Lesson 2

China's Ancient Philosophies

MAIN IDEAS

Belief Systems Legalists believed that the government must control people through strict laws.

Belief Systems Confucius taught that order would return to China if society was organized around five relationships.

Belief Systems The followers of Daoism taught that people could find virtue by living in harmony with nature.

Legalism

ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Legalism suggest that society be controlled?

Peace Through Ideas

- In Time of the Warring States, warlords and kings fought for land
- Scholars developed three ways of thinking to bring peace to land
   - Legalism, Confucianism, Daoism
   - each was a **philosophy**—study of basic truths, ideas about universe
- **Legalism**—rulers should use legal system to force people to obey laws
   - believers felt strong government would end China's disorder

Strict Laws and Harsh Punishments

- Legalists felt human nature is wicked
   - must force people to do good
   - government must pass strict laws to control peoples' behavior
- Believed harsh punishments kept people afraid to do wrong

An Increase in Government Control

• Legalist Shang Yang wanted to force people to report lawbreakers

• Legalists taught that rulers should reward people who do their duty

• Legalists did not want complaints or questions about government

   - arrested people who questioned government, taught different ideas

   - felt rulers should burn books with different philosophies, ideas

REVIEW QUESTION

Why did Legalists want a strong government?

Confucianism

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What actions did Confucius believe would bring order to China?

Confucius

- Confucius lived 551 to 479 B.C., during time of unrest in China
  - developed ideas to end conflict, have peace in all relationships
- Believed that respect for others was necessary for peace, harmony
- Confucius' ideas collected into book, *Analects*
  - together the teachings form the belief system of **Confucianism**

The Five Relationships

- Confucius taught code of proper conduct
  - proper conduct in family, proper conduct in society
- Confucianism had Five Relationships
  - father and son, older and younger brothers
  - husband and wife, friend and friend, ruler and subject

Proper Conduct

- Confucius felt correct behavior would bring peace to society
  - should begin at home; husbands good to wives, wives obey husbands
  - brothers kind to one another, but younger must obey older
- **Filial piety**—idea that parents must be treated with respect
- Confucius said respect authority; rulers—live right, respect people
  - subjects had duty to obey ruler if ruler lived in right, moral way

The Impact of Confucianism

- Confucianism set out family and social roles
  - following these roles helped Chinese avoid conflict, live peacefully
- Rulers tried to live up to Confucius' model
- Confucius encouraged education, creating fair and skilled officials

REVIEW QUESTION
How did Confucius think rulers should behave?

Daoism

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What did the Daoists believe about society?

The Way

- **Daoism**—Laozi's ideas in *Dao De Jing (The Book of the Way of Virtue)*
  - Laozi may not have existed, but said to have lived in 500s B.C.
- Daoists felt universal force, the Dao (the Way), guides all things
  - all creatures but humans live in harmony with Dao
- Humans must find own way (Dao) to relate to nature, each other
  - each must learn to live in harmony with nature and inner feelings

Following the Way

- Daoists did not argue over good and bad, or try to change things
  - accepted things as they were; did not get involved in government
- Tried to understand nature, live in harmony with its rhythms
- Forces of yin, yang interact, complement each other; change, evolve
  - yin (black)—cold, dark, mysterious
  - yang (white)—warm, bright
- Understanding yin and yang helped people find place in the world

REVIEW QUESTION
Why did Daoism teach that each human had to find an individual way to follow in life?

Lesson Summary

- Legalists believed humans are wicked and need strict laws with harsh punishments.
- Confucius taught a code of proper conduct, including respect, that humans could learn.
- Daoists held the view that each human must find an individual moral path to follow.

Why It Matters Now...

The teachings of Confucianism and Daoism remain influential in China and the world today.