



► Archeological excavation at Sutton Hoo, 1939

## Mystery at Sutton Hoo

The strange mounds on Edith Pretty's property in Sutton Hoo, southeast England, had always intrigued her. What were they? In 1938, Pretty hired an archeologist, Basil Brown, to investigate.

What Brown found astonished him. But what was it, who made it, and what was it for? For an answer, follow the clues that helped Brown solve the mystery.

### CLUE #1

Brown found long rows of rivets (metal pins, like nails). The placement of the rivets revealed the outline of an object 24 metres long. Look at the photo. What does it look like to you?

### CLUE #2

The largest mound was on a high ridge overlooking the River Deben, which flows to the North Sea. How could such a large object get so far from the river and so deep under a mound?

### DISCOVER

- Why who you are affects how you see the world
- How ancient belief systems helped people live together
- Why ancient spirituality and religions have lasted so long
- How ancient belief systems continue to influence people

► A helmet found buried at Sutton Hoo



### CLUE #3

There were 263 gold, silver, bronze, iron, and gem-encrusted items: silver bowls and spoons, drinking horns, jewellery, a buckle, a sword, a shield, a helmet, an axe-hammer, and a coat of mail. Who could have owned such a treasure?

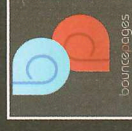
### CLUE #4

There were coins from the reign of Rædwald, a powerful Anglo Saxon king who died in 624 CE. Was Sutton Hoo connected to King Rædwald?

### CLUE #5

According to many ancient religions, people go to another place after they die. Those who died were buried with objects they might need in the afterlife. How might this be relevant to Sutton Hoo?

◀ A gold buckle found at Sutton Hoo



## Unravel the Past

Belief systems with ancient roots have endured for thousands of years. How do they continue to influence societies today?

# In What Ways Do Belief Systems Reflect Who We Are?

## Examine

What shapes our beliefs?

When the Anglo Saxons buried King Raedwald in a boat for his journey to another place after death, they were acting on a **belief**. Some beliefs can be proven to be true. For example, most people today believe that the world is a sphere because it has been proven. Some beliefs cannot be proven even though they may be true. For example, could the Anglo Saxons prove that there is life after death? **Belief systems** help people to make sense of the world—to explain the world and their place in it.

A **belief** is an idea that someone regards as true.  
A **belief system** is a shared set of beliefs that help people make sense of the world. It also gives them a sense of identity.



**Values** are the principles or qualities that people see as desirable. How might our values and beliefs be connected?

## How Do Our Beliefs Affect Our Worldviews?

All of a people's experiences, beliefs, and values affect their **worldview**—the way that they see and understand the world. **Worldview** affects how people interact with the world around them. For example, a person who sees the world as a place in which all living things should be respected might campaign to protect a rare turtle species.

A **worldview** is the way people see and understand the world.

How would you describe your worldview?

## Understanding Perspective

Keep these statements in mind to help you understand perspectives.

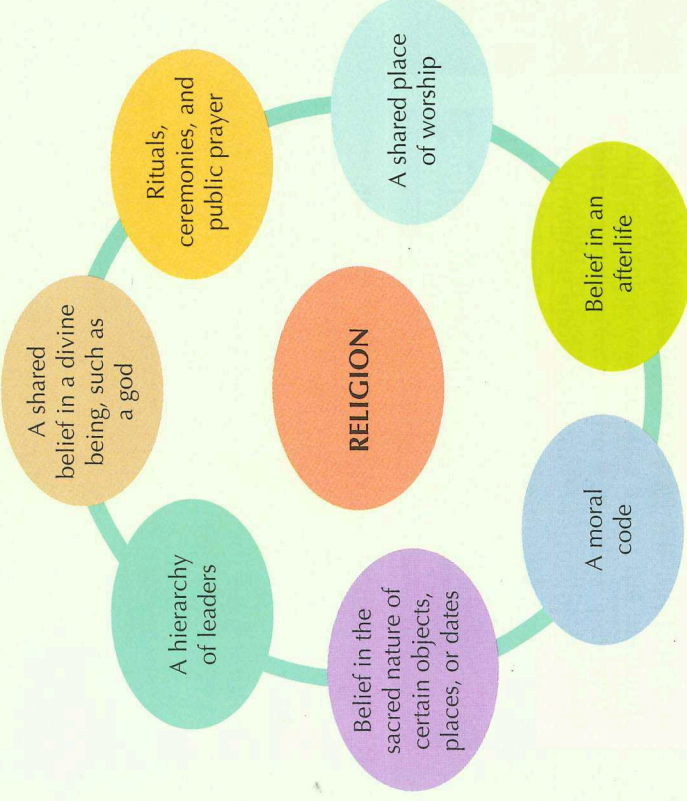
- Your experiences, beliefs, values, and worldviews affect your perspective.
- People living in different times and places have different perspectives.
- Part of understanding the past means understanding that people in different times and places have different beliefs, values, and experiences.

