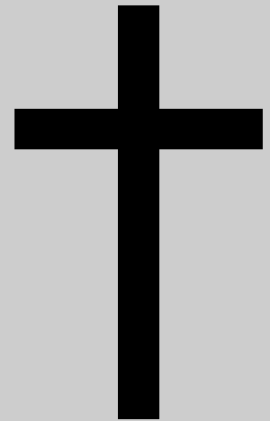
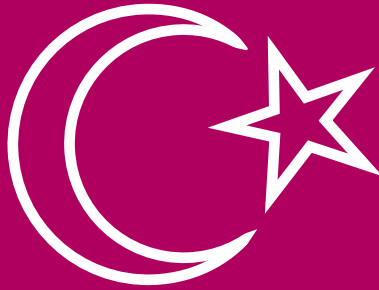


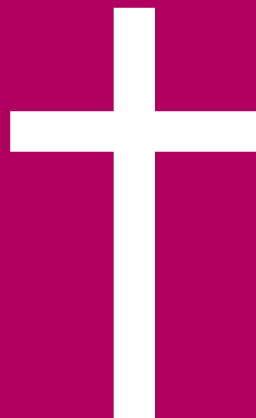
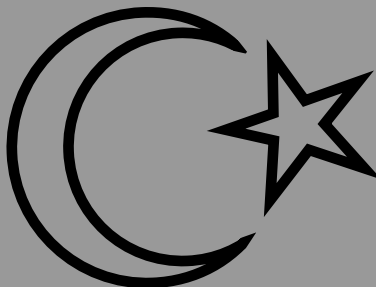
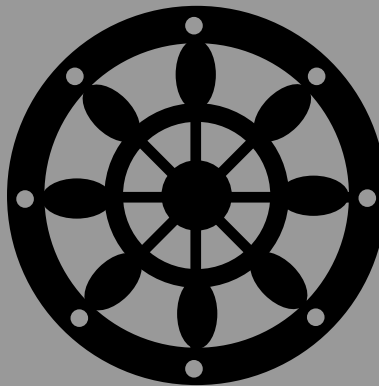


Faith & Belief:

Five Major World Religions



T E A C H E R ' S G U I D E



Faith & Belief:

Five Major World Religions

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T E A C H E R ' S
G U I D E

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Five Major World Religions

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Student activity sheets may be
duplicated for classroom use.

introduction



Goals

The goals of the video *Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions* and this teacher's guide are to help students understand and appreciate both what is unique and what is common to five of the most historically significant of the world's religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The video presents a brief summary of each religion and also traces the emergence and growth of all five. The teacher's guide provides a series of lessons that teach students to investigate and discuss some of the themes presented in the video.

Audience

Junior high / middle school students and high school students.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the video and completing the activities in this guide, students should be able to do the following:

- 1 Explain some of the most important concepts underlying Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.
- 2 Understand the contributions key religious leaders made to the growth of these religions.
- 3 Appreciate the way that these religions have responded to deeply felt questions that confront all human beings.
- 4 Make some initial comparisons among these religions and some other major world religions.

the video and guide



The Video

Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions presents an overview of the nature and origins of five world religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. The video begins with a series of philosophical questions about nature, existence, and human behavior, questions that all religions seem to address in one way or another: Why are we here? Why is nature sometimes so bountiful and other times so cruel? How must we behave toward one another? What happens to us after death? The video then looks at the way the five above-mentioned religions seek to explain some of the mysteries and hardships of human existence. It deals first with the religions that arose in the Middle East (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) contrasting them in several ways, but also stressing their common features — monotheism, a view of history as linear and progressive, etc. The focus then shifts to the East, with Hinduism and Buddhism presented as examples of a very different tradition: non-monotheistic and with a more cyclical conception of history. The video concludes by stressing the importance and continuing value of religion in the modern world.

The Guide

The teacher's guide consists of the following:

- 1** A brief introduction, stating goals and objectives and describing the video and guide.
- 2** The complete text of the video.
- 3** A readiness activity to be done before viewing the video and four follow-up lessons to be done after viewing it.
- 4** Reproducible activity sheets accompanying the lessons.
- 5** A brief list of additional resources.

video script



Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions

The world all around us is full of mystery — of beauty and wonder. Yet even today, the forces of nature can also easily overwhelm and destroy us.

