






Student Handout 3 - Global Belief Systems—Reference Sheet and Study Guide


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Belief System Name</i> • <i>Amount of followers</i> • <i>Where largest percentage of followers exist</i> 	<i>Name of Deity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Founder</i> • <i>Location of origin</i> • <i>Date started</i> 	<i>Sacred Text</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Basic Beliefs</i>	<i>Symbols/Icons</i>
<p>Animism (Tribal Religions)</p> <p><i>Today: 232 million followers in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the Americas</i></p>	<p><u>Polytheistic</u>-many Gods Often connected to the natural world; beliefs are passed through stories and myths explaining the creation of fire, wind, water, man, and natural world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No real founder • Probably one of the earliest human belief systems, most likely dating to the Paleolithic Age (pre-history) 	<p>No text</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shamans and other types of leaders; • Their main task was to tend to the relationship between the community and the world of the spirits. 	<p>People in this religion generally believe that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A soul or spirit exists in every object • All life is sacred, including plants and animals, and there is a balance what must be maintained between humans and the natural world. • The spiritual world and the material world are connected. • The spirits of the dead are still present and must be honored. 	<p>Charms--people often carry charms or amulets, which they believe will ward off evil spirits, encourage fertility or long life and can be used for healing. Masks-commonly used in ceremonies and are believed to have power</p>

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<p>Hinduism</p> <p><i>Today: Over 1 billion followers mainly in India and South East Asia with smaller groups in Europe and the US</i></p>	<p>Brahman – the one supreme being</p> <p>Believed in other forms of the same god, such as Vishnu and Shiva, and Shakti, are worshipped separately and treated almost as different gods.</p> <p>Don't want to label their religion as having one or many gods.</p>	<p>No one founder</p> <p>India</p> <p><i>Uncertain, but before 1,500 BCE</i></p>	<p>No single book; sacred texts:</p> <p>The Vedas: existed in oral form for centuries before they were written down.</p> <p>The Puranas: long stories of Hindu myths, gods, goddess and heroes.</p> <p>-Upanishads -Rig Veda -Laws of Manu</p>	<p>Guru, Holy Man, Brahmin priests</p> <p><i>Famous Teachers -- Gandhi</i></p>	<p>People in this religion generally believe that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The soul never dies, but it is continually reborn; this is called reincarnation. • Persons achieve happiness and enlightenment after they free themselves from their earthly desires. • Freedom from earthly desires comes from a lifetime of worship, knowledge, and virtuous acts. • Good deeds and thoughts will result in later good results, whereas bad deeds result in bad outcomes... this is Karma. • Worship and praying to god(s) brings blessings and protections and expresses devotion. • The relationships with favorite gods/goddesses are very personal. 	<p>The sound OM, or AUM, is the most sacred syllable for Hindus. It is often used in prayers.</p> 

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<p>Taoism (Daoism)</p> <p>550 BCE</p> <p><i>Today: Around 225 million in China, South East Asia</i> <i>Mainly Taiwan; Some reside in North America and Canada as well</i></p>	<p>Polytheistic</p> <p>Tao is not a god, but a unifying force in the universe. Some Taoists believe in many gods, most borrowed from other cultures. These gods themselves are subject to the Tao.</p>	<p>Lao-Tzu ("The Old One")—he is looked upon as a god by some Taoists.</p> <p>China</p> <p>550 BCE</p>	<p>The two most important Taoist texts are the <i>Tao Te Ching</i>, said to have been written by Lao-tzu and the <i>Chuang Tzu</i>, named after its author.</p>	<p>Spiritual leader:</p> <p>Sage</p>	<p>People in this religion generally believe that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no all-powerful god. • Some worship more personal gods in order to try to be in harmony with Tao, to achieve balance in their lives. <p>Tao (pronounced "Dow") can be roughly translated into English as <i>path</i>, or <i>the way</i>. It is basically indefinable. It has to be experienced. It "<i>refers to A power which envelops, surrounds and flows through all things, living and non-living. The Tao regulates natural processes and nourishes balance in the Universe. It embodies the harmony of opposites (i.e. there would be no love without hate, no light without dark)</i></p>	  <p>Chinese character "Tao"</p>