Create three lists: one of your core beliefs, one of your core values, and one of your core experiences.

▲ Values, beliefs, and experiences together create our worldviews. How might this explain why the worldviews of ancient peoples were different from our own?

## What Is Religion?

A **religion** is a system of beliefs, rituals, and rules shared by people in a religious community. Religions have been a part of the human experience for almost as long as people have wondered about their place in the universe. All religions require **faith**—confidence in the beliefs of the religion, even those that cannot be proven. Many religions have a **moral code**—a set of rules for good conduct.



▲ Many belief systems have some of these characteristics. Most religions have all of them. Which characteristic do you think is the most important? Would you add anything?

Many belief systems, including most religions, provide answers to these four questions:

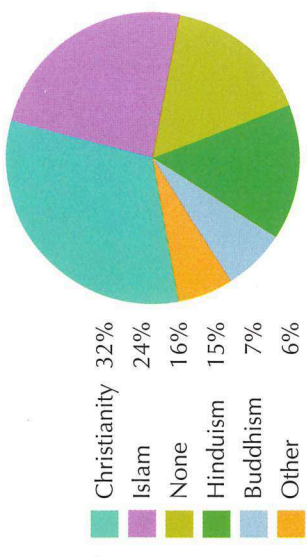
- Where did we come from?
- Why do good and bad things happen?
- How should we treat one another?
- What happens after we die?

Why would people want answers to these questions?

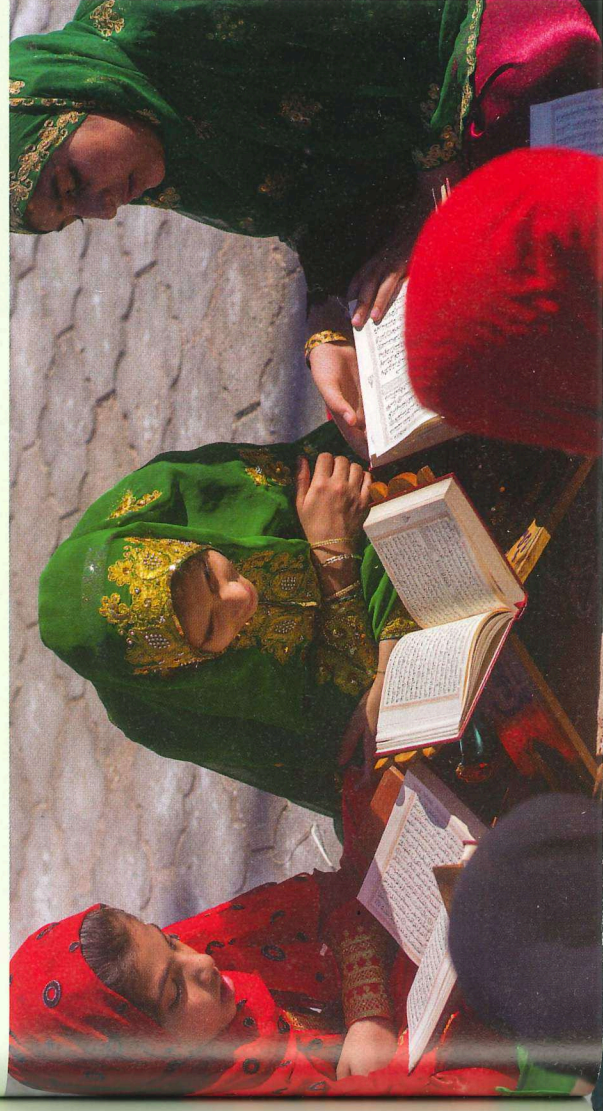
In the ancient world, what would be the appeal of having a religion that everyone in a community embraced?

