

*World Faiths Today Series*

*Exploring*  
**Buddhism**



*Teachers' Handbook*

World Faiths Today Series

## Exploring Buddhism

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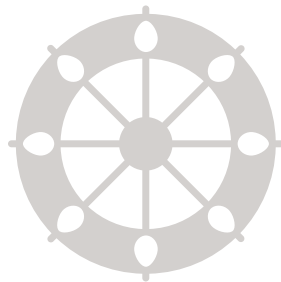
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In the World Faiths Today Series, Rees and Sara learn about the major world faiths in their own country. The seven stories in the series are:

- Exploring Islam
- Exploring Judaism
- Exploring the Parish Church
- Exploring the Orthodox Church
- Exploring Hinduism
- Exploring Buddhism
- Exploring Sikhism



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## Exploring Buddhism

### The story

Rees and Sara have two Buddhist friends, James and Hana, who live next door. James and Hana introduce Rees and Sara to key beliefs and practices in Buddhism. The children explore a Buddhist Centre and learn about the Three Jewels which lie at the heart of Buddhism. They attend a Buddhist children's festival and learn about the significance of the life of Shakyamuni Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) and the purpose of meditation. Rees and Sara are introduced to sources of authority in Buddhism in the form of a lineage of Buddhist teachers who pass on central beliefs and practices to others. They investigate Buddhist attitudes to the environment and caring for others through exploring the symbolism of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. Rees and Sara learn about ethical livelihood, informed by Buddhist beliefs, through visiting a coffee shop run by Buddhists and listening to a story about a Tibetan Buddhist monk.

### The basics

Buddhism appeared in northern India around the sixth century BCE as a result of the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, or the 'Buddha Shakyamuni', from whom Buddhism derives its name. Today, there are two main Buddhist traditions: the Theravada tradition and the Mahayana tradition. Theravada Buddhism claims to have preserved accurately the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama in its sacred text called the Pali Canon. Mahayana Buddhism includes many different Buddhist groups such as Zen, Pure Land, and Tibetan Buddhism, for example. Each group has its own special sacred texts or Mahayana sutras, which it traces back to Siddhartha Gautama, although Theravada Buddhists would dispute such claims.

In *Exploring Buddhism* Rees and Sara are introduced to the New Kadampa Tradition which is a popular branch of Tibetan Buddhism in the West and a part of Mahayana Buddhism.

Mahayana Buddhists believe in:

- Dharma (teaching or truth): the basis for belief and practice. The source of Dharma is the cosmological Buddha, which is the ideal that lies behind and within all things. Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha Shakyamuni) was one important physical manifestation of the cosmological Buddha;
- rebirth: all unenlightened beings are tied to and suffer in a continuous cycle of rebirth;
- karma: all thoughts and actions (karma) produce negative or positive consequences which affect a person's life and rebirths in negative or positive ways;
- tanha: grasping and craving for physical or non-physical things for oneself is negative karma and produces negative consequences. It is this grasping and craving which causes the suffering in the cycle of rebirth;
- universal Buddhahood: the ideal is that all living beings are capable of becoming full Buddhas through following the Path of the Bodhisattva (Bodhisattva = one who is working towards Buddhahood). The Path of the Bodhisattva teaches Mahayana Buddhists how to control suffering and rebirth in order to help other suffering beings.

Mahayana Buddhists practise:

- seeking refuge in the Three Jewels: Buddha; Dharma (Teaching); and Sangha (Community) to help them progress on the Buddhist path;
- invoking Buddhas and Bodhisattvas for assistance on the Buddhist path, often through rituals performed before the shrine;
- meditating to develop the skills of wisdom and compassion, which are central to following the Path of the Bodhisattva leading to Buddhahood.

## Chapter I Visiting a Buddhist centre

James and Hana take Rees and Sara to the shrine room in their Buddhist Centre to see the Three Jewels which lie at the heart of Buddhism. The Three Jewels, like the ring the children found at the swimming pool, are old and precious, and have been passed down by Buddhists, from generation to generation. Buddhists regularly express their faith and confidence in the Three Jewels and their ability to help them on the Buddhist path, by reciting this statement of belief:

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I take refuge in the Dharma.

I take refuge in the Sangha.

### The first Jewel: Buddha

The first Jewel is Buddha. Buddha is 'one who is fully awakened' to the truth, which is: everything suffers, there is a reason for this suffering, and there is a cure for this suffering.

In the story, Rees and Sara are shown a Tibetan shrine which has Buddha Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama) in the centre and, on either side, Bodhisattvas (those on the path to becoming full Buddhas, committed to helping other suffering beings). Popular Tibetan bodhisattvas include:

- Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara who represents Buddha's compassion. A popular story relates how Avalokiteshvara vowed to help all suffering beings, and because of the enormity of the task he had to grow extra arms and heads;
- Bodhisattva Manjushri who represents Buddha's wisdom. He is often portrayed holding a flaming sword which symbolises wisdom cutting through ignorance;
- Bodhisattva Vajrapani who represents Buddha's power. Depictions of Vajrapani are often ferocious and filled with battle-related imagery; he strikes warlike poses, holds weapons, and wears a skull around his neck. The power is directed to all that impedes correct thought and action;
- Bodhisattva Tara who represents Buddha's deeds or action. Tara is a female aspect of Avalokiteshvara, and is also linked with compassion. She is depicted in many different forms which symbolise her various qualities, for example, white Tara symbolises compassion and black Tara symbolises power.

Each image of a Buddha or Bodhisattva is carefully crafted according to specific rules, which vary among Buddhist traditions. The images hold their hands in a number of different positions which are

called mudras. For example, in the story Buddha Shakyamuni is shown touching the earth because when he attained enlightenment, tradition records that he touched the earth to witness the event. Other mudras include hand symbols depicting: no fear, teaching, meditation, giving and generosity.

Practices associated with the First Jewel include:

- presenting offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas on the shrine;
- bowing and prostrating before Buddhas and Bodhisattvas;
- chanting mantras associated with specific Buddhas and Bodhisattvas;
- creating and offering mandalas to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Symbolic offerings to Buddhas and bodhisattvas on the shrine include:

- water and food: Buddhism originated in India and has inherited Indian practices such as the tradition of offering guests food and water (for drinking and bathing). Food offerings in the West may consist of various food jars and packets, including chocolate bars;
- cut flowers: the beautiful flowers will eventually wither and die. This reminds Buddhists of the important truth that everything is impermanent and that nothing lasts forever;
- light: this symbolises the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment, when the darkness of ignorance is replaced by the light of wisdom;
- incense.

During devotional worship before the shrine, Mahayana Buddhists invoke Buddhas and bodhisattvas for their guidance and help.

When Buddhists enter the shrine room, they remove their shoes, and bow and prostrate themselves before the figures on the shrine as a sign of respect. Mantras (words which are believed to have great sacred power) are recited and each Buddha and Bodhisattva has its own mantra. Mahayana Buddhists believe that these mantras help to focus the mind and generate merit (positive karma) for the person chanting them as well as for others. Often a string of beads (usually 108 beads) is used to keep count of the mantras recited. Mantras are translated and interpreted in many ways by different Buddhists. Examples of Tibetan mantras include:

- Om Mani Padme Hum for Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara;
- Om Tare Tuttare Ture Svaha for Bodhisattva Tara;

- Om Ah Ra Pa Tsa Na Dhih for Bodhisattva Manjushri.

Mandalas are popular in Tibetan Buddhism. A mandala is a powerful tool in meditation, which includes the act of constructing it. A mandala is a geometric symbolic representation of the Buddhist universe; it may be a physical picture or model (painted or constructed from a variety of materials such as coloured rice or sand) or it may be a mental image. The focus of the mandala is its centre; everything else points towards it and emphasises it. In traditional Tibetan mandalas, a Buddha or Bodhisattva will be at the centre. Meditating using a mandala is particularly powerful because it focuses the mind on what it wants to achieve ultimately – enlightenment and Buddhahood via the path of the Bodhisattva.

