

Summer Institute on China 2016

Fulbright-Hays UC Berkeley

Introduction to Buddhism Unit

Buddhism and Its Spread Along the Silk Road

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GRADE LEVEL

11th and 12th grade Exploring World Religions/ Religious and Social Studies Department

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. By looking at objects found on the Silk Road, we can learn much about the ways (Buddhism) in which ideas and beliefs may have spread.
2. Why do you think the practice of building cave temples was so popular among lay-people as well as monks (Buddhism-spread of spirituality and the idea of hope and survival on the Silk Road)?
3. (The Buddha-Shakyamuni) What do the prince's encounters outside of the palace tell us about the kind of person Siddhārtha Gautama was?
4. (The Buddha-Shakyamuni) How does the story of Buddha's life compare to our own ideas of ambition and success in life today?
5. (The Buddha) (Self-Evaluation principle) Do you think Buddha would place value on the same ideas?
6. (Buddhism) (Self-Evaluation principle) Do you think there is value in Buddha's beliefs?
7. (Buddhism) (Self-Evaluation principle) Think about some of the choices you make in your everyday life.
8. (Buddhism) (Self-Evaluation principle) Do you believe in values similar to those outlined above?
9. (Buddhism) (Self-Evaluation principle) What actions or decisions in your own life would you need to change in order to follow the Eightfold Path or the Five

Precepts?

10. Can you see any recurring physical characteristics in these images of the Buddha? (Buddhism found in the Dunhuang Mogao Caves)
11. Look at the artifacts above which were found at different sites along the Silk Road. (Buddhism found in the Dunhuang Mogao Caves)
12. Can you see any recurring symbols or motifs on the figure of the Buddha? What do you think these motifs might represent? (Buddhism found in the Dunhuang Mogao Caves)

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism and Its Spread Along the Silk Road

Besides silk, paper and other goods, the Silk Road carried another commodity which was equally significant in world history. Along with trade and migration, the world's oldest international highway was the vehicle which spread Buddhism through Central Asia. The transmission was launched from northwestern India to modern Pakistan, Afghanistan, Central Asia, Xinjiang (Chinese Turkistan), China, Korea and Japan. Buddhism not only affected the lives and cultures on those regions but also left us with a world of wonders in arts and literature.

GRADE LEVEL





Buddhism Introduced to China from the Silk Road

It is not certain when Buddhism reached China, but with the Silk Road opened in the second century BC, missionaries and pilgrims began to travel between China, Central Asia and India. The record described that Chang Ch'ien, on his return from Tashia (Ferghana) in the 2nd century BC, heard of a country named Tien-chu (India) and their Buddhist teaching. This is probably the first time a Chinese heard about Buddhism. A century later, a Buddhist community is recorded at the court of a Han prince. However the most famous story is the Han emperor Mingdi's dream about Buddha. In 68 AD, Mingdi sent his official Cai Yin to Central Asia to learn more about Buddhism after a vision of a golden figure appeared to him in a dream. The next morning he asked his ministers what the dream meant and was told that he had seen the Buddha - the god of the West. Cai Yin returned after 3 years in India and brought back with him not only the images of Buddha and Buddhist scriptures but also two Buddhist monks named Shemoteng and Chu-falan to preach in China. This was the first time that China had Buddhist monks and their ways of worship. A few years later, a Buddhist community was established in Loyang, the capital. From then on, the Buddhist community grew continuously. They introduced the sacred books, texts and most importantly the examples of Buddhist art, never before seen in China. In 148 AD, a Parthian missionary, An Shikao arrived China. He set up a Buddhist temple at Loyang and began the long work of the translation of the Buddhist scriptures into the Chinese language. The work of scripture translation continued until the 8th century when access to Central Asia and India by land

was cut off by the Arabs. In 166 AD Han Emperor Huan formally announced Buddhism by having Taoist and Buddhist ceremonies performed in the palace. The unrest situation in China at the end of the Han dynasty was such that people were in a receptive mood for the coming of a new religion.

During the 4th century, Kumarajiva, a Buddhist from Central Asia organized the first translation bureau better than anything that had existed before in China. He and his team translated some 98 works from many languages into Chinese, of which 52 survive and are included in the Buddhist canon. By around 514, there were 2 million Buddhists in China. Marvelous monasteries and temples were built and the work of translating the scriptures into Chinese was undertaken with great industry.

Buddhism in China reached its apex during the Sui and Tang dynasties (581-907). Popular forms of Buddhism percolated down to the ordinary folk, fully sinicizing Buddhist religion and art. (Figure on the right: Buddha preaching to his disciples. Silk banner from the Dunhuang cave, 8th century) emerged and spread into Korea, and thence into Japan by the end of the sixth century. However in 845 a persecution of Buddhists in China had 4600 temples destroyed and 260,500 monks and nuns defrocked; this was a severe setback to Buddhism.

While numerous pilgrims arrived China from the West, Chinese Buddhist pilgrims were sent to India during different times and the accounts which some of them have left of their travels in the Silk Road provide valuable evidence of the state of Buddhism in Central Asia and India from the 4th to the 7th centuries. Some of the more famous Chinese pilgrims were Fa-hsien (399 to 414), Xuan-zang (629-645), and I-tsing (671-695).



Buddhist Art and its Impact

It is impossible to talk about Buddhism without mentioning its profound impact on the development of Central Asian art. It is through those artworks that a fusion of eastern and western cultures was demonstrated. The art of Buddhism left the world the most powerful and enduring monuments along the Silk Road, and among them, some of the most precious Buddhist sculptures, paintings and murals. Furthermore the contact with the

Hellenized Gandharan culture resulted in the development of a new art form, the Buddha statue, sometimes referred as a Buddha image. Before Buddhism reached Gandhara in the 3rd century BC, there had been no representation of the Buddha, and it was in the Gandharan culture that the use of Buddha images had begun. The earliest Buddha images resembled the Greek god Apollo. (Figure on the left: Buddha image,

Gandhara, 2-3 century) It has been suggested by the scholars that the earliest Buddha images in Gandhara were created by the local Greeks who carried their classic artistic conception and Indianized it by transforming it into the figure of the Greek-featured Buddha, dressed in a toga and seated in the yoga pose. The Gandhara style represented a union of classical, Indian, and Iranian elements continued in Afghanistan and the neighboring regions throughout most of the first millennium until the end of the 8th century.