- What benefits could religion bring to early communities?
- What characteristic of a religion did the evidence at Sutton Hoo reveal?

## Religions by World Population



▲ How does Canada's religious makeup compare with that of the world?



◀ Muslim students read the Qur'an together in Iran in 2015. Why do most children embrace the religion of their parents and community?

## What Is Spirituality?

**Spirituality** is personal reverence of the sacred. It includes feelings of awe toward things that have no physical presence, such as an ancestor's life force, or spirit.

Hiking in a forest is one way to connect spiritually with the land. What connection do you have to the land?

Spirituality can be confused with religion, but it is not the same thing. While a religion is the belief system of a whole community, spirituality is personal reverence of something sacred. For many people, spirituality can be part of their religious practice, whether or not they attend a place of worship.

Spirituality can mean seeking to connect with something bigger than everyday life. It may involve seeking something deeply personal. A spiritual person may, for example, practise yoga, meditate, speak with Elders, or give thanks.

*You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.*

—Swami Vivekanand, Hindu monk (1863–1902)

How might the spiritual questions people asked in the ancient world be similar to or different from the spiritual questions we ask today?

## What Is Philosophy?

**Philosophy** is the study of ideas. Philosophers apply thought and reason to seek answers about human existence and the nature of reality. They ask questions such as, "How can we know what we know?" and "What is the right way to live?" In some ways, philosophy is similar to both religion and spirituality. All three involve a quest to understand the world and our place in it.

Over thousands of years, philosophers in every society have pondered our world. The ideas of ancient philosophers continue to influence politics, sociology, mathematics, science, and literature.

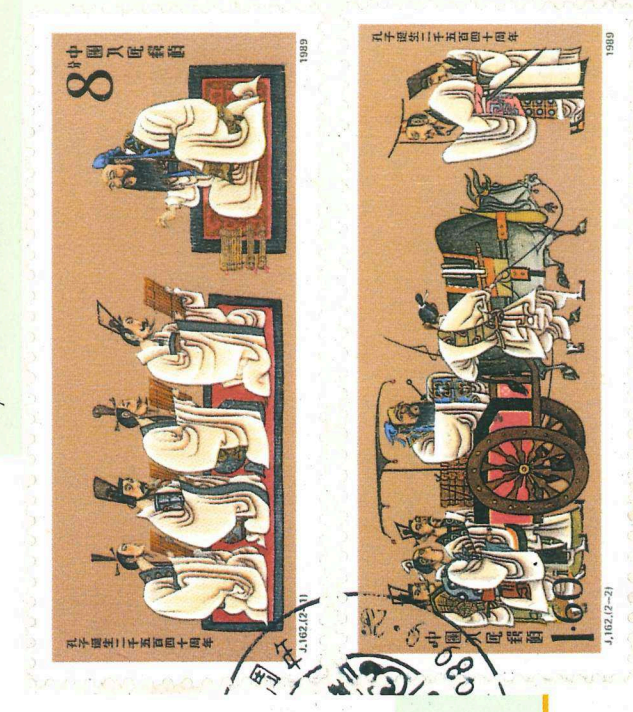
The word **philosophy** comes from the Greek word *philosophia*, which means "love of wisdom."

## Confucianism

Confucianism is a system of philosophy that holds great significance for Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese societies. Confucius (K'ung-fu-tzu) was a Chinese philosopher who lived almost 2500 years ago. He thought deeply about how people can become good family members, neighbours, and rulers. Kindness, loyalty, obedience, and duty are key Confucian principles.

After his death, Confucianism was widely adopted throughout ancient China. People displayed his sayings or portraits of him in their homes. The influence of Confucianism is still visible in Chinese culture today through the importance of family relationships, respect, and a belief in the benefits of education.

▼ This postage stamp was created 2540 years after Confucius was born. It shows the teacher with his students. After Confucius died, his students recorded his ideas, which were embraced by the government. What would a government influenced by Confucian ideas be like?