Buddha's position as the first Jewel shows that Buddhism is unlike most other faiths which have God or gods at their centre. Buddhists believe that gods, like all other things, are also trapped and suffering within the cycle of rebirth. Gods, then, are of limited use on a Buddhist path which seeks control over the cycle of rebirth. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, however, know how to control the cycle of rebirth, and they use this knowledge to help others out of compassion for their suffering.

### **The second Jewel: Dharma**

Dharma is the second Jewel. Dharma means 'teaching' or 'truth'. Buddhists believe that this teaching or truth was taught and practised by Buddha Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama) and is taught and practised by all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Dharma explains why people are unhappy and suffer, and it shows them how to experience real happiness and end suffering. Dharma is presented in written form

in the different sacred texts of the various Buddhist groups. In Mahayana Buddhism, Dharma is usually found in their sutras; however, on the Westernised Mahayana Tibetan shrine in the story, a collection of books written in English by the founder of the community represents the Dharma.

### **The third Jewel: Sangha**

The third Jewel is Sangha which is the Buddhist community. Placing faith and trust in Buddha and Dharma alone is not enough to progress on the Buddhist path; Buddhists also need a supportive, like-minded community. As the story of the King's Elephant illustrates, a person's social context has a great effect on how that person thinks and acts. To progress more quickly and more effectively on the Buddhist path, Buddhists believe that it is important to spend time with those who have similar ideals and practices. At the Buddhist Centre in the story, some members of the community reside there full-time, and other members of the community live in their own homes and visit the Centre for various events, devotions, and classes.

### **Helping others**

The Three Jewels provide Buddhists with the right kind of support necessary to develop spiritually and to follow the path of the Bodhisattva. In Mahayana Buddhism the motivation behind this aim is to be in a position to help suffering beings tied to the cycle of rebirth. An important part of Mahayana Buddhism's practice is creating and giving 'merit' (good karma) to others to make their lives better. Mahayana Buddhists do this in a number of ways, for example, through rituals and prayers offered before the shrine, the Tibetan prayer flags (see worksheet) and prayer wheel, and reading sacred texts.

## Activities

### ***Visiting a Buddhist place of worship***

Visit a Buddhist place of worship and identify the places mentioned in the story. How does it differ from the places in the book and how is it the same?

### ***Mix and match***

Cut out the nine boxes on the 'Write a story' worksheet, and then cut each box into three sections: the heading, the information, and the picture. Mix up all the sections and place them in an envelope. Divide pupils into pairs or groups and give each pair or group an envelope. Pupils need to match heading, information, and picture correctly.

Pupils can then do the task on the 'Write a story' worksheet (the story can easily be adapted to another genre such as a diary entry or newspaper article, if needed).

### ***Mudras: using our hands to talk***

Hands are very important because they help us to communicate with one another. Discuss the different ways in which we use our hands, for example, when we are talking, police/traffic wardens directing traffic, diving language, semaphore flags.

What advantages do hands have in these situations (instead of writing or talking, for example)?

Look at and try to copy the various mudras (hand symbols) depicted by pictures or statues of the Buddha. What advantages do hands have in these situations (instead of writing or talking, for example)?

### ***Picturing the Three Jewels***

Show pupils a picture depicting the Three Jewels – often they are represented as three flames. Why do you think that this is the case? In small groups, design your own picture for the Three Jewels. Share your design with the rest of the class, explaining the thinking behind your picture.

### ***Living together***

Discuss the importance of community for Buddhists, using the story of the King's Elephant as a focus. The story can be acted out. Explore how the children's school or home community affects them. Ask them about the behaviour of others around them that causes them to be helpful or irritable.



## Chapter 2 A children's festival

In non-Buddhist countries like Britain where there are comparatively few Buddhists it can be difficult to gather together regularly for communal activities or to celebrate festivals. It is also more difficult to bring children up in a faith tradition without the support of a faith community. In the last chapter we learnt the importance of belonging to a community in Buddhist tradition. To address this problem the New Kadampa Tradition featured in the story holds an annual 'Buddhist festival' and a 'Kid's Festival' where New Kadampa Buddhists can meet up and engage in activities as a large community.

At the children's festival Rees and Sara learn more about Buddhism in the workshops. They are introduced to the life and teachings of the historical founder of Buddhism, Buddha Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama). The story of Siddhartha Gautama is an excellent teaching tool because it outlines the main concerns of Buddhism in a simple way.

### Siddhartha's life in more detail

- Siddhartha Gautama was born into a tribal group called the Shakyas. This explains the title given to him by Mahayana Buddhists - Buddha Shakyamuni, which means sage of the Shakyas. As a son of the tribal leader, he would have lived a privileged and luxurious life.
- His conception and birth were miraculous. Legend says that his mother, Maya, dreamt that a white elephant entered her womb, and after ten months she gave birth; he was born on a full moon in Lumbini Park and deities paid homage to him; immediately after his birth he took seven steps and proclaimed his mission. Siddhartha's mother died when he was seven days old and he was brought up by his mother's sister who was also his father's wife.
- Siddhartha's training to be a great ruler would have included learning academic skills such as how to read and write and do mathematics as well as the skills of war such as archery and sword fighting. He was a fast learner and excelled in all his lessons.
- At sixteen he married Yasodhara, the daughter of an elder from a neighbouring tribe, and they had a son called Rahula. Rahula means 'fetter'; a tie which would make it particularly difficult for Siddhartha to leave on his quest to find the cure for suffering. In spite of this, he left his sleeping wife and newborn son to join a group of wandering holy men; this is called the Great Renunciation, which is symbolic of the detachment needed for

following the Buddhist path. After enlightenment Siddhartha returned to see his family, and his son, Rahula, became a Buddhist monk.

- Siddhartha had a number of respected teachers while he lived the life of a holy man. He learnt all that they knew, but they did not know the cure for suffering. Siddhartha tried all the traditional methods for attaining spiritual knowledge, such as practising different meditation techniques and depriving his body of food. This made him very ill but it did not help him to discover the cure for suffering, so he gave up this lifestyle. Statues of the Buddha exist where he is pictured as a starving, skeletal figure meditating, which recall his pre-enlightenment spiritual search.
- While he sat under the Banyan tree in Bodhgaya on the night of his enlightenment, he entered into higher and higher states of meditation. In these states he learnt why everything suffers and the solution to this suffering. This is what he taught to his first disciples in his first sermon in the Deer Park at Sarnath.
- When Siddhartha Gautama, now the Buddha, died at Kusinara, he was cremated and his remains were buried under monuments called stupas.

The places of the Buddha's birth (Lumbini), enlightenment (Bodhgaya), first sermon (Sarnath), and death (Kusinara) are now important places of Buddhist pilgrimage alongside the stupas.

### Meditation

Practising meditation is very important in Buddhism. In the meditation workshop Rees and Sara learn that meditation helps to control the mind by stilling and calming it. When the mind has been quietened, it is easier to concentrate and focus on really important things like the truth of the impermanence of everything around us. Buddhists believe that learning how to use the mind effectively is the key to enlightenment and following the Path of the Bodhisattva.

Buddhists can use a number of different techniques for meditation, for example:

- sitting in the lotus position;
- walking meditations;
- chanting mantras;
- undertaking everyday tasks like peeling potatoes, washing up, or gardening;
- focusing on an image or statue of a Buddha or Bodhisattva;
- focusing on their breathing;
- practising on their own or in groups.



## Activities

### ***What are my ties?***

Make a list of the ties or 'fetters' that would have been difficult for Siddhartha to leave behind as he set out on his spiritual journey (for example, beautiful house, clothes, servants, friends, wife, child, food).