*Volcanoes and earthquakes ...
Floods and storms ... Disease,
drought, and famine ...*

Why is nature so beautiful some times and so destructive other times? And what about humans? Our wars, our hatreds, our greediness — these are also often the causes of suffering. Why do innocent people suffer in this life? How are we to live and treat others? And what happens to us after death?

For thousands of years, people have struggled to answer these questions. Religion is an attempt to answer these most difficult and most troubling questions.

Religions have shaped faith and belief for hundreds of millions of people. And over the years, religious beliefs have taken thousands of forms. This is the story of five of the major religions that guide our world today.

Primitive peoples believed that spiritual forces, unseen powers, and gods were the causes of many of the mysteries of nature. Spirits or gods in trees, the sky, thunder, rain, the sun, and animals explained why the seasons changed ...

... why some got sick and others stayed healthy ...

... why crops grew, or withered in drought ...

... why warriors succeeded in battle, or fell in defeat.

People created rituals and sacrifices to please the gods — or apologize to them. In ancient Sumer, in the Middle East, people believed each city had its own god looking out only for the residents of that city. Ancient Egyptians believed their Pharaoh, or king, was actually a god who had taken human form to watch over all of Egypt.

Most early religions were ways to deal with the immediate fears and needs of a single tribe or nation. A god who protected one group of people was not seen as having any concerns about other groups. But in time, religions began to deal with broader matters, with questions of right and wrong, and with all of humanity.

Today, five such religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism — still influence and guide billions of people all over the world. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all began in the same region of the world — the Middle East. And all three religions share some of the same beliefs.

Judaism

Judaism began about 4,000 years ago as the religion of a small Middle Eastern group of people called Hebrews or Jews. The Hebrews wandered the lands between two of the Middle East's mighty civilizations — Babylon in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and Egypt in the valley of the Nile.

Powerful gods were said to protect these great empires and keep them strong. The Hebrews, too, had a God who watched over them. But in time, they developed a startling new, even revolutionary, idea about this God — the idea of monotheism, that there is only one god for all of humanity.

THE VIDEO SCRIPT

A group of ancient writings, called the Old Testament, tells how God made a special covenant, or agreement, with the Hebrews. He would protect them and bring them into a land of their own — Canaan. In return, the Hebrews must obey his laws, especially the laws spelled out in the tablets God gave to Moses — the Ten Commandments. In time, the Hebrews came to see God as the creator of the entire universe — and as the only true god.

He might show special favor toward the Hebrews. But in fact, all human beings were his children. He cared about all of them. For the followers of Judaism, history has a purpose. God is leading humanity to a better future. History is the story of God's plan for humanity.

As we've seen, the three central ideas of Judaism are:

Monotheism — the idea of a single God.

Lawfulness — the idea that God sets down moral laws and agrees to be fair to those who obey them.

History — the idea that God is changing the world and leading humanity to a better life.

Today, followers of Judaism live all over the world, but most live in Israel, the U.S., and the former Soviet Union. They worship God in special buildings called synagogues.

In Judaism the Shabbat, or Sabbath, is a special day of rest and prayer. This weekly holy day begins at dusk on Friday and continues through Saturday.

There are only about 17 million Jews in the world today. But from Judaism grew two other religions — Christianity and Islam. Both of these religions have hundreds of millions of followers.

Christianity

Like Jews, Christians also believe in one God, in God's lawfulness and his role in guiding human history. They accept the version of history described in the Old Testament. But for Christians, the most important events took place later in history — the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

According to the writings of the New Testament, Jesus Christ was a Hebrew who was born in Jerusalem about 2,000 years ago, when the Middle East was part of the ancient Roman Empire.

Christians believe that Christ is God's son, who was sent to Earth to teach people to love one another as God loves them. Christ taught that rich and poor, Jew and non-Jew, are all equally important in God's eyes.

Some powerful leaders in Israel and in the Roman Empire disliked and feared Christ's teachings. And they executed him as a criminal — they nailed him on a cross and left him to die. Yet Christ's death was what allowed his message to triumph.

