

Aim: What are the major beliefs and practices of Buddhism?

HW: p.56G - M

What are the major beliefs and practices of Buddhism?

Objective: Identify and describe the major beliefs, practices, and sacred texts of Buddhism.

Introduction

→Directions: Answer the questions below and be prepared to share them with other classmates.



Based on your experience, list three reasons why people suffer.

- Death - Bullying
- Starvation
- Torture
- Disease - illness
- Discrimination
- Dehydration
- Being alone / no family

Based on these three reasons, what do you think is the "root cause" of suffering?

- Loss of something or someone that means a lot.
- Oppression
 - unbalance of power

What are the major beliefs and practices of Buddhism?

Directions: Read the text and examine the images below and then answer the accompanying questions.

1. Philosophy or Religion?

Many people debate whether Buddhism is a **philosophy** or a **religion**. We refer to it as a "belief system" which includes both religions and philosophies.

Those who argue that Buddhism is a philosophy note that there is no worship of gods in the beliefs and practices associated with Buddhism. Instead, one's spiritual journey is guided by their own determination and their teacher. In this way, Buddhism is different than Hinduism which has thousands of gods.

1. Why do some people consider Buddhism a philosophy rather than a religion?

Because there is no worship of God.

2. Reincarnation, Enlightenment, and Nirvana

Like Hindus, Buddhists believe that there is escape from the cycle of reincarnation. For Buddhists, the goal of spiritual life is to reach "**nirvana**" after death. It is similar to *moksha* that Hindus strive for. Nirvana, in Sanskrit, means "blown out," as in a candle. It is the state of a still and empty mind. This can be accomplished by reaching a state of **enlightenment** like the Buddha did through intense **meditation**.



[Galvihara-sunw.jpg](#) by Lankapic is published under the [CC BY-SA 3.0 Unported](#) license

Statue of the reclining Buddha in Gal Vihara, Sri Lanka. The image of the reclining Buddha represents the last moments of the Buddha's life before he died and entered a state of nirvana.

2a. Do Buddhists believe in reincarnation?

Yes

2b. What is nirvana?

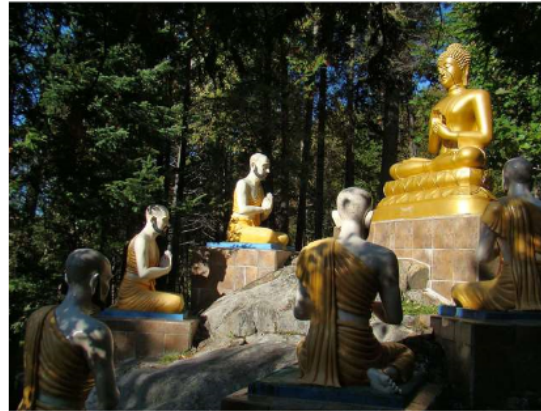
Nirvana = enlightenment = reaching an empty mind / becoming one with the universe.

2c. How do Buddhists believe one can achieve enlightenment?

Meditation

3. The Middle Path

Before devoting his life to seeking spiritual truth, according to legend, Siddhartha Gautama lived a life of luxury. When he left his father's palace, he became an ascetic, a person who practices extreme self-discipline and denies themselves any comfort. He found that neither route brought him enlightenment. Instead, it was the Middle Path, sometimes called the Middle Way. Buddha's teachings are meant to lead his followers down the Middle Path to enlightenment.



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Read it from the Sacred Text!

The following text is an excerpt from Buddha's sermon in which he describes the Middle Way. It is known as "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Law [Dharma]." This story was passed down orally by Buddhists until it was written down about two hundred years later in a collection known as the Three Baskets of Wisdom, or the *Tipitaka*.

Excerpt 1 from "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law[Dharma]" from the *Tripitaka*

Bhikkhus (Monks), these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone forth into homelessness. What two? The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble [not honorable], unbeneficial; and the pursuit of self-mortification [punishment of the body to strengthen spiritual connections], which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathagata [Buddha] has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna [Nirvana, or Enlightenment].

[Excerpt](#) is courtesy of Suttacentral and is in the public domain

3a. What are the "two extremes" that Buddha warns his disciples about?

