

World Religions Scavenger Hunt

Lindsay Smith

Station 1

The Ohio New Learning Standard for 6th grade that addresses the study of world religions is the following:

Theme: Regions and People of the Eastern Hemisphere

Strand: Geography

Topic: Human Systems: Human systems represent the settlement and structures created by people on Earth's surface. The growth, distribution and movements of people are driving forces behind human and physical events. Geographers study patterns in cultures and the changes that result from human processes, migrations and the diffusion of new cultural traits.

Content Statement: 8. Modern cultural practices and products show the influence of tradition and diffusion, including the impact of major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism).

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded on the teachings and principle of Siddhartha Gautama. He was born around 563 BCE. He later became known as The Buddha. Buddhism is currently the fourth largest religion in the world with 400 - 500 million followers. This religion is very different than other world religions being that it is not based upon the idea of a God. Instead, followers of Buddhism are encouraged to reach a position of enlightenment. When a person reaches enlightenment, they understand the truth about themselves and their surrounding world. Buddhist followers are encouraged to embrace the Four Noble Truths which include the following: life is suffering, suffering is due to attachment to things, attachment can be overcome, and there is a life path to accomplish all. The path is called the Noble Eightfold Path. Finally, there are two types of Buddhism. Theravada is a traditional and most ancient type of Buddhism which includes fewer changes. Mahayana is the other type of Buddhism and arose about 500 years after the Buddha attained Enlightenment. The religions was adapted by including new ideas, people, and culture.

Ganeri, A. (2002). *What do we know about Buddhism?* New York, NY: Peter Bedrick Books.

This nonfiction book would be useful as a reference book for students or for students to read if they had an interest in learning more about Buddhism. The book

answers common questions about the religion as well as gives details about important dates and sacred texts.

O'Brien, B. (2012). *What is Buddhism?* Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZLph_GawI

The YouTube video is very informational. It is short and to the point. The video delivers the history behind the religion as well as gives the main principles for Buddhism. This would be a good resource to introduce the religion.

World Religions for Kids. (n.d.) *Buddhism*. Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from <https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/buddhism>

This website outlines the most important facts of Buddhism. It even has links to information videos, maps, and pictures. Students can easily navigate through the information, and the reading level is easy enough for 6th grade students to understand. It also has links to more information about a variety of other world religions.

Christianity

Christianity is currently the most practiced religion throughout the world. It is a monotheistic religion meaning that there is only one god being worshipped. It is believed that God is the Holy Trinity - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the sacred text / holy book of the religion. It is divided into the Old Testament which was written before the birth of Jesus and the New Testaments. Most of the New Testaments have 27 "books". Christianity is based in the teachings of Jesus Christ who was born in 1 CE in Bethlehem. He was then crucified around 33 CE in Jerusalem. Christians believe that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to his disciples which made him the Savior who was promised in the Old Testament. It is believed that Jesus died for the sins of his followers. Christianity was unpopular until the people of the Roman Empire began converting to Christianity. Then, Christianity began to spread throughout Europe. Currently, there are three main denominations of Christianity: Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant. Then, the denominations are further divided into more denominations.

Morgan, E. (2015). *Who was Jesus?* Hartford, CT: Grosset & Dunlap.

The book is part of the Who Was...? series. It provides a biography of what is known about Jesus and his life. The book explains the historical aspect of Christianity

and how it has spread to become a major religion in our current day society. The book outlines the main characteristics of Christianity.

Oleksiuk, J. (2009). *What is Christianity?* Retrieved July 16, 2015 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut-UOhY0s8E>

This video would be a great introduction to the study of Christianity! It is short and wraps up the major points of Christianity. It describes how the faith is complex including the story of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The video highlights the main characteristics of the religion.

Slick, M. (n.d.) *What is Christianity?* Retrieved July 16, 2015 from <https://carm.org/what-is-christianity>

This online article provides details of Christianity. It starts with historic information including the birth and crucifixion of Jesus. Then, it outlines the major events that led to the spread of Christianity as well as the different denominations of Christianity. It would be a good resource for students to read to answer predetermined questions.

Hinduism

Hinduism is the world's oldest religion and is a combination of religious, philosophical, and cultural ideas and practices. The earliest scriptures of this religion were written around 6500 BCE, and some scholars believe that the religion was founded around 10000 BCE. There are prominent themes that emerge in Hinduism: Dharma (ethics and duties), Samsara (rebirth), Karma (right action), and Moksha (liberation from Samsara). The Hinduism belief is that there is one supreme god named "Brahman". There are thousands of other deities that represent the many different aspects of Brahman. The Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are considered the creator, preserver, and destroyer. Hindus also worship animals, trees, spirits, and planets. One well known belief of Hinduism is that of reincarnation.

