# World Religions: The BIG SIX

Directions: Working in your groups you are to complete the chart below by reading and discussing the information on pgs. 164-169. Be prepared to answer questions about THE BIG SIX.

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Buddhism

During its 2500 year history, Buddhism has grown from a tiny religious community in northern India into a movement that spans the world. It has influenced civilizations in India and Southeast Asia, China, Tibet, Korea, and Japan. It has become a major part of the multi-religious western world. Buddhism plays a "religious" role in many cultures, but it does not conform to many of our most basic assumptions about religions. Buddhists do not worship a God, they revere the memory of a man who found a way out of the suffering of life. The release of suffering constitutes the ultimate goal of human life.

Brief History:
The story of Buddhism begins with a man named Siddhartha Gautama in northern India around 500 B.C.E. Later known as the Buddha, he found a liberation from suffering and passed the learning on to his followers. His disciples formed a community of monks which continued to grow after his death. Two major reform movements eventually appeared in India, the Mahayana and the Tantra. As it was transmitted to other countries in Asia, it developed in strikingly new ways. It was carried to Sri Lanka in the 3rd century B.C.E. and from there to Southeast Asia and Indonesia. Buddhism entered China in the 2nd century C.E. with monks and merchants through Central Asia, into the heartland of China, and eventually to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. In the 8th century C.E. it was carried across the Himalayas from India to Tibet. Today, the Dalai Lama, the leader of the Tibetan Buddhist community, is one of the most visible and active Buddhist leaders in the world.

Estimated Adherents: 500 million

Major Schools of Buddhism:
Theravada – "Tradition of the Elders"
Mahayana – "Greater Vehicle"
Vajrayana – "Diamond Vehicle"

Basic Beliefs:
The Triple Refuge:
I take refuge in the Buddha.
I take refuge in the Dharma [the Buddha’s teaching].
I take refuge in the Sangha [the community of the Buddha’s followers].
The Middle Way:
4 Between hedonism and asceticism lies the middle way to nirvana.

The Four Noble Truths:
1. The truth of suffering (life is unsatisfactory).
2. The truth of the arising of suffering (suffering is caused by our craving).
3. The truth of the cessation of suffering (suffering can stop).
4. The truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering (the eightfold path is the way).

The Eightfold Path:
1. Right view
2. Right intention (resolve)
3. Right action
4. Right speech
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right concentration
8. Right mindfulness
Five Moral Precepts:
For laypeople:
1. No killing
2. No stealing
3. No lying
4. No abuse of sex
5. No drinking of intoxicants
Additional for monks:
6. No eating after noon
7. No sleeping on soft beds
8. No handling money

Recent Messages from Current Leadership:
The 14th Dalai Lama (Tenzin Gyatso) is the longest lived incumbent to the office of Dalai Lama. Of Tibetan origin, he is one of the most visible and active leaders in Buddhism. A charismatic speaker, he has traveled the world, teaching Tibetan Buddhism and advocating the importance of compassion as the source of a happy life.
Christianity

Christianity claims more adherents than any other religion and is the dominant tradition among diverse peoples. It has remarkably various manifestations, in distinct groupings and specific styles. Most of the world operates on a dating system that is centered around the birth of Jesus: B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (anno Domini).

Brief History:
Accepts the biblical history from Adam to Jesus Christ. The birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ mark the beginnings of Christianity. It rapidly expanded across the Roman Empire, despite persecution and lack of central controls. In the 2nd century C.E. Christianity defined itself. When Constantine pronounced it the official religion, its long period of political and cultural influence began.

Estimated Adherents:
2 billion

Significant Groupings:
Orthodox
Roman Catholic
Protestant

Basic Beliefs:
Doctrines occupy a central place in Christianity. Christian belief is expressed formally by creeds and doctrines that have developed overtime in response to internal conflicts. Although all Christians emphasize belief, there is no common assent for any single creed. Christians believe in one God and that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Son of God, who was sent to Earth and died on the cross to save humanity. Christians believe that faith in Jesus saves believers from God’s penalty for sin and bestows eternal life. The cross remains a very potent symbol of the religion. For Christians, the Bible is the inspired word of God. Christianity began approximately 2,000 years ago. It is practiced by 2 billion people in nearly all parts of the world.

