

1 **“The Way Princes Should Keep Their Word”**

2 Excerpted from: *The Prince*

3 Niccolo Machiavelli

4 1532

5

6 Everyone understands how praiseworthy it is for a prince to remain true  
7 to his word and to live with complete integrity without any scheming.  
8 However, we’ve seen through experience how many princes in our time  
9 have achieved great things who have little cared about keeping their  
10 word and have shrewdly known the skill of tricking the minds of men;  
11 these princes have overcome those whose actions were founded on  
12 honesty and integrity.

13

14 It should be understood that there are two types of fighting: one with  
15 laws and the other with force. The first is most suitable for men, the  
16 second is most suitable for beasts, but it often happens that the first is  
17 not enough, which requires that we have recourse to the second.

18 Therefore, it is necessary for a prince to know how to act both as a man  
19 and as a beast. This was signified allegorically to princes by the ancient  
20 writers: they wrote that Achilles and many other ancient princes were  
21 given to be raised and tutored by the centaur Chiron, who took custody  
22 of them and disciplined them. This can only mean, this trainer who was  
23 half beast and half man, that a prince needs to know how to use either  
24 one or the other nature, and the one without the other will never last.

25

26 Since it is necessary for the prince to use the ways of beasts, he should  
27 imitate the fox and the lion, because the lion cannot defend himself from  
28 snares and the fox cannot defend himself from wolves. Therefore, it is  
29 important to be a fox in order to understand the snares and a lion in order  
30 to terrify the wolves. Those who choose only to be a lion do not really  
31 understand. Therefore, a prudent leader will not and should not observe  
32 his promises, when such observance will work against him and when the  
33 reasons for making the promise are no longer valid. If all men were  
34 good, this precept would not be good; but since men are evil and will not  
35 keep their word with you, you shouldn’t keep yours to them. Never has a  
36 prince lacked legitimate reasons to break faith. I could give you an  
37 infinite number of examples from modern time, and show you numerous  
38 peace treaties and promises that have been broken and made completely  
39 empty by the faithlessness of princes; these know well how to use the  
40 ways of the fox, and they are the ones who succeed. But it is necessary  
41 to know how to hide this nature and to simulate a good character and to  
42 dissimulate: for the majority of men are simple and will only follow the  
43 needs of the present, so that the deceiver can always find someone he  
44 can deceive.

45

46 I’m not going to pass up a specific example from recent history.  
47 Alexander VI never did or thought about anything else except deceiving  
48 people and always found some reason or other to do it. There was never

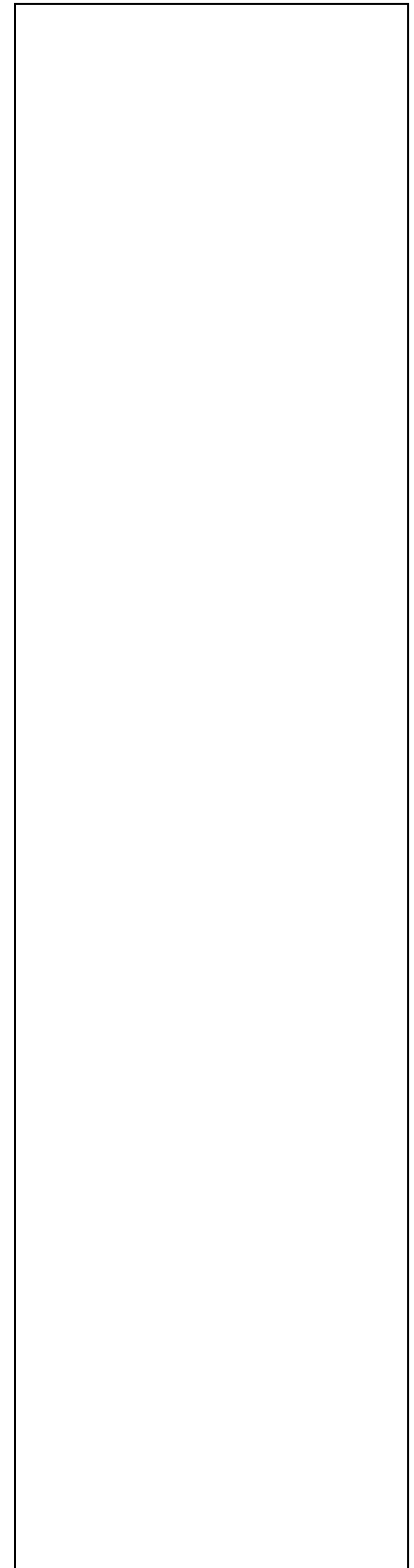
cleverly
an option
symbolically
idea

49 a man who was better at making assurances, or more eager to offer  
50 solemn promises, or who kept them less; yet he always succeeded in his  
51 deceptions beyond his wildest dreams, because he played his role in the  
52 world so well.