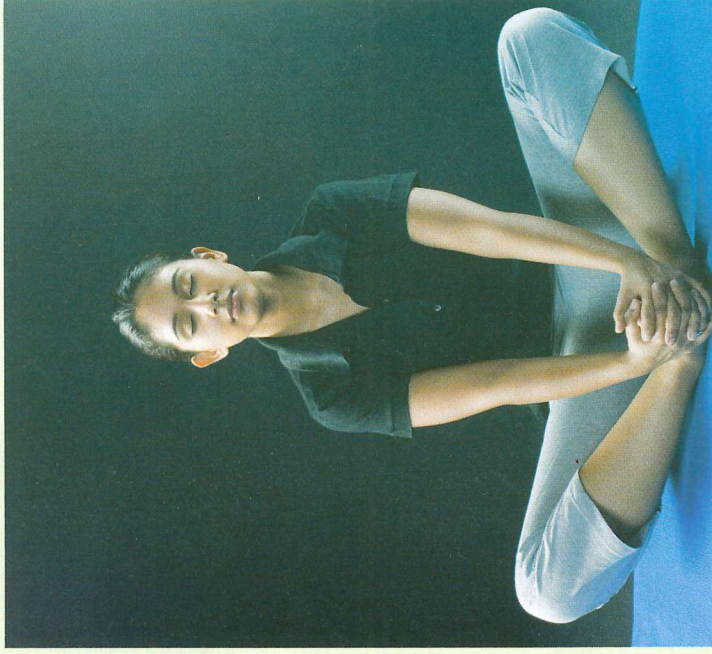


## Check Your Learning

1. Why do people see the world in different ways?
2. What are the most important differences between religion, spirituality, and philosophy? How are they connected?

## Make Connections

3. Construct a graphic of your worldview. Include important experiences, people, or activities from your life. Use your creativity to show what you believe and value.



▲ Religious teachers developed and practised yoga in ancient India, perhaps as early as 3000 years ago. Today many spiritual people practise yoga as a way to unite the mind, body, and spirit.

## WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION?

### Spirituality

Spirituality is about exploring matters of the **spirit**, the essence of who a person is. Typically, spiritual people seek answers about the meaning of life. They may or may not be religious. They may or may not believe in a supernatural being or in a soul.

### Religion

A religion is a system of belief and practices shared by members of a religious community. Religious people take part in ceremonies and rituals connected with their religion. They may or may not be spiritual.

How can a person be spiritual without being religious? How can a person be religious without being spiritual?

# How Have Belief Systems of First Peoples Reflected Their Worldviews Since Time Immemorial?

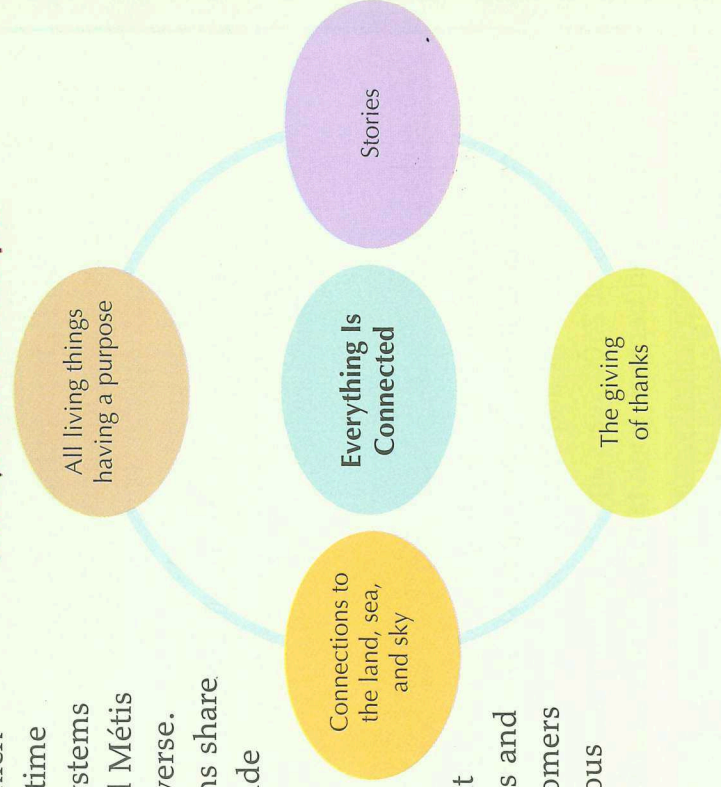
What do you think of when you hear the phrase “everything is connected”?

First Peoples have deeply spiritual ways of being, which they have practised since time immemorial. The belief systems of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada are diverse.

Various peoples and nations share some common aspects of beliefs that guide and enrich their lives. Some of these common aspects are shown on this page.