Though it was largely as a result of Greek influence that Gandhara became the center of development in Buddhist sculpture, it was on the Indian foundation from which Buddhist architecture evolved. The development of Buddhism along the Silk Road resulted in a proliferation of monasteries, grottoes, vishanas and stupas throughout the entire Buddhist communities. However the cave temples hold the most unique position in the development of Buddhist architecture. The Buddhists' devotion was deeply reflected by the wall paintings of its rock-cut caves. From Gandhara, Bamyin, Kuntura, Kizil, to Bezeklik, and Dunhuang, the Buddhist artists, with arduous labor, created the most impressive wall paintings of cave temples dedicated to the Buddha, his saints, and his legend. They present us an astonishing pageant of local societies with kings, queens, knights, ladies, monks and artists. Aside from their artistic values, those cave temples provide us with an immense amount of historical information. The portraits of Kizil donors with light complexions, blue eyes, and blond or reddish hair teach us they are more Indo-European than Mongol in appearance. The processions of Uighur prince and princess from Dunhuang illustrate how Uighurs dressed in the 9th century. It is from these wall paintings that we can have a glance at the lives and cultures of these fascinating but vanished ancient peoples.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will analyze and compare and contrast the various elements of the teaching/tenets of The Buddha with their own lives.
- Students will write a critical self-evaluation paper exploring the tenets and teaching of The Buddha with their own moral and ethical code of humanistic development.
- Students will research and make inferences about the artistic renditions

of the spread of Buddhism through historical sites like the Mogao Caves in Dunhuang.

- Students will also prepare an analytical project expressing their understanding of the spread of Buddhism on the Silk Road.

- Students will explore the ideas of “Hope”, “Love” and “Compassion” in understanding the spread of Buddhism along the Silk Road

UNIT LESSONS 1. Teacher will lecture on topics based on 8-9 different activities outlying the Life of the Buddha and his teachings. In addition, to the perspective of his life and tenets, the Teacher will explore the significance of

the spread of Buddhism on the silk road as it pertains to the building of Temples, Cave dwellings/paintings and sculptures. (History-Life-Silk Road-Art-Spirituality Development-Hope-Love- Compassion)

2. Reading, Viewing, Listening: Versions of Buddha narratives (Lotus Sutra, Diamond Sutra, Jatakas – Story telling, film (BBC documentary: The Buddha), articles from the Dunhuang academy, the British Museum, excerpts and photographs from Paul Pelliot and M. Aurel Stein and Langdon Warner)

3. Writing: Response to Lecture, Literature, Teachings, Artwork and Story-telling – Character Analysis Reflection Essay: Self-evaluation

4. Listening and Speaking: Teacher and student shared philosophical responses, class guided discussion topics and oral responses (participation and engagement)

5. Research: Research and make inference how Buddhism is portrayed in the Mogao Caves, Yulin Caves to produce a collage, video, other multi-media product (could include possible role-play and creation project)

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Chodzin, S & Kohn, A. *The Barefoot Book of Buddhist Tales*, Bath: Barefoot Books, 1999. Foltz, R. *Religions of the Silk Road: overland trade and cultural exchange from antiquity to the fifteenth century*,

Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999. *From Silk to Oil, Cross-Cultural Connections Along the Silk Roads*, China Institute, 2005. Gethin, R. *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford: OUP, 1998. Gilchrist, C. *Stories from the Silk Road*, Bath: Barefoot Books, 2005. Keown, D. *Buddhism, A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: OUP, 1996. Lopez, D. *Buddhism*, London: Penguin Books, 2002. Pemberton, D. *The Buddha*, London: British Museum Press, 2002. Pomme Clayton, S & Herxheimer, S. *Tales Told in Tents*, London: Francis Lincoln Children's Books, 2004. Whitfield, S. *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War*

& Faith, London: The British Library, 2004 **References:**

British Library Online Gallery 'Turning the Pages': An interactive, virtual copy of the Diamond Sūtra enabling you to scroll through the manuscript and magnify the details. Also includes a recording of the sūtra being chanted.

The Museum of East Asian Art, Bath: Find information about school and family programmes plus downloadable, curriculum led resources about Chinese and Asian cultures, including a Buddhist loan box.

Silk Road Foundation: Website offering information on many aspects of Silk Road Culture including a timeline and history of Buddhism, explaining its spread along the Silk Road.

The Big View: Website offering an overview to philosophical topics. Includes a useful resource on Buddhist symbols and mudrās.

Silk Road Seattle: A public education project by the University of Washington using the Silk Road theme to explore cultural interaction across Eurasia.

DharmaNet: An educational and informational resource on all things Buddhist including extensive links to further reading.

Buddhanet: Useful Buddhist studies site by the Buddha Dharma Education Association, with various resources and interactive tools.

The Institute of Oriental Philosophy UK: Research and study center focusing on Buddhism and working towards the public education and awareness of the religions and philosophies of Asia and their application in social and cultural life. Information on lectures, conferences and courses plus a substantial library on Buddhist Studies.

Silkthreads Cabinet of Curiosities: Artist led project site with downloadable images, sound clips and video from the Silk Road.

V&A Museum Education Pages: Comprehensive resource on Buddhism and Buddhist art aimed at students and teachers of Religious Education and Art and Design at UK KS3, from the V&A Museum.

The Clear Vision Trust: UK Buddhist audio-visual media project specializing in DVD and interactive online resources for Buddhism in your classroom.