53  
54 Therefore, a prince doesn't need to have all the qualities mentioned  
55 earlier, but it is necessary that he appear to have them. I'll even add to  
56 this: having good qualities and always practicing them is harmful, while  
57 appearing to practice them is useful. It's good to appear to be pious,  
58 faithful, humane, honest, and religious, and it's good to be all those  
59 things; but as long as one keeps in mind that when the need arises you  
60 can and will change into the opposite. It needs to be understood that a  
61 prince, and especially a prince recently installed, cannot observe all those  
62 qualities which make men good, and it is often necessary in order to  
63 preserve the state to act contrary to faith, contrary to mercy, and contrary  
64 to humaneness, and contrary to religion. And therefore he needs a spirit  
65 disposed to follow wherever the winds of fortune and the variability of  
66 affairs leads him. As I said above, it's necessary that he not depart from  
67 right but that he follow evil.

68 A prince must take great care never to let anything come from his mouth  
69 that is not full of the above-mentioned five qualities, and he must appear  
70 to all who see and hear him to be completely pious, completely faithful,  
71 completely honest, completely humane, and completely religious. And  
72 nothing is more important than to appear to have that last quality. Men  
73 judge more by their eyes than by their hands, because everyone can see  
74 but few can feel. Everyone can see how you appear, few can feel what  
75 you are, and these few will not dare to oppose the opinion of the  
76 multitude when it is defended by the majesty of the state. In actions of all  
77 men, especially princes, where there is no recourse to justice, the end is  
78 all that counts. A prince should only be concerned with conquering or  
79 maintaining a state, for the means will always be judged to be honorable  
80 and praiseworthy by each and every person, because the masses always  
81 follow appearances and the outcomes of affairs, and the world is nothing  
82 other than the masses. The few do not find a place wherever the masses  
83 are supported. There is a certain prince of our own time, whom it would  
84 be wise not to name (Ferdinand of Spain), who preaches nothing except  
85 peace and faith, and yet is the greatest enemy of both; and if he had  
86 observed one or the other, he already would have lost both his reputation  
87 and his state many times over.

88



# Teacher's Guide

Name of Text: **The Way Princes Should Keep Their Word**

Question Composers: **Dolores Harper; Jennifer Chandler**

Standards: NCSS: C16.1.[9-12].1, H1.[9-12].14  
CCSS: RH 1, 2, 4, 8, 10; WHST 1E, 4; SL 1C, 1D, 3, 4

Teacher Background Notes:

The Renaissance is a key unit within secondary world history courses. Machiavelli's work, *The Prince*, is one of the most widely read pieces of literature from the time period. This rich text contrasts a Medieval connotation of moral leadership with a more humanistic secular rationale for effective leadership. Through interaction with the author's words, students should recognize the tension between good and evil as they relate to political power. Machiavelli's discussion on government and how politics work provide a foundation for teaching about the acquisition of power, effective government and leadership analysis that can be revisited in many contexts throughout the course.

Text Dependent Questions	Teacher Notes And Possible Textual Evidence For Student Answers
<p><b>Using lines 6-10, what are the qualities of a good prince?</b></p> <p><i>Rationale for question: This question is straightforward and easy to answer. This first question will help students feel confident that they can use text to find answers and help them follow protocol of stating line numbers prior to sharing their answers. On a deeper level students should begin to discover the tension between "moral" leadership qualities and "secular" leadership skills.</i></p>	<p>Remain true to his word (6-7) Live with complete integrity without scheming (7) Achieve great things (9) Cared little about keeping their word (9-10) Shrewdly known the skill of ticking minds of men (10)</p>

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes  
And  
Possible Textual Evidence  
For  
Student Answers

Refer to line 70-71. What five qualities does Machiavelli say must come from the prince’s mouth? Which one does Machiavelli say is most important? Use evidence from the text that explains why he thinks this is most important.

*Rationale for question: Machiavelli’s work is revolutionary because he is one of the first to articulate the concept that a leader should be evil and not moral in order to be effective. This challenged the traditional idea that a good leader was moral with the best interests of the people at heart. Students should recognize that political leaders often use the guise of religion to consolidate control.*

Pious (70)  
Completely faithful (71)  
Completely honest (71)  
Completely humane (71)  
Completely religious (71) - most important (72)[ because political leaders often create or use religion as a way to wield power](**not explicit**)

In lines 78-79, Machiavelli states that a prince should only be concerned with what? Why?

*Rationale for question: This question will guide students to focus on Machiavelli’s main idea ⇨protecting power at all costs/ “the ends justify the means”*

Conquering or maintaining a state (78-79)  
Means will always be judged to be honorable and praiseworthy by each and every person because masses always follow appearances and the outcomes of affairs (79-82)

In lines 14-15, what types of fighting exist? How does the centaur symbolize the relationship between these types of fighting?