Das, S. (2012). *Hinduism for beginners*. Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from <http://hinduism.about.com/od/basics/p/hinduismbasics.htm>

This online article is extremely kid friendly! It is a series of common questions asked about the Hindu faith. The answers are short, concise and written in a manner that students would be able to understand. The article outlines the history of Hinduism, beliefs, practices, traditions, and the different deities.

Patel, S. (2006). *The little book of Hindu deities: From the goddess of wealth to the sacred cow*. Plume.

This book brings to life the most important gods and goddesses of Hinduism. The different deities are shown through illustrations and have short profiles. This would be a good resource for students exploring and learning more about the Hindu religion. There are deities ranging from monsters and demons to warriors and princesses. There will be a deity that every student thinks is interesting or will think the story behind the deity is interesting.

Sanstha, S. (2015). *Things to know: Scriptures*. Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from <http://kids.baps.org/thingstoknow/scriptures/4.htm>

The online site and article explain in kid-friendly language what the Four Vedas are, which is important to the Hindu religion. The Four Vedas are the following: Rigveda, Samveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. The article gives a brief description of each and how it relates to Hinduism.

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion, and it is the second most popular in the world. Scholars believe the religion began 600 years after Christianity. Muhammad was born in 570 CE and was visited by the Archangel Gabriel. Gabriel told Muhammad the message from God, and was written down in book. This book is the holy text of Islam, known as the Koran. Muslims call God "Allah". Muslims worship in a mosque and are supposed to pray five times a day. The time of prayer is closely related to the timing of the sun. There are two main denominations in the Islamic religion - Sunni and Shi'a. The Five Pillars of Islam are extremely important. These Five Pillars are the following: Shahadah (belief that Muhammad was God's messenger), Salat (pray five times a day), Zakat (give back to the poor and needy), Sawm (abstain from food and drink from sun up to sun down during Ramadan), and Hajj (attempt to travel to Mecca at least once in a lifetime).

Khan, H. (2015). *Golden domes and silver lanterns: A Muslim book of colors*. Rockville, MD: Chronicle Books.

The book is a children's book, but would be good as a read aloud to the students. It is simple and outlines the different celebrations and traditions that the Islamic religion consists of. It helps introduce concepts of the religion to young readers as well.

Stone, C. (2005). *DK eyewitness books: Islam*. DK: Children.

This nonfiction book helps students discover the Islamic faith, culture, and history. It provides details on how the ancient religion has influenced the modern Islamic world. Traditions and celebrations are outlined as well as multiple photographs of artifacts, sacred texts, and modern-day pictures that help to illustrate the religion and bring it to life.

World Religions for Kids. (n.d.) *Islam*. Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from <https://sites.google.com/site/worldreligionsforkids/islam>

This website breaks down the most important aspects of the religion of Islam. It is written in kid friendly language and incorporates pictures, maps, and videos. It also has links to other sources. I could see this resource being very useful while students are reading or researching this religion.

Judaism

Judaism is monotheistic religion. It began around 1812 BCE when a covenant was established between God and Abraham in Israel. The Torah is Judaism's sacred text which was given to the Jews by the Prophet Moses about 3,300 years ago. The Torah includes five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Followers of Judaism believe that there is a single God who created the universe. Each Jewish follower is able to have an individual relationship with God. There are three different types of Judaism: Orthodox, Reform, and Liberal. The main Jewish celebrations and holy holidays are Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Hanukkah.

Barrow, M. (n.d.). *Judaism for children*. Retrieved on July 16, 2015 from <http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/homework/religion/jewish.htm#orig>

This website was designed for kids in mind! It is meant for a middle school homework help. The site lists common questions that surround Judaism and provides kid friendly answers. There are pictures, videos, and even links for additional resources. It would also be a good resource for the other religions too, because there is a tab for all of the previous religions mentioned.

Heiligman, D. (2008). *Holidays around the world: Celebrate Hanukkah!* National Geographic Children's Books.

This book gives students a closer look at the well known Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. It presents the history of the holiday as well as presents information on how different Jewish communities around the world celebrate the holiday in current day society.

Stone, C. (2003). *DK eyewitness books: Judaism*. DK: Children.

