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Intermediate Student’s Book

Life

Confucianism in China

**Part 1**

**00.15–01.59** China is one of the largest and oldest countries in the world. Millions of Chinese people share a rich history that has lasted for thousands of years. Over time, China has been influenced by numerous great leaders and thinkers. One of its greatest and most famous philosophers was Confucius, who lived from 551 to 479 BC. Around 500 BC, the Zhou *[jo]* dynasty governed central China; however, its rulers were weak and the dynasty was in decline. Local warlords fought among themselves for land and power; family members also fought one another over property and money. The country of China was caught up in a dark period of war and unhappiness. Confucius travelled across China and hoped to convince the people that his moral and ethical ideas about society could restore order, justice and prosperity to the country. He believed that peace and harmony depended on having the correct and proper conduct in key relationships: for example, the relationship between a parent and child, or between ruler and subject. Unfortunately, the leaders of the day were warlords. They didn’t govern their lands by forming positive relationships with their subjects the way Confucius taught. As a result of this and other issues, the Zhou dynasty continued its decline. Eventually, Confucius retired and focused on teaching his disciples, or followers. After his death, his disciples developed and expanded his ideas through the centuries. Finally, 300 years after Confucius died, the Han dynasty adopted his philosophy as its official government policy. Confucianism became an important part of the Han dynasty as well as others and his ideas still influence China today.

**Part 2**

**02.02–02.29** The Master said, ‘A youth should be respectful of his elders.’ The respect that young people show towards the elder members of their family is still an important aspect of Chinese life today. Several generations of family members often live and work together. Most children are expected to follow their parents’ wishes and do what is best for the family. Traditionally, sons carry on the family name and support their parents when they are older and require care.

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**02.30–03.17** The Master said, ‘Is it not pleasant to learn with a constant perseverance and application?’ Confucius felt learning should be a pleasant experience and approached with joy. Nowadays, learning and education are still extremely important to the people of China. From a very early age, students learn to study hard and respect their teachers. Throughout the history of China, and many other cultures, an education has been an opportunity to move up in the world and attain success in a number of ways. More than five million young people in China graduate from university every year. Some seek jobs in China, others choose to explore their options by going abroad. Over 30 million Chinese people now live in other parts of the world, including Southeast Asia, the United States, Canada and other countries and regions.

**03.18–03.38** ‘Virtue is the root; wealth is the result.’ Confucius felt that if people were good and hardworking, they would become rich. Today, many Chinese people continue to work hard to build lives for themselves and their families. This reflects a fundamental principle that those who are dutiful and live in harmony with others will always prosper.

**03.39–04.02** Because Confucianism is often associated with China’s past, many people aren’t aware of its influence on present-day society. The 2,500-year-old philosophy was the centre of Chinese civilisation and culture for centuries. Some consider it to be at the very foundations of modern Chinese society. As China and the world continue to change, this country’s future will surely be impacted by its past.