All of us have ties of some sort, even in our everyday lives. Imagine that your mother has asked you to tidy your room (or do your homework or some other task). You have promised to do it before tea. It is a beautiful, sunny afternoon and your best friend arrives with a new bike which has to be tested in the park. What ties or 'fetters' might stop you from tidying your room? Try to explain carefully why.

Learning to recognise and let go of fetters and ties in all parts of a person's life is central to the Buddhist path.

### ***Special places***

What makes a place special to us? A special place is often associated with people who are special to us or events which are special in some way. Draw a picture/diagram illustrating the special places of Buddhist pilgrimage linked to the life and death of the Buddha. Draw another picture/diagram to illustrate the special places in your life and write a sentence about each to explain why. And/or, ask adult members of your family to identify four special places in their lives, and to explain why they are special. Have they ever been back to those places? If they have, how did they feel?

### ***Amazing birth and childhood stories***

Compare the birth and childhood stories of Siddhartha Gautama with the birth and childhood stories of Jesus, noting all the clues which show that they are very special and different from those around them. Do you think that it is important for great religious teachers to have amazing stories about their birth and childhood? What do you think these amazing stories about birth and childhood are trying to teach those who hear them?

Does your family have any favourite stories about when you were a baby or a very young child? Why do you think that they remember them?

### ***Mind over body***

Practise a simple meditation using breathing. Sit pupils comfortably cross-legged on the floor with their eyes closed or, if this is not possible, at their desks. Ask them to inhale and exhale, not too quickly or too slowly, and try to concentrate on their breathing. Every time the mind wanders to anything else, they should gently bring it back to their breathing. After a few minutes, ask the children to stop and quietly reflect on the experience:

- How do they feel now?
- Was it difficult to focus on their breathing?
- What things distracted them?

Practise a focused meditation in groups concentrating on an everyday picture or an object which is not religious. Ask pupils to look carefully and silently at the picture or object: its shape, colours, and tiny details, for a few minutes. Remove the picture/object from each group, and ask one pupil from each group to describe in detail what s/he noticed. Can the other members of the group add any more details? Does anything surprise them about what they noticed? How easy was it for them to concentrate on the picture/object?

### ***Celebrating festivals in Buddhism***

There are other more traditional types of Buddhist festival which you can also study. A very useful and important festival is Wesak which celebrates the birth, life, and death of Buddha Shakyamuni.

### ***Festivals across religious traditions***

Work on a calendar or book of festivals from all religions. This would need to be a loose-leaf folder, or pages joined together with treasury tags so that pages can be added as needed in chronological order.

Talk about the importance of organising material well so that people can quickly find the information they need. With the pupils, decide on a useful structure for the book, for example, section headings could include stories, how the festival is celebrated today, recipes, and so on.

## Chapter 3 Teachers

Although all teachers are different, in the story Hana observes that 'a good teacher is anyone who knows how to help people learn things'. Teachers have a central role to play in many Mahayana Buddhist groups. A good Buddhist teacher knows that people are different from one another and that individuals need to be taught in different ways if they are to progress on the Buddhist path. In Tibetan Buddhism (and the New Kadampa Tradition), a good teacher will know exactly which spiritual exercises will be most useful to individual pupils, and will make sure that the pace of education is not too fast or too slow. This appreciation of difference may be linked to the appreciation of different learning styles for different children which is part of good educational practice in schools today.

### Teaching as skilful means

Mahayana Buddhism uses the term 'skilful means' when referring to this flexible and individualised kind of teaching. 'Skilful means' is using your wisdom and compassion for the benefit of others in the most appropriate way. In the Lotus Sutra there is a famous story which illustrates skilful means.

A father returned home to see his house in flames. He could hear his children playing inside. He called to them to get out, but the children were too interested in their game to leave and they did not realise the danger that they were in. The father knew that the only way to save his children was to offer them something they wanted which would grab their attention, so he promised them the best toys that they could imagine, if they came out of the house immediately. His children came out of the house and were saved.

The father gave his children the greatest gift of all – life, although through indirect means because the children were not mature enough to understand their real needs. The message of the story is that teaching needs to be presented in a way that people can understand, and this will be different for each individual.

### A long line of teachers

Like all Buddhists, the New Kadampa Tradition traces its teachings back to Buddha Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama), and like all Mahayana Buddhist groups, it has a line of recognised and famous teachers who have passed on the teachings. This is a way of proving that the teachings are authentic as well as protecting them from being corrupted and distorted.

The New Kadampa Tradition recognises an Indian Buddhist called Atisha as the most important founding father of Kadampa Buddhism in Tibet (982-1054 CE). The next most significant Kadampa Buddhist teacher in Tibet was Je Tsongkhapa who lived in the fourteenth century. According to the New Kadampa Buddhist Tradition, Buddha Shakyamuni predicted that Bodhisattva Manjushri would appear in the form of Je Tsongkhapa. Je Tsongkhapa modernised the tradition and founded New Kadampa Buddhism. A Tibetan called Geshe Kelsang Gyatso wanted those who lived in the West to benefit from New Kadampa Buddhism as well, and so he made it his mission to present the teachings in a way which Westerners would understand. He founded the very successful New Kadampa Tradition, the International Kadampa Buddhist Union which contains over 1,000 Buddhist centres from around the world.

If religious traditions are to be meaningful, they need to adapt appropriately to changing times and cultures without losing that which lies at the heart of the tradition. Gyatso may be said to have done this for the New Kadampa Tradition in the West.

### Biography of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

- He studied Buddhism in Tibet.
- He spent 18 years meditating in a Himalayan retreat supported by his spiritual teacher.
- In 1977 he came to England to teach and introduce New Kadampa Buddhism to the West, and settled at the Manjushri Centre in the Lake District.
- He established the New Kadampa Tradition, the International Kadampa Buddhist Union, which consists of over 1,000 Buddhist centres from around the world.

## Activities

### ***The Middle Way***

Buddha Shakyamuni (Siddhartha Gautama) recommended the middle way between a life of luxury and a life of asceticism. He compared it with a stringed instrument: if the string is too tight it breaks (asceticism); if it is too loose then it does not play (luxury). The instrument needs the middle way of balance to play best. Put the pupils into three discussion groups.

- Group 1: identify the signs of being very rich (for example, expensive car etc.).
- Group 2: identify the signs of being very poor (for example, little money to buy food etc.).
- Group 3: identify the basic things that we need to keep us alive.

Each group chooses one person to speak to the class on their behalf, presenting their ideas. Put the pupils back into their groups for the following discussions:

- Group 1: if you were very rich, what would be good and bad about it?
- Group 2: if you were very poor, what would be good and bad about it?
- Group 3: if you had enough to keep yourself alive, but no more or less, what would be good and bad about it?

It is interesting to note that research surveys suggest that after certain basic needs have been met, people's happiness levels do not appear to grow with increased wealth.

### ***Creating a tableau***

Prepare a tableau depicting the line of teachers in the New Kadampa Tradition (Buddha Shakyamuni, Atisha, Je Tsongkhapa, and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso) or in another Buddhist tradition such as Zen Buddhism, for example.

Tradition is important in Buddhism (and other religions), and correct belief and practice is passed on through reliable and respected people or groups. These reliable and respected people or groups adapt belief and practice sometimes to make the traditions relevant and meaningful to different countries and times. For example, India over two thousand years ago was very different from Britain today (you can discuss these differences with pupils). However, some important basic things remain the same (human suffering, illness, death, the desire to be happy, for example). Throughout their history, Buddhists have tried to present Buddhist teaching about suffering and its cure in ways that make sense to different people in different places at different times. The figures in the tableau are examples of this.

