



Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project

A Tale of Two Temples: Living Buddhisms in Miami

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Context:

This activity is designed for my new World Religions elective that I will be teaching next year to juniors and seniors who have chosen to take this course. It is a regular level course (not Honors or AP). I will most likely have 2 sections of 15 students each. It is important to note that this is a private, independent school (no religious affiliation) and that our school strongly encourages the Harkness method of discussion which is largely student-centered. In addition, our students sit at large tables that form a circle. We have a prepared field trip form that is used for all days that a student will be absent. Therefore I may not need to prepare a separate letter for the parents but I will discuss this with my department chair upon return.

Objectives:

- For students to understand that there are multiple ways of practicing Buddhism
- To experience the different religious worlds of Buddhism in Miami

Unit:

This 2-part field trip will take place during our 3 week unit on Buddhism. It will most likely take place at the end of the unit when the students have a strong foundation in Buddhism. I have already prepared a detailed PowerPoint with discussion questions and background information on Buddhism. It is based on our textbook, *Living Religions* by Mary Pat Fisher. In addition, the students will have read and discussed "The Triple Refuge", "The Wheel of Truth", "The Word of Buddha", "Summary of Buddha's Dharma", "The Twin Verses", and "Why Buddhism Makes Sense." All of these readings can be found in *A World Religions Reader*, edited by Ian S. Markham and Christy Lohr. Lastly, the students will have watched most of the DVD: *The Buddha* by PBS. Therefore, the students should have a solid background in Buddhism prior to our visits and will have basic information on the different schools of Buddhism.

Before the activity:

I will go over several main ideas with the students. First, we will go over the similarities and differences between the Theravada and Zen traditions of Buddhism. Then we will discuss the daily rituals and practices of Buddhists. Secondly, we will go over the respect and rules needed to visit the two centers of these traditions in Miami. Lastly, I will give these three questions to the students ahead of time. They will be re-asked these questions, possibly in a written assignment, upon return from the field trips:

- What do these two religious worlds tell you about Buddhism?
- Have these experiences altered your prior image of Buddhist ritual and practice?
- What do these places tell you about Buddhist practice in Miami?

The Activity:

The students will take two separate field trips (or one if time permits) to two different Buddhist “worlds.” First, we will go to the WatBuddharangsi Temple. The website is <http://watmiami.org/>. This is a Thai temple based on the Theravada tradition. It is an ornate and beautiful temple located on a wide scope of land. This temple is in Homestead, FL which is about a 30 minute drive from my school. I have been told that the monks at this temple are very inviting to guests and are happy to receive them. Of course, I will call ahead of time and speak about the details of the visit. On that same day, or separately, I will take the students to Zen Village which is more of a Buddhist center rather than a temple. This center of Buddhist life is literally across the street from my school. The website is <http://zenvillage.org/>. It is based more on the Zen tradition (as well as others) and is not a temple per say but rather a center for holy and holistic living. In any event, it can still reflect a religious world in that it includes the daily practices of rituals of practicing Buddhists.

After the activity:

The students and I will reflect on these site visits. I will ask them about their sensory and overall experiences in these places. We will discuss the similarities and differences. In addition, I may have them write a written response to the field trips. I may ask them:

- What do these two religious worlds tell you about Buddhism?
- Have these experiences altered your prior image of Buddhist ritual and practice?
- What do these places tell you about Buddhist practice in Miami?

Appendix:

I have attached images of both of the Buddhist centers to give an idea of what the field trips might feel like:

- 1) The WatBuddharangsi Temple, Homestead, FL:



- 2) Zen Village, Coconut Grove, FL:

Photo #1:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/73682611@N02/7409119394/>

Photo #2:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/73682611@N02/7409119394/>

(These photos are copyrighted so I can only include the link. But you can see the prayer flags and then my school across the street in the second photo.)

***For information about the
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and many more resources to enrich your teaching on
religious diversity, see:***

www.religiousworldsnyc.org