*Rationale for question: This question guides to students to understand Machiavelli’s reasoning - use of the two natures*

One with laws (15)  
One with force (15)  
A prince needs to know how to use either one or the other natures, and the one without the other will never last (23-24)

Text Dependent Questions

Teacher Notes  
And  
Possible Textual Evidence  
For  
Student Answers

**What does Machiavelli claim a prince needs to succeed? Why?**

*Rationale for the question: Locating these answers leads the students to restate Machiavelli's main claim rephrased in multiple ways. Once they have identified these they should be able to restate Machiavelli's claim in their own words.*

Hide this nature and simulate a good character and to dissimulate (40-42)  
Know how to use ways of the fox (39-40)  
Don't keep your word since men are evil and will not keep their word with you, you shouldn't keep yours to them (34-35)  
Break faith (36)  
Will not and should no observe his promises when such observance will work against him and when reasons for making the promise are no longer valid (31-33)

**In lines 31-35, reflect on what Machiavelli is saying about what it means to be a prudent leader.**

*Rationale for the question: Students should understand that prudent doesn't mean good, in the traditional sense.*

Since men are evil and don't keep their word, a prudent leader shouldn't keep their word either when keeping their promise will work against them.

**(68-88) Machiavelli states that religious appearance is the most important quality of a prince. How is this in contradiction to what he says about what a prudent leader needs to do to succeed?**

*Rationale for the question: This further illuminates that prudent means the savvy manipulator.*

Lines (68-83) The masses will always follow appearances  
This means he will always be judged to be honorable and praise worthy (79-80)

**What examples does Machiavelli use in his writing? Do they strengthen or weaken his claim? How? Defend your answer with evidence from the text.**

*Rationale for the question: This requires students to search for answers from multiple areas of the text then draw conclusions about the effectiveness of Machiavelli's examples and reasoning for using them.*

Fox - understand the snares (29)/can't defend himself from wolves (28)  
Lion - terrify the wolves (29-30)/can't defend from snares (27-28)  
Centaur - half man/half beast(23)/ One without the other doesn't work - mythical animal of Greek mythology that incorporates two elements effectively into one (24)  
Ferdinand of Spain (84-85)/preaches nothing except peace and faith, and yet is the enemy of both(84-85) - current success of the strategy Machiavelli proposes  
Alexander VI (46-52)

## Text Dependent Questions

## Teacher Notes And Possible Textual Evidence For Student Answers

**In lines 60-77 what words does he use to describe people the Prince rules over? What phrases from the text describe the characteristics of the people? How does he use these descriptors to validate his argument?**

*Rationale for question: In searching for the different words, students will recognize Machiavelli's variety in word usage and its effectiveness. They will be able to further describe the people in the author's own words. Finally, they will draw the conclusion that he is persuading the reader to validate his argument.*

Men (72), everyone (73-74), masses (80-82), each and every person (80), all (70), multitude (76), few (82), the state (87)

Judge more by their eyes than their hands (73)

Will not dare oppose the opinion of the multitude when it is defended by the majesty of the state (75-76)

Masses always follow appearances and outcomes of affairs (80-81)

Everyone can see but few can feel (73-74) The more foolish and needy he makes the public look the more need for the leader to exercise sly deviance to protect the state.

The multitudes are just waiting for a leader to tell them what to think

Please compose a clear writing prompt or question to follow this close analytic reading. Make sure that your writing prompt/question follows the CCSS writing standards (choose informational or argumentative) and that you use the terminology of the standards. The writing assignment can be a very formal essay or a fairly short piece, as long as it demonstrates that students have understood the document and can use evidence from it effectively.

**According to Macciavelli: What is the "Way Princes Should Keep Their Word"?**

**Choose three claims within his argument to elaborate upon using evidence (quotes or paraphrases with line numbers) from the text. That is, how does he "prove" his point? Summarize Machiavelli's reasoning for each claim.**

Brainstorm possible answers to the prompt in groups, then task groups with a specific claim and have students find quotes from the text to support the claim.

Create a graphic representation Machiavelli's argument picturing key claims and examples - challenge students to represent Machiavelli's premise in a limited number of words and an equal number of non-visuals.

Have students work in pairs to construct a basic outline of the text labeling claims, reasoning and evidence clearly to show they can apply their understanding of the terms to Machiavelli's text.

Once claims have been identified, have students pick the claim they think Machiavelli has supported best. Set up a class debate where students argue for their favorite claim.

Assign a specific claim to each grouping of students and have students write a paragraph addressing the prompt using claims, reasoning and evidence together as a team.

Assign a full 5 paragraph formal essay with an introduction, 3 body paragraphs and a conclusion.

In the space below, create a very specific checklist that helps teachers what exactly to identify in order to measure student success or difficulty with this particular writing assignment on this particular reading. Make sure to use your grade level's writing standards as a guide. Be clear!