Asia Society: An overview of the Belief Systems Along the Silk Road
<http://asiasociety.org/education/belief-systems-along-silk-road>

The MET Museum: Images of the Buddha along the Silk Road
<http://metmuseum.org/exhibitions/listings/2012/buddhism>

NCTA (National Consortium on Teaching about Asia): Buddhism in China and Korea
<http://asiaforeducators.org/>

The Dunhuang Academy: The Religions of Dunhuang and The Art Grottoes (Education and Teaching Lessons on Buddhism and the Silk Road)
<http://public.dha.ac.cn/content.aspx?id=241808307552>

The Getty Museum: Cave Temples of Dunhuang: Buddhist Art on the Silk Road
http://www.getty.edu/research/exhibitions_events/exhibitions/cave_temples_dunhuang/index.html

Common Core Standards Speaking and Listening Standards

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

3. Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

Writing Standards:

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense,

growth, or resolution). d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters. e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

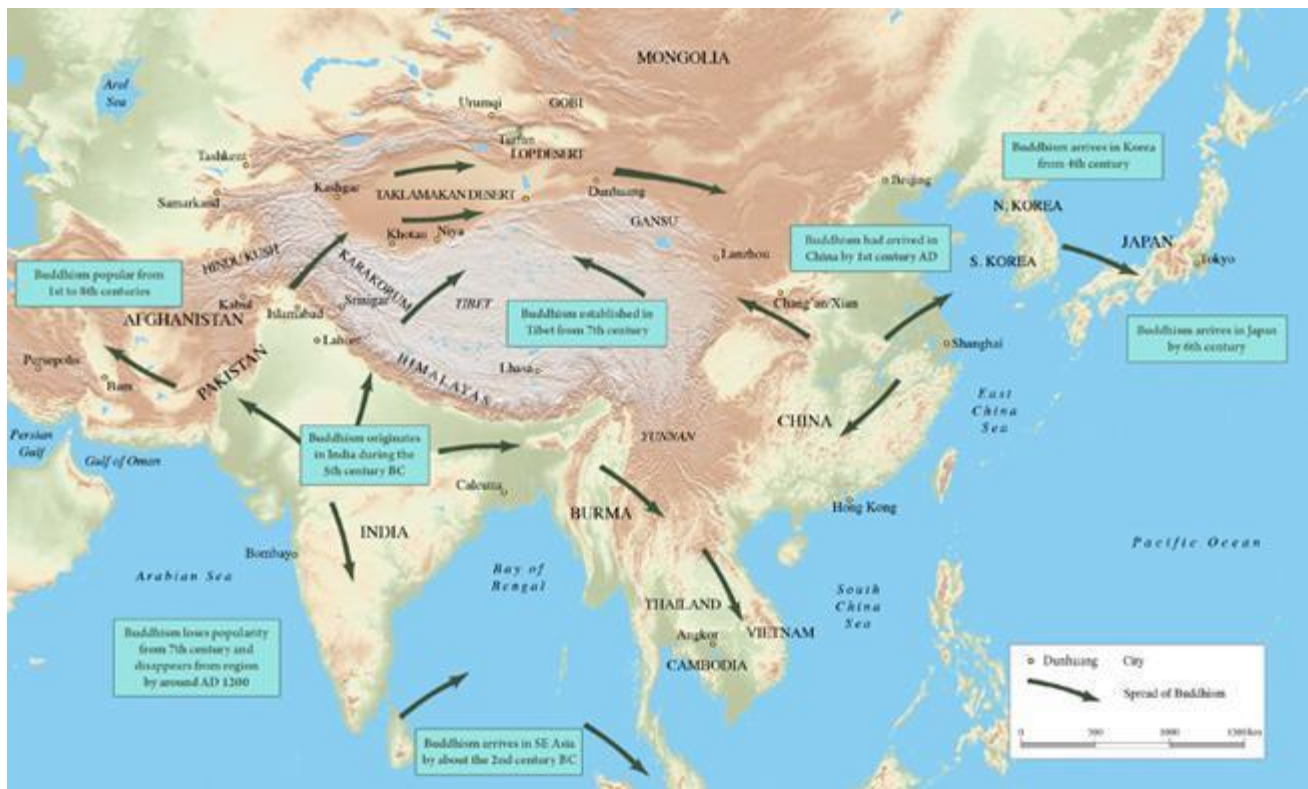
Lesson Planning:

Opening Classroom Activity

In Buddhist tradition, the replication of the image of the Buddha is an important way of spreading the word of Buddha, and of attaining merit for rebirth in the next life. Examples of this practice can be seen in Buddhist cave complexes around the world, including in the caves at Dunhuang where many of the artifacts were found.

Get involved and join this tradition by adding your own hand-drawn, painted or printed Buddha image to the gallery of 1000 Buddhas, and generate merit for yourself and everyone else.

Lesson and Activity 1: Buddhism & The Silk Road: The Transmission of Buddhism



Buddhism originated in India during the fifth century BC, but its rapid spread and huge influence on world culture can be largely attributed to the network of trading routes through Asia that we now know as the Silk

Road. Between the first century BC and the seventh century AD, different strands of Buddhism travelled across the Silk Road from India along several different routes through Central Asia to China.

The Silk Road linked Europe by land to all the major Asian civilizations and as such acted as a conduit for the transmission of all sorts of ideas, traditions and beliefs. They were spread partly by missionaries and monks, partly by those expanding and invading empires that had adopted the religion, and partly by travelling merchants, artisans, pilgrims and nomadic people who travelled the Silk Roads to make their fortune.

From the fourth century AD, Chinese Buddhist monks had begun to travel in the other direction towards India to discover Buddhism first-hand. Buddhism quickly became the dominant religion of the Silk Road, and its decline there only came as Mongolian and Turkic influence in China increased towards the end of the first millennium AD, and Islam overtook it as the dominant faith. With the eventual fall of the Tangut Empire to Genghis Khan in 1227, Buddhism gradually disappeared from the Silk Road altogether.

A traveling story letter or monk.

This painting shows a monk with a pack full of scrolls, a staff and a tiger. It is possible that the character could be a pilgrim monk like the famous Xuanzang who had a dream that convinced him to journey to India on a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Buddhism, preaching his faith and collecting sutras as he went. The journey took him over seventeen years and was immortalized in the famous Chinese novel *Journey to the West* and the 1970s television series *Monkey*.

