

**SELECTION FROM THE CONFUCIAN ANALECTS:
ON FILIAL PIETY**

Introduction

Confucius (the Latinized version of Kong Fuzi, “master Kong”) or, to call him by his proper name, Kong Qiu (551-479 BCE) lived during the time when the Zhou kingdom had disintegrated into many de facto independent feudal states which were subject to the Zhou kings only in theory. Confucius was a man of the small feudal state of Lu. Like many other men of the educated elite class of the Eastern Zhou, Confucius traveled among the states, offering his services as a political advisor and official to feudal rulers and taking on students whom he would teach for a fee. Confucius had an unsuccessful career as a petty bureaucrat, but a highly successful one as a teacher. A couple of generations after his death, first- and second-generation students gathered accounts of Confucius’ teachings together. These anecdotes and records of short conversations go under the English title of the *Analects*.

Selected Document Excerpt with Questions

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*Selection from the Confucian Analects:
On Filial Piety*

1:11 The Master said, “When a person’s father is alive, observe his intentions. After his father is no more, observe his actions. If for three years he does not change his father’s ways, he is worthy to be called filial.”

Questions:

1. As Confucius sees it, what qualities might there be in the ideal relationship between a man and his son?
2. What effect would this definition of filial piety have on your life, if you were to follow it? What effect do you think it would have had on the lives of men in imperial China?