

3.2 Religions and Belief Systems

TECHTREK

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Main Idea Religions and belief systems are important parts of cultures around the world.

A religion is a set of beliefs and practices that is often focused on one or more deities, or gods. Major world religions include Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Sikhism.

Elements of Religion

Religion is a powerful influence that helps people answer questions such as, "What is the purpose of life?" At the center of many religions is the belief in a deity. **Monotheistic religions** are those with a belief in one deity. Christianity, Islam, and Judaism are monotheistic religions. **Polytheistic religions**, such as Hinduism, have many deities.

Every religion has a doctrine, or a set of basic beliefs. For example, Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

Scriptures are sacred, or highly respected, texts that communicate the beliefs of a religion. The Bible is the sacred text for Christianity, the Koran is the sacred text for Islam, and the Torah is the sacred text for Judaism.

One of the important ways in which religion affects culture is through a code of conduct, or beliefs about right and wrong behavior. For example, the Ten Commandments are a code of conduct for Jews and Christians.

Origin and Spread of Religions

Several of the major world religions are based on the teachings of an individual. For example, Christianity grew from the teachings of Jesus Christ nearly 2,000 years ago. Other religions, such as Hinduism, grew from the beliefs of ancient peoples.



HINDUISM

Founder Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha

Followers 400 million

Basic Beliefs People reach enlightenment, or wisdom, by following the Eightfold Path and understanding the Four Noble Truths.



Founder Jesus of Nazareth

Followers 2.3 billion

Basic Beliefs There is one God, and Jesus is the only Son of God. Jesus was crucified but was resurrected. Followers reach salvation by following the teachings of Jesus.



Founder Unknown

Followers 860 million

Basic Beliefs Souls continue to be reborn. The cycle of rebirth ends only when the soul achieves enlightenment, or freedom from earthly desires.

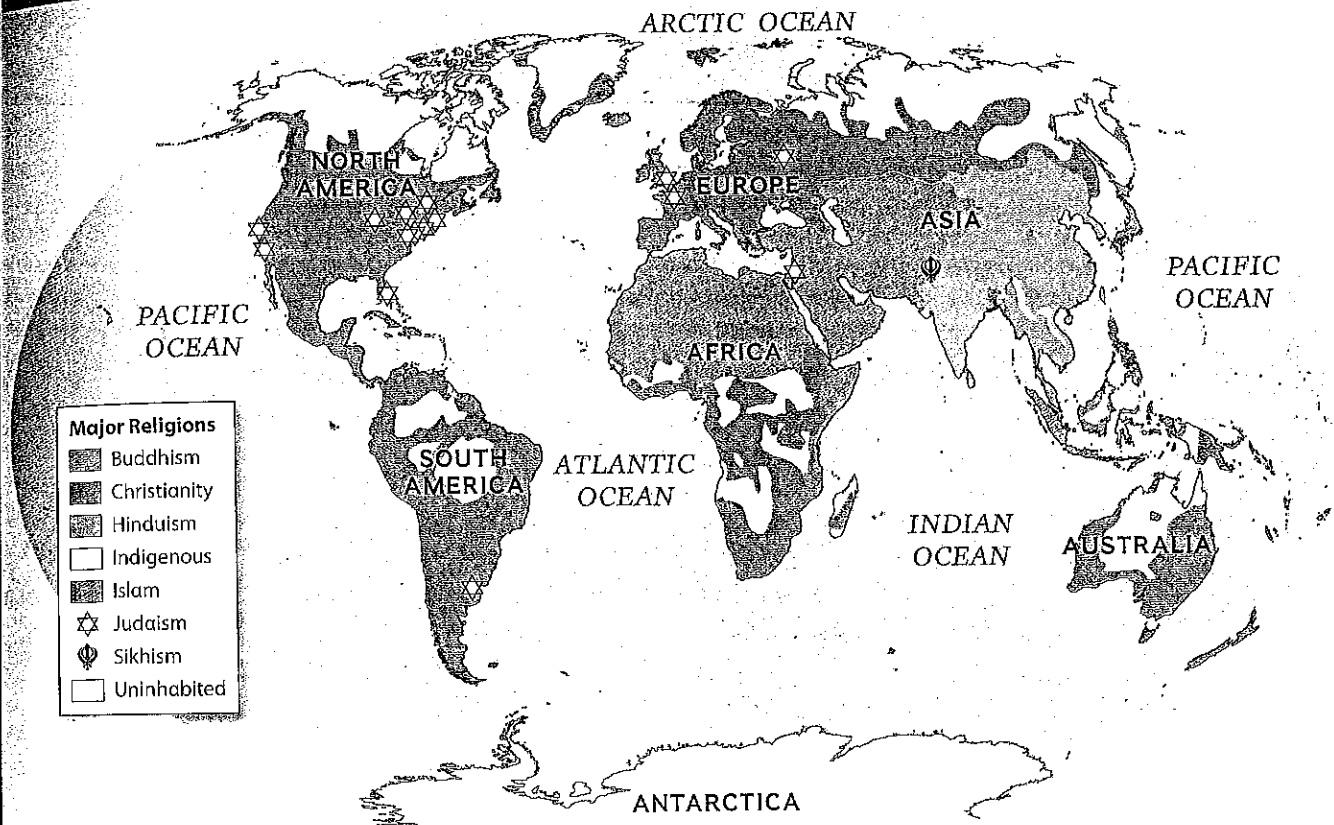


Founder The Prophet Muhammad

Followers 1.6 billion

Basic Beliefs There is one God. Followers must follow the Five Pillars of Islam in order to achieve salvation.

WORLD RELIGIONS



Religions have grown and spread around the world. For example, Buddhism began in India, but it spread to Japan, China, Korea, and Southeast Asia through

migration and trade. Religions have also spread due to the work of missionaries, people who convert others to follow their religion.



Founder Abraham
Followers 15 million

Basic Beliefs There is one God. People serve God by living according to his teachings. God handed down the Ten Commandments to guide human behavior.



Founder Guru Nanak
Followers 25 million

Basic Beliefs There is one God. Souls are reborn. The goal is to achieve union with God, which a person does by acting selflessly, meditating, and helping others.

Before You Move On

Make Inferences How is religion an important part of culture?

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

READING LAB

- 1. Monitor Comprehension** What is the difference between a monotheistic religion and a polytheistic religion?
- 2. Compare and Contrast** How are Hinduism and Buddhism similar?
- 3. Region** What major religions are found in the area around the eastern Mediterranean Sea? Why do you think they are found in this region?