

Humanities University

Study Guide

LIT 411A Ancient Literature I: Asia (to 500 AD)

UNIT	WEEK	TOPICS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	TEXTS
I	_	Middle East	
	1	Early Literature Please describe the structure of ancient civilizations and the way that the earliest literature emerged. How did early civilizations record their stories and songs?	NA, Vol A, pp 2—9
	2	<i>Gilgamesh</i> Please describe the way that friendship is portrayed in Gilgamesh, and provide two or three scenes as examples. In Gilgamesh, what is a hero? What does a hero do? Provide examples.	NA, Vol A, pp 10-40
	3	Ancient Egyptian Poetry Describe two Egyptian poems. What are they writing about? How is an individual's relationship to nature portrayed? In Akhenaten's "Hymn to the Sun," what is the role of the sun? How does it affect humanity?	NA, Vol A, pp 41-52
	4	Hebrew Literature Describe the creation story as depicted by Hebrews. What are some of the characteristics. What is God's relationship to the earth and to humanity?	NA, Vol A, pp 52-62
II		China	
	5	Early Chinese Literature Describe the importance of Confucianism in early Chinese writing. Please list three or four major events in Chinese history.	NA, Vol A, pp 804-811
	6	<i>Classic of Poetry</i> Select two or three lyric poems from the Classic of Poetry and analyze them. What are the authors writing about? How do they describe nature?	NA, Vol A, pp 812-819
	7	Confucius, <i>Analects</i> What are core Confucian values? What are the Analects? What for do they take?	NA, Vol A, pp 820-832

- 8 *Chuang Chou, Chuang Tzu* NA, Vol A, pp 832-858
Describe some of the events in Chuang Tzu. Please list two or three examples of how Chuang Tzu makes the individual aware of how language can be inadequate to describe reality.
- 9 *Ssu-ma Ch'ien, Letter Historical Records* NA, Vol A, pp. 858-879
What are the characteristics of heroes as depicted in Historical Records? Describe the some of the attributes of humans and human nature as depicted in Historical Records.

III India

- 10 Early Indian Literature NA, Vol A, pp. 880-889
List some of the major religions that emerged in ancient India that still exist today.

What is India's "heroic age"? What were some of the early works of literature?
- 11 Valmiki, *Ramayana* NA, Vol A, pp. 890-952
Describe two or three key episodes in the Ramayana. What occurs? What are they scenes showing about human nature, dharma, or karma?
- 12 *The Mahabharata* NA, Vol A, pp. 953-1001
Describe the events and the central conflict around which the epic is shaped. Who are some of the main characters and what did they do?

Please describe the attitudes and beliefs of the main characters and their approach to education, heroism, and duty, and provide supporting examples.
- 13 *The Jataka* NA, Vol A, pp. 1002-1009
Describe the structure of the Jataka. What are the purposes of the stories?

Choose one "beast fable" and explain how the fable illustrates a virtue, vice, or moral lesson.
- 14 *Bhagavad-gita* NA, Vol A, pp. 1010-1028
Choose a passage in the Gita and describe the core philosophical values it is exploring.

What values and attitudes about death and dying, death and rebirth are expressed in the Gita?

What does the Gita say about self-discipline? What is the purpose of self-discipline? Please cite passages that illustrate the point.
- 15 *The Tamil Anthologies* NA, Vol A, pp. 1029-1040
Select two or three poems and describe how each one uses language and nature to portray an emotional state of being, or a condition of life.

IV Finals

Notes about Procedures

Questions for Discussion / Journal

Your answer should be between 150 and 250 words, in paragraph form. Be sure to include a clear topic sentence and to support your answer with specific details and examples from the text.