### ***Lessons in life***

There are many important lessons in life which people pass on from generation to generation. Ask pupils to interview an older family member or neighbour. Possible questions include:

- If you had to pass on only one piece of advice to others, what would it be?
- How did you learn that piece of advice?

The pupils can also ask themselves the same questions, and feed back to the class.

Before he died, Buddha Shakyamuni said, 'When I am gone, do not say that you have no teacher. Whatever I have taught, let that be your teacher when I am gone.' Ever since then the Buddha's teachings have been passed on from teacher to pupil, providing guidance for Buddhists on how to live their lives.

## Chapter 4 Caring for the world and others

In this chapter Rees and Sara plant trees and look at a picture of the Tibetan Wheel of Life. They learn that Buddhists believe every action a person does (both good and bad) has an effect on others, the world, and ourselves. Many environmental organisations and charities also make a similar basic connection.

An important question is asked: why do people do things which damage others, the world, and themselves? It does not make sense. James and Hana explain the Buddhist answer to this question through looking at the symbolism in the Wheel of Life.

### The Wheel of Life in more detail

#### The centre

The three symbolic animals in the centre fuel the wheel of life and keep it turning. Ignorance (pig), greed (cockerel), and hatred (snake) are shown either biting one another or throwing one another up. This symbolises that they feed on one another and are connected to one another. For example, if people are ignorant of how the world works, they become greedy and strive to possess things for themselves, and this often leads to hatred towards anything which stands in the way. By replacing ignorance with knowledge (practising the Buddha's teaching or Dharma) a person becomes 'enlightened'; an enlightened person is without greed and hatred, and the wheel stops turning because it runs out of fuel. In the picture, the figure of the Buddha sits in meditation outside the Wheel of Life, which represents the potential in everyone to free themselves from the cycle of rebirth through following Buddhist practice.

#### The inner circle

This shows what happens if people's lives are dominated by ignorance, greed, and hatred. They are trapped in an endless cycle of rebirth which is marked by pain and suffering. Rees and Sara learn that Tibetan Buddhists believe that there are many different realms of existence which co-exist and, depending on a person's actions (karma), that person will be reborn into one of these realms. Although Buddhist scriptures sometimes say what actions would lead to rebirth in a particular realm (for example, rebirth in the hell realm for killing a Buddha), the whole process is very complicated and simple connections like this are best avoided.

Tibetan Buddhists also believe that skilled Buddhists can choose where they want to be reborn, and they will choose the best rebirth for helping those

still suffering in the cycle of rebirth. This is part of following the Path of the Bodhisattva.

#### The outer circle

This takes one human life and shows the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. In a more detailed picture of the wheel of life, it is possible to see how all actions are connected to one another and how they contribute to the endless cycle of rebirth and suffering. Although these connections are too complicated for pupils in this age group to understand, it is useful for teachers to see how they work in more detail:

- blind man: failure to 'see' the truth;
- potter: creates pots (actions) based on ignorance of the truth;
- monkey: unruly, uncontrollable, and restless, swinging from tree to tree, like actions based on ignorance;
- three men in a boat: the boat (body) takes a person across a stream (a life journey), and the route taken is affected by a person's past actions (karma);
- house: actions are determined by sensory information passing through sense entrances into the mind (windows and doors of the house);
- lovers: the link between sense organs and the sense information entering the mind produces sense-based feelings;
- man with arrow in his eye: the strength of the sense-based feelings damages a person's ability to see things properly;
- an intoxicated man, drinking: damaged sight turns sense-based feelings into desire, and a need to have more than a person requires;
- monkey eating fruit in a tree: the monkey is symbolic of a person clinging to a desired thing despite the fact that the uncontrolled clinging makes that person unhappy;
- pregnant woman: the uncontrolled clinging produces the seeds for a new life;
- woman giving birth: a new life begins;
- an old man weighed down by a heavy bag: the life is weighed down by all its 'history', and so the cycle continues.

The Wheel of Life is held in the jaws of Yama, the Lord of Death.

A diagram of the wheel of life is provided in the worksheet for pupils to discuss, label, and colour.

## Activities

### ***Practising mindfulness***

How often do we really think about what we say and do, and the effect that it has on ourselves and those around us? Arrange a break time when pupils can practise 'mindfulness' to understand better an important skill that practising Buddhists try to develop. They will need some practical pointers.

- Think before you say or do anything. How will what you say or do help or harm other people or yourself?
- Look around you. Is there anything that you can do to help others or the environment?

It is important that pupils are given an opportunity to feed back to the class directly after the break time, focusing on their experiences in response to the practical pointers.

### ***Caring for the environment***

Buddhists believe that everything they do should be helpful to themselves and others. Planting trees is helpful for the environment. However, you need to make sure that the trees are planted in the right place (for example, not near pipes or overhead wires) and cared for properly. There are several organisations that will work with groups to ensure trees are planted sensitively, such as the Forestry Commission of Wales Education Team, the Tree Council (which runs a National Tree Week around

November), and the Woodland Trust. Create a research project based on one or more of these organisations.

### ***What can I do?***

Sit in a circle and allow each child in turn to complete the sentence, 'I can care for the world by ...' (If children do not wish to say anything, allow them to pass.) These ideas can be displayed in the classroom to act as a reminder.

### ***The domino effect***

Set up a line of dominoes or cards, and demonstrate the domino effect. This is similar to an important belief in Buddhism. Buddhists believe that all things are connected to one another, and that every action has a knock-on effect.

Make a list of 'actions', for example, planting trees, buying fairtrade bananas, and supporting a chosen charity. Divide the class into groups, and give each group an 'action' to research further. Then, on a large sheet of paper, create a spider diagram which shows the effects of that action on other people and the world as well as us. Remember that knock-on effects can occur in all directions, so try to make the diagrams as complicated as possible.

## Chapter 5 It is better not to kill

### Right livelihood

Choosing the right livelihood (job or work) is important for many Buddhists, where a choice is available. Ideally, a job should support and not hinder one's progression along the Buddhist path, so a job should require actions which are good karma rather than require actions which are bad karma. By working in the organic coffee shop, James and Hana's mother believes she is producing good karma and showing compassion for the world and living beings within it. In Theravada Buddhism right livelihood is part of its Eightfold Path which guides a person on the path to enlightenment. One of the accompanying worksheets describes the Eightfold Path and suggests an activity. In Mahayana Buddhism the idea of right livelihood is understood in the context of the Path of the Bodhisattva, which guides Mahayana Buddhists to enlightenment. The Path of the Bodhisattva focuses on practising Six Perfections: giving; moral discipline; patience; effort; concentration; and wisdom.

### Practising compassion

In Buddhism it is important to show care and compassion towards all living beings, and not just human beings. Buddhism is traditionally less human-being focused than religions like Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. This is because of its beliefs about rebirth and the interconnectedness of all living things. Like other religions which emerged from India such as Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism, the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) is often central to Buddhist practice. The Tibetan tale of the meditating Buddhist monk illustrates this.

However, Buddhist beliefs about non-violence do not mean that all Buddhists are vegetarian or that they treat the natural world in exactly the same way. In the story two reasons are given which explain why. The

first reason is that different Buddhists and Buddhist groups live in different cultures and environments. In Theravada Buddhism (and Theravadin Buddhist countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka) the laity see it as their duty to provide monks with food and other means of support, and monks are not expected to 'work' in a traditional sense. The laity accepts the Theravadin rule that monks should not till the soil because it would produce bad karma for them to kill living creatures. However, Theravadin monks are allowed to eat meat if an animal has not been killed to feed them. By providing food and other support for the monks, lay Buddhists believe that they are making good karma which will help to produce a good rebirth in their next lives.

Mahayana Buddhist groups were established in places where it was unrealistic for the laity to provide them with food, for example, in China and Japan. Also, Mahayana Buddhism is more flexible in the way that it approaches scripture, and tends to adapt to its environment to a greater extent than Theravada Buddhism. As a result, Zen monks are able to do work which would not be acceptable to Theravadin monks.

