

LESSON TOPIC: Buddhism: *Becoming “the Force”***Learning Targets**

I CAN...

- a. identify Buddhist terms, concepts, and historical figures: Siddhartha, Middle Way, Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, meditation, impermanence, karma, reincarnation, enlightenment, and nirvana;
- b. summarize the story of Siddhartha and the rise of Buddhism;
- c. compare and contrast Hindu and Buddhist beliefs about suffering (causes/effects) and enlightenment.

QUICK INTRODUCTION: BASIC BUDDHIST BELIEFS ABOUT GOD

1. Impermanence. Buddhists think life is created by changing energies; nothing is permanent.
2. God. Since nothing is permanent, Buddhists believe there is no permanent God or soul.

THE STORY OF SIDDHARTHA. The religion of Buddhism began with a man named Siddhartha Gautama. Siddhartha was born in northern India (in present-day Nepal) in the sixth century BCE. His wealthy parents wanted him to become a great prince. So they kept him in their palace, away from the problems of the world. They gave him everything he wanted. But one day Siddhartha snuck out of the palace and wandered into the city. He saw an old man, a sick man, and a dead man. This was the first time he ever saw suffering. Disturbed, Siddhartha wanted to discover the cause and end of suffering. This wisdom about suffering is called Enlightenment.

Siddhartha tried to seek Enlightenment by denying all desires, including food. He quickly realized that extreme self-denial caused weakness, which made understanding difficult. Extreme wealth was equally bad. Wealth created more desires than poverty. So Siddhartha followed a Middle Way – a healthy lifestyle between wealth and poverty. By following a healthy path, Siddhartha felt prepared to seek Enlightenment. He sat down under a Bodhi Tree and decided not to rise until he reached Enlightenment. After 49 days of meditation (intense concentration), he discovered four truths. He came out of meditation as a Buddha – an enlightened “Awakened One.”

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS. Siddhartha’s “awakening” came because he discovered that:

1. All life is full of suffering.
2. Desire is the cause of suffering.
3. To end suffering, one must eliminate desire.
4. To eliminate desire, one must follow the “Eightfold Path.”
 - a. Those who follow their desires earn bad karma, which causes reincarnation.

THE EIGHTFOLD PATH. The Eightfold Path required seekers of Enlightenment to have...

1. Right view: *Buddhists must see that desires cause bad karma, and bad karma leads to a life of suffering.*
2. Right intention: *Buddhists must try to get rid of personal qualities that are harmful (like jealousy).*
3. Right speech: *Buddhists must not gossip, tell lies, and abuse others with words.*
4. Right action: *Buddhists must not murder, steal, harm, or participate in immoral sexual activity.*
5. Right livelihood: *Buddhists must avoid jobs and careers that bring harm to others.*
6. Right effort: *Buddhists must speak and act in ways that bring out the best in themselves and in others.*
7. Right mindfulness: *Buddhists must always be aware of things that affect their bodies and thoughts.*
8. Right concentration: *Buddhists must meditate on objects in order to gain true wisdom about them.*

NIRVANA. Meditation teaches Buddhists that everything is connected – nothing is separate. Buddhists believe people desire what they do not have; if a Buddhist feels connected to the things he wants, then he will not desire them. This is the wisdom an enlightened Buddha. When an enlightened Buddha dies, he gains freedom from *samsara*, the punishing cycle of reincarnation (rebirth). The energies that created him will become part of the energies of the universe. This enlightened state of freedom from suffering and rebirth is called *nirvana*.

HINDUISM

BUDDHISM

SIMILARITIES

1. Both religions began in India.	4. Both religions practice meditation.
2. Both religions believe desire is the cause of suffering and prevents true wisdom.	5. Both religions believe reincarnation is a punishment for living with desire.
3. Both religions believe in the law of karma: One's actions affect the future.	6. Both religions stress the importance of nonviolent and compassionate behavior.

DIFFERENCES

WITH REGARD TO...

Hindus believe in a permanent truth/god/reality beyond us (Brahman) and a permanent soul within us (<i>atman</i>).	The Soul	Buddhists believe life is constantly changing. Because of constant changes, there cannot be a permanent soul.
Hindus focus on connecting the mind to the true self (<i>atman</i>).	Meditation	Buddhists focus on achieving <i>anatman</i> by disconnecting the mind from the self.
Hindus believe that one may achieve an Enlightened mindset through prayer and meditation, which ultimately causes one to see the unity of all living things in God. Seeing thus, one acts accordingly toward others and also commits to the abandonment of worldly desires.	Seeking Enlightenment	Buddhists believe anyone can become a Buddha (an Enlightened One) by observing the Four Noble Truths and by following the Eightfold Path, which will help one achieve the renunciation of desire.
When an Enlightened One dies, his soul is released from the cycle of reincarnation. The soul becomes part of Brahman. This state of perfect peace and redemption is called <i>Moksha</i> .	Death after Enlightenment	A Buddha is one who discovers that everything is connected, that nothing is separate, and thus that desire is pointless. When a Buddha dies, his energies reunite with those of the universe. This peaceful, redemptive reunion is called <i>Nirvana</i> .