Alternatively the image could depict a travelling storyteller, carrying illustrations for his public recitals. Characters such as this would have travelled the Silk Road telling popular Buddhist tales, illustrated by painted scrolls.

After about the first century AD, the spread of Buddhism among learned people was helped by the practice of writing down and translating Buddhist Scriptures or [Sutra](#) into different languages. In fact, much of the knowledge we have today about the spread of Buddhism comes from documents that have survived at sites such as Dunhuang on the Silk Road. Originally however, knowledge was passed largely by word of mouth and this allowed ideas to spread far more easily to ordinary and illiterate people.

Both storytellers and travelling pilgrim monks such as these would therefore have played a vital part in spreading Buddhist ideas and imagery upon their travels.

Activity:

- By looking at objects found on the Silk Road, we can learn much about the ways in which ideas and beliefs may have spread.



- Look at the painting below from the British Museum. Can you guess who this character is or what he may be doing?

- Look at the pack of scrolls on his back. What might these have been used for? **Lesson 2: Buddhist Cave Temples: The Mogao Grottoes at Dunhuang Mogao caves at Dunhuang. 3 April 1914. Photographer: M. Aurel Stein.** In Buddhism, the tradition of building temples in caves is common and can be seen all over Asia. The practice may have originated in India, the birthplace of Buddhism, but the caves pictured here are situated near Dunhuang, a Silk Road town in the northwest of China. Today, there are some four hundred and ninety-two cave temples carved out of the sandstone cliff facing the Sanwei mountain at Dunhuang. The caves vary in size and in decoration. Some of the smallest caves are no more than tiny niches, while others are vast chambers containing Buddhist figures over 30 metres high. In total the temples contain over forty-five thousand square metres of paintings and two thousand four hundred sculptures. The caves vary in date but span a period from the early fifth to the fourteenth century AD.

The very first cave temple was excavated at Dunhuang in AD 366. The legend tells of a Buddhist monk Lezun, who stopped to drink and to water his donkey at the Great Spring Valley near Dunhuang before continuing on his way to the West. Resting awhile, he watched the sun set over the Sanwei mountain and was amazed to see a wondrous vision of a giant [Maitreya Buddha](#) surrounded by an aura of golden light, from which emerged the image of a thousand golden Buddhas.

Lezun was astounded by this vision and took it as a sign that this was the holy place for which he had been searching. He abandoned his onward journey in order to settle here and build a cave in which he could meditate and pay homage to the [Buddha](#). After cutting his cave by hand from the cliff-face opposite the mountain, Lezun painted his vision onto the walls of the cave, adding a three dimensional figure of the Buddha constructed around a wooden frame. His cave was soon followed by that of a second monk, Faliang, who also adorned his niche with images and scenes to focus his meditation. This pattern, of mural wall-painting along with carved or sculpted figures was to set a stylistic precedent in Dunhuang among pious Buddhists who, keen to demonstrate their faith and social standing, carved hundreds of beautifully decorated cave temples out of the cliff face over the next thousand years.



Many of the caves at Dunhuang contain images of the wealthy and pious patrons who commissioned their construction and decoration, and the wall murals tell us much about their belief as well as the society to which they belonged.

Archaeological Discovery at Dunhuang

Paul Pelliot in the Dunhuang Library Cave, 1908.

Around the turn of the twentieth century a hidden cache of manuscripts was discovered at

the Dunhuang caves. In a previously walled up chamber, now known as the Library Cave or cave 17, tens of thousands of manuscripts and hundreds of paintings were discovered. Many of the manuscripts were Buddhist texts while others were items related to everyday and official life on the Silk Road. No one is quite sure why the items were hidden here, but it was clear that they had been stored untouched for almost 1000 years. The contents of the cave were variously dispersed, and can now be seen in museum and library collections around the world.

Thanks to important archaeological discoveries such as these, today we know much about the Silk Road, its inhabitants and their beliefs. The Mogao caves are now protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and opened to the public as a tourist destination at certain times of the year. There are strict controls to protect this unique site for future generations and conservation work is ongoing.

Discussion:

- Why do you think the practice of building cave temples was so popular among lay-people as well as monks?
- Caves were often richly decorated in the style of the period and depicted patrons as well as political and religious scenes in their murals. Do you think this kind of visual information is as valuable to historians as written accounts of the day? **Lesson 3: The Life of the Buddha**





Details from *The Life of Śākyamuni*.

Buddha with a Begging Bowl

The life of the [Buddha](#) is usually told as a mixture of historical fact and legend. The name of the historical Buddha is Siddhārtha Gautama. The exact date of his birth is not known. Many scholars say he was born in Kapilavastu on the present-day Indian-Nepalese border about 563 BC, and other sources indicate he may have been born up to a century later. As he belonged to a people called the Śākyas, he became known as [Śākyamuni](#), 'the sage of the Śākyas'. Legend tells that Queen [Māyā](#), the mother of Śākyamuni, became pregnant after dreaming of an elephant appearing on a cloud. Śākyamuni was born from his mother's right side as she was reaching for a branch of a sāla tree in the Lumbinī grove. As a young prince, Śākyamuni lived a life of luxury in his father's palace.

At the age of 29, the young prince became curious about life outside the palace walls. In the outside world, Śākyamuni had four encounters which would change his life. He saw an old man, a sick man, a corpse, and a serene holy man. From these experiences he learnt that life is full of suffering, is impermanent and eventually comes to an end. He noted that the holy man seemed unaffected by these traumas, and decided to leave his



father's palace to embark on his own spiritual journey to understand human suffering and how it may be endured and transcended.

After attempting various kinds of ascetic practices, Śākyamuni sought shelter under a [bodhi tree](#) to reflect on his life and the passing away of all living things. During this time, he was tormented by a demon called [Māra](#) but eventually, at the age of 35 he achieved [enlightenment](#), subsequently becoming known as the 'Buddha', or the 'Awakened One'. From this moment, Buddha devoted the rest of his life to alleviating the suffering of other beings through teaching. This was effectively the birth of the Buddhist religion.

Activity:

- Look at the painting on silk from the British Museum (above). Can you identify any of the key moments from Buddha's life in the scenes depicted?

