



Introduction to Buddhism



Unit Overview

This unit will introduce students to the practice and faith of Buddhism.

They will encounter the basics of Buddhist theology including their approach to suffering and rebirth.

They will also look at the basics of Buddhist practice including meditation and worship.



Key Facts

- The majority of Buddhist people can be found in countries in South-East Asia like Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.
- Around 1% of people in London are Buddhist and there are a number of Buddhist temples and monasteries located in the UK.
- Siddhartha Gautama was a young, rich prince who would go on to become the founding figure of Buddhism - Buddha. He left his comfortable life to attempt to become enlightened - at first through ascetic practice but then through the Middle Way of meditation and good living.
- The Four Noble Truths explain the Buddhist beliefs that all humans suffer, that suffering is caused by selfishness and that suffering can come to an end - a very different approach to suffering than in Christianity or Islam.
- The Eightfold Path lays out eight ways in which Buddhists can live a good life and bring suffering to an end for themselves and others.
- A major part of Buddhist practice is meditation - the act of controlling and training their minds to focus on a state of enlightenment.
- Some Buddhists go on a pilgrimage to a Lumbini where Buddha was born and to Bodh Gaya where Buddha became enlightened.



Key Vocabulary

Analogy - using a relatable example to explain a more complex idea e.g. the Analogy of the Doctor to explain the Four Noble Truths

Concentration - the Buddhist practice of concentrating on the world around them to develop a mindful sense of the world.

Eightfold Path - the eight ways of living which Buddhists believe will bring an end to suffering

Enlightenment - the end state of meditation - achieving a sense of the actual reality of the world

Four Noble Truths - the Buddhist belief that everyone suffers but that suffering can come to an end

Jhana - a state of concentration in meditation

Meditation - the practice of concentration and focusing of the mind in order to achieve enlightenment

Nirvana - the place of escape from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth

Pilgrimage - a spiritual journey religious people undertake to places of religious importance e.g. Buddha's birth place

Shrine - a place set up for the worship of a particular religious figure