

Comprehension Questions for *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli

1. For what reasons did Machiavelli write *The Prince*?
2. What were the mistakes of Louis XII listed by Machiavelli in Chapter 3? What general rule could one draw from them?
3. In Chapters 6 and 7, which vices are considered useful and advisable? Why?
4. Describe Cesare Borgia as he is presented in Chapter 7. Why did Machiavelli dedicate almost the entire chapter to him?
5. According to Machiavelli, why must a prince have both popular and military support? (Chapter 9)
6. Describe the four types of armies as seen by Machiavelli. What types of troops, according to Machiavelli, does he warn against and why? Describe the role of armies within the state according to Machiavelli. (Chapters 12-14)
7. Why does Machiavelli say that it is better for a prince “to be both loved and feared?” Is it possible for a prince to be both? Explain.
8. What is Machiavelli’s view of human nature? How does this help explain what he says about the way in which a prince should rule?
9. What is the crux of the dilemma of the prince that Machiavelli presents in Chapter 17?
10. What is the significance of the Myth of Chiron in Chapter 18? What are the qualities symbolized by the fox and the lion?
11. In Chapter 20, explain the three bits of advice Machiavelli gives a prince?
12. According to Machiavelli in Chapter 21, what must a prince do to be esteemed? In what way(s) are these ideas “modern”. (Modern = not previously developed, discussed or recognized in antiquity or the early Middle Ages)
13. Name three (3) recurring themes in *The Prince*. Describe the importance of each within the context of *The Prince*.
14. List and describe ten (10) characteristics of a Machiavellian ruler.
15. According to Machiavelli and Renaissance humanism, what is *virtù* and how would this positively impact the “state”?
16. Discuss Machiavelli's ideas about religion.
17. As you perceive it, what advantages and disadvantages might a citizen encounter living under a Machiavellian ruler?
18. Describe what a best-case-scenario and worst-case-scenario Machiavellian state might be like.
19. Why does Machiavelli support his arguments by citing examples of real historical and contemporary rulers?
20. According to Machiavelli, what roles do fate and fortune play in human life?

**“Whoever wants to be happy, let him be so:
about tomorrow there’s no knowing.”**
—Lorenzo The Magnificent