One extreme = indulgence

Other extreme = abstinence

3b. Why is each extreme "unbeneficial?"

Indulgence - harms body + your soul

Abstinence → painful, causes suffering.

3c. What does the Buddha suggest his disciples strive for instead of the "two extremes?"

The Middle Way = Moderation

3d. Explain the extent to which this excerpt of Buddha's "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Law [Dharma]" is a reliable source of evidence about the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama

Some what reliable. It may have changed from the original, because it was first passed down orally.

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S = suffering C = Causes Suffering
E = Ends Suffering

4. Four Noble Truths

Buddha taught four principles that he believed to be true. They are called the **Four Noble Truths**. Put simply they are:

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering: **Life is suffering.**
2. The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering: **Suffering is caused by desire.**
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation [Stopping] of Suffering: **To end suffering, one must end desire.**
4. The Noble Truth of the Path: **To end suffering, follow the Eightfold Path.**

Excerpt 2 from "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law [Dharma]" from the *Tripitaka*

Now this, bhikkhus [monks], is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering,"

Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination.

Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, nonreliance on it.

*And what, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata [Buddha], which gives rise to vision ... which leads to Nibbāna [Nirvana]? It is this **Noble Eightfold Path**; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.*

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4a. What does the Buddha list as examples of suffering?

Illness, death, birth, aging,
not getting what you want...

4b. Buddhists believe that the 2nd Noble Truth, "Suffering is caused by desire," is true. Do you? State a claim and provide evidence (examples from your experience) to support it.

4c. According to Buddha, how can one end suffering?

END DESIRE!

4d. Explain the extent to which this excerpt of Buddha's "Setting in Motion the Wheel of Law [Dharma]" is a reliable source of evidence about the practices of modern-day Buddhists in the United States.

5. Eightfold Path

Buddhism's fourth Noble Truth states, "To end suffering, follow the Eightfold Path." The **Eightfold Path** describes how one should act to eliminate desire and thus suffering. The Eightfold Path is the **moral code of conduct** for Buddhists, similar to the Ten Commandments in Judaism and Christianity.

<p style="text-align: center;">Teachings of Siddhartha Gautama</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Eightfold Path</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Source: <i>The Human Experience, Glencoe</i> from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam.</p>	<p>"The Wheel of Life" is a common symbol of Buddhism. It represents the cycle of reincarnation. There are eight spokes in the wheel representing the Eightfold Path.</p> <p><small>Dharma Wheel.svg by Shazz, Esteban.barahona is published under the CC BY-SA 3.0 Unported license</small></p>
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Excerpt 3 from "Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Law [Dharma]" from the *Tripitaka*

And what, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision ... which leads to Nibbāna? It is this Noble Eightfold Path; that is, right belief¹, right aspiration², right speech³, right conduct⁴, right means of livelihood⁵, right endeavor⁶, right memory⁷, right meditation⁸. This, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

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5a. What do Buddhists suggest people do to alleviate suffering?

Follow the 8 fold path

5b. Describe what your day would be like if someone were to follow the Eightfold Path as Buddha describes it in the excerpt above.

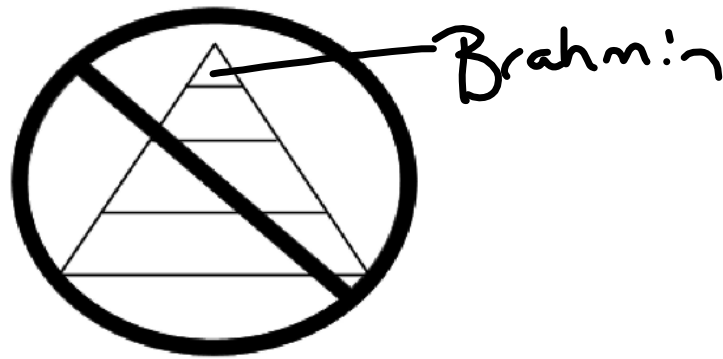
¹ The belief that life is suffering, that the Eightfold Path is the way to eliminate suffering and that it is possible to do.
² The process of removing bad thoughts, desires, and cruelty from one's mind before embarking on the path to Enlightenment.
³ Not lying, cursing, or speaking badly about others.
⁴ Conducting one's self honestly, and without killing or stealing.
⁵ Only doing jobs that do not harm others.
⁶ Avoids all distractions and bodily desires.
⁷ The act of focusing one's mind only on important topics like life, suffering and death.
⁸ Focused concentration that can lead to Enlightenment