According to the New Testament, after Christ's death, he appeared to his followers — the 12 apostles. He told them that those who had faith in him and followed God's teachings would be forgiven their sins and have everlasting life.

In the view of some historians, Christianity is centered around a single image — an image of God, or his Son, not as a glorious and powerful king ... but as a human being ... moreover, a humble, kind human being.

Today, Christian religions take many different forms. Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and Baptists are just a few religious denominations that follow a belief in Christ.

They worship in churches, with joyous singing, with readings from the Bible, and with silent prayers. Many Christians attend church services on Sunday, their day of rest.

From its beginnings in the Middle East, Christianity has spread to all parts of the globe. Today, more than a billion people belong to one of the many Christian churches.

THE VIDEO SCRIPT

Islam

Islam, the Muslim religion, is another religion with roots in the Middle East. Islam began in the ancient city of Mecca, in the middle of the great desert that today makes up much of Saudi Arabia.

There, around 610 A.D., the prophet Muhammad began to describe messages he said the Angel Gabriel had given him from God. In time, these beliefs were written down in Islam's holy book — the Koran.

The Koran teaches all Muslims how they are to worship. And it sets down in detail all other important rules for daily living. According to Islam, God, or Allah, demands strict obedience of all his laws.

All Muslims must follow five main duties:

They must profess their belief in God and in Muhammad as God's prophet.

They must pray five times each day, facing in the direction of Mecca.

Muslims must give alms to the poor.

They must fast during the special month of Ramadan.

And if possible, at least once in their lives, they must make a pilgrimage to the Muslim holy city of Mecca.

Muslims from all over the world travel to Mecca. For them, the pilgrimage is one of life's most important events. During their pilgrimage, they must follow many special ceremonies over the course of several days. But before they enter the mosque in Mecca, they must wash and change into clean clothes.

One of the most important ceremonies involves walking or running around a shrine, called the Kaaba, seven times.

The Kaaba holds the sacred Black Stone in its walls. Pilgrims kiss or salute the stone as they circle the Kaaba, saying "God is the greatest."

Like Christians, Muslims believe in life after death. They believe Allah will send the good to heaven, and the bad to hell. Muslims have not set aside a weekly day of rest. But on Fridays, all male Muslims must attend prayers at a mosque.

Islam began with one group of people in the Middle East — the Arab people. Later, the religion spread far beyond the Arab world — into Europe, Africa, and Asia. Today there are more non-Arab Muslims than there are Arabs — about 800 million believers in all.

Muslims, Christians, and Jews all follow the belief in a single, all-powerful God. This God cares about people. He works through history to change the world and to end suffering and evil.

The problem of suffering and evil also lay at the heart of religion in Asia. But in Asia, the major religions — Hinduism and Buddhism, in particular — dealt very differently with this and many other problems of life.

Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the oldest living religions in the world.

It began about 4,000 years ago in the villages and cities of India.

Since ancient times, Indians believed that rivers — especially the sacred Ganges River — were gifts from the gods. The Ganges is a powerful symbol for most Hindus.

A river flows continuously. But it is always the same. In Hinduism, the river is a symbol for the soul — it is the same, endless, yet constantly being reborn, or reincarnated, from lifetime to lifetime.

Along with reincarnation, Hindus believe that our actions in this life determine the human or animal form our soul takes in its next life. An evil soul, for example, might be reborn as a lowly insect. Someone who lived a good life might be reborn as a prince, a priest, or a cow — an animal that is sacred to Hindus.

THE VIDEO SCRIPT

Hindus have long accepted the Indian idea of caste — a rigid way of ranking people. People from all walks of life belonged to one of four castes. People who followed their caste's rules and lived a good life could rise to higher castes in future rebirths. Those who did not, risked reincarnation as an untouchable — a person with no caste who is ignored and mistreated. Today, India has outlawed the caste system.

In any case, the ultimate Hindu goal is not a better caste. It is to win release completely from this endless round of rebirth and redeath — to achieve spiritual perfection and to be free of the pain and suffering of this world.

Hindus are polytheistic — they worship many gods. The most important are ...

Vishnu — the preserver of the world.

