

Unit 1: History and belief

Knowledge organiser

Key vocabulary

ascetic Someone who lives a life of simplicity and self-denial

bhikkhu A Buddhist monk; nuns are called bhikkhunis

Bodhi Gaya The holiest site in Buddhism, where Siddhartha meditated under a Bodhi tree and became the Buddha

Brahmins Priests in ancient India who interpreted Queen Maya's dream when she was pregnant with Siddhartha

Buddha The awakened or enlightened one

caste system A series of social classes that determine someone's job and status in society

Dhammapada A Buddhist scripture that contains the teachings and sayings of the Buddha

dharma The Buddha's teachings

dukkha The suffering or dissatisfaction of all living beings

Eightfold Path Eight instructions taught by the Buddha to help people overcome suffering and reach enlightenment

enlightenment The state of being awakened to the truth about life

Five Precepts Five rules that all Buddhists are expected to follow

Four Noble Truths The basis of the Buddha's teachings: all creatures suffer; suffering is caused by selfish desires; suffering can be ended; the way to end suffering is to follow the Eightfold Path

Four Sights Four things seen by Siddhartha when leaving the royal grounds – old age, sickness, death and a holy man

karma The forces that influence people's fortune and future rebirth

laity Buddhists who are not monks or nuns

meditation The practice of focusing the mind

Middle Way A lifestyle between luxury and having nothing at all

missionaries People who spread a religious message to different countries

nirvana A state of bliss experienced by those who have found enlightenment

Pali Canon The main sacred text for many Buddhists which contains the teachings of the Buddha, rules for monks and nuns and the philosophy of Buddhism; also known as the Tipitaka

parable A story used to teach a moral or spiritual lesson

parinirvana A state of complete bliss, entered into by souls that are not reborn

pilgrimage A journey taken to a place of religious importance

samsara The continual process of life, death and rebirth

Sangha The community of Buddhist monks and nuns

Sanskrit An ancient Indian language

scriptures Religious texts

sermon A speech given by a religious leader

stupa A place where the remains of the Buddha were buried

Three Jewels Buddha, dharma, Sangha; also known as the Three Refuges

Three Poisons Greed, hatred and delusion

Key facts

- Buddhism began in India over 2500 years ago. It is now the fourth-largest religion in the world, with approximately 500 million followers. 99% of Buddhists live in Asia. 50% live in China.
- Buddhists believe that everyone is travelling through a cycle of birth, death and rebirth called samsara. A person's actions in this life can affect his or her next one (karma).
- The main sacred text for Buddhists is the Pali Canon, which contains Buddhist philosophy and teachings.
- Buddhism was founded by a prince called Siddhartha Gautama. From childhood, Siddhartha noticed the suffering of other creatures.
- When he was 29 years old, Siddhartha saw four things that changed his view of life: old age, sickness, death and a holy man. He gave up his life of luxury and set out to discover how to end suffering by living as an ascetic.
- Siddhartha eventually realised that denying his body what it needed was as bad as living in luxury. He settled on the Middle Way. Eventually, while sitting under a Bodhi tree, he found enlightenment, nirvana, and became the Buddha.
- The Buddha attracted many followers. They eventually established the Sangha, a community of monks and nuns who dedicate their lives to Buddhism.
- The basis of the Buddha's teachings are the Four Noble Truths: all creatures suffer; suffering is caused by selfish desires; suffering can be ended; the way to end suffering is to follow the Eightfold Path.
- The Eightfold Path is a series of eight steps that Buddhists can follow to help them lead a contented life.
- All Buddhists follow the Five Precepts. Members of the Sangha follow over two hundred more rules, but when they first join there are just five extra rules.
- After the Buddha's death, Buddhism spread to other countries with the help of the Indian Emperor Ashoka, who converted to Buddhism and encouraged it across his large empire.

Key people

Ashoka An Indian emperor who ruled between 272 and 231 BCE and became the first Buddhist ruler

the Buddha The name given to Siddhartha Gautama, an Indian prince born in 563 BCE, after he achieved enlightenment; the central figure of Buddhism

Channa Siddhartha's servant

Devadatta Siddhartha's cousin

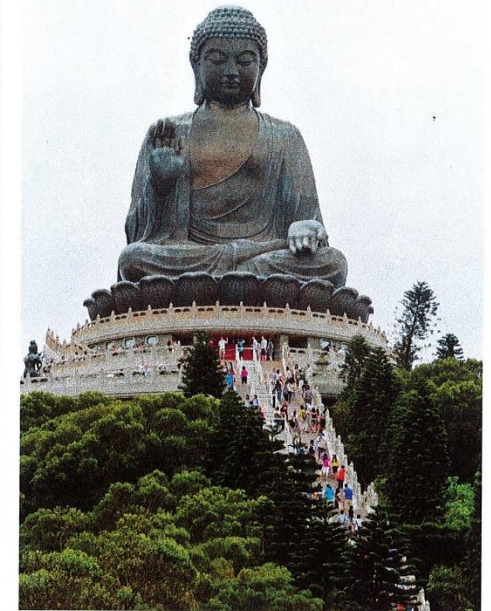
Mara The demon Lord who tried to prevent Siddhartha from achieving enlightenment under the Bodhi tree

Maya Siddhartha's mother

Rahula Siddhartha's son

Siddhartha Gautama An Indian prince born in 563 BCE who became the Buddha. He died in 486 BCE

Yashodhara Siddhartha Gautama's cousin and wife



Tian Tan Buddha, also known as the Big Buddha, is a large bronze statue located in Hong Kong. It was completed in 1993.