6. Rejection of the Caste System

Buddhism started in a region of the world where Hinduism dominated, but **Buddha rejected a major part of Hindu society: the caste system.**

Buddha taught that anyone, regardless of their place in society, could achieve enlightenment if they realized the Four Noble Truths and followed the Eightfold Path.

Believe Everyone is equal.



6a. If you were a member of the Brahmin caste, how would you react to Buddha's teachings? Why?

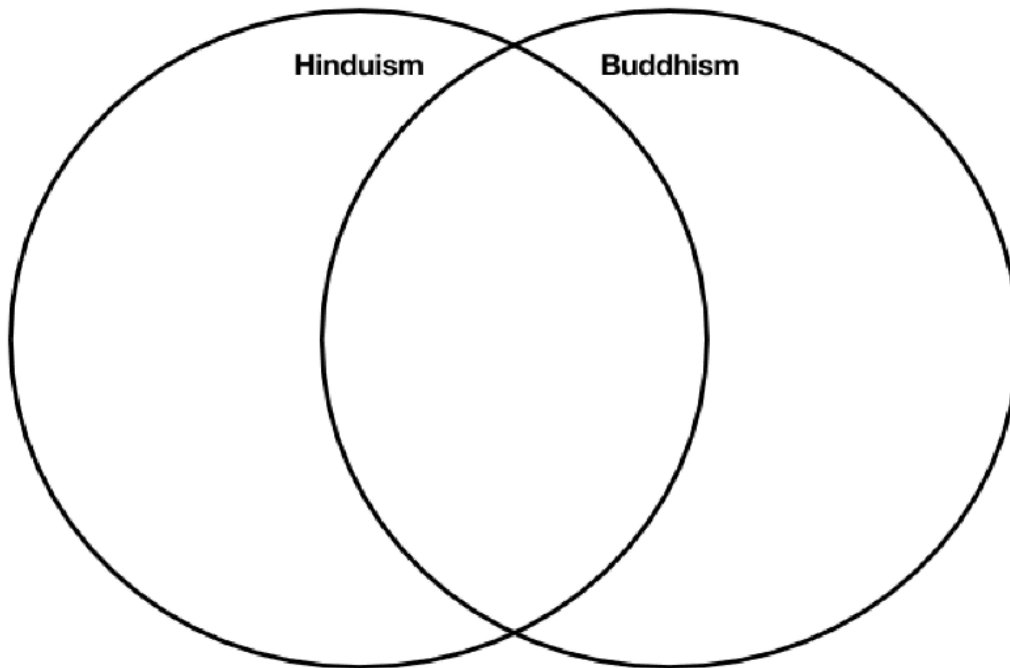
I wouldn't like it because I would lose power + status.

6b. If you were a member of the Untouchables or the Shudras caste, how would you react to Buddhism? Why?

I would like it because it treats me with respect + makes me equal to everyone else.

How are the beliefs, practices, and effects on social order of Hinduism and Buddhism similar? How are they different?

Directions: Review what you've learned about Hinduism and Buddhism, then fill in the Venn Diagram below to show what the belief systems have in common and how they differ.





SQ: What are the major beliefs and practices of Buddhism?

→ Directions: Use the information you learned about Buddhism to complete the [Belief Systems Chart](#), and then answer the question below.



Identify and describe Buddhism's

- Major beliefs and practices
- Sacred texts

Contextualize

Identify | Describe

• Tripitaka

→ Sacred text of Buddhism / means Three Baskets of Wisdom

• Meditation

→ Process of freeing one's mind / used to reach Nirvana.

• Reject caste system

• Reincarnation

• Middle Way

• Enlightenment / Nirvana

• 4 Noble Truths

• 8 Fold Path

HW - Complete p. 56M +
the Buddhism
Belief System Chart.