This nonfiction books helps students discover the history, faith, and culture of the Jewish religion. The book integrates pictures with information for a perfect resource for kids in the classroom. The information presented also surrounds the traditions, sacred texts, important artifacts, and celebrations of Judaism.

Station 2

Competency: *Develop skills in leading students in discussion regarding their religious beliefs and practices, as well as the beliefs and practices of others.*

It is important for teachers to be able to lead students in a civil discussion about religion. According to the AAR K-12 Curriculum guide, “religion is a subject where students can feel that their own personal experiences give them special knowledge and authority” (p. 11). It is important that teachers teach students how to express their opinions about their own religion as well as other religions. Also, students may have negative feelings towards other religions, and it is important to help them express their opinion without fostering further prejudice or causing the learning environment to become affected in a negative way. Therefore, “it is imperative to foster a climate of tolerance, respect, and honesty by encouraging students to move away from making generalizations toward more qualified statements” (p. 12). Teachers must first develop a positive learning environment where students can share their opinions but in a constructive way. It would be a good idea to model how to participate in a class discussion religion and teach students how to make generalizations more accurate statements. Teach students how to understand that not every person who follows the same religion acts the same way or at times, believes the same things. I would incorporate classroom discussions into teaching world religions. I would model how to participate in the discussion. Another activity that would go along with this is having students reflect on their own religious beliefs so they are more aware of what they want to contribute to the discussion. You could also have students reflect on what they believe about other religions. As a class, you could either clarify misconceptions or reinforce accurate statements.

Competency: *Be aware of examples of best practices in teaching about religion.*

Throughout the reading, there were multiple examples of best practices! The different snapshots of practice utilized numerous best practices that we came up with as a group. For example, on page 26, the example of the elementary language arts classroom, the teacher is integrating language arts with social studies by reading the book *Tar Beach*. Students are then exposed to the different religious aspects of the novel. The teacher then supplements other readings to support their findings about the religious aspects. By providing students with supplemental readings, integrating disciplines, and engaging students in discussion, the teacher is using a variety of best practices. Another example of best practice that was described in the reading is through the elementary social studies example. The teacher integrates the study of geography, people, and religion. The integration is an example of a best practice. Also, students are exploring the different explorers and their religion, and how the explorers are spreading their religion. The research was student centered. One way I would incorporate best practice into my teaching is through student collaboration. I think discussions are extremely important when teaching religion. Students' opinions and thoughts will benefit other students. Also, I am thinking a jigsaw format with the different religions would be beneficial for students because students would be doing the research and it would be more student centered.

Competency: *Develop the ability to present multiple religious perspectives in a fair or neutral way.*

In order to teach religion in the public school setting, it is important to present numerous religions from different perspectives. On page 16 of the article it states that religious study must, "include a diversity of worldviews representing a variety of religious and philosophical perspectives and must avoid privileging one view as more legitimate than others". Since there is separation of church and state, it is crucial that teachers take a neutral view on religion while teaching. In the article, it presents different guidelines that teachers should follow when presenting different perspectives. For example, a school's approach to religion is academic and not devotional. The goal is to help students achieve awareness of different religions. They do not have to accept a particular religion. Also, it is important that students are exposed to a variety of views and are educated about all religions within reason. I think it is important for students to gain a basic understanding of different religions in order to combat some of the misconceptions that are present about religion. One way to incorporate this competency into teaching is to choose a variety of religions to teach. I think it is important to make sure to include all of the religions that are practiced by the students in the class. I think an interesting way to present multiple perspectives would be to visit different places of worship such as a mosque, temple, or church. This way, students are receiving different perspectives. Another way to present different perspectives is by taking a historical approach to teaching.

Station 3

By examining the competencies in Station 3, it is clear that teachers must understand how to teach world religions in a lawful, academic way. Teachers must draw a very clear line when teaching about world religions. For example, students are to learn about religions in an academic way and at no time should a devotional approach be taken. It is also important that teachers have established a positive learning environment. I feel like world religions is something that should be taught after teachers have a good understanding of their students. That way, teachers will understand how to diffuse a rough conversation or know how to divert the conversation back to a positive one. This comes back to knowing the diversity in your classroom and having a feel for your students' opinions and beliefs.