Rituals:
Christians gather weekly to worship God and pray. Christian’s also observe important and joyful holidays such as Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christians believe that his resurrection was the evidence of God’s power over sin and death. Holy Week, the week before Easter, begins with Palm Sunday, which celebrates Jesus’ arrival into Jerusalem. Holy Thursday, commemorates Jesus’ last meal with his disciples. Good Friday is a somber day in remembrance of Jesus’ death.

Sacred Texts:
Old Testament
New Testament
Apocrypha (not accepted by all Christians as part of the canon)
Judaism

Judaism adheres to particular beliefs and practices, but many Jews would nevertheless consider the designation of a “religion” as far too narrow. Judaism encompasses geographic, ethnic, national, and religious aspects. As a religion, Judaism is the oldest surviving monotheistic religion. There is a strong emphasis on living according to God’s law and commandments, rather than debating particular nuances of doctrine.

Brief History:

Judaism traces its roots to the patriarchal family of Abraham as found in the historical account of the Hebrew Bible. The biblical period tells the story of the emergence of the Israelite nation: their liberation by Moses from Egyptian bondage and the eventual establishment of a kingdom in the land promised to their patriarchs. After a period of political consolidation, a monarchy emerged under rule of the house of David. This ended with the fall of the Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C.E. to the Babylonians. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed but eventually rebuilt. Ruled by a succession of conquering empires for the next 600 years, the second destruction by the Romans in 70 C.E. signaled a major challenge to its very existence. The diaspora left Judaism without a recognized and unifying center. New systems and contexts for Jewish religious life began to emerge. During the Middle Ages, most Jews were dispersed through outlands controlled by Moslem or Christian rulers. The attack by intellectual challenges from both religions stimulated an enormous literary output, including philosophical, mystical, polemical, and legal works. Beginning with the Enlightenment of the 18th century and continuing with the political upheavals of the 19th, new challenges initiated a reform movement that questioned traditional Jewish practice and belief. Ultimately an unprecedented split occurred in the ranks of adherents to Judaism.

Estimated Adherents:
15 million

Significant Divisions:
Conservative
Reform
Orthodox

Founder's Story:
Founders: Abraham, Moses, David
From the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh

Basic Beliefs:

Over the centuries, various attempts at defining the essence of Judaism have been made. Some have designated portions of the biblical scripture.

Decalogue: Comprise the dual foci of the Jewish religion:
1. Between man and God
2. Between man and man
3. Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.
4. Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;
5. Thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me;
6. And showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments.
7. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.
8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work;
10 but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work
11 for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
12 Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.
13 Thou shalt not murder.
   Thou shalt not commit adultery.
   Thou shalt not steal.
   Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.
14 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.
Not a universally accepted creed, but another famous attempt at formulating a list of "principles" was made by the Jewish philosopher, Maimonides:

**Sacred Texts:**

Tanakh

The Tanakh is an acronym for the three components of the Hebrew Bible. The Torah is supreme in terms of prestige and sanctity.

Torah
Hinduism

“Hinduism” is a problematic term to describe a complex and diverse set of beliefs and culture. There is no single statement of belief that would be agreed upon by all Hindus. There is no central authority to establish orthodoxy, no universally agreed upon creed. The very word “Hindu” is not native to the Indian culture. It was used by outsiders to name the culture of the Indus River Valley. Unlike what westerners typically consider a religious tradition, Hinduism is not a part or aspect of life; it is far more encompassing than that, influencing every aspect of Hindu life, including arts, music, medicine, etc. The stream of Hinduism has undergone continuous change from its early roots to modern times. If you attend a yoga class or talk about your karma, Hinduism has already had an influence on you. Hinduism is now truly a world religion.

