct things. His wife must follow him. The leader of a country must be kind. His people must follow him and not fight against him. If every person does the correct thing, then the country will be quiet and people will be happy. In the teachings of Confucius, the family was very important. Everybody in the family must know his correct place. Because of Confucius the family was a very important part of Chinese life. China became like a big family. The king was the father and his people were his children.

The teachings of Confucius were not new, but Confucius was the first person to bring all these ideas together for people to learn and follow. For Confucius, if a man was bad, he was not born bad. He was bad because he did not live correctly in the world. The leader of a country was a very important man in the teachings of Confucius. If the leader of the country was a good man, the people in that country would also be good. When a leader is bad, then the country will not be a happy place. Someone asked Confucius, 'What does a country need?' Confucius answered, 'Enough food, a good army, and a good leader.' The person then asked, 'Which one is the most important?' Confucius answered, 'An army is not very important. All men must die, so food is not the most important, but if the leader of the country is not good, then everything will be bad.'

When Confucius died, he was over seventy years old. Although he died more than two thousand years ago, many people still try to follow his ideas.

(550 words)

Write your time in the box and then answer the questions on the next page. Once you start answering the questions DO NOT look back at this page.

## QUESTIONS: Confucius

1. The teachings of Confucius...
  - (a) came from God.
  - (b) were about life after death.
  - (c) were about God.
  - (d) were about this world.
2. For most of his life Confucius...
  - (a) worked for the king.
  - (b) lived in one place.
  - (c) sold things.
  - (d) was a teacher.
3. We know the teachings of Confucius because...
  - (a) his students wrote them.
  - (b) people told them to each other.
  - (c) they were made into songs.
  - (d) Confucius is still living.
4. The teachings of Confucius were most famous...
  - (a) when he was young.
  - (b) after he died.
  - (c) while he worked for the king.
  - (d) when he was still a teacher.
5. Because many people followed Confucius's teachings...
  - (a) he became the leader of China.
  - (b) he traveled to many foreign countries.
  - (c) his birthday was a holiday.
  - (d) he wrote many books.
6. A man could become happy and clever when...
  - (a) he knew his place in the world.
  - (b) he did not have a family.
  - (c) he could be free of the world.
  - (d) he was better than other people.
7. In a family everyone must...
  - (a) try to live by himself.
  - (b) know his correct place.
  - (c) follow his own ideas.
  - (d) lead the others.
8. The teachings of Confucius...
  - (a) were not understood by many people.
  - (b) started many wars.
  - (c) had many new ideas.
  - (d) brought together many old ideas.
9. The most important thing in any country was...
  - (a) the army.
  - (b) the leader.
  - (c) the church.
  - (d) the schools.
10. Confucius died when...
  - (a) he was still young.
  - (b) he was about forty years old.
  - (c) he was about fifty years old.
  - (d) he was more than fifty years old.