

Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about China. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical world history class.

★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- **A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of world history**

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards—Assessment 1 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 1, Assessment 2 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 2, and so on. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- **Based on primary or secondary sources**

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone. Links to online versions of print media are available in the Bibliography. Please note that these links were valid at the time of production, but the websites may have since been discontinued.

Teacher Introduction

- **Brief tasks promoting historical literacy**

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- **Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments**

A *basic* and an *advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *basic* assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *advanced* assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the *basic* version.

- **Easy to use as both learning and assessment tools**

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess students' historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- **Evaluating student responses**

Brief but specific suggestions are provided, defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly, they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Assessment 1 *Basic Level*

Confucius on the Well-Governed State

★ Key Ideas and Details

- 1. (6–8)** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

★ Using This Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their ancient history coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

★ Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question may vary and should be discussed. Best answers should see that these links are all equally important. Together they are meant to convey the idea that a well-governed state is based on “well-regulated” families and individuals of good character and clear thinking. That Confucius repeats the string of linkages in reverse order may be a way to stress their mutual interdependence. Acceptable responses to the second assessment question should see that Confucius was adapting ideas central in Chinese culture to a time of turmoil and political conflict. That is, China’s traditional reverence for ancestors and family elders, its careful observance of ritual, and its stress on loyalty to one’s prince are reflected in Confucius’s search for the basis of order and good government in these same things.

Confucius on the Well-Governed State

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and one secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Primary Source

The ancients who wished clearly to exemplify illustrious virtue throughout the world would first set up good government in their states. Wishing to govern well their states, they would first regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they would first cultivate their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they would first [correct] their minds. Wishing to [correct] their minds, they would first seek sincerity in their thoughts. Wishing for sincerity in their thoughts, they would first extend their knowledge. The extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. For only when things are investigated is knowledge extended; only when knowledge is extended are thoughts sincere; only when thoughts are sincere are minds [corrected]; only when minds are [corrected] are our persons cultivated; only when our persons are cultivated are our families regulated; only when families are regulated are states well governed; and only when states are well governed is there peace in the world.

Source Information: These are the words of Confucius, the most important teacher and philosopher in China's long history. He is generally thought to have been born in 551 BCE, though historians are not sure about this. His views came to influence China's educated classes and leaders for many centuries. This passage by Confucius can be found in *Da Xue (The Great Learning)*, in vol. 1 of *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, edited and translated by Theodore de Bary, Wing-Tsit Chan, and Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 115, as quoted in *Shaping a Global Theological Mind*, edited by Darren C. Marks (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), pp. 66–67.

Document 2: A Secondary Source

As in other ancient civilizations, the Chinese believed in many gods. Often these gods were linked with natural forces, such as rain, wind, mountains, floods, etc. But the Chinese also believed that the spirits of their dead ancestors could help them gain the favor of these gods or natural forces. China's most important spiritual thinker developed an entire philosophy of life out of this respect for tradition, ritual, and ancestors. His name was Kongfuzi (known in the West as "Confucius"). Confucius lived in the sixth century BCE, a time of great political conflict in China. Reverence for ancestors, China's gods and rituals, and familial respect and duty were all central to the good character he sought to develop in his students. Central also was loyalty to one's ruling prince. For Confucius, a good advisor would seek honestly to correct a bad ruler, yet remain loyal throughout. In general, Confucius saw individuals as closely connected to and dependent upon family and society. His views gave rise to China's main school of ideas, one that would influence China's rulers for centuries. In time, China's rulers came to see Confucius as the one thinker who every leader and official needed to learn about.

Source Information: This document is a secondary source about Confucius and his impact on China's history. A secondary source is an account of past events written later by someone who did not experience or take part in those events. This secondary source is adapted and expanded from "Gods, Ancestors, Ethics," Lesson 2 in Jonathan Burack's *Ancient China*, History Unfolding (Culver City, CA: MindSparks, 2009).

Assessment Questions

1. In Document 1, Confucius tells us what it takes to foster "virtue throughout the world." His explanation involves a long chain of cause-and-effect links. Which links do you think are most important in his explanation? Cite details to support your answer.
2. How does Document 2 help you better understand why Confucius links the items he does in Document 1?

Assessment 7 *Advanced Level*

China's Language and Dialects

★ *Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

- 7. (9–10)** Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.
- 7. (11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

★ *Using This Assessment*

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their ancient history coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Assessment 7 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 7 for grades 9–10 and 11–12 combined. It asks students to do something historians must do all the time—integrate evidence found in a wide variety of primary sources presented in many visual and textual formats. It also asks them to judge the relative strengths and weaknesses of visual as compared with written sources.