Discussion:

- What do the prince's encounters outside of the palace tell us about the kind of person Siddhārtha Gautama was?
- How does the story of Buddha's life compare to our own ideas of ambition and success in life today?
- Do you think Buddha would place value on the same ideas?
- Do you think there is value in Buddha's beliefs?

Lesson 4: The Basic Tenets of Buddhism



Book of Buddha's Names

As a religion Buddhism addresses the true nature of our existence and offers a means by which human suffering may be transcended. A number of basic tenets, or principles, offer guidance to help Buddhists make the right choices in their religious lives.

The reduction of Buddhist morals into a series of numbered lessons makes them easier both to remember and recite. This was a device which proved vital to the spread of Buddhism as a religion throughout ancient India and China during a time when a largely oral culture existed. The basic tenets of Buddhism are summarized below:

The Four Noble Truths

Buddha's teachings are summarized in The Four Noble Truths which were taught in his first sermon. Their origins lie in inherited Indian religious beliefs in rebirth, karma and liberation.

1. All life is suffering —pleasure is impermanent.
2. The origin of suffering is desire — we should not attach ourselves to impermanent

things.

3. There exists Nirvana, an end to suffering — to achieve this we must end desire.
4. An 'eightfold' path, defined by the Buddha, leads to Nirvana — this is a middle path, avoiding extremes.

The Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path describes choices for living a religious life:

1. The right knowledge — this relates to the right way of viewing the world, as outlined in the Four Noble Truths.
2. The right thought — or the right intention; to lead a good life.
3. The right speech — to be truthful, avoid harsh language, gossip or boasting.
4. The right action or conduct — to avoid unethical behaviour and to encourage wholesome conduct by following the five precepts.
5. The right livelihood — choosing an occupation which does not profit from the suffering of others.
6. The right effort — or the right frame of mind to overcome evil or unwholesome things.
7. The right mindfulness — being aware of oneself and one's emotions.
8. The right concentration — concentration of mind achieved through meditation.

The Three Treasures or Jewels

The Three Treasures or highest entities in Buddhism took root throughout Asia as Buddhism spread across the continent. Salutation to these three entities forms a basis of meditation for many Buddhists.

- The Buddha
- The Dharma (Buddhism Path)
- The Sangha (the community of Monks) **The Five Precepts** The Five Precepts outline a code of moral conduct for laypersons for everyday life. They focus on the most important moral issues and must be observed. There are also a

number of higher precepts, not listed here, which may be observed once a month by those who wish to withdraw from normal life without making the full-time commitments of a monk. These include abstinence from more frivolous or luxurious activities. The

five basic precepts however are:

1. Do not kill any living thing.
2. Do not engage in sexual misconduct.
3. Avoid wrong speech. Do not lie, gossip or speak poorly of others.
4. Do not use intoxicating substances, alcohol or recreational drugs.
5. Do not steal or take anything which does not belong to you. Do not allow any person to profit from the suffering of any other living species.

Discussion:

- Think about some of the choices you make in your everyday life.
- Do you believe in values similar to those outlined above?
- What actions or decisions in your own life would you need to change in order to follow the Eightfold Path or the Five Precepts?
- Do you disagree with any of these principles? If so, why?

1. _____

Lesson 5: Iconography of the Buddha

'Iconography' is a word we use to talk about the use of images or symbols in art to represent a particular idea, movement, person or belief. Buddhist art has a very clear iconography and the image of the Buddha in particular is characterized by various recognisable motifs which developed out of a desire to share the teachings of Buddhism with a wider audience.

Some images of the Buddha are pictured below. It is interesting to note however that very early Buddhist art (before the first century BC) did not depict the Buddha as a human figure at all but instead used familiar symbols such as a stupa or a dharma wheel to represent him instead.

Top: Prints of Buddha-The British Library Board. Buddha with a Begging Bowl-

The British Museum. Detail from a Paper Prayer Sheet-The British Library Board. Bottom: Seated Bodhisattva-Le musée Guimet. Wooden Buddha-Le musée Guimet. Buddha Stencil-The British Library Board.

- Look at the artifacts above which were found at different sites along the Silk Road.
- Can you see any recurring symbols or motifs on the figure of the Buddha? What do you think these motifs might represent? Did you notice that all of these images picture the Buddha sitting cross-legged? In Buddhist art there are a number of set postures for the Buddha called asanas. These can tell us about what Buddha is doing or thinking. The cross-legged 'lotus' position is one of meditation, but you may also see images of the Buddha



standing upright with hands raised in a gesture (or *mudrā*) of reassurance, or reclining in a pose which refers to the end of his life before entering *Parinirvāṇa*.

- Can you see any recurring physical characteristics in these images of the Buddha?



Replica figures at the Dunhuang Academy. Photographer: Abby Baker. International Dunhuang Project.

The Buddha has thirty-two *lakṣaṇa* or special physical characteristics which mark him out as a 'cosmic being'. The *lakṣaṇa* represent spiritual characteristics of the Buddha such as wisdom and enlightenment and also demonstrate the idea that Buddha's outer beauty is a reflection of his inner spiritual nature. In these images you may have noticed the tuft of hair or third eye between Buddha's eyebrows (*ūrṇā*) which symbolizes spiritual insight or the bump on the top of the head (*Uṣṇīṣa*) which symbolizes wisdom and spirituality and his attainment of enlightenment.

Other physical symbols such as his elongated ears (which remind us the Buddha was born a wealthy and privileged prince who wore heavy earrings but who sacrificed luxury to live a spiritual life) are not considered *lakṣaṇa* but are common in images of the Buddha making the meaning and message of Buddhist art clear and easy to recognize.

Other common motifs

The Lotus Flower

Buddha is often pictured sitting on a lotus flower which symbolizes purity and goodness. As a plant which rises from the mud, the lotus is a lesson that we can rise above our circumstances to achieve goodness.

