



## *Religious Worlds of New York • Curriculum Development Project*

### **Religious Diversity through Sacred Arts**

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#### **Abstract**

This is a curriculum for ninth grade students who study religious arts once a week over eight weeks. In the afternoon of the eighth week students take an adult on a mini-tour of the Metropolitan Museum of Art they themselves create. The tour features three pieces – each from one of the world’s great religions. Students choose a theme for the tour and then explain at least five symbolic elements in the art. They also must relate the art to the key beliefs of the faith the art reflects. (It would be great if we could come up with a rubric for the presentation)

#### **Weeks One and Two, Hinduism**

Themes: soul, Blessings, prayer, devotion, peace,

#### Essential questions

- 1) What do Hindus believe is the nature of the divine? (There is one god, but it is taken up to three million forms.
- 2) What do Hindus believe about the creation of the world and the past?
- 3) What do Hindus believe about death and the afterlife? (Key ideas of Karma, Reincarnation,
- 4) What is the nature of reality (Reality is an illusion. The illusory nature of reality leads to Samsara. When the individual learns this over the course of many lives he or she is released into total bliss or Nirvana.
- 5) How do Hindus worship God? ( Pooja, Darsan, yoga, Chants,
- 6) What is the goal of the faith and how does a believer reach that goal? (Moksha Liberation of the soul from samsara and Dharma.
- 7) What is the relationship between Humans and the divine? (Hindus believe that God is within all people, but that there is also a world soul. Nirvana is the complete union of the world soul with the individual soul.
- 8) What does Hinduism teach about how man relates to nature and animals?
- 9) What are the social implications of Hinduism? Caste system?
- 10) How do the beliefs of Hindus affect Hindu Culture and Daily life?

## Activities:

- 1) Students will work in groups with texts that answer the Essential questions?  
Students will jigsaw with other students so that together they answer the essential questions
- 2) Drama students create a drama in which a Hindu from the Brahmin caste informs her mother that she wishes to marry a boy from a lower caste.
- 3) Students divide up into groups six each group is assigned a deity and a text about the symbols and importance of the deity. Each group uses the text to identify the major symbolic markers of the deity and then shares out with the other groups. Students take notes from the presentations on the deities.
- 4) Deity identification game. Students are put into teams. They are shown ten images of different deities. Using their notes students must identify the deity and explain what symbols helped them identify the deity.
- 5) Explanation of the symbolism of Shiva Nataraj.
- 6) Students Visit the Divya Dahm Hindu temple ask the Swami of the temple the ten essential questions and take notes.
- 7) Students sketch three of the statues and then label the important symbols in the statue.
- 8) Students will read a passage from Baghdadi Gita and discuss how the text helps them answer the essential questions?

## Assessments

- 1) Students are graded on the answers to the ten questions and on their labeled sketches

## **Week Three, Buddhism**

### Essential Questions.

- 1) What major ideas do both Buddhism and Hinduism share?
- 2) What Hindu practices and ideas did the Buddha reject and why?
- 3) What did Siddhartha Gautama understand about the nature of life?
- 4) What did The Buddha learn about the nature of reality?
- 5) How can we compare and contrast the social ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism?
- 6) What did the Buddha teach was the goal of Life?
- 7) What is the eightfold path to happiness?
- 8) What are the major differences in how Buddhists and Hindus practice their faiths?
- 9) What are the social implications of Buddhism?
- 10) How do Buddhist beliefs shape culture and daily life?

## Activities

- 1) 1) Students will work in groups with texts that answer the Essential questions. Students will jigsaw with other students so that together they answer the essential questions
- 2) Students watch the film Little Buddha and create a storyboard on the life of the Buddha?
- 3) Students take notes on the symbolism of Buddhist Art.
- 4) Students visit the Rubin Museum and sketch two pieces of art and label the important symbols they identify in the art.
- 5) Students read the Heart Sutra and discuss how the Sutra helps them to answer the essential unit questions.

## Assessments

- 1) Essential questions, Storyboards and sketches.

## **Week Four, Judaism**

- 1) What is the relationship between God and Man according to Judaism? (Covenant?)
- 2) What is the relationship between God and laws?
- 3) Why are words and texts so central to Judaism?
- 4) How is the story of Moses emblematic of the Jewish relationship to God?
- 5) How did Moses shape Jewish faith?
- 6) What did the other Monotheistic faiths take from Judaism?
- 7) How is the idea of law and obedience to it essential to Judaism?
- 8) How can we compare and contrast Judaism with Hinduism and Buddhism?
- 9) What aspects of other faiths would violate Jewish laws and why?
- 10) How are stories from the bible an example of vindication of faith?

## Activities

- 1) Reading of the binding of Isaac in Genesis 22.
- 2) Storyboard of the life of Moses based on clips from the film "The Ten Commandments.
- 3) Visit to the Eastside Synagogue. Students ask questions of the Rabbi and take notes.
- 4) Discussion of the essential questions in relation to the film "The Ten Commandments.
- 5) Discussion about why Judaism has a different decorated tradition than Hinduism and Buddhism.

## Assessments

- 1) Essential questions, Storyboards

## **Weeks Five and Six, Christianity**

### Essential Questions

- 1) What are the major similarities between Christianity and Judaism?
- 2) What are the major differences between Judaism and Christianity?
- 3) How does the life of Jesus parallel the story of Moses?
- 4) What are the most important teachings of Jesus and why?
- 5) Why was Jesus so controversial?
- 6) What is the importance of Jesus' crucifixion?
- 7) How do the teachings of Jesus affect the daily lives of Christians?
- 8) What are important symbols in art depicting the crucifixion?
- 9) How and why do Christians differ on the importance of art in understanding the religion?
- 10) How do various aspects of a cathedral reflect Christian ideas of the middle ages?
- 11) How and why did Martin Luther want to reform the Catholic Church?

### Activities

- 1) Storyboard on the life of Jesus
- 2) Discussion of Jesus' message.
- 3) Reading of the sermon on the mount
- 4) Explanation and note taking on symbolism in Christian art.
- 5) Reading drama based on the life of Martin Luther.
- 6) Visit to the Cathedral of St John the Divine
- 7) Visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## **Week Seven, Islam**

### Essential Questions

- 1) What are similarities between Islam and the other monotheistic faiths?
- 2) How does Islam differ from the other Monotheistic faiths?
- 3) What are the five pillars of Islam and how do they affect the daily life of Muslims?
- 4) How does law shape Islamic life?
- 5) How is art in Islam similar to and different than other faiths?
- 6) How do Islamic ideas create a community of faith?
- 7) How is Mohammed similar to and different than other prophets?
- 8) Why does Islam appeal to so many people?
- 9) What do Muslims believe about the afterlife?
- 10) How do Islamic beliefs affect the film the message?

## Activities

- 1) Storyboard on the life of Mohammed from the film "The Message"
- 2) Reading of a sutra from the Qur'an
- 3) Question and answer with a Muslim student
- 4) Presentation on symbolism in Islamic Art
- 5) Visit to the Metropolitan Museum of Art Islamic wing. Students sketch any piece of Islamic art and identify the symbols in it.

## Assessments

- 1) Storyboards, Essential questions, Sketches.

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