Shiva — the destroyer, and also the creative force in the world.

And Shiva's wife, who — like the others — often appears in many different forms. As Parvati or Uma, she is the goddess of motherhood. As Durga or Kali, she is the goddess of destruction.

In Hinduism, all of the gods and goddesses make up one universal spirit, called Brahman.

Most Hindus worship individually

— outdoors, in temples, or in the home. Many Hindu homes have small shrines dedicated to a god chosen by the family. Today, more than 700 million people follow this religion. Most Hindus live in India, but Hinduism has a strong following in other Asian nations.



Buddhism

Like Hindus, Buddhists believe that existence is a cycle of death and rebirth. Unlike other major religions, Buddhism does not stress a belief in a supreme being or in powerful gods. Instead, Buddhists focus on the idea of spiritual enlightenment, which must come from within each person.

Buddhism began about 2500 years ago in northern India, with the teachings of one man. This man was a prince named Siddhartha Guatama. Siddhartha felt something was missing in his comfortable palace life. He was saddened by the death, the disease, and the suffering he saw in the world. He left his luxurious palace and gave away his belongings. At first, he denied himself all comfort and pleasure.

But in the end, he decided that suffering and denial were no better than luxury and laziness. He began to meditate. According to legend, he finally attained enlightenment while meditating under a bodi tree. He then became the Buddha, which means "the enlightened one."

Today, millions of people in Asia follow the teachings of Buddha. They have built hundreds of temples in honor of Buddha — but they do not worship Buddha as a god.

Some of the most devout Buddhists, monks and nuns, live in separate communities, away from the complexities and distractions of the world at large.

All Buddhists follow what they call the "Middle Way" — a path of moderation, neither giving in to desires and wants, nor struggling to deny them. Instead, they seek control over their inner lives.

Buddhists believe that by controlling the mind and spirit they will achieve "nirvana" — a perfect state of peace and happiness. Buddhists believe that those who achieve nirvana can escape the weary round of death and rebirth. Only then can they achieve a profound and indescribable joy in life.

Though Buddhism began in India, it did not remain strong there. Instead, several forms of it spread throughout other parts of Asia — to China, Tibet, Korea, and Japan. Today, there are more than 300 million Buddhists.

For Buddhists and Hindus, history and nature move in endless cycles. Life is a circle, a constant repetition of birth and rebirth. Peace and happiness come from within.

THE VIDEO SCRIPT

In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, history moves in a line. There is progress. God has a plan to save human souls from suffering.

All of these religions have important ideas to teach. And all have made terrible mistakes, as well.

Followers of many religions, for example, have done cruel things in the names of their religions. They have declared “holy wars” in which people of different faiths were imprisoned or killed. They have accused innocent women of witchcraft and sentenced them to death.

Today, some say the traditional religions no longer offer answers for the problems of the modern world. But others disagree. They say that religion is needed now as never before, as a guide and solace to people in a very confusing era.

The ideas of the great religious teachers — Christ, Muhammad, Buddha, and many others — have not been lost. Their ideas about how to live and how to treat others still play an important role in people’s lives. People everywhere — even people who do not follow any religion — follow religion’s basic teachings of good and evil. These basic lessons continue to inspire and guide the faith, belief, and actions of our world. □



Meditating Buddha

readiness activity

(Do this activity before viewing the video.)



Understanding World Religions

Objective:

To better enable students to understand some of the main terms, explanations, and historical references in the video.

- 1 Split your class into four or five smaller groups.
- 2 Reproduce and pass out copies of the Readiness Activity Sheet (see opposite), which contains a list of terms and vocabulary words.
- 3 Give each group about 15 minutes to discuss the terms and try to agree on definitions. Ask one person in each group to act as secretary and record each of the group's definitions in one or two sentences.
- 4 As a whole class, have the secretaries read their definitions and discuss them. Try to supply accurate definitions where necessary. Then tell the class that they will be viewing a video about five major world religions that will make use of and expand on the terms on their lists.
- 5 Show video.

readiness activity sheet

FAITH & BELIEF: FIVE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

In a small group, discuss the following terms. Have one member of the group act as secretary and record an agreed-upon definition for each of the terms in the space provided.

