

**Follow-up Discussion**

- Generally speaking, what elements do Western theologians believe must be present in a religion? Should religions be judged by Western standards?
- How does Taoism resemble Confucianism? Compare and contrast the two religious traditions.
- Based upon his teachings, do you think Confucius would be a modern-era advocate of democracy?
- Compare and contrast the role and treatment of the elderly in Chinese society with that of the United States.
- Why was Confucius so interested in developing social and interpersonal harmony in human relationships?
- How are Confucianism and Taoism relevant to China today?

**Follow-up Activities**

- Organize a debate among three groups about whether Confucianism is a religion, a philosophy or a mixture of both.
- Have each student develop a chart based on the Confucian Five Relationships that clearly graphs the major relationships already formed in their own lives. Have each chart depict the mutual responsibilities and reciprocation inherent in each relationship.
- Have students research the Taoist herbal and medical practices that have influenced the medical systems of other countries. Then, via diagrams and charts, have the students present the principles of acupuncture.
- Have students research and present to the class an exercise lesson using the slow exercise principles of Tai Chi.
- After researching the art of Feng Shui, have students apply its principles to their own home or bedroom. Have them redesign one of their rooms and report by diagram and commentary. Or, as a class project, apply the art of Feng Shui to the classroom and redesign the learning environment.

**Internet Resources**

[www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Taichi/taoism.html](http://www.chebucto.ns.ca/Philosophy/Taichi/taoism.html)

Taoism and the Philosophy of Tai Chi Chuan — Provides a complete review of Taoism, both as a philosophy and as a religion, as well as links to other sites and print resources.

[www.fengshui.co.nz/fengshui.htm](http://www.fengshui.co.nz/fengshui.htm)

Feng Shui: The Ancient Art of Placement — The Feng Shui Institute of New Zealand explains the concept and practices of Feng Shui.

[www.friesian.com/confuci.htm#text-8](http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm#text-8)

Confucius — Offers an excellent overview of Confucianism and biographical information on Confucius with a clear definition of the major principles of the religion.

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[www.religioustolerance.org/](http://www.religioustolerance.org/)

Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance — Promotes religious tolerance through education; this site has profiles of many religions, points out examples of intolerance and addresses "hot" current topics in religion. Links from the home page include information about Confucianism and Taoism.

**Suggested Print Resources**

- Cleary, Thomas. *The Essential Tao*. Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1998.
- Clooney, Francis X. *Confucianism*. Facts on File, 1993.
- Confucius. *The Wisdom of Confucius*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1996.
- Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Poob*. Penguin, 1987.
- Robinet, Isabelle. *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Wong, Evan. *Teachings of the Tao*. Boston: Shambhala, 1997.

**TEACHER'S GUIDE:**

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# CONFUCIANISM & TAOISM

The study of world religion is the examination of the specific beliefs, customs and traditions of a particular religion as well as its impact on world culture and history. The *Religions of the World* video series and its accompanying Teacher's Guides are designed to supplement World Cultures and History curriculum. These teaching aids are meant to invite classroom study and dialogue and challenge students to make connections between the past and the present. Questions and insights are likely to develop and will reveal striking similarities and vast differences among the world's major religions as well as the unique perspective of its many individual cultures.

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## Historical Overview

Throughout history and into the present, the religious traditions of Confucianism and Taoism have influenced the lives of billions of people in China and around the world. Confucianism shapes the spiritual and ethical considerations of its followers, while Taoism stresses a harmony with nature and with the life force within one's self. While the major religions of the Western world affirm a belief in a single god, these two spiritual movements are also philosophies of life focusing inward on human behavior and thought and providing guidance for maintaining relationships in Chinese society.

## Time Line

**551 B.C.E.** — Kong Qui is born in China and is later known to the Western world as Confucius.

**520 B.C.E.** — Lao Tzu, legendary founder of Taoism is believed to have died.

**479 B.C.E.** — Confucius dies.

**286 B.C.E.** — Chuang Tzu, a major influence in the development of Taoism, dies.

**213 B.C.E.** — Ch'in emperors in China order all Confucian books destroyed.

**206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.** — China undergoes major societal changes during the reign of the Han dynasty. It becomes Humanist with an emphasis on philosophy, history, literature and politics.

