

THE IMPACT OF NEO-CONFUCIANISM ON WOMEN: THE DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE CONFUCIAN WIFE

GRADES: 11-12

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SUBJECT: Religion, Women's Studies

TIME REQUIRED: Three to four class periods

OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

1. Describe how marriage was used to strengthen kinship bonds.
2. Identify the variety of roles and duties wives held within her husband's family.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of gender relations in this period.
4. Explain how women were able to exercise power within societal constraints.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Deuchler, Martina. *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992 (pp. 257-273).

BACKGROUND:

Only one of the Five Relationships gives women a role, that of the wife. Yet students in today's modern era have a very different conception of what this may mean. After examining these readings, students will gain more insight into the rights and obligations of women, specifically married women, during the Yi dynasty.

PROCEDURE:

1. Divide the class into the following groups and have the groups focus their reading notes on the following topics:
 - Group A: Education of Women and Limitations on Gender Interaction (pp. 257-261)
 - Group B: A New Wife's Status in the Household (p. 261 to middle of p. 263)
 - Group C: Wives under the Law (pp. 264-267)
 - Group D: The Status of Secondary Wives (pp. 267-270)
 - Group E: Sons of Secondary Wives (bottom of p. 270 to top of p. 273)
2. Reorganize the students into groups of 5 with one member of each group represented. Have members present information from their readings. Students should take notes on what others present.
3. Regroup as a class. Based on information from other students, have them write their names on a sheet of paper and answer pro or con to the following question: *The role of the wife in Confucian society was one of obligations, with few protections and no individual power to exercise her will.*
4. Collect the sheets and divide the class into two sections (one pro, the other con) and debate this question. Students should utilize their notes for supporting evidence.

EVALUATION:

Once the debate has ended, students should write an essay in response to the debate question. In addition, if their opinion has changed from their initial response (see sheets), they need to explain what altered their decision. If their opinion did not change, they need to explain how the debate reinforced their original opinion.