**WHAT CONFUCIANISM MEANT FOR CHINA ACTIVITY 49**

**CAUSES & CONSEQUENCE**

Confucius was China’s most influential and respected philosopher. He lived between 551BC and 479BC. He examined the ideas of right and wrong and was interested in how people related to one another. His concern for the Chinese living in densely populated cities was very real. His ideas, Confucianism, explained acceptable social behavior in all situations. Confucianism set up strict guidelines for proper behavior between people.

The most basic concept in Confucian philosophy us the idea of *jen*. Confucius defined *jen* as the human quality that leads people to live harmoniously in society. The idea of *jen* is partly to the idea of sympathy with other people and partly the idea of, “That which you do not want done to you, do not do to others,” as Confucius said. There is no word in English that quite has the same meaning.

Confucius believed that the family was very important. In families, people learned how to act in society. The Chinese state was considered to be a large family with the emperor as father.

In the two thousand years that Confucianism dominated Chinese thought, its basic principles were adapted to meet new challenges. Disciples of Confucianism often developed new ideas to offset other religious or philosophical ideas that challenged the basic system of Confucian thought. During the Tang Dynasty, for instance, Confucian thought was challenged by beliefs of Chinese Buddhists and Daoists. Eventually Confucianism incorporated many Daoist and Buddhist ideas.

Confucian thought and its system of ethical relationships preserved order and structure in Chinese society for over two thousand years. These Chinese also used Confucianism to absorb their conquerors into the Chinese way of life.

Confucian thought, however, seriously slowed the development of Chinese scholarship as well as economic development. Because the Chinese adhered so rigidly to the ideas of Confucianism, they often discarded foreign ideas. As a result, they did not readily adopt ideas in astronomy, mathematic and medicine from the Middle East. Neither did they learn how to use animal labor for crop cultivation.

**COMPREHENSION: Explaining Written Information**

1. Explain what Confucians mean when they speak of *jen*.

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1. How did Confucius view family? How was China compared to a family?

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**APPLICATION Inferring Information**

1. Why did Confucius create his system of ethics and relationships?

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1. How did Confucianism aid the Chinese in conquering their conquerors?

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1. What were the advantages of the Confucian system for China?

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1. How did Confucianism prove to be a disadvantage for the Chinese?

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