Brief History:

Many consider Hinduism the oldest religious tradition. The Indus River Civilization flourished from around 3000 to 1500 B.C.E. The Aryans migrated into the region, bringing an oral tradition of knowledge known as the Veda, and other beliefs and practices that greatly influenced the established culture. Between 1500 and 500 B.C.E. the Aryan culture flourished and became the foundation out of which Hinduism is maroys. A reevaluation of Hindu rituals spurred the development of the classical period of Hindu history from 500 B.C.E. through the early centuries C.E. Islam entered India in the 8th century through military conquest. By the 15th century, Muslim sultans ruled India. This represented the first significant stress on the Hindu culture in the modern era. The second was the British colonization of India in the 18th century, bringing with it western ideas and values. Mohandas K. (“Mahatma”) Gandhi, taking many of his philosophical foundations from Hindu thought, was a key figure in India’s independence movement. In the 20th century there has been a significant movement of Hindus and Hinduism into the West.

Estimated Adherents:

1 billion

Founder:
None known

Sacred Texts:

The Vedas: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, Athara Veda

Recent Messages from Spiritual Leaders:

Swami Vivekananda was an Indian Hindu monk and a key figure in the introduction of Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the western world. Among his many accomplishments, he may be best known for his inspiring speech through which he introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893. This meeting was the first attempt to create a global dialogue of faiths.
Islam

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world and in the United States. Because of its vast geographic expanse, certain cultural practices, interpretations, and realities of Islam vary, though there are certain shared core beliefs. Despite the cultural diversity and wide geographic dispersion, myths, stereotypes, and misinformation about Islam and Muslims abound. Many in the West know little about the faith and are familiar only with the actions of a minority of radical extremists.

During the dark ages of the West, Islamic culture flourished with vast Islamic empires and a rich and dynamic civilization of arts, architecture, science, and medicine. That ended with the Crusades and European colonialism. Muslims find themselves facing a new millennium in which the old stereotypes of violent religion and people to be feared and fought returned to the spotlight. The future will be a time for deciding how to educate, engage in dialogue with, and find new ways in which to work with and within the West and global civilization.

Brief History:
The story of Islam begins with a man named Muhammad in Arabia around 600 C.E. At the age of 40 he received his first revelation from God. Eventually, he was able, mainly through military and political means, to gain power in South Arabia. Following his death, a dispute over his successor resulted in a split that exists to this day. Sunni's believed the rightful successor to be his most loyal companion, Abu Bakr. Shia Muslims believed it should come from Muhammad's family line.

Islam continued to expand through military conquest, conquering Jerusalem in 638 C.E. The high point of Islamic civilization lasted from the 8th to 13th centuries C.E. The Crusades marked the beginning of the end. In the 18th and 19th century, almost every part of the Muslim world was colonized by European powers. Muslims felt humiliated. Three modern day responses have emerged: 1) Decline was due to a departure from Islam; return to true Islam and reject the West, 2) imitate the West; modernize through secularization and Westernization, and 3) The middle way: Modernize, but in an Islamic way.

Estimated Adherents:
1.5 billion

Significant Divisions:
Sunni,
Shi'a
Sufi

Founder's Story:
Founder: Muhammad

Basic Beliefs:
The Five Pillars of Islam:
1- Shahadah (Witness of Faith)
The witness of faith is a two-part declaration that embodies the central beliefs of Islam. To become a Muslim (one who submits), one must accept the following statement as inviolable and recite it with conviction: “I witness that there is no god but Allah, and I witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.”
2- Salat (Prayer)
Ritual prayer is performed five times a day, dawn, midday, late afternoon, sunset, and early
evening. In preparation, a Muslim must first have righteous intent and perform a symbolic washing of face, hands, and feet. The call to prayer in Islamic society, always recited in Arabic, is as follows:

Allahu akbar ("God is great[than all else]").[Recited four times]
Ashhadu anna la ilaha illa Allah ("I testify that there is no god but Allah"). [Twice]
Ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah ("I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God"). [Twice]
Hayya 'ala al-salat ("Comto prayer"). [Twice]
Hayya 'ala al-falah ("Come to salvation and prosperity"). [Twice]
Allahu akbar ("God is greater[than all else]").[Twice]
La ilaha illa Allah ("There is no god but Allah").

3- Zakat (Almsgiving)
Islam distinguishes between two forms of charitable giving: zakat, a legal duty obligatory for all Muslims, and sadaqa, a spontaneous free-will offering intended specifically to help the poor and those in need.

