Aim: How does Hinduism impact the lives of Hindus?

HW: p. 55 & 56 & Belief System Chart on Hinduism if you haven't done it already.
**Objective:** Explain how Hindu beliefs about caste have affected the Untouchables in India.

**Introduction**

Directions: Answer the questions below and prepare to share your response with the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How is a person’s class determined in the United States?</th>
<th>If you want to move into a higher class in the United States, can you do it? How?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- wealth/income</td>
<td>- get a higher paying job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- job</td>
<td>- get an education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- political power?</td>
<td>- Make connections with rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The President</td>
<td>- work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elected officials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Hindu Caste System is a rigid social hierarchy. It is a system for grouping people in society. It is called “rigid” because you cannot leave whichever caste you are born into. There is no social mobility. Your caste determines your job, where you live, and who you can associate with.


*Aryans were nobles in ancient India and were believed to be descendants of a group that migrated into India around 1500 BCE. Some of the Aryan belief system was blended with Indian beliefs which contributed to creating Hinduism.

The ultimate goal is to reach enlightenment or Moksha and unite with the universal Energy or Spirit called Brahman and to break out of the cycle of rebirths.
Read The Original Source Text: *The Bhagavad Gita*

**Introduction**

In the following excerpt from the *Bhagavad Gita*, there are two characters. One is named Arjuna. He is a warrior from the Kshatriya caste. His dharma [duty] as a member of that caste is to rule and to fight, but he does not want to fight in the battle he faces because he will have to fight against members of his own family and he does not want to cause them any more suffering. To encourage Arjuna to fulfill his dharma, the Hindu god, Vishnu, takes the form of a human and comes to Earth. Vishnu, who is the speaker in this text, then explains the importance of caste-duty, telling Arjuna that he must fight.

...The fourfold division of castes was created by me [Vishnu] according to the apportionment [distribution] of qualities and duties....The duties of Brāhmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, and of Śudras, too...are distinguished according to the qualities born of nature. Tranquility, restraint of the senses, penance, purity, forgiveness, straightforwardness, also knowledge, experience, and belief (in a future world), this is the natural duty of Brāhmins. Valour, glory, courage, dexterity, not slinking away from battle, gifts, exercise of lordly power, this is the natural duty of Kshatriyas. Agriculture, tending cattle, trade, (this) is the natural duty of Vaisyas, And the natural duty of Śudras, too, consists in service.

(Every) man intent on his own respective duties obtains perfection. Listen, now, how one intent on one's own duty obtains perfection. worshipping, by (the performance of) his own duty, him from whom all things proceed, and by whom all this is permeated, a man obtains perfection. One's duty, though defective, is better than another's duty well performed. Performing the duty prescribed by nature, one does not incur sin.... one should not abandon a natural duty though tainted with evil; for all actions are enveloped by evil, as fire by smoke.

1. According to Vishnu, how have the "duties of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, and of Śudras (II 2-3)" been determined?

2. List three qualities or duties of each of the following castes as described by Vishnu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brahmins</th>
<th>Kshatriyas</th>
<th>Vaisyas</th>
<th>Śudras</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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1 The people in each caste have a duty they are responsible for. If one completes their duty, they will have good karma, and receive a better incarnation in the next life. Brahmins teach and are responsible for religious ceremonies, Kshatriyas rule and fight, Vaisyas work, and Śudras serve.

UNIT 3 | Classical Civilizations | SQ 8 How does Hinduism impact the lives of Hindus?
Read The Original Source Text: The Bhagavad Gita

Introduction

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Contextualize

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1. According to Vishnu, how have the “duties of Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaisyas, and of Sudras (II 2-3)” been determined?

   Based on qualities born of nature

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Straight-forwardness</td>
<td>- Courage</td>
<td>- Agriculture</td>
<td>- Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Forgiveness</td>
<td>- Glory</td>
<td>- Tending cattle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Purity</td>
<td>- Valor</td>
<td>- Battle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Knowledge</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>- Trade</td>
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3. According to Vishnu, if one wanted to "obtain perfection," how could they do that?

   **Doing your job/duty!**

4. Explain what Vishnu means when he states “One’s duty, though defective, is better than another’s duty well performed. Performing the duty prescribed by nature, one does not incur sin…” (II 11-13).

   You must do your best at your job rather than doing another’s job, even if you could do it better.

5. If a Kshatriya, like Arjuna, followed all of Vishnu’s advice, how would he live his life? What would be his reward?

   He should be strong, be courageous, protect your people, and fight in battles, train.

6. Explain the extent to which this excerpt of the Bhagavad Gita is a reliable source of evidence about Hindu religious beliefs.

7. Explain the extent to which this excerpt of the Bhagavad Gita is a reliable source of evidence about the way caste-duty if followed in modern India.
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Watch this video on The Untouchables in India, then answer the questions below.

1. What types of jobs do the Untouchables in this video perform?

2. Where do they live?

3. How are the Untouchables treated by people born into higher castes?

4. What steps have been taken to stop discrimination against the Untouchables and improve their way of life? What have been the effects of these steps?

5. Why was it important that an upper caste man led the bull through the village during the ceremony at the end of the video?
3. According to Vishnu, if one wanted to “obtain perfection,” how could they do that?

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SQ: How does Hinduism impact the lives of Hindus?

- **Directions:** Use the information you learned about Hinduism to complete the [Belief Systems Chart](#), and then complete the task below.

Describe the caste system in Hinduism.

**Explain** how the caste system impacted different classes in Hinduism.

Hinduism has impacted individuals and society by creating a caste system that divides society into social classes. Each caste has an assigned job that they have to perform such as Kshatriyas, or warriors.