Monotheism

Moses

Jesus Christ

Salvation

Mecca

Muhammad

The Koran

Reincarnation

Caste

Buddha

Nirvana

FAITH & BELIEF: FIVE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

classroom activities

(Do these activities after viewing the video)



Lesson 1

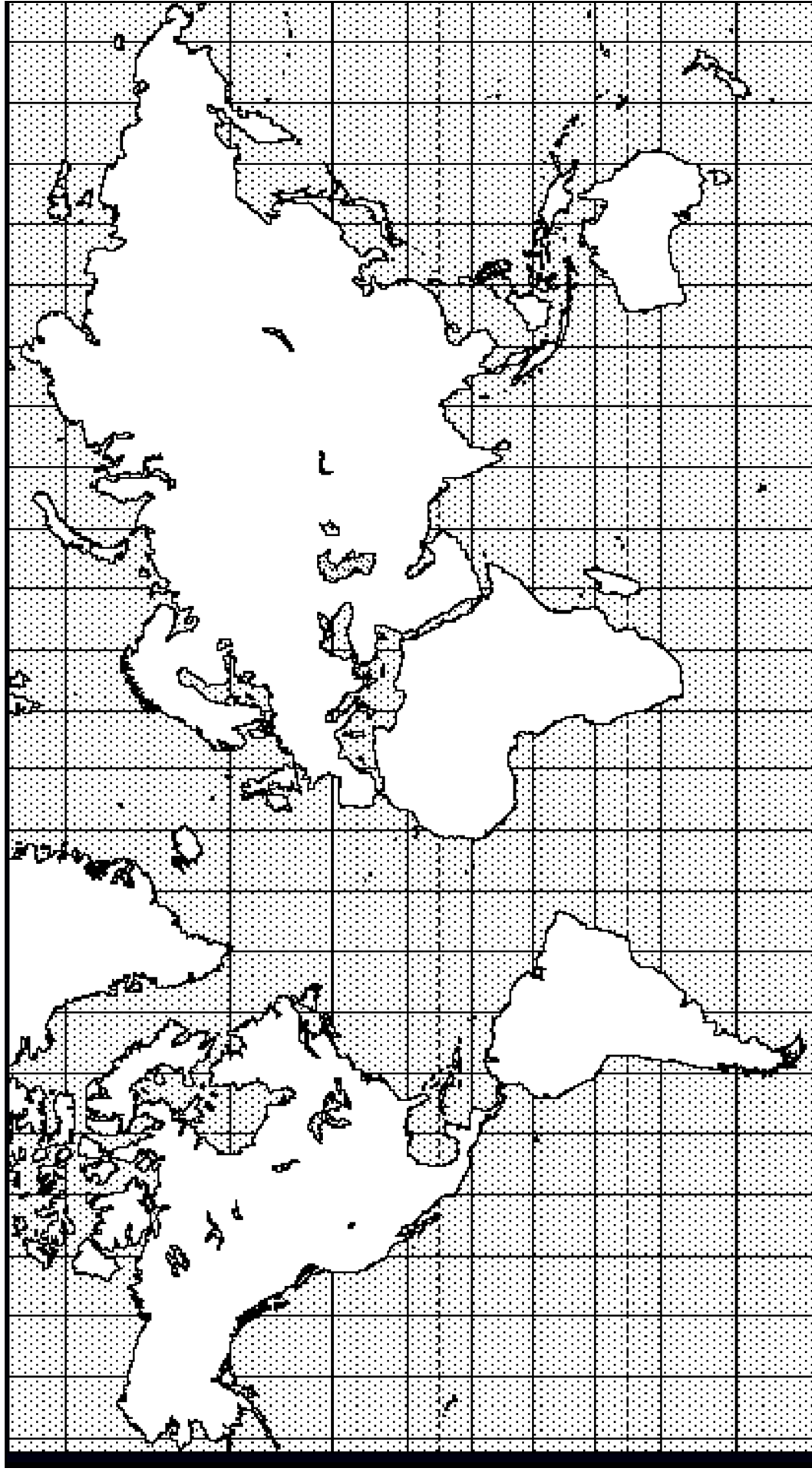
Objective:

To enable students to better appreciate the relative size and geographical extent of the five world religions reviewed in the video.

