



WORLD LITERATURE READING 5

Daoism

About the Selection

In China, the time from 403 B.C. to 221 B.C. is called the Period of the Warring States. Several ideas about how to create a peaceful society became popular. One of these, Daoism, was practiced widely between 500 B.C. and 300 B.C. The ancient Chinese text *Dao De Jing* has 81 verses. The writings teach people to give up their worldly desires and live in harmony with nature.

Guided Reading

As you read this verse, think about the beliefs of the Sage and what is expected of his students. Then answer the questions that follow.



Reader's Dictionary

sage: a wise person

virtue: morality

illumination: a spiritual understanding

honed: made sharper or more effective

blundered: having made a mistake through stupidity or carelessness

Dao De Jing

Verse 27

A knower of the Truth
 travels without leaving a trace
 speaks without causing harm
 gives without keeping an account
 The door he shuts, though having no lock,
 cannot be opened
 The knot he ties, though using no cord,
 cannot be undone

The Sage is always on the side of virtue
 so everyone around him prospers
 He is always on the side of truth
 so everything around him is fulfilled

The path of the Sage is called
 "The Path of Illumination"
 He who gives himself to this path
 is like a block of wood
 that gives itself to the chisel—
 Cut by cut it is honed to perfection

WORLD LITERATURE READING 5 (continued)

Daoism

Only a student who gives himself
can receive the master's gift
If you think otherwise,
despite your knowledge, you have blundered

Giving and receiving are one
This is called,
"The great wonder"
"The essential mystery"
"The very heart of all that is true"

Source: Lao Tzu. *Tao Te Ching: The Definitive Edition*. Translated by Jonathan Star.
New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 2001.

Literary Response and Analysis

Directions: Answer the questions below in the spaces provided.

1. Give an example from the text of the power of "a knower of the Truth."

2. What side is a Sage always on?

3. What is "the very heart of all that is true"?

4. **Critical Thinking** How might the values described in this verse help create a peaceful society?

5. **Critical Thinking** Think about the description of how a student learns from a teacher. How does that compare to how you are expected to learn from your teacher?