The second reason given for difference in practice among Buddhists is that people are at different stages on the Buddhist path, so you should not expect the same standard of practice from someone just beginning as you would a Buddhist monk, whose life revolves around the path. Everyone should do what they reasonably can by putting in the right effort (not too much or too little); this is called the Middle Way. Everyone should do what is appropriate in their particular life situation and stage of spiritual development.



## Activities

### ***Difference in Buddhism map***

Display a map of the world and mark the countries where there is a large population of Buddhists (for example, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Laos, Vietnam, Japan, Macau, Taiwan, China, Japan, South Korea, and India). Illustrate the map with pictures from the internet of famous Buddhist buildings, locations, and statues. You could also show the different styles of dress for Buddhist monks and nuns (for example, black for Zen in Japan, purple for Tibetan in Tibet or one of the New Kadampa Tradition centres, saffron for Theravada in Thailand and Sri Lanka).

### ***Make a graph***

Some Buddhists may prefer to use organic food because they believe it is better for the environment and the body. Do your parents use organic food? Ask at home how often (if ever) your parents usually include organic food in cooking, selecting one of these five descriptions of frequency: never, a few times a week or more, at least once a week, at least once a month, less often.

If your parents do use organic food, find out the reasons why. If your family does not use organic food, find out the reasons why.

Construct a block graph to display the results for the class, using the five frequency categories. This could be further developed by asking different questions based on the graph. For example: How many families use organic food in their cooking? How many families use organic food at least once a week or more? Also, the selected information could be presented in a different way, for example as a pie-chart, or table.

### ***Difficult decisions***

There are many difficult choices to make in life and making the right choice can be a complicated business. Also, people often disagree about what the right choice is. Gather together or prepare information about one or more of the following for the pupils:

- organic farming and organic food/conventional farming;
- food available in the UK/food from around the world;
- free-range animals and battery-farmed animals;
- fish farms/open-water fishing.

It would be useful to include a comparative price list in this information, and you could include air miles, where relevant.

Working in groups or pairs, ask pupils to use the gathered information to answer the following question, which can be adapted according to the topic selected.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Give reasons for your answer.

- Organic farming is better than conventional farming.

Groups should feed back their answers to the class. Did every group have the same answer and reasons?

Buddhists have to make difficult choices too. They may decide what to do by weighing up the effects of certain actions on others, the world, and themselves. As it shows in the story, there is often more than one answer, and different Buddhist groups can make different choices.

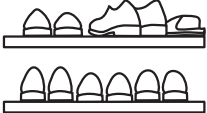










## Keywords

<b>ahimsa</b>	non-violence	<b>Pali Canon</b>	the scriptures of Theravada Buddhism
<b>Bodhisattva</b>	one who has taken the Bodhisattva oath, and is on the path to becoming a full Buddha	<b>rebirth</b>	the belief that all things are subject to a continuous cycle of birth and death
<b>Dharma</b>	teaching or truth	<b>Sangha</b>	the Buddhist community; often used more specifically for the monastic community
<b>enlightenment</b>	waking up and seeing things as they really are	<b>Shakyamuni Buddha</b>	another name for the historical Buddha
<b>Geshe Kelsang Gyatso</b>	the founder of the New Kadampa Tradition	<b>Siddhartha Gautama</b>	the Buddha from whom Buddhism derives its name
<b>karma</b>	action: there is positive action (karma) and negative action (karma)	<b>skilful means</b>	the use of wisdom and compassion to help suffering beings in the most appropriate way
<b>Mahayana Buddhism</b>	one of the main Buddhist traditions; many Buddhist groups fall in the category of Mahayana Buddhism, including the New Kadampa Tradition	<b>sutra</b>	a sacred scripture in Mahayana Buddhism
<b>mandala</b>	a tool used in meditation	<b>tanha</b>	grasping and craving for the self; the cause of suffering
<b>mantra</b>	words which are believed to have great sacred power	<b>Theravada Buddhism</b>	one of the main Buddhist traditions
<b>meditation</b>	the practice of calming and focusing the mind	<b>Three Jewels</b>	Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha
<b>Middle Way</b>	not doing or having too much or too little of anything, it provides the ideal context for Buddhist practice.	<b>Wheel of Life</b>	a Tibetan picture which depicts the universe, the cycle of rebirth, and the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment
<b>mudra</b>	hand symbol present in Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh iconography		
<b>New Kadampa Tradition</b>	a tradition within Tibetan Buddhism		

# Write a story

Imagine you have visited a Buddhist Centre with a Buddhist friend. Write a story about it, giving details of all the places you visited and the things you saw there. The pictures and descriptions below will help you.

<p><b>shoe rack</b></p> <p>As a sign of respect, dirty shoes are left outside the shrine room. This also keeps the floor clean so people can sit down.</p> 	<p><b>Buddha</b></p> <p>A large statue of Buddha Shakyamuni sits on the shrine. People may greet the statue by putting their hands together in front of their chests and bowing slightly.</p> 	<p><b>candles</b></p> <p>People may light candles on the shrine as a gift of light and as a symbol of the light of Buddhist teaching.</p> 
<p><b>shrine room</b></p> <p>There are no seats here so people sit cross-legged on the floor to listen to the teaching and to meditate.</p> 	<p><b>Dharma</b></p> <p>The teachings of Buddhism have been passed down for hundreds of years. These special books sit on the shrine as a sign of how important they are.</p> 	<p><b>flowers</b></p> <p>The shrine may have several beautiful flower arrangements. Buddhists like to be surrounded by peace and beauty.</p> 
<p><b>shrine</b></p> <p>Buddhist shrines are beautifully decorated. The shrine is considered to be a special place and is treated with respect.</p> 	<p><b>incense</b></p> <p>Sometimes Buddhists burn incense (a strong-smelling spice) on the shrine.</p> 	<p><b>meeting room</b></p> <p>The community is very important to Buddhists, so they may stay and drink tea together after their meeting time.</p> 

# Make a prayer flag

Some Buddhists write prayers on brightly coloured flags and place them outside. They believe that as the wind blows across the flags, the prayer is repeated over and over as the wind carries it into the world.