- 1 Ask students to use history texts and encyclopedias to find out where most of the followers of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism live.
- 2 Reproduce and hand out copies of Activity Sheet for Lesson 1 (see opposite), which contains an outline map of the world.
- 3 Ask students to create a key for the five religions and color in the areas where each religion is dominant. In the case of Judaism, areas of greatest concentration will overlap with other religions.
- 4 On a separate piece of paper, have students create a bar graph illustrating the estimated total number of adherents of each of these five faiths.

activity sheet

Lesson 1



☐ Judaism ☐ Christianity ☐ Islam ☐ Hinduism ☐ Buddhism

classroom activities



Lesson 2

Objective:

To enable students to recognize that religions evolve in part because of the efforts of important religious leaders and thinkers, who have influenced millions with their words and deeds.

- 1** Reproduce and hand out copies of Activity Sheet for Lesson 2 (see opposite). This activity sheet lists several important figures in the history of religion.
- 2** Point out that what we know about some of these figures depends entirely on accounts of them in religious writings. Our knowledge of others is more extensive and historically grounded.
- 3** Give each student the task of learning more about the figures on the list. Have them complete the activity sheet using resources in the library and elsewhere.
- 4** Divide the class into four groups. Assign each group responsibility for one of the four figures listed on the activity sheet. Pass out copies of all of the completed activity sheets to each group. Have each group use the activity sheets to prepare a short presentation on the religious leader it has been assigned.

activity sheet

Lesson 2

Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions

The names of four important religious figures are listed here. Use history textbooks, encyclopedias, or other resources to fill in the information below in a few sentences.

Moses

Who he was

His most important teachings

Muhammad

Who he was

His most important teachings

Jesus

Who he was

His most important teachings

Siddhartha Guatama

Who he was

His most important teachings

FAITH & BELIEF: FIVE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

classroom activities



Lesson 3

Objective:

To enable students to make some initial comparisons and contrasts among the writings found in some of the world's great religious texts.

- 1 Reproduce and hand out copies of Activity Sheet for Lesson 3 (see opposite). The activity sheet lists the names of two groups of sacred writings.
- 2 Have students choose two of the writings listed in the activity sheet. One choice must come from Group A — writings belonging to religions that arose in the Middle East. The other choice must come from Group B — religious writings from Asia.
- 3 Give students time to locate and read parts of the two writings they have chosen. Then have them complete the activity sheet. Select some of the activity sheets as the basis for a class discussion.

activity sheet

Lesson 3

Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions

Below are two groups of sacred writings from some of the religions discussed in the video *Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions*. Those in Group A are from religions that arose in the Middle East. Those in Group B are from religions that arose in Asia. Choose two of these sacred writings, one from Group A and one from Group B, and read parts of each of them. Find a passage in each that you especially like. Copy each passage and answer the two questions that follow. You may use additional paper.

Group A

**The Old Testament
The New Testament
The Koran
The Talmud**

Group B

**Bhagavad-Gita
Mahabharata
Ramayana
Vedas**

Passage from Group A

Passage From Group B

How do the two passages differ?

How are the two passages alike?

FAITH & BELIEF: FIVE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

classroom activities



Lesson 4

Objective

*To give students a chance to compare
what they have learned about the five religions in the video
to other major religions of the world.*

- 1 Reproduce and hand out copies of Activity Sheet for Lesson 4 (see opposite). This sheet asks for information on one of several other major religions.
- 2 Give students time to research one of the religions listed in the activity sheet.
- 3 Have each student complete the activity sheet.
- 4 Use some of the activity sheets as the basis for class discussions on some of the other major world religions.

activity sheet

Lesson 4

Faith & Belief: Five Major World Religions

Some Other World Religions

Choose one of the religions listed below and complete the following information as it pertains to that religion. (Use additional paper if necessary.)

Bahai

Confucianism

Jainism

Rastafarianism

Shinto

Sikhism

Taoism

Zoroastrianism

Founder, if any

Sacred Writings or Myths

Major Beliefs

FAITH & BELIEF: FIVE MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

additional resources



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