Lesson 6: Object Focus: Buddhist Paintings





Buddha preaching the Dharma. Detail from the Paradise of Śākyamuni

This image is of a painting on silk from the Stein collection at the British Museum. These silk paintings were part of the cache of manuscripts and artefacts found in the early twentieth century in cave 17, the Library Cave, at the Mogao caves near Dunhuang, northwest China. The silk paintings found in the Library Cave mostly date from the eighth to tenth centuries.

Many of them were brought back to London by Sir Aurel Stein, who carried out four expeditions to Chinese Central Asia in the early twentieth century. Others, brought back to Europe by Paul Pelliot, can be seen in the Guimet museum in Paris.

This particular painting depicts the figure of Buddha preaching the Dharma. It dates from the early eighth century AD. In real life, this painting measures 139cm x 102cm and so is both impressive and imposing. It would probably have hung in one of the many cave temples at Dunhuang, which were used both for private worship and to demonstrate status and wealth in society.

- Take a closer look at the image of this painting and see if you can recognise the following details which tell us something about both the subject of the painting and the people who commissioned it.
- We can interpret the subject of this painting — 'Buddha Preaching the Dharma' — by looking at the central figure. Buddha adopts the vitarka mudrā, a hand gesture which represents intellectual discussion. The circle formed by his thumb and index finger is the sign of the wheel of Dharma and reminds us of the cycle of life.
- Notice the Uṣṇīṣa, or bump on Buddha's head symbolizing his wisdom and enlightenment.
- Notice the elongated ears. These remind us of the heavy jewels Buddha would once have worn as a prince. He has sacrificed much to live a spiritual life.
- Buddha is raised on a lotus petal platform. Around him float other figures on lotus flowers. This flower symbolizes purity and goodness, and reminds us that, like the lotus, which grows from mud, we can rise above our circumstances to achieve goodness.
- Buddha is surrounded by attendants and sits beneath a magnificent canopy. These visual aids help the faithful to picture the Pure Land they strive towards.

- In the bottom left hand corner a smaller kneeling figure represents the female donor, or sponsor of this painting. A missing piece in the opposite corner would have contained her husband. Pious donors such as these were vital to the production of Buddhist art.

- The fragile silk on which this image was painted has deteriorated in parts. When these paintings were discovered in the library cave, they were stored in rolls and many were in poor condition. Originally there would have been a complete painted border around the outside of this panel. You can see a number of rectangular panels or cartouches in this scene. These may have contained instruction from a Sutra, or inscriptions which we cannot now read. In some cases these were never completed. Why do you think this may have happened? **Lesson 7: Object Focus: *The Diamond Sūtra*** *The Diamond Sutra* at the British Library is the world's earliest dated printed book, and was made in AD 868. It was discovered by accident in the early twentieth century along with tens of thousands of other scrolls in a hidden cave at the Buddhist Mogao cave site in Dunhuang, northwest China.



The Diamond Sūtra.

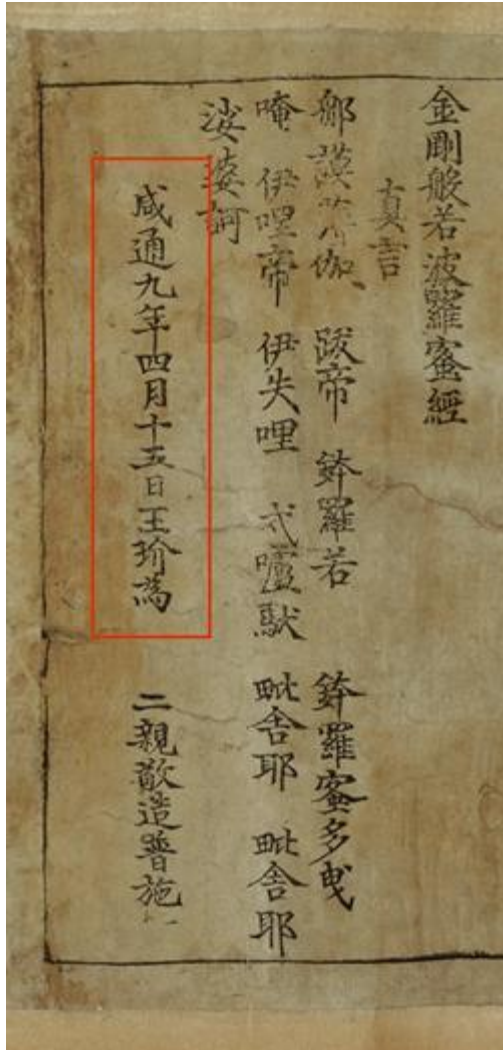
What is a sūtra?

The text printed on this scroll is one of the most important sūtras in Buddhism. 'Sūtra' is a Sanskrit (or ancient Indian) word meaning a 'classic text', and in Buddhism came to mean the words, sermons and lectures of the historical Buddha Śākya-muni. Buddhism originated in north India and spread all over Asia, and thus Buddhist sūtras were translated into many local languages so that people could understand the word of the Buddha more clearly. This copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* is in Chinese.

How and why was it made?

This copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* was printed using wood blocks. Buddhists in China began to use printing technology from the eighth century onwards. An essential part of Buddhist teaching stresses the importance of doing good deeds and spreading the word of the Buddha. Printing was an ideal way to distribute Buddhist knowledge as widely as possible, benefiting society, and attaining merit for the sponsor of the work, diminishing his karmic debt in a bid to ensure a better rebirth in the next life.

This *Diamond Sūtra* was printed on seven sections of fine paper made from hemp and mulberry. Paper had first been invented in China in the second century BC, and so by AD 868 had become very refined and beautiful. It was often colored yellow with a dye called *huangbo*, which repelled both insects and water. Yellow was the color of the emperor in Imperial China, and was also taken on by the Buddhists as a sacred color.



咸通九年四月十五日

xiántōng jiù nián sì yuè shíwù rì The fifteenth day of the fourth month of the ninth year of the Xiantong reign.

How do we know the date of this copy?

The date of this item is printed in a colophon. The colophon is a note printed at the end of the scroll, giving information about the date and the sponsor of the sūtra. The colophon here reads, 'Reverently made for universal distribution by Wang Jie on behalf of his two parents on the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the ninth year of the Xiantong reign'. This is the Chinese calendar equivalent of 11 May 868.

