

was judge dee a good magistrate? essay sample

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Living in the time of the Tang dynasty (618-906 AD), Dee Jen-djeh came from a long line of prefects and high-ranking government officials. He studied calligraphy, painting, poetry and Confucianism. He took the civil service exams and was placed as the district magistrate of Chang-Ping where he became a judge. Throughout the book, Judge Dee takes on many complex cases and with his education in Confucian beliefs is able to catch each criminal and provide justice for the people of Chang-Ping. Judge Dee was a good Confucian government official because he practiced filial piety, he possessed the three most important characteristics of a Junzi and he implemented the idea of the Five Relationships.

Through his rulings, Judge Dee demonstrates the importance of respecting and honoring one's elders. He releases Mrs. Djou, who allegedly murdered her husband, on bail so that she can attend to her elderly mother-in-law and her daughter. On page 112 it states that Judge Dee said, " I think it is not right that your old mother suffers for you, and has to run her house all alone. I therefore shall release you on bail, so that you can serve your mother, as is proper." By doing this, he is demonstrating the principle of filial piety. During the executions, Judge Dee's punishment for Mrs. Djou is modified because of his Confucian belief in filial piety On page 214 Judge Dee says, " Her possessions shall not be forfeited in consideration of the fact that she leaves behind an old mother." In contrast, the two other criminals that were also being put to death on that same day had to forfeit their possessions in addition to their lives. However, because of the Judge's belief in respecting and taking care of the elders, he altered the punishment so the grandmother would not share in the punishment. Throughout the book, Judge Dee

demonstrates the three most important characteristics of a Junzi, a “gentlemen” or “superior person:” Ren, or benevolence; Li, or propriety; and De, or governing by virtue. On page 31, when Judge Dee is disguised as a doctor in the village, he uses his genuine knowledge of medicine to help an old woman in need. He says, “If I did not possess this skill, how would I dare to travel hither and thither, indulging in vain boasts? Just give me a clear description of your symptoms, and I shall cure you...you have an ailment of the heart, and I have medicine for the heart.”

This sick woman has nothing to do with the case, but he helps her anyway, and by doing so he demonstrates benevolence, or kindness. The sickly woman replies gratefully saying, “Master, you indeed are a physician of uncanny skill! I have been suffering from this malady now for a considerable time, but never yet has any doctor so accurately determined its cause.” When it comes to propriety, Judge Dee never fails in his accusations even when he does not have hard evidence against a suspect. His allegations are always correct and throughout the entire book, he never tortured someone who turned out to be innocent. This indicates that Judge Dee bears the trait of propriety. Finally, Judge Dee proves to be a fair official who governs by virtue because of his reasonable punishments to the three criminals in the end of the book. On page 214 he gives the punishment of “lingering death” to Mrs. Djou, which would typically be to cut off parts of the body while the individual was still conscious and living. However, taking into account how much Mrs. Djou had already suffered torture during the trial, he ordered the executioner to kill her quickly. This punishment was both fair and just and thus exhibited Judge Dee’s ability to govern by virtue.

Judge Dee, as a magistrate, is considered the “ Mother and Father” of the people in his district. In the Five Relationships, there is a superior and inferior in each. This does not mean that one is better than the other, but rather implies different roles and responsibilities. As the “ Mother and Father” of the people of Chang-Ping, Judge Dee applies the Confucian belief the superior is required to be wise and merciful while the inferior is obedient and respectful. Sometimes, by committing crimes, the inferior does not hold up his end of the bargain. It is Judge Dee’s duty, as the superior, to bring justice to the criminals and right the wrongs done by his people. For example, his own lieutenants, Ma Joong and Chiao Tai, were criminals themselves when they met Judge Dee. They were described on page 9 of the book as, “ ‘ Brother’s of the green woods’ or, in plain language, highway robbers.” Judge Dee takes it upon himself to “ reform these men, and engage their service later to assist him in executing the King’s business; in such a way their talents might be used to good purpose.” Judge Dee was successful in doing so and Ma Joong and Chiao Tai became major contributors in resolving the crimes. This is just one example of his honest, caring for the people of Chang-Ping. Judge Dee is therefore fulfilling his duty as defined by one of the Five Relationships.

Throughout the book, Judge Dee amazes us with his ability solve cases. His intuition never fails him in catching the criminal and providing a fair punishment. He demonstrates the values of kindness, morality and loyalty and thus he carries out his duty as the “ Mother and Father” of the Chang-Ping district. Although he is not an action-packed crime fighter that we often see on television nowadays in our culture, but I was still impressed with his

commitment to his position and to Confucian teachings and beliefs. FOR
THESIS

-Answer the question, show 3 or 4 examples of why - this will become the
base of the body paragraphs.

-Must be arguable

-Must have an attention getter

FOR BODY

-Confucianism - quote about how Confucianism shows he is a good
magistrate (answer the question), compare to today's world -Daoism - how
has the daoist side of JD influenced his decisions and actions during his
cases, how does this make him a good magistrate -Legalism - how has JD's
strict legalistic decisions help him along the way. -each paragraph needs a
concluding sentence, 3rd person, explain topic after topic sentence, explain
every quote