The Seventeen Article Constitution

Directions: Read the information below and complete numbers 1 and 2 on a separate sheet of binder paper. Include your complete heading information and title as well.

In chapter 20, you learned or will learn, that Japan was strongly influenced by neighboring cultures, particularly China, from the 6th to the 9th centuries. In 593, a young man named Prince Shotoku came to power in Japan. The prince greatly admired Chinese culture. When he wrote Japan’s earliest code of law, called the Seventeen Article Constitution, he based much of it on ideas from the Chinese philosopher Confucius.

The Seventeen Article Constitution is different from other constitutions you may know. Only a few of the articles are about how the government should rule. Most are concerned with the moral behavior of individuals. One of the most important characteristics of the constitution is its emphasis on harmony. This idea came directly from Confucianism. Confucius believed that society worked well when people acted properly based on their roles and their relationship with others. All people must respect and obey those above them. In return, those above must behave properly to those below them.

Below is the first article from Prince Shotoku’s Seventeen Article Constitution. Confucius believed there were five basic relationships: ruler and subject, husband and wife, father and son, older sibling and younger sibling, and friend and friend.

Harmony is to be valued, and avoidance of wanton [wasteful] opposition to be honored. All men are influenced by class-feelings, and there are few who are intelligent. Hence there are some who disobey their lords... or who maintain feuds with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are friendly, and there is concord [agreement] in the discussion of business, right views of things spontaneously gain acceptance. Then what is there which cannot be accomplished!

1. Which relationship is the article above talking about? Use an example from the article to explain your answer.

Source

Investigating Primary Sources
Prince Shokoku based many of the ideas in his Seventeen Article Constitution on the teachings of Confucius. For instance, Confucius taught, “Do not do to others what you would not want to be done to you.”

2. Write your own constitutional article based on this idea.

Your article needs to:
· be one well-written paragraph that includes a topic sentence and a closing sentence.
· state clearly and specifically how the government should rule or how an individual should behave.
· be written neatly, have the correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Submit your assignment when finished.