

appear more horrible than it would have been otherwise.

▪ **Reading Comprehension 2013**

Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Use your own language.

The civilization of China - as everyone knows, is based upon the teaching of Confucius who flourished five hundred years before Christ. Like the Greeks and Romans, he did not think of human society as naturally progressive; on the contrary, he believed that in remote antiquity rulers had been wise and the people had been happy to a degree which the degenerate present could admire but hardly achieve. This, of course, was a delusion. But the practical result was the Confucius, like other teachers of antiquity, aimed at creating a stable society, maintaining a certain level of excellence, but not always striving after new successes. In this he was more successful than any other man who ever lived. His personality has been stamped on Chinese Civilization from his day to our own. During his life time, the Chinese occupied only a small part of present day China, and were divided into a number of warring states. During the next three hundred years they established themselves throughout what is now China proper, and founded an empire exceeding in territory and population any other that existed until the last fifty years. In spite of barbarian invasions, and occasional longer or shorter periods of Chaos and Civil War, the Confucian

system survived bringing with it art and literature and a civilised way of life. A system which has had this extra ordinary power of survival must have great merits, and certainly deserves our respect and consideration. It is not a religion, as we understand the word, because it is not associated with the super natural or with mystical beliefs. It is purely ethical system, but its ethics, unlike those of Christianity, are not too exalted for ordinary men to practise. In essence what Confucius teaches is something is very like the old-fashioned ideal of a 'gentleman' as it existed in the eighteenth century. One of his sayings will illustrate this: 'The true gentleman is never contentious.....he courteously salutes his opponnets before taking up his position,.....so that even when competing he remains a true gentleman'.

➤ Questions

1. Why do you think the author calls Confucius' belief about the progress of human society as a delusion?
2. How did Confucius' thought affect China to develop into a stable and 'Proper' China?
3. Why does the author think that Confucian system deserves respect and admiration?
4. Why does the author call Confucian system a purely ethical system and not a religion?
5. Briefly argue whether you agree or disagree to Confucius' ideal of a gentleman.

➤ Answers

1. The author called Confucius belief about the progress of human society as a delusion because he disagrees that the present society cannot be improved. He believes human society to be

1- Human society is naturally progressive. It is in man's inherent nature to strive for new successes. He is rarely satisfied with his share of possessions. Thus people may seem happy to some degree but in reality, they are envious and dissatisfied. That is why the author calls Confucius' belief about the progress of human society a delusion.

2. Although Confucius' successors did not follow his teachings regarding territorial expansion, they followed his vision of life, art and literature. His vision of ethics and civilisation made China a prosperous and stable state. It was the moral code of Confucius that ingrained into the Chinese culture and created a considerate and respectful society.

3. From 500 BC till now, Confucian system has provided the guiding principles of the Chinese civilisation. It has remained firm in the state of war and peace alike. The resilience, practicality and adaptability of this system makes it admirable.

4. All religions believe in the presence of a supernatural power - a deity, God. The blind faith of after-life and fear of judgement serve as a stimulus for the followers of any religion. Confucian system is not based on mystical power. Rather, it is a system of ethics, values

and morality which is learned through principles and practice.

5. Confucius' concept of a gentleman is too idealistic. A real man is competitive and selfish. He puts his own selfish interest and needs before others. He forgets the code of honour while competing against his opponents. All wars in the history of the world teach us that man is anything but an ideal gentleman.

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Title: The Impacts of Climate on Man.

Climate plays a powerful role in a man's life. It impacts ~~the~~ quality and continuity of his work. The strength, stamina, habits and judgement of an individual depend on his habitat. The aggregate of these qualities reflect strongly in the overall character of a nation. Citizens of the ^{temperate} countries are better adapted to outdoor activities than their northern counterparts. They are more active, disciplined and agile. Nevertheless, ^{the severity of} weather compromises the livelihood of people in both these areas. This reflects man's vulnerability and susceptibility to nature.

Practice Exercise

Climate influences labour not only by enervating the labourer or by invigorating him, but also by the effect it produces on the regularity of his habits. Thus we find that no people living in a very northern latitude have ever possessed that steady and unflinching industry for which the inhabitants of temperate regions are remarkable. In the more northern countries the severity of the weather, and, at some seasons, the deficiency of light, render it impossible for the people to continue their usual out-of-door employments. The result is that the working classes, being compelled to cease from their ordinary pursuits, are rendered more prone to desultory habits, the chain of their industry is, as it were, broken, and they lose that impetus which long-continued and uninterrupted practice never fails to give. Hence there arises a national character more fitful and capricious than that possessed by a people whose climate permits the regular exercise of their ordinary industry. Indeed so powerful is this principle that we perceive its operations even under the most opposite circumstances. It would be difficult to conceive a greater difference in government, laws, religion, and manners, than that which distinguishes Sweden and Norway, on the one hand, from Spain and Portugal on the other. But these four countries have one great point in common. In all of them continued agricultural industry is impracticable. In the two Southern countries labour is interrupted by the dryness of the weather and by the consequent state of the soil. In the northern countries the same effect is produced by the severity of the winter and the shortness of the days. The consequence is that these four nations, though so different in other respects, are all remarkable for a certain instability and fickleness of character.

Practice Exercise