## You will need

scrap paper

scissors

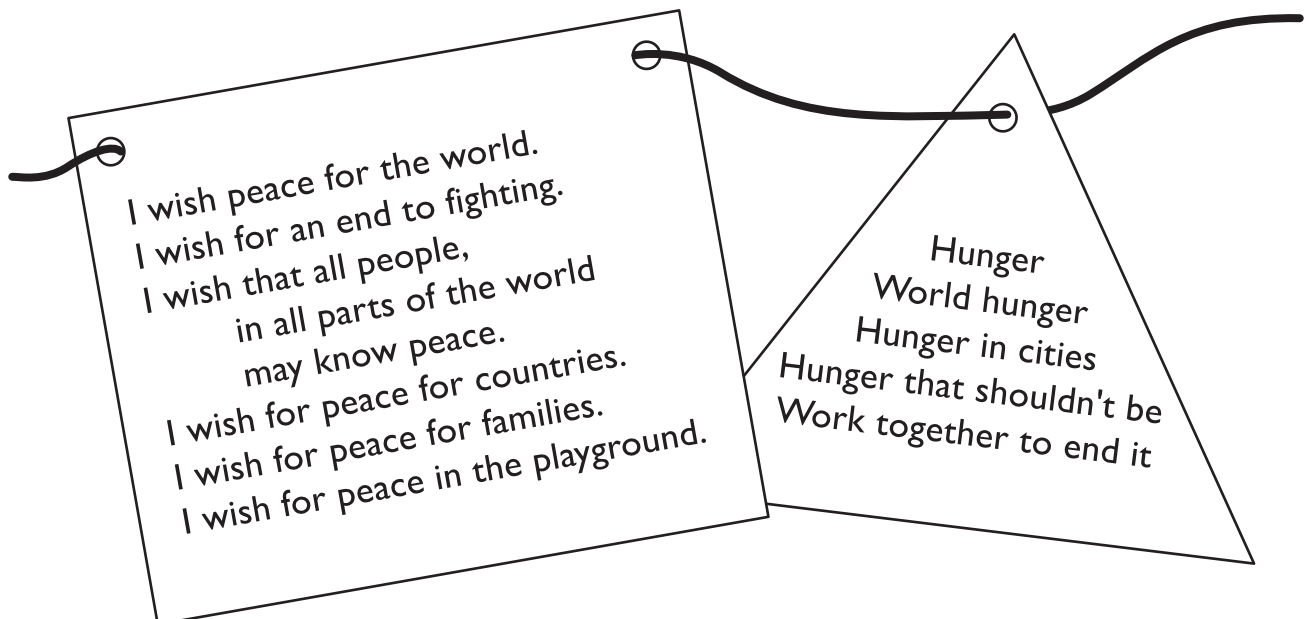
brightly-coloured paper or fabric

pens or felt-tipped pens

string

## What to do

1. Write a prayer for the world. What is it that you most wish for our world and for all the people on it? Share your ideas with your friends and then write down what is most important to you.
2. Write your prayer on brightly coloured paper or fabric. (Use felt-tipped pens to write on fabric.) Cut it into your chosen shape for a flag.
3. Punch holes in corners of the flag and thread string through the holes.
4. Tie your flag outside where you will see it and be reminded of your own wish for the world. Each time you see it, think of what you can do to help fulfil your hopes.

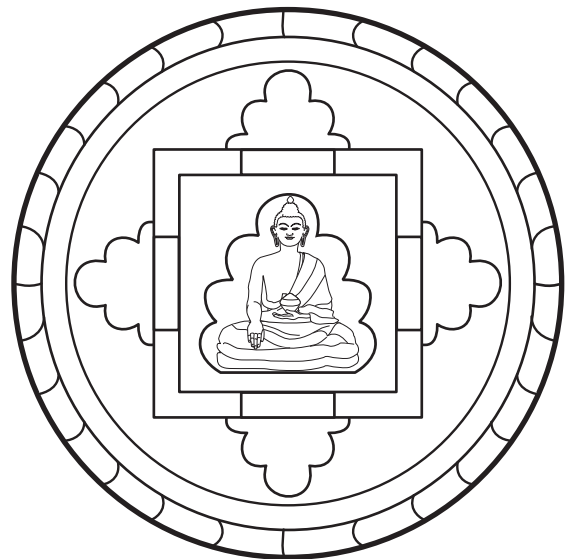
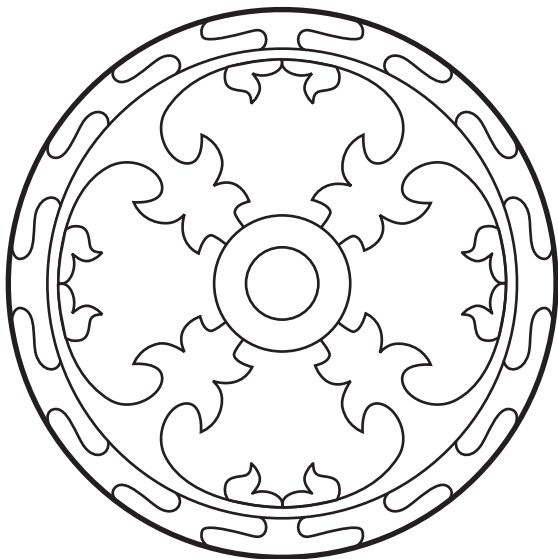


# Design a mandala

Some Buddhists use mandalas to help them meditate. A mandala is a circular design with geometric patterns made from circles, triangles, squares and diamonds. Some mandalas include pictures of Buddha Shakyamuni.

## What to do

1. **Research:** Find pictures of traditional mandalas for ideas. Look in books about Buddhism or search the internet using keywords like 'mandala' and 'pictures'.
2. **Discuss:** Look at the pictures with your friends. Talk about how the elements of the mandalas would help Buddhists to meditate. Why do some include pictures of Buddha Shakyamuni? Why are some geometric patterns?
3. **Reflect:** Buddhists meditate on the teachings that are important to them. What is important to you? What do you need to work at in your life?
4. **Design:** Plan a mandala that will help you think about the things that are important to you.
5. **Make:** Make your mandala. Mandalas can be drawn or painted, stitched on cloth or made out of coloured sand that is then blown away by the wind. (You can make coloured sand by putting clean, washed sand in a plastic bag, adding food colouring and shaking it until the colour mixes. For brighter colours, use sugar and food colouring.)



# Make a cut-away card

There are many Buddhists with many different traditions. In Buddhist countries, Wesak is an important festival. It is a time to remember the life of Buddha Shakyamuni. It is celebrated on the day of the full moon in April or May.

Generosity is important to Buddhists. At Wesak (sometimes known as Buddha Day) they make offerings and give gifts to the monks. Some people send cards or give small gifts to family and friends.

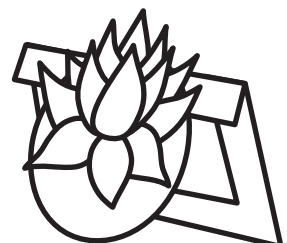
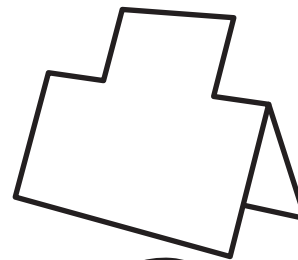
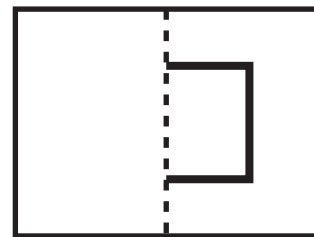
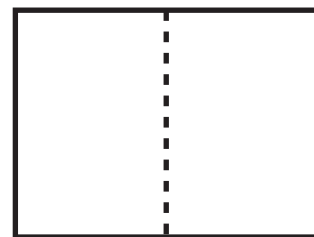
## You will need

½ sheet of A4 card  
ruler

pencils  
cutting knife and scissors

## What to do

1. Rule a faint line down the centre of the card where the fold will be.
2. With a cutting knife, cut out the three sides of the rectangle as shown. (The fourth side is the ruled line.)
3. Make a mountain crease pointing up along the outsides of the ruled line so that your cut-out section stands up. Do not crease this part.
4. Choose a suitable design for your card, such as Buddha Shakyamuni, a lotus blossom or an eight-spoked wheel. Draw this on the card. Carefully shape the top of the card to fit the design. When you understand how to make these cards you can change them. You can make them smaller, fold them sideways or cut away part of the bottom of the design.
5. Write 'Happy Wesak' or 'Happy Buddha Day' on the card.



# Discover the cycles of the moon

Many Buddhist festivals are held at the time of the new moon. This is because most important events in the life of Buddha Shakyamuni are believed to have happened then.

Fill in the details on the calendars below. Choose the next two months. Write the days at the top of the columns. Mark in the new moon days for each month. You could also fill in the dates of the full moon and the two half moons.

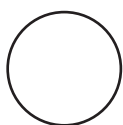
**The month of \_\_\_\_\_**

___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

**The month of \_\_\_\_\_**

___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day	___ day
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

## key



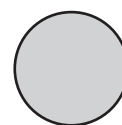
new moon



or



half moon



full moon

# Make a wheel

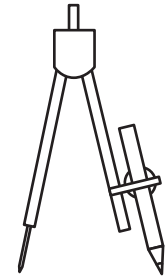
The wheel is a symbol of the teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni. It has eight spokes to represent the Noble Eightfold Path, which Buddhists believe to be the way to end suffering.