When European newcomers came to the territories of First Nations and Inuit peoples, they brought their own religious and beliefs with them. Some Christian newcomers tried to convince, or even force, Indigenous peoples to become Christians.

## Common Aspects Among the Belief Systems of First Peoples



*Going back to the ways of our ancestors... means using our ancestral knowledge and wisdom to become a balanced human being, so we can help ourselves, families, communities, nations, and beyond more effectively.*

—Cree Elder Matthew Mukash, 2016

▲ For First Peoples, “everything is connected” means that everything in the world, both living and non-living—including the ancestors—is interrelated. All things have spirit, which makes everything sacred. The world is endlessly changing in a continuing cycle.

## Medicine Wheels

Ancient medicine wheels have been found all over North America. The largest is the Bighorn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming. Certain points on the wheel show where the sun and stars will rise on key days of the year. Many First Nations use various versions of a medicine wheel to teach the four aspects—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual—that a person can nurture to achieve balance and harmony within self, family, and community.

◀ The Bighorn Medicine Wheel is 24 metres across. How can you tell that it is made by humans and not natural?



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## The Anishinaabeg Sunrise Ceremony

The Anishinaabeg Sunrise Ceremony welcomes the beginning of a new day and is a chance for participants to honour the power and life-giving energy of the Sun. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the gift of life. A Smudging Ceremony is sometimes held to prepare for the Sunrise Ceremony. Participants burn sweetgrass or sage to create a scented smoke. People use the smoke to cleanse themselves of negativity. Why might this be good preparation for a Sunrise Ceremony?

Since time immemorial, spiritual practices such as the Sunrise Ceremony have helped people connect with the sacred. Why do you think people seek these connections?

▲ Anishinaabeg Elder Lawrence Houle performs a Sunrise Ceremony to start Earth Day in Winnipeg.

## How Do Traditional Stories Help People Understand Their Place in the Universe?

First Peoples have a valuable link to the past: the traditional stories, histories, and teachings that have been passed down from one generation to another. Elders treat these stories with great respect, being sure to tell the stories exactly as they learned them. In that way, the wisdom of the ancestors can be passed to the present and into the future. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children hear these stories from members of their family or community. The stories help them understand the world.

In many cultures—in both ancient times and today—stories are used to teach people how to live. What stories do you know that show you why people should be fair, generous, or kind?

## CONSIDER THIS!

In BC residential schools, Secwepemc children, like other Indigenous children, were not allowed to speak their language. A 1999 survey found that only 308 of 7597 Secwepemc First Nations members could speak Secwepemctsin. Over the next two decades, language use shrank even more.

When traditional stories are told in their original language, the ancestors’ intended meaning is clearest. What happens to a culture when its language is lost?

## How Do Creation Stories Reflect Worldviews?

Some of the stories told by Indigenous peoples are creation stories. These stories tell how the world began. Many of them explain how all living things—including humans—came to be on Earth, and what role they play. Consider the three stories illustrated here and on the next page. How are they similar? How are they different? What hints do you find about the worldview of the peoples who created each story?

What does each story tell you about a divine being, humanity, women and men, or our relationship with the land? How do these stories compare with other Creation stories you know?

### A Creation Story of the Indigenous Peoples of Australia

*The world was flat, bare, and cold. The Rainbow Serpent slept under the ground with all the animal tribes in her belly waiting to be born. When it was time, she pushed up, calling to the animals to come from their sleep. She [spat] the land out, making mountains and hills and spilled water over the land, making rivers and lakes. She made the sun, the fire, and all the colours.*

—Commonwealth of Australia



▲ This mural is in Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School, in the Tiwi Islands, Australia. The Rainbow Serpent is believed to remain in the world, bringing the rains every year and also floods and storms.

What spiritual questions do Creation stories help us answer?

Complete a diagram showing how these stories are similar and different. You could compare two of the stories to each other, or compare all three.



◀ The *Raven and the First Men* is a cedar sculpture carved by Haida sculptor Bill Reid in 1980. It shows Raven coaxing the first humans out of a clam shell because he was lonely.