After examining the four approaches to teaching religion, I would use a combination of the historical approach and traditions-based approach. By combining these two approaches, they help support each other and students will get a more well rounded understanding of world religions. By presenting students information from a historical approach they will be able to understand the origins of a religion and the development of the religion. It will also allow students to be able to explore the political , economical, and geographical factors that played into the development and spread of the religion. Then, by using a traditions-based approach, students will be able to become more culturally aware of different traditions, celebrations, and holidays that occur in current day society. This makes religion more relevant to the students in my opinion. Maybe a student has a friend who is Jewish versus the student's religion of Christianity. It may help the student understand why the holiday is celebrated differently and what exactly each religion is celebrating. I feel like in 6th grade, there still needs to be a focus on traditions and celebrations to make religion more "real". Students need to see how the religion is practiced and used in everyday life to make it more applicable. It would be my goal that by combining these two approaches students would learn about religion and understand it as a complex social and cultural phenomenon. Also, by integrating these approaches, it would lend itself to compare religions and the history and traditions of different religions.

There are multiple ways that I can envision myself combining these two different approaches along with the competencies. First, I would have students academically research a specific celebration, holiday, or tradition. In order to make it more collaborative, students could do this in small groups or partners. Students would research the particular celebration, holiday, or tradition and what the significance was to the particular religion. Then, in order to incorporate a historical approach, students would decipher when their celebration, holiday, or tradition developed and what the meaning is behind it. Students would then present their findings to the class. Another

idea I have that integrates the two approaches and competencies is inviting multiple class speakers who are members of different faith. This could even be continued throughout the year when a particular religion's holiday, celebration, or tradition was nearing. For example, during the month of Ramadan, a member of the faith could come into the class to talk about the why Ramadan exists and the history behind it. Also, there are other ways to "bring in" class speakers through Skype or Google Hangout. It would also be beneficial for students to have background knowledge of the particular religion and for the students to have questions prepared for the speaker. This would be a more engaging way for students to learn about different religions' traditions, holidays, and celebrations.

Station 4

Overall, I felt the AAR document was very informational and eye-opening. I never thought about all the different ways to teach world religions. Personally, I cannot remember how I was taught world religions in school (it must not have made a very big impact). I think that if teachers find engaging ways to teach world religions, students will be more interested and want to learn about the different religions. While reading, I developed the idea that there is no "right" way to teach social studies. I feel like there are different approaches and strategies. Like I mentioned earlier, I would combine two of the approaches for my ideal teaching strategy while instructing world religions. Sometimes combining different approaches and strategies will best benefit your learners.

It was also very eye-opening to me at how diverse religious studies actually are. Since religions are internally diverse, dynamic, and embedded in culture, there are so many aspects that students must be exposed to in order to gain an understanding of different religions. I thought it was interesting how the article brought up students' illiteracy about religion. I have seen this evident in the classroom along with illiteracy in other realms such as government, politics, and economics. Illiteracy leads to prejudice and antagonism and is far too rampant in our educational system. In my opinion, learning about other cultures, especially religions, helps to build tolerance and understanding within our schools and society. Studying cultures and religions helps to promote respect, diversity, and peaceful coexistence with other human beings that we see as "different" from ourselves. I liked the point that the article made about putting an emphasis on media literacy. Students are constantly bombarded with information from a multitude of media outlets whether it is the television, radio, computer, or social media outlets. I think it is a top priority for teachers, especially social studies and language arts teachers, to help teach students which sources are credible. Students need to be able to decipher which sources they can trust to get their information from.

After reading the AAR document, there are many practices that I envision using while teaching world religions. First, I want to be sure to study a variety of religions, making sure to study the five required religions in depth. I think it is also important to examine and explore the religions from multiple perspectives and have the students understand we are studying these religions in a purely academic way. I will use a blend of traditions based and historical based approach while also examining how the religions function and influence the current day world. It is a goal of mine to teach media literacy and help students become advocates for correct information as well as not overgeneralizing information. Hopefully, students will be able to help stop prejudice and instead replace the prejudice with truth and understanding of others. I also think it is important to help students communicate their own beliefs and opinions. I want to conquer all of this through discussions, readings, collaboration, and projects.

One “snapshot of practice” that I can think of is integrating the study of religion into the study of the ancient river civilizations. Let’s look at the ancient civilization of China. If I wanted to integrate religion with the study of ancient China, I would focus on Buddhism. As a class, we would watch the YouTube video *What is Buddhism?* in order to introduce students to the religion. I would have students take down notes while watching the video. Then, we would examine the historical roots of Buddhism. Later, students would be assigned to small groups. Each group would have a different aspect to research and present (historical roots, traditions, sacred texts, current day influence, etc.). Students would present their research to the class. This activity utilizes a number of best practices that we have studied such as collaboration, instruction being student centered, and utilizing a variety of resources.