## You will need

2 sheets of A4 card  
scissors

compass  
sticky tape or glue

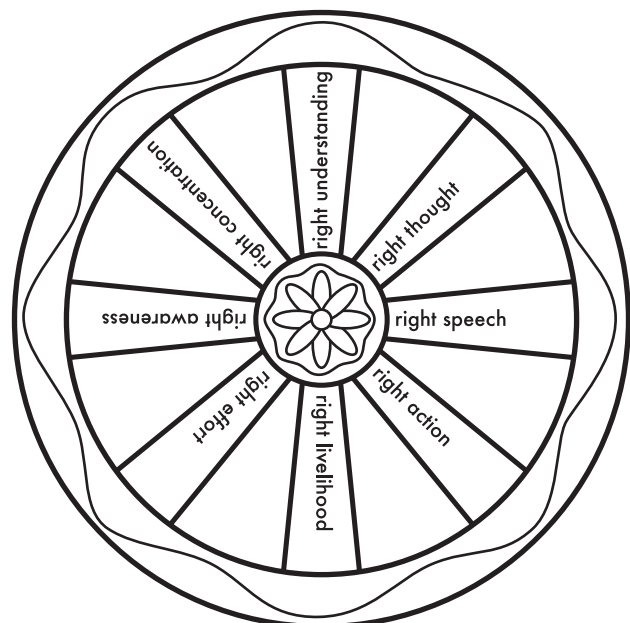
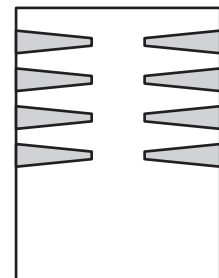
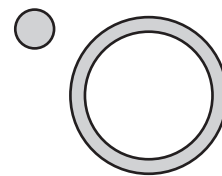
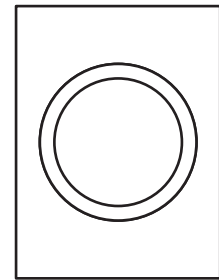
pencil  
pens



## What to do

1. Use the compass to draw a circle about 18 cm across. (This means the compass point and the pencil need to be about 9 cm apart.) Draw a second circle 2cm inside this. Cut this out as the rim of the wheel.
2. Draw and cut out another circle about 3 cm across for the centre of the wheel.
3. Cut out 8 spokes, each about 7 cm long. Make them 2 cm wide where they meet the rim and 1 cm wide where they meet the centre.
4. Join the pieces of the wheel together with glue or tape on the back of the model.
5. Decorate the rim and centre.
6. On each spoke write one of the steps to right living:

- right understanding  
(of Buddha Shakyamuni's teaching)
- right thought  
(think kind thoughts)
- right speech  
(do not tell lies or speak angrily)
- right action  
(do not steal or harm others)
- right livelihood  
(a job that does no harm)
- right effort  
(work to do the right thing)
- right awareness  
(be alert and aware)
- right concentration  
(train your mind to be calm)





# What is happiness?

This is the Metta Sutta, a famous talk given by Buddha Shakyamuni. Metta means 'loving kindness', which is very important to Buddhists. This talk shows the importance of happiness to Buddhists.

May all beings be happy and secure.  
May their hearts be whole.  
Whatever living beings they are -  
Weak or strong, tall or short,  
Small or large,  
Those seen or unseen,  
Living near or far away,  
Those who are born  
And those yet to be born -  
May all beings, without exception,  
Be happy!

Buddhists believe that happiness is a state of mind. If our mind is pure and peaceful we will be happy, no matter what is happening around us. Fill in the acrostic with words and phrases about happiness.

**H** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A** \_\_\_\_\_  
**P** \_\_\_\_\_  
**P** \_\_\_\_\_  
**I** \_\_\_\_\_  
**N** \_\_\_\_\_  
**E** \_\_\_\_\_  
**S** \_\_\_\_\_  
**S** \_\_\_\_\_



# Make a lotus flower

The open lotus flower is important to Buddhists as a symbol of spiritual purity. They believe that Buddha Shakyamuni had a vision in which he saw people as being like a lake of lotus plants that had not yet opened.

- Some people are like buds still buried at the bottom of the lake.
- Some people are like buds that have grown a little taller but are still muddy and tightly closed.
- Some people are like buds that have reached the surface of the lake and just need a little help from the sunlight to open into beautiful flowers.