What does the sūtra tell us?

Look at the main image of the *Diamond Sūtra* at the top of the page. The picture before the main text of the *Diamond Sūtra* is called a frontispiece. It shows the Buddha

preaching to his followers, and in particular to Subhuti, his elderly disciple who asks the Buddha questions throughout. Before the main text of the sūtra, there is an invocation to those who may chant the sūtra aloud advising them first to recite the mantra for purifying the karma of the mouth. Sūtras were often recited or chanted as another means of gaining merit,

and the *Diamond Sūtra* was popular because it was relatively short and easy to remember for this purpose. The text encourages disciples to recognise and reject the material illusions of the world around them as human constructs. The recognition of this, along with the practice of the Buddhist path, leads to enlightenment.

- Take a closer look at this scroll and listen to a recording of *The Diamond Sūtra* being chanted by monks from a temple in Taiwan on the British Library website.

http://www.bl.uk/turning-the-pages/?id=1c92bc7e-8acc-49b3-9a27-b5ad8f44230a&type=sd_planar

Lesson 8: Bodhisattvas & Avalokiteśvara

Child's painting of Avalokiteśvara. @The British Museum

In Buddhism, all beings are believed to have the potential to achieve Buddhahood. Buddhahood is achieved by entering Nirvāṇa (the end of the cycle of re-birth) through the attainment of enlightenment and is the result of a lifetime of meditation, study and good deeds. Enlightenment is not sought by most Buddhists, whose practice of the Buddhist path leads purely to better rebirth in the next life.

A bodhisattva is an 'enlightened being', or one destined to become a Buddha, who chooses to stay in the world of suffering to help other beings attain enlightenment. In order to achieve this end, the bodhisattva carries out unselfish acts and gives away the karmic merit that he gains from these good deeds to other beings.

Avalokiteśvara is a bodhisattva known in Chinese as 'Guanyin' 观音. In Indian sculptures this figure was originally male, but in China later became a beautiful female figure. Avalokiteśvara is the embodiment of compassion and the principal assistant of Amitābha. Amitābha Buddha is a Buddha who reigns over the Western Paradise or Pure Land, into which all may be reborn if they recite his name during their lifetimes on earth.

The name Avalokiteśvara can be translated as 'He who looks down on the World' or 'He who hears the cries of the World'. This bodhisattva is first mentioned in *The Lotus Sūtra* in which Avalokiteśvara is able to take any



form in order to come to the aid of humans. He is often depicted helping those in trouble. His compassion, and his conviction and ability to help all sentient beings without prejudice is seen as an embodiment of the great compassion of Buddhahood itself.

This image of Avalokiteśvara, held at the British Museum in London was probably painted by a child between the 9th and 10th centuries AD, and was discovered in the hidden Library Cave at Dunhuang in China by the archaeologist and explorer Sir Aurel Stein at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Avalokiteśvara has a large following throughout Asia and has inspired the largest number of representations of all the Buddhist figures. The simplest is that of a bodhisattva holding a lotus. Avalokiteśvara is also commonly depicted with a red lotus symbolizing love and compassion, and often wears the image of Amitābha in his headdress or crown. The hand gesture or mudrā most often associated with Avalokiteśvara is that of charity or gift giving (*varada mudrā*) where the Buddha's hand is lowered and extended downwards with the palm facing outwards.

In Tibet, Avalokiteśvara is often pictured with many arms and heads. This depiction relates to the Buddhist belief in Avalokiteśvara's ability to hear and reach out to all the

suffering beings in the world. By the twelfth century, Avalokiteśvara was taken to be the patron deity of Tibet, known as Chenrezig. Since the seventeenth century, the Dalai Lama has been commonly recognized as the incarnation of Avalokiteśvara.

- See if you can spot any of these symbols in the child's painting of Avalokiteśvara from the British Museum above and in the image below?

The Thousand-armed, Thousand-eyed Avalokiteśvara. The British Museum. Lesson 9: Jātaka Stories

The Jātaka stories, or 'birth stories' are tales which originally came from local folklore and were adapted as teaching aids as Buddhism spread throughout Asia from India. The stories depict the Buddha in former lives or 'incarnations', both human and animal, and usually portray him showing great compassion, thus serving as moral fables in a similar way to the Parables used in Christianity. The Jātaka stories appeared frequently in Buddhist art as a way of teaching illiterate people the morals of Buddhism. Many such examples can be seen in wall paintings at Buddhist cave complexes such as at Mogao near Dunhuang on the Silk Road.

- Look at the following images from cave number 257 at Dunhuang. The three images follow on from one another and depict 'The Ruru (or deer) Jātaka'.
- Can you work out the story from the images?
- Read on to see if you were right below.





Deer Jātaka on a wall painting at Dunhuang, Cave 257. Dunhuang Academy.

The Ruru Jātaka, or the Tale of the Deer of Nine Colours

The Buddha once lived in a lush forest as a beautiful deer with a gleaming multicolored coat which glimmered like jewels. Wary of hunters, the deer was careful to stay hidden from view and had never been seen by those who frequented the forest. One day the deer was alerted to the cries of a drowning man who had fallen into a fast flowing river flooded by rain. With no regard for his own safety, the deer plunged into the water and dragged the drowning man to the riverbank. The man was very grateful and he pledged to be forever in the service of his rescuer. The deer was humble, but asked the man to protect him from hunters by continuing to keep his existence a secret. The man promised never to tell anyone about the deer.

One day the queen of the country dreamed of the multicolored deer in the forest and demanded that he be found and brought to her. A reward was posted, promising riches and land to whoever should find and capture the deer. The man who had been rescued by the deer was good but very poor and eventually, overwhelmed with guilt, he went to the palace and offered to lead the king's hunters to the deer.