★ *Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment*

Acceptable answers to the first assessment question should see that the topic these sources have in common is China's dialects and its written language. A thesis should focus on the unique nature of written Chinese and its unifying role in a land of many dialects, often ones that are mutually unintelligible. Document 1 clarifies the nature of that written language in relation to those dialects. Document 2 is evidence of the ancient origins of the written language and its role in religious ceremonies and in foretelling the future. Document 3 is evidence supporting the remarks in Document 1 about China being the home to a bewildering variety of dialects. This reinforces the idea that the written language played a key role in unifying this land. Acceptable answers to the second assessment question may vary, but they should be able to infer from these documents what this historian is getting at. Document 1 offers support for the idea that written Chinese was a highly complex system that took a long time to master, yet mastering it was a requirement for advancement in the Chinese bureaucracy. It would have been, and was, hard for the masses of people to find resources or time to become literate.

China's Language and Dialects

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer two questions on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 7: (9–10) Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text. **(11–12)** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

Document 1: A Secondary Source

The Chinese people have always spoken many different dialects. A dialect is the form of language spoken by people in a particular geographical region. Dialects can be so different from each other that two people speaking two dialects of the same language may be unable to understand each other. But no matter what a Chinese person's dialect is, he or she is able to read and understand a single writing system. How is this possible?

The Chinese writing system is not based on an alphabet in which letters stand for the sounds in words. (Do not be confused by the pinyin alphabet. It is only used to spell Chinese words in English.) Instead, Chinese writing is made up of thousands of characters that grew out of the early pictographs of Chinese fortune-tellers. These characters represent—alone or in combination—all the objects, ideas, and relationships needed to put thoughts into writing. So no matter what dialect a writer speaks, the written thought will be understood. Imagine that you are a speaker of English who wants to tell someone who does not speak or read English the following: When three is multiplied by two, the answer is six. If you wrote $3 \times 2 = 6$, both of you would be able to read those characters and understand exactly what was meant.

Source Information: This document is a secondary source about China's written and spoken language. This secondary source is excerpted from "Ancient China: The First Civilizations," a lesson in *World History I, Power Basics* (Portland, ME: Walch Publishing, 2005).

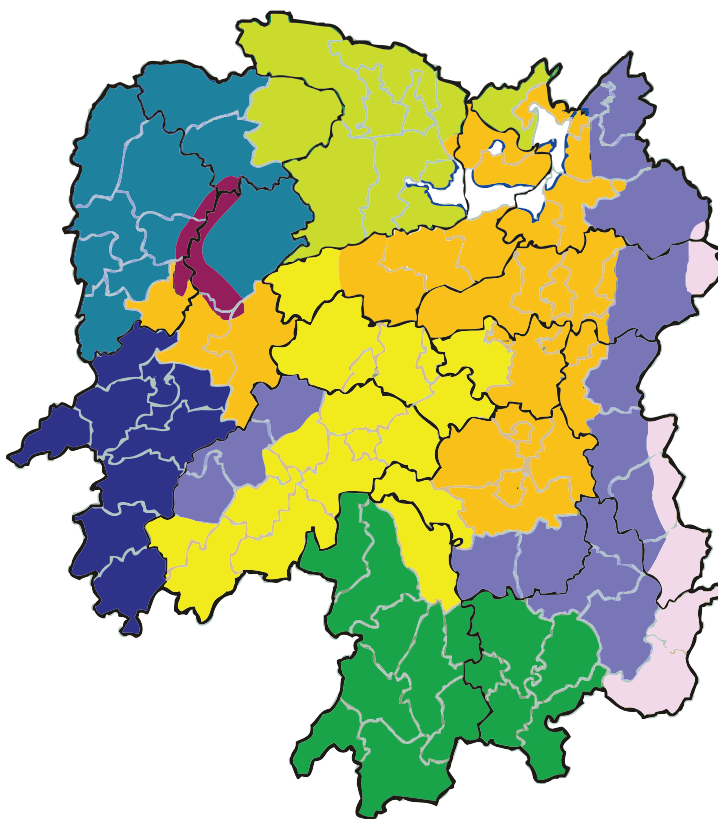
Document 2: A Primary Source



Image Source: By Babel Stone (CC BY-SA 3.0), via Wikimedia Commons

Source Information: In China, the earliest writing developed to aid a type of fortune-telling, the reading of oracle bones. Chinese characters would be written on animal bones or shells, such as a tortoise shell. These would then be heated to produce cracks. The future could be interpreted by the way the cracks lined up with the written characters. This photo shows one of these “oracle bones.” It was discovered in Anyang, Henan Province, and is now held at the National Museum of China in Beijing.

Document 3: A Secondary Source



Map Credit: Adapted from Xiang, by 不知 (网络) [FAL], via Wikimedia Commons

Source Information: This map shows the dialects spoken in Hunan, one of China's provinces. Many regional varieties of spoken Chinese exist. They share a common written form, and for that reason many in China refer to them as dialects. Usually, speakers of one dialect in a language can understand speakers of other dialects in that language. However, that is not always the case with these Chinese dialects. In some cases, they are more like separate languages.

Assessment Questions

1. Construct a thesis statement or claim about language and China that *all three* of these sources could be used to support.
2. Consider this historian's statement: "China's written language is impressive. However, it also kept a tiny literate elite in power and made it hard for the masses to improve their status." Explain what you think he means and why you do or do not agree with him.