

Reading Questions: Machiavelli, *The Prince*

1. How does Machiavelli characterize the aims of *The Prince* in his letter to his friend, Francesco Vettori?
2. How does Machiavelli characterize fortune (*fortuna*) or fate throughout *The Prince*? What attitude does he suggest we take toward it?
3. What historical figures does Machiavelli single out for praise? Why? Who does he criticize and why?
4. What different means are there for acquiring power, according to Machiavelli? In which of these is he most interested?
5. What are the main supports for the authority of a prince, according to Machiavelli?
6. How would you characterize Machiavelli's use of history? Choose an historical example he uses in *The Prince* and analyze its significance.
7. Think of four or five words that help convey the meaning of Machiavelli's use of the term *virtù*. What qualities go along with it? What qualities are inimical to it? What historical examples does he use to illustrate it?
8. How does Machiavelli's use of the term *virtù* differ from a conventional understanding of virtue?
9. Compare Machiavelli's treatment of Cesare Borgia and Agathocles of Sicily. What are the important differences between these figures according to Machiavelli? Pay *very* close attention to the discussion of Agathocles in Ch. VIII: does Agathocles have *virtù*?
10. What is the relationship between *virtù* and *fortuna* according to Machiavelli?
11. What is Machiavelli's attitude toward the church? Toward religion?