

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## NICOLLO MACHIAVELLI & *THE PRINCE*

1) Niccolo Machiavelli, a diplomat who worked for the Republic of Florence, wrote *The Prince* in 1513 after the overthrow of the Republic forced him into exile. It is widely regarded as one of the basic texts of Western political science and represents a basic change in the attitude and image of government.

2) Niccolo Machiavelli's best know work, *The Prince*, recorded the rules of the game of power politics. Previous writers of political philosophy tried to describe perfect governments – but Machiavelli had a different idea in mind. He wanted to understand how political leaders could best obtain and maintain power. He thought that trickery was more effective in achieving these goals than honesty. He also thought that acquiring and maintaining power was more important to rulers than being a “good” leader.

3) To stay in power, Machiavelli said rulers would have to ignore the lofty ideals of politics – honesty, justice, honor, generosity, and so on – and adopt whatever means necessary to gain and maintain power. In the excerpt below, Machiavelli offers advice on the kind of qualities a wise ruler should possess. As you read the excerpt, ask yourself how useful Machiavelli's advice would be to rulers in today's world.

### **Chapter XVII**

*Whether it is better to be loved than feared*

4) A controversy has arisen about this: whether it is better to be loved than feared, or vice versa. My view is that it is desirable to be both loved AND feared; but it is difficult to achieve both and, if one of them has to be lacking, it is much safer to be feared than loved.

5) For this may be said of men generally: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and deceivers, avoiders of danger, eager for gain. While you benefit from them if they are all devoted to you: they would shed their blood for you; they offer you their possessions, their lives, and their sons... But when you are hard pressed, they turn away. A ruler who has relied completely on their promises, and has neglected to prepare other defenses, will be ruined because friendships that are acquired with money, and not through greatness and nobility of character, are paid for but not secured, and prove unreliable just when they are needed.

6) Men are less hesitant about offending or harming a ruler who makes himself less loved than one who inspires fear. For love is sustained by a bond of gratitude which, because men are excessively self-interested, is broken whenever they see a chance to benefit themselves. But fear is sustained by a dread of punishment that is always effective.

Nevertheless, a ruler must make himself feared in such a way that, even if he does not become loved, he does not become hated.

### **Chapter XVIII**

#### *How rulers should keep their promises*

7) There are two ways that rulers can approach this topic: one by using laws, the other, force. The first is appropriate for men, the second for animals, but because the former is often ineffective, one must sometimes resort to the latter. Therefore, a ruler must know well how to imitate beasts as well as employing properly human means...

8) ...He should imitate both the fox and the lion, for the lion is liable to be trapped, whereas the fox cannot ward off wolves. One needs, then, to be a fox to recognize traps, and a lion to frighten away wolves. Those who rely merely upon a lion's strength do not understand matters.

9) Therefore, a prudent ruler cannot keep his word, nor should he, when such fidelity would damage him, and when the reasons that made him promise are no longer relevant. This advice would not be sound if all men were upright; but because they are treacherous and would not keep their promises to you, you should not consider yourself bound to keep your promises to them...

10) A ruler, then, should be very careful about everything he says: to those who see and hear him, he should seem to be exceptionally merciful, trustworthy, upright, humane and devout... Everyone can see what you appear to be, whereas few have direct experience with what you really are; and those few will not dare to challenge the popular view, sustained as it is by the majesty of the ruler's position.

\_\_\_\_\_ /25 points

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### Comprehension Questions

**Directions:** Read each question carefully and refer to the indicated paragraph (above) to reflect on and respond to the question. You will be graded on quality and accuracy so take your time and provide evidence from the text to support your responses.

1. What do rulers have to **do** to stay in power, according to Machiavelli (P3)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. According to Machiavelli, is it safer to be **loved** OR **feared**, and **why** (P4-6)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. According to Machiavelli, what is the general **nature of man** (P5)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What **animals** should a prince imitate and **why** (P8)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What does Machiavelli say about **appearance** (P10)?