4- Sawm (Fasting)
Fasting plays a central role in the annual Muslim religious festivals, and in individual spirituality. Frequent fasting is a means of achieving islam, complete submission to Allah.

5- Hajj (Pilgrimage)
Every Muslim who is physically and financially able is required to go on pilgrimage to Mecca at least once. The hajj is the highest act of devotion for a Muslim. It is a time of spiritual reflection, rededication to Allah and to Islam, purification and self-denial, and peace with one's fellow beings.

Jihad (Effort or Struggle):
Some consider this the sixth pillar. It is the effort necessary to live in accordance with what God wills. Some equate the term to holy war. There are strict rules of engagement that govern this type of jihad in the Qur'an and Hadith. Ultimately, however, the kind of jihad that involves fighting is considered the "lesser jihad." The highest jihad is the inner struggle to keep the worst within is under control so that we can follow the straight path.

Shari'a:
Often translated as Islamic law, but that's not quite right. Muslims who say they want to live in accordance with Shari'a often mean that they want to live in accordance with God's will. Jurisprudence, on the other hand, is conveyed in the word fiqh.

There are four commonly accept sources of Shari'a:
1- Qur'an (revelations of Muhammad)
2- Sunna (practices of Muhammad)
3- İma (consensus of the community)
4- Qiyas (reasoning)

Sacred Texts:
Some Muslims do not believe that any text other than the actual Arabic text of the Quran (even a transliteration or an Arabic text with vowels) can strictly be called 'the Qur'an'. The Arabic text is considered canonical and there can be no other versions of it.
Confucianism

Many scholars agree that Confucianism is still the strongest force shaping East Asian culture. To understand East Asia, one must understand Confucian values.

Brief History:
The Chinese worldview has been shaped by certain cosmological beliefs and folk traditions for millennia. The universe has regularities and patterns, but there is no deity or law giver in charge of it all. The most basic pattern is the complementary forces of yin and yang. Each exists because the other exists, and each flows into the other in continuous cycle. The Chinese ideal is not one side conquering the other but rather achieving the proper balance between the two. From two forces the next level moves to the Five Elements, but better understood in a dynamic (processes or phases) rather than a static sense: watery, earthy, woody, metallic, and fiery. They are in a perpetual cycle of transformation, either of generation or of conquest. In the cycle of generation, wood catches fire, fire reduces to ash (earth), the earth forms metal, metals melt to liquid, and water nourishes the growth of wood. The cycle of conquest is driven by one element overcoming the next.

Qi is one of the most important Chinese metaphysical concepts. It is translated as “vital force,” “vital energy,” or “cosmic breath.” Qi is circulating within our bodies and the natural world. It bridges the divide between the physical, mental, and spiritual.

Ancestors are supernatural beings who can play a helpful role in human lives. In general, they are seen as helping the living family members and serving as the family representative in the spirit realm. But the ancestor can also bring bad luck on a family if the ancestor is angered by being neglected.

Estimated Adherents: 500 million (generally combined with Daoism)

Founder's Story:
Founder: Kong Fuzu (or Kongzi)[Romanized: Confucius]
Confucius was born in 551 B.C.E., a time of great chaos in China. Rulers of different states fought each other for supremacy, raising large armies capable of tremendous brutality. The rulers of these states often invited philosophers from different schools to hear the best ideas of the day and select advisors. Confucius was one of these philosophers. He journeyed around China trying to persuade rulers to hire him and implement his ideas. Along the way he gathered many disciples. He was revered as a great teacher.

Confucius believed in a time during the reign for the great sage-kings when there was perfect order in society. He looked for answers in history to restore the practices and values of that golden age. He emphasized learning and study rather than introspection and intuition. He developed a program of study that became a central component in the body of common knowledge that unified China through a common cultural inheritance.

Basic Beliefs:
Learning is a way to develop one’s character
Ritual brings people together in community
Ritual and virtue are superior to law
Key virtues: filial piety, loyalty, reciprocity, benevolence
Five key relationships:
1. parent – child
2. husband – wife
3. elder brother – younger brother
4. ruler – subject
5. friend – friend

**Sacred Texts:**
The Five Classics: Shu Ching, Shih Ching, I Ching, Li Ki, Ch'un Ch'iu
The Analects