When the deer heard hunters approaching and saw the man he had rescued with them he called out in a human voice. Explaining who he was, and asking who had led the hunters to him, he explained that he had been betrayed by a man whose life he had saved. The king was angry and berated the man, but the deer explained that the temptation of riches was too much for some people to resist and that such desire weakens integrity. The king, upon hearing such wisdom agreed to pay the man his reward and also granted the deer freedom to walk the forest without fear. In gratitude for this freedom the deer offered his services to the king. The king asked the deer to return with him to the

palace and to become a teacher of the Dharma, or Buddhist path. He accepted and was welcomed as an honored guest. At his welcome banquet the deer preached to the guests.

His teaching explained that despite all the complexities of the Dharma, its central message was clear and simple; have compassion and respect for all living beings. The king promised that from then on, all animals in his kingdom would be protected.

- How might you apply the moral offered in this Jātaka story to situations in your own life?

- Do you think the cave painting from Dunhuang illustrated this story clearly? Would you have been able to work out what was happening from the painting alone?

Final Assessments. After the completion of Lesson 9 and the Buddhism Unit:

Final Assessment 1

A role-play exercise: students propose a Silk Road trading expedition

presenting Buddhist art products and performances to a group of investors.

Suggested art products and performances: paintings, calligraphy scrolls,

sculptures, architectural projects, garden designs, silk products,

garments/fashions/costumes, fans, embroidery, ceramics/pottery/porcelain,

bronze vessels, jade products, jewelry, paper cuttings, books/literature,

dramatic performances, puppet shows, shadow shows, operas, music,

musical instruments, dance performances, and etc.

Student group presentations will be evaluated by a rubric on the quality, depth

and width of the research.

Final Assessment 2

Students will read some essays on the Silk Road and Buddhism (Mogao Caves) and answer questions on reading comprehension.

Caves) and answer questions on reading comprehension.

An Essay on the Silk Road

充满魅力的丝绸之路

今天,中国境内的这条古老的交通大道已经失去了往日的作用,但是,这条古道上那数不清的古代遗物却以极大的魅力吸引着人们。古城西安的半坡遗址、秦始皇陵兵马俑坑、碑林^①、帝王陵墓、寺庙、佛塔等都闻名中外;汉代长城遗迹、被风沙吞没的楼兰、高昌^②等古城都有着神秘的吸引力;敦煌莫高窟、麦积山石窟更像古道上的明珠,闪烁着古代文明的光辉。

丝绸之路沿途的自然风光也是独特的诱人的。奔腾东去的黄河,一望无际的沙漠、终年积雪的高山,水草丰美的草原,加上那多如繁星的湖泊,组成了一幅丝绸之路的山水画卷。唐诗“大漠孤烟直,长河落日圆”^③正是丝绸之路边塞风光的真实写照。

丝绸之路经过中国少数民族集中居住的地区。回族、蒙古族、藏族、维吾尔族、哈萨克族、塔吉克族、柯尔克孜族人民祖祖辈辈居住在那里,他们独特的生活方式和文化传统给丝绸之路增添了更加迷人的色彩。

丝绸之路是充满魅力的,它每年吸引着大批中外旅游者前去游览。近几年来,一些旅游团骑着马和骆驼,沿着古老的丝绸之路旅行,这真是件有趣的事,他们要亲身体验一下古代行人的艰辛,亲自探索一下丝绸之路的奥秘。



高昌古城遗址

An Essay on Buddhism



什么是佛教，创始者是谁？

佛教是由佛陀释迦牟尼所创立的一种宗教，它包括以下内容：信奉佛的言教，按照佛的教导去实践和修行的信徒所组成的宗教团体；内容为佛的言教以及阐述和发挥佛的教义思想的宗教经典；信徒所举行的教规和仪式。佛教将这些概括为佛、法、僧三个最基本的内容。

“佛”是梵语“佛陀”的音译略称。中国古代典籍中，“佛陀”一词有时又译作“浮屠”、“浮屠”等。其本意是指“觉者”、“觉悟者”之意，泛指一切“觉悟”了人生真谛，掌握了佛教所说的最高真理，证得了佛教修行的最高境界者。具体则是指释迦牟尼佛，即佛教的教主。

“法”，梵文音译为“达摩”、“达磨”或“昙无”等。“法”一词包含两层意思：一是指事物的规范或规律，人们可以通过这些规范或规律，对事物加以认识，另一层意思是指事物的自性或本质。正是由于这些事物的自性和本质，才决定了各种不同事物之间的差异，使世界呈现出多姿多彩的各种形象。因此，从某种意义上讲，所谓“法”，概括了宇宙间一切事物的现象和本质。佛经中经常说的“一切法”、“三世诸法”、“胜间法”等，就是这个意思。此外，“法”这个词在许多场合，就是指佛法，指佛所说的教义理论，也就是人们常说的“佛法”，而佛教的经典，因为记载了佛陀的教法，所以一般也被称为“法宝”。

“僧”，是指信奉佛法并依法出家修行，并且继承和弘扬佛教教义的佛教信徒。僧是梵文“僧伽”的音译略称，意思是“和合众”、“法众”。《释氏要览》解释：“梵语具言僧伽，唐言众，今略称僧也。”由此可见，僧的最初意思就是众。《中阿含经》中说：“有若干姓异名异族异，剃除须发，着袈裟衣，至信舍家，从佛学道，是名众。”因此，出家修行的佛弟子被称为“僧”。

佛教的创始者为乔达摩·悉达多。一般认为他出生于公元前565年，逝世于公元前486年，约当我国春秋时期。相传他自幼受传统的婆罗门教育，29岁时因寻求解脱之道而出家，经过6年苦行，最后终于悟道成佛，并创立了佛教。佛教在印度，大约经历了原始、部派、大乘、密教等发展时期。约公元前3世纪，印度孔雀王朝的阿育王时，佛教开始向印度以外的国家和地区传播，并逐步发展成为一个世界性的宗教。目前世界上信奉佛教的人口有2亿多，主要分布于亚洲各国，近年来欧洲一些国家也有佛教流传，不过影响不大。

Then students will write about their learning of Buddhism in a Chinese essay

which will be accompanied by a power point presentation. The evaluation will

be done by a rubric.

Final Assessment 3

Students will present a comparative essay (Religious Journey on the Silk

Road) to that of their spiritual journey in Life.