### The Haida Creation Story

*...It wasn't long before one, then another of the little shell brothers, timidly emerged. Some of them immediately scurried back when they saw the immensity of the sea and the sky and the overwhelming blackness of the Raven. But eventually curiosity overcame caution and all of them crept or scrambled out.*

—Bill Reid, Haida master carver, 1989

### The Jewish and Christian Creation Story

*The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.... The Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib.*

—Genesis, 2:7, 21, 22

▶ This woodcut from a Latin Bible was printed in Venice, Italy, in 1511. It shows God creating the first woman from the rib of the first man.



In the Islamic Creation story, God creates Adam and Eve at the same time from the same substance. How is this different from the Jewish and Christian Creation story? What does this difference tell you?

### Check Your Learning

1. Use the evidence of the three Creation stories to compare the worldviews of the three ancient peoples who created them. How might these ancient peoples continue to have an impact on their descendants today?

### Make Connections

2. Read Creation stories from different world cultures. How are the beliefs about Creation similar? How are they different? How do they compare with your own beliefs about the world?

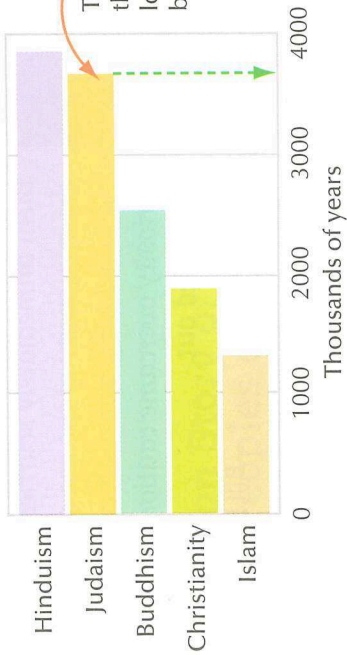
# Why Are the Influences of Religion So Long Lasting?

Some religions span thousands of years. Many have deep roots in even older religions. Religion is a powerful continuity that extends from the past to the present.

There are different ideas about how old Hinduism and Judaism are. Why might it be difficult to agree on a specific age?

► These ancient religious traditions are thousands of years old, although it is difficult to pinpoint a specific age. Why do religions last so long?

The Age of Five Ancient Religions



## Discovering an Ancient Religion

We knew nothing about one ancient religion until 1922, when archeologists discovered the ruins of a large ancient city they called Mohenjo-daro. The city was home to about 35 000 people at least 4600 years ago. It was part of an ancient society now known as the Indus civilization.

Not all religions are ancient. Does age make a religion more or less significant?



▲ Statues such as this one suggest that the people of the Indus Valley may have worshipped a fertility goddess. What does this belief tell you about the worldview of this ancient people?

## What Do We Know About the Religion of the Indus?

To learn more about life in Mohenjo-daro, archeologists studied the buildings, art, and artifacts left behind. They found the following evidence of an ancient religion:

- stone sculptures of priests
- amulets (charms), likely worn to ward off negative forces
- a large bath (12 metres by 7 metres), likely used to spiritually purify those who bathed in it
- images of goddesses and gods similar to Hindu goddesses and gods such as Parvati, the Hindu goddess of fertility
- altars that may have been used for animal sacrifices



Indus Civilization

What might be the connection between this religion and Hinduism, which came later?

## How Did Hinduism Develop?

Archeologists have noticed that new religions tend to grow out of old ones. In about 1800 BCE, the Indus civilization weakened, and a new people, the Aryans, gained power. Aryan beliefs were combined with beliefs from the Indus civilization. The new mix of beliefs formed the basis of the religion we know today as Hinduism. This is the oldest religious tradition still being practised today.

The Aryans created hymns to their gods called the *Vedas*. These were recited from memory, and were not written down until possibly the 3rd century BCE. The *Vedas* describe an unknowable supreme being, Brahman, the soul of the universe. Hindus believe that humans cannot comprehend this supreme being. Therefore, Brahman appears to them in thousands of divine forms, including a Hindu “trinity” of creator, preserver, and destroyer (Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva).

