

**SELECTION FROM THE CONFUCIAN ANALECTS:  
ON WOMEN AND SERVANTS**

**Introduction**

Confucius (the Latinized version of Kong Fuzi, “master Kong”) or, to call him by his proper name, Kong Qiu (551-479 BCE) lived during the time when the Zhou kingdom had disintegrated into many de facto independent feudal states which were subject to the Zhou kings only in theory. Confucius was a man of the small feudal state of Lu. Like many other men of the educated elite class of the Eastern Zhou, Confucius traveled among the states, offering his services as a political advisor and official to feudal rulers and taking on students whom he would teach for a fee. Confucius had an unsuccessful career as a petty bureaucrat, but a highly successful one as a teacher. A couple of generations after his death, first- and second-generation students gathered accounts of Confucius’ teachings together. These anecdotes and records of short conversations go under the English title of the *Analects*.

**Selected Document Excerpt with Questions**

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*Selection from the Confucian Analects:  
On Women and Servants*

17:25            Women and servants are most difficult to nurture. If one is close to them, they lose their reserve, while if one is distant, they feel resentful.

**Questions:**

1. What point of view does Confucius reveal in this statement?
2. Why do you think he puts women and servants in the same category?
3. What does this passage reveal about class structure and class stereotypes in Confucius’ time?
4. Can you find parallels to Confucius attitude in other cultures at the same or at other times?