

Honors World History
Summer Reading
Mr. Kevin Moore

This summer, I would like you to read *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu. This book is widely regarded by many as not only a “bible” for the battlefield, but also a great source of lessons for life in general. Please complete the following questions as you read and be prepared to turn them in the first day of class

Directions: Read each chapter closely. Answer each question in complete sentences, using text references where appropriate.

Foreword

1. Simply stated, what does *The Art of War* teach? In what situations can Sun Tzu’s wisdom be applied?
2. Interpret this statement: “It [Sun Tzu’s knowledge] can give us the protection we need to watch our own children grow in peace and thrive.”

I. Laying Plans

3. Describe the five factors that will determine whether or not a general is victorious.
4. According to former Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, moral clarity—simply being clear about what is right and what is wrong—is necessary to winning the war against terrorism. Compare Sun Tzu’s and Netanyahu’s attitudes toward morality on the battlefield.

II. On Waging War

5. Discuss the value of time both as it pertains to waiting to attack and as it pertains to the length of the fight.
6. How might a battle affect the economy?

III. The Sheathed Sword

7. Discuss the kind of strategy a person needs to “break the enemy’s resistance without fighting.”
8. Explain the following sentence: “Humanity and justice are the principles on which to govern a state, but not an army; opportunism and flexibility, on the other hand, are military rather than civic virtues.” What is Sun Tzu’s point?

IV. Tactics

9. Discuss the irony in this statement: “To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself.”
10. Phillip Fulmer, national-championship-winning football coach at the University of Tennessee says, “I constantly coach our players about having the intensity to be able to intimidate our opponents. This doesn’t mean to play outside the rules. It means that our players should be fundamentally sound and in such good physical condition that they can outlast and outwork their opponents.” How would Sun Tzu respond to Fulmer’s statements? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
11. What, essentially, is “true excellence”?

V. Energy

12. What are direct methods of fighting? What are indirect methods?

VI Weak Points & Strong

13. Explain the implications of this sentence: "If he sends reinforcements everywhere, he will everywhere be weak."

VII. Maneuvering

14. When is maneuvering advantageous? When is it dangerous? Discuss the difference.

VIII. Variation of Tactics

15. When "must" an army fight? What is a "desperate position"?
16. What does *The Art of War* "teach us to rely" on? Explain.
17. List the "five dangerous faults that may affect a general." Which do you believe is the most critical? Why?

IX. The Army on the March

18. Sun Tzu makes several references to sunny places in this chapter. Locate some of them and discuss why he places such importance on being in the sun.
19. According to Sun Tzu, what is the "certain road to victory?"

X. Terrain

20. Clearly explain "the soldier's best ally."
21. Discuss the "test of a great general" and the circumstances under which the general may be considered the "jewel of the kingdom."

XI. The Nine Situations

22. Identify and explain the lesson of the *shuai-jan*.
23. Discuss what Sun Tzu considers a "vital act" of war.

XII. Attack by Fire

24. Contrast the effects of using fire and water in battle.
25. What is the best way to maintain peace in a country? To maintain a complete army?

XIII. The Use of Spies

26. Study the fate of *doomed spies*. Respond to the use of spies in that fashion. Is it ethical? Just? Necessary? Why or why not?
27. Discuss the "end and aim of spying."