**124 B.C.E.** — The Han emperors in China restore Confucianism in the Imperial University and educate all Imperial officials in the teachings of Confucius.

**2nd Century B.C.E.** — The earliest writings of Lao Tzu found to date have been determined to come from this period.

**618–906 C.E.** — The Tang Dynasty makes the teachings of Confucius the state philosophy of China.

**12th Century C.E.** — Neo-Confucianism develops in China.

**16th Century C.E.** — Catholic missionaries visit China.

**1949–1972 C.E.** — Communists attempt to eradicate Confucianism and Taoism in China. Efforts generally fail.

## Vocabulary

**Kong Qiu** — The Chinese name for Confucius. Later changes to Kong Fuzi or Master Kong. Confucius is the European translation of this name.

**Analects** — The records of Confucius' conversations with his disciples on his teachings.

**Yin and Yang** — The two cosmic creative principles that control all change in the universe.

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**Five Relationships** — One of the best known concepts of Confucianism. They are between ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend to friend; all have mutual and reciprocal responsibilities to each other.

**Jen** — The virtue of love and affection present in all positive human relationships.

**Li** — The principle of proper conduct between individuals who form relationships, based upon profound love.

**Lijiao** — This is the ritualistic portion of Confucianism as practiced in China as a religion in action.

**Tao Te Ching** — The central text of Taoism.

**Tao** — Chinese for “the way.” Tao is the source for all things in existence. It is a model for human action and the natural way of behavior.

**Lao Tzu** — The primary founder of Taoism.

**Chuang Tzu** — Another important contributor and founder of Taoism.

**Laozi & Zhuangzi** — The two major texts of Taoism that explain model human behavior and the nature of the universe.

**Wu Wei** — The principle of non-action. It is the proper outlook on life in order to achieve Tao.

**Chi** — Chinese for life force, the breath of life within each living person.

**Alchemy** — The miraculous conversions of base materials to objects of great value. To make something of the extraordinary from the ordinary.

**Zhuan** — The Taoist ability to sit and forget the world in order to achieve wisdom of the universe and supreme consciousness.

**Feng Shui** — The process of ridding the body of toxic energy to balance the chi through the proper placement of furniture and objects in one's total environment.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- Have students develop a list of essential elements they believe must be present for a belief to be considered a religion. Discuss how their list relates to Confucianism and Taoism.
- Yin and yang are fundamental concepts in Chinese philosophy. Discuss with students their understanding of yin and yang, and generate a list of opposing concepts of a similar nature.
- Many students will have heard of Confucius. Have students brainstorm some of the ideas and concepts they associate with that name. Graph or map their responses on the board. Then after viewing the video, compare their initial answers with those provided in the program.

## Focus Questions

1. What is the focus of these traditional Chinese religions? How do they differ from major Western religions?
2. What was China's society and religion like before Confucius became so influential in its culture?
3. What do Confucius' ideas of virtue and propriety mean for human conduct?
4. What are the Analects? Why are they important to Confucianism?
5. What are yin and yang?
6. Why were the Confucian ideals of the Classical Writings inscribed in stone after 124 B.C.E.?
7. What does it mean to find the ultimate in the relative?
8. What are the five relationships?
9. What role do rituals play in Confucianism?
10. What does rational morality mean in Confucianism?
11. How can one form harmonious and responsible relationships with other human beings?
12. How do the concepts of yin and yang help explain and apply to the two main Chinese religious traditions of Taoism and Confucianism?
13. Why do Taoists generally retreat from the world into the inner life of meditation?
14. What are the names of two major texts of Taoism?
15. What is Tao?
16. According to Taoism, by what methods can one discover Tao?
17. What is the most important practical lesson of Taoist philosophy?
18. How does Taoism relate to nature? What role does nature play in Taoism?
19. Do Taoists believe in the immortality of the soul? If so, how is this belief explained?
20. What is a holistic medical system? How can Taoist medical practices be considered holistic?
21. What are the three principles of life in Taoism?
22. What role does meditation play in Taoism? What is the goal of Taoist meditation?
23. What are the five basic elements of Taoist cosmology? How do they contribute to the Taoist understanding of the universe?
24. What is the central religious message of Taoism to the Chinese?