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<p>Buddhism</p> <p>Today: 376 million In China, Tibet, Nepal, Japan, and South East Asia (India, Korea, and Vietnam)</p>	<p>The Buddha did not teach a personal deity (God).</p> <p><u>Sects:</u> Theravada--the original teachings of Buddha</p> <p>Mahayana--the modified version -- mass salvation and popular worship-- teaches that Buddha was a god</p>	<p>The Buddha— <i>Siddhartha Guatama</i></p> <p>India</p> <p>Approx. 500 BCE</p>	<p>No one Book-sacred texts include the <u>Perfecti on of Wisdom Sutra</u> or <u>The Tripitaka</u></p>	<p>Buddhist Monks and Nuns</p>	<p>People in this religion generally believe that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons achieve complete peace, known as nirvana, by eliminating their attachment to things. • Nirvana is achieved by following the Eightfold Path. • There are Four Noble Truths <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Suffering exists 2) There is a reason that people suffer. 3) There is an end to suffering. 4) To end suffering, follow the Eightfold Path: know the truth, resist evil, say nothing that might hurt, respect life, free the mind from evil, service to others, control evil thoughts, and meditation. <p>The soul is reborn into new life after death. Living a good life can help you escape the cycle.</p>	<p>Wheel of the Law</p> <p>The Buddha is said to have "set in motion the wheel of the dharma" during his first sermon.</p> <p>His teachings are often symbolized by a wheel.</p> 

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<p>Judaism <i>No consensus-possibly around 3000 years ago</i></p> <p><i>Today: 13.5 million in Israel and the United States, smaller numbers in Europe</i></p>	<p><i>Monotheistic</i> God (Yahweh)</p>	<p>Abraham</p> <p>Middle East</p> <p><i>No consensus-possibly around 3000 years ago</i></p>	<p>Hebrew Bible, known as the Torah</p> <p>The Talmud is contains stories, laws, medical knowledge, debates about moral choices, etc. It also includes a series of debates or interpretations of passages of the Torah.</p>	<p>Rabbis</p>	<p>People in this religion generally believe that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is only one God, who watches over and cares for his people. • God loves and protects his people, but also holds people accountable for their sins and short-comings. • Persons serve God by studying the Torah and living by its teachings. <p>Jewish sacred texts have little to say about what happens after death. It is more focused on actions than on beliefs.</p>	 <p>Star of David</p> <p>Also called the Shield Of David, it is the universal symbol of Judaism. The emblem refers to King David, who ruled the kingdom of Israel from about 1000-962 BCE</p>

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<p>Christianity</p> <p><i>Today: 2.1 billion, most in Europe and the Americas, but present in Africa and Asia/Pacific as well</i></p>	<p>Monotheistic</p> <p>One God, and</p> <p>The Trinity holds that there are three in one and one in three aspects of God: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Ghost</p>	<p>St. Paul founded it based on his interpretation of Jesus Christ's life and mission</p> <p>Middle East</p> <p>30 CE</p>	<p><u>Bible</u></p> <p>Includes the Torah, Old Testament, and the Gospels and New Testament (accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and St. Paul's mission amongst Jews and Gentiles)</p>	<p>Clergy (Pope, priests and ministers)</p>	<p>People in this religion generally believe that...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is only one God, who watches over and cares for his people. • Jesus Christ was the son of God. He died to save humanity from sin. His death and resurrection made eternal life possible for others. • The 10 Commandments are a guide for moral behavior (thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not murder, etc.). <p>There are different beliefs within the larger Christian religion about life after death, but Christians generally hold that there is an afterlife, and that the worthy will go to Heaven to be rewarded and that the unworthy will go to Hell. There is disagreement, however, about who is worthy and who is unworthy.</p>	<p><u>The Cross</u>, a symbol of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, represents Jesus' love for humanity in dying for its sins.</p> 

Student Handout 4 – Global Belief System Comparison/Contrast Matrix

Place an X in the appropriate box for each characteristic that applies to each religion. Then answer the questions.

Religion/Belief System	Approximate date of origin <i>(fill in the closest date)</i>	Polytheistic	Monotheistic	Basic beliefs distinguish between right and wrong	Belief in an after-life <i>(for example, heaven or hell)</i>	Belief in reincarnation	Has sacred text(s)	Has leaders that are seen as religious authorities
Animism <i>(not a world religion)</i>								
Zoroastrianism <i>(use the article, not the chart)</i>								
Hinduism								
Judaism								
Buddhism								
Daoism(Taoism)								
Christianity								
Use the completed chart above to help you make inferences in order to answer the questions below:								

<p>What do the world religions have in common?</p> <p><i>(don't include animism)</i></p>	
<p>What are important differences?</p>	
<p>What religions seem more connected to each other or more similar?</p>	