## You will need

1 cup of salt

a dribble of cooking oil

white paint

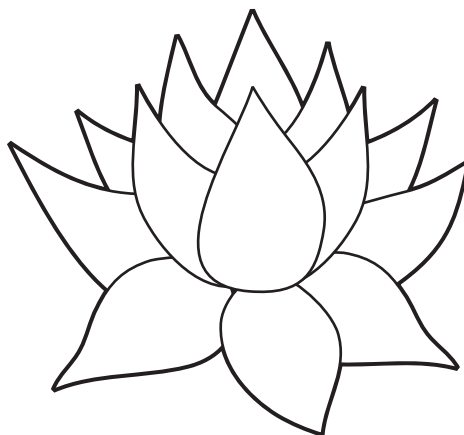
3 cups of flour

1 cup of water

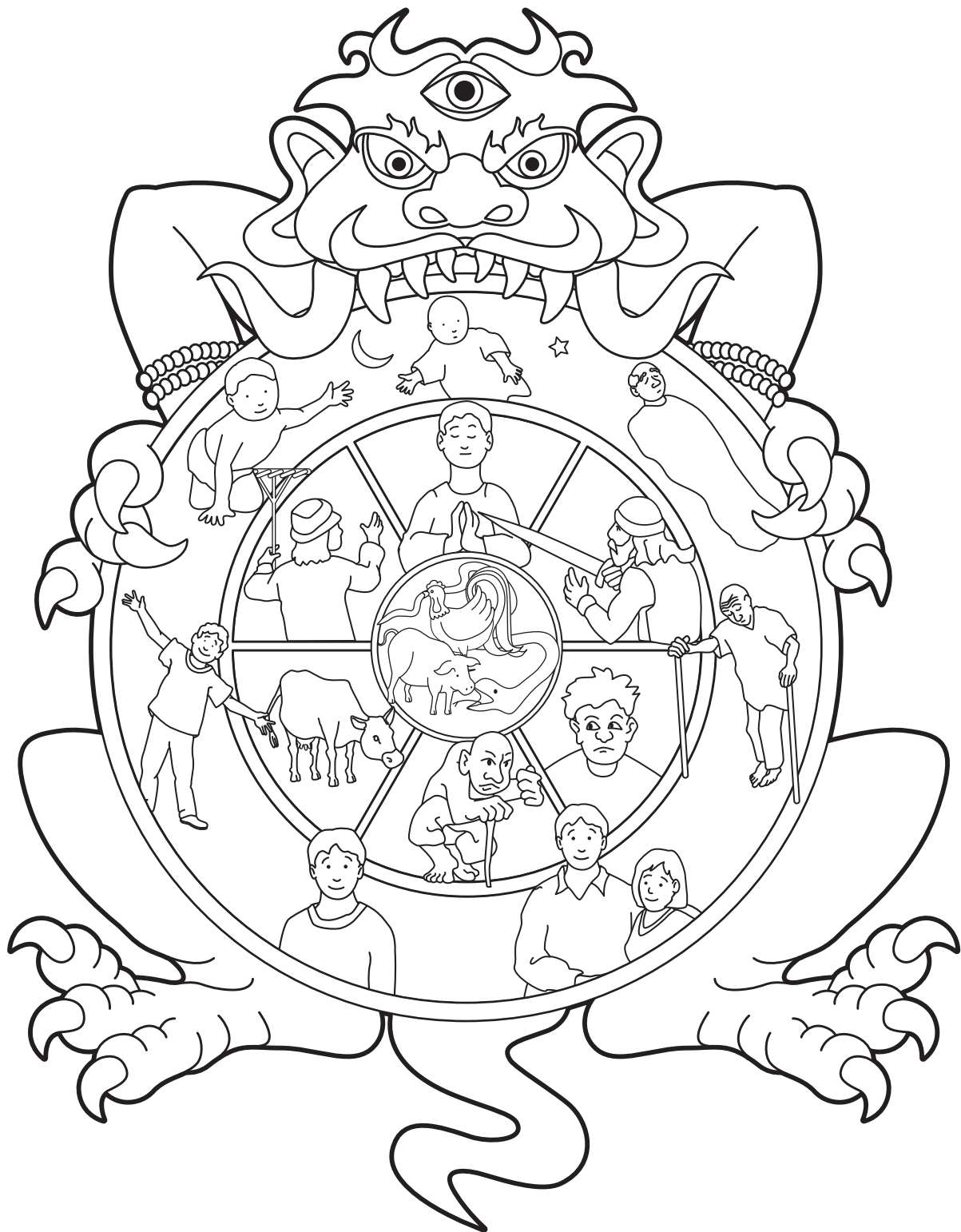
PVA glue

## What to do

1. Make salt dough by mixing together the salt, flour, oil and water. If the dough is too dry, add more water.
2. Knead the dough for at least two minutes. Leave it to rest for half an hour before using it.
3. Shape the dough to make models of an eight-petalled lotus flower. (If you have any dough left over it will need to be used by the next day or else thrown out.)
4. Ask an adult to cook the models for you. Small models can be cooked for an hour at 150°C (300°F or gas mark 2). Large models need to be cooked for 3 hours at 135°C (275°F or gas mark 1). Cook the models until they are thoroughly dry. Test by tapping them on the bottom. If they sound hollow, then they are ready.
5. Paint the models white and varnish them with PVA glue.



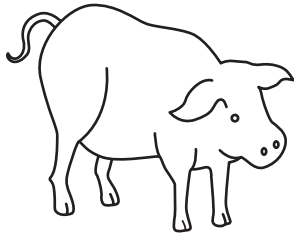
# Wheel of life



# The way of life

Buddhists believe that unhappiness is caused by ignorance, hatred and greed. Write in some problems that are caused by these three things. Think of their opposites and a symbol for each. Write in some good deeds that are caused by these.

The pig is a symbol for ignorance.

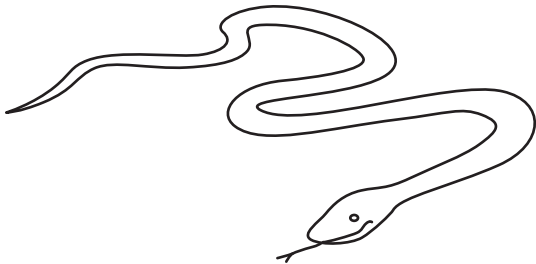


Some problems caused by ignorance are

The \_\_\_\_\_ is my symbol for knowledge.

Some good deeds caused by knowledge are

The snake is a symbol for hatred.

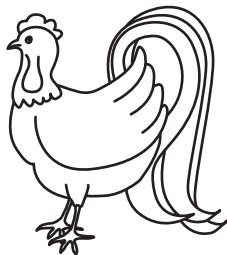


Some problems caused by hatred are

The \_\_\_\_\_ is my symbol for love.

Some good deeds caused by love are

The cockerel is a symbol for greed.



Some problems caused by greed are

The \_\_\_\_\_ is my symbol for generosity.

Some good deeds caused by generosity are

## Think about occupations

Buddhists believe they should choose their jobs carefully. They should select jobs that do not harm themselves or other living things.

First, write a list of jobs down the first row. Next, think about whether these jobs help or harm the world and the creatures in it. In the second row put a tick for helping and a cross for hurting. As you do this, fill in your reasons in the third row.

[illegible]

# Organic food

Buddhists prefer to eat food that does not harm the earth as it grows and does not harm their bodies when they eat it. Some Buddhists choose to do this by eating organic food. Is this easy? Could you prepare your favourite meals if you only bought organic food from the supermarket?

Check it out by logging on to an online supermarket. (You may need to ask someone to access an account for you to use.) In the search field, type in 'organic' to see the variety the supermarket offers. Fill in the food in the categories below.

**dairy and eggs**

**meat**

**bread, cakes and biscuits**

**fruit and vegetables**

**ready meals**

**general**



# My dictionary

You will meet many new words in *Exploring Buddhism*. Some of these will be English words and some will be either Pali or Sanskrit words. Keep a record of them, along with their meanings.

**meditation** training the mind, emptying it of all thoughts in order to focus on things that are important

**Dharma** the teaching that has come from Buddha Shakyamuni

**Sangha** the community of Buddhists

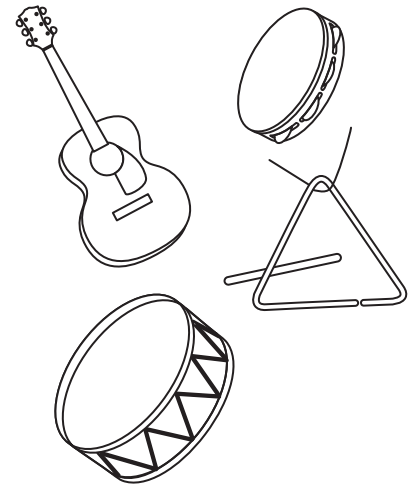



# Compose music

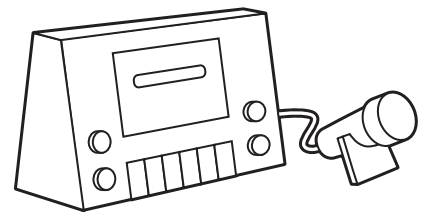
Have you noticed the effect that different sounds have? Some sounds make us excited; some can scare us; some leave us feeling peaceful. Buddhists choose special words and sounds (known as mantras) to help them meditate. Sound is very important.

## What to do

1. Choose a feeling that you would like to explore.
2. Experiment with musical instruments and everyday items in and around the classroom. Select some that produce the feeling you wish to evoke.
3. Try out your sounds in different combinations to produce the best effect.
4. Write down the sequence in a way that helps you remember it.
5. Record your music on a tape recorder or computer.
6. Test your music on a friend to see if it creates the feeling you chose. If it does not, then work out how to change it and then re-record it.

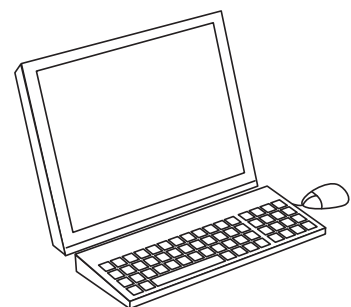


bell			3		3	
drum	x					
stamp	xx		xx		xx	xx
tambourine	x		~		x	



## An extra idea

If you record your music on computer as a sound file, you could import it to a programme such as 'PowerPoint' and find pictures from the internet or from Clip Art to accompany it for a presentation to the whole class.



# World Faiths Today

## *teachers' handbook*

The teachers' handbook is part of the *World Faiths Today Series*, which includes seven story books for 8- to 11-year-old learners. In the series, both learners and teachers are invited to join two children called Rees and Sara who are learning more about their friends from religious traditions:

- Anglican Church
- Buddhism
- Eastern Orthodox Church
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism

The teachers' handbook provides:

- In-depth background information about the seven religious traditions
- Classroom activities
- Photocopiable worksheets
- Keywords



**Bear Lands Publishing**