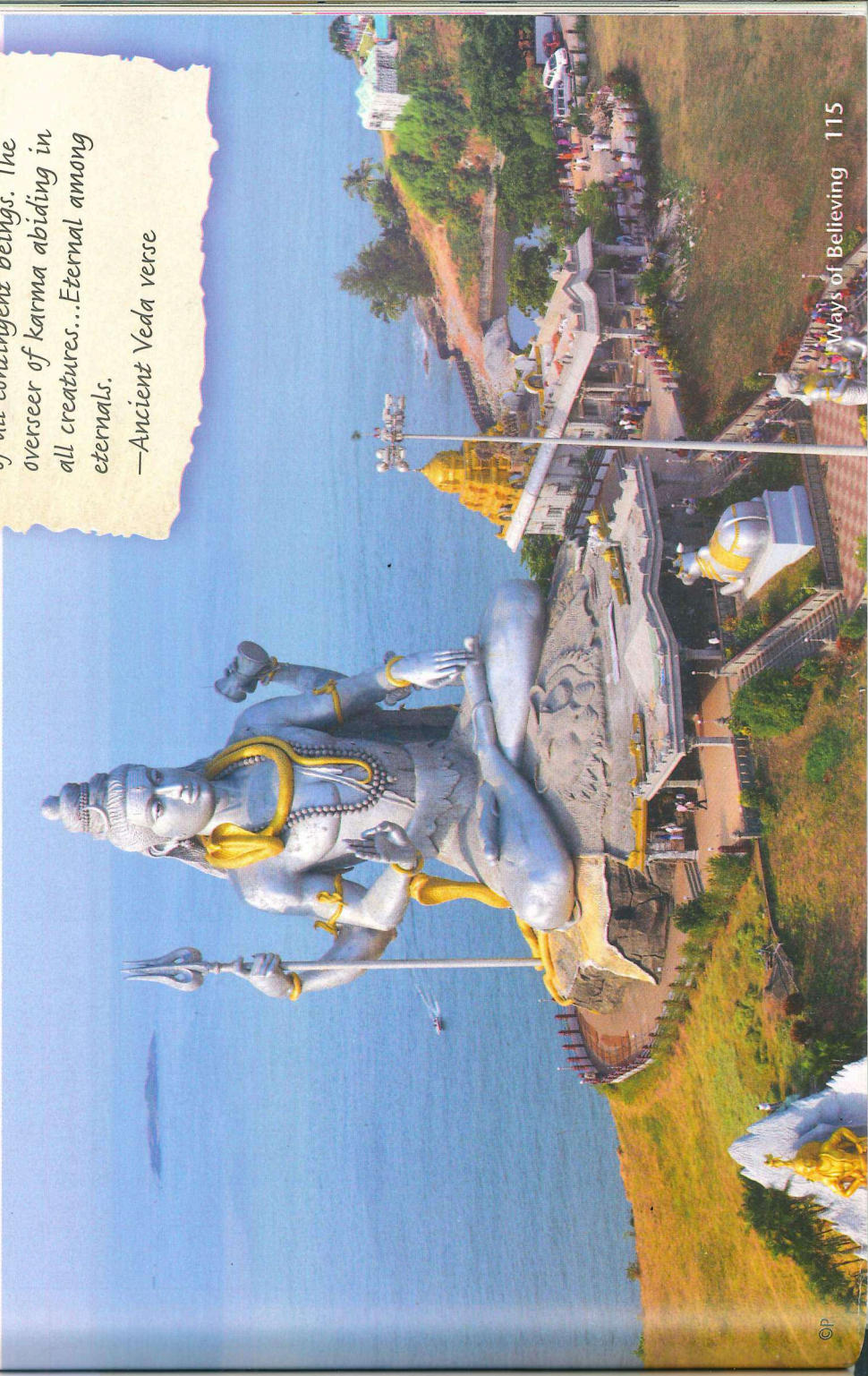
- How might religious beliefs help ancient people understand the world in which they lived?
- In most ancient religions, people sang hymns, prayed, and followed rituals. What could be the purpose of these practices?

The **soul** is a person's essential spirit, or non-physical essence.

*[Brahman is] the One God, hidden in all creatures. Pervading all, the inner self of all contingent beings. The overseer of karma abiding in all creatures...Eternal among eternal.*

—Ancient Veda verse

▼ The statue of Shiva at Karnataka, India, is 37 metres tall—about the size of an 11-storey building. What reasons would people have to build such a statue?



## How Did Ancient Hinduism Help People Live Together in a Large Society?

Imagine if you tried to live in a city where there are no laws and no mutual understandings about how to treat one another. What would life be like?

To understand how ancient religions and spiritual systems helped people live together, we can examine present-day religions that have roots in the ancient past. For example, Hindus today try to live by **dharma**, a divine law of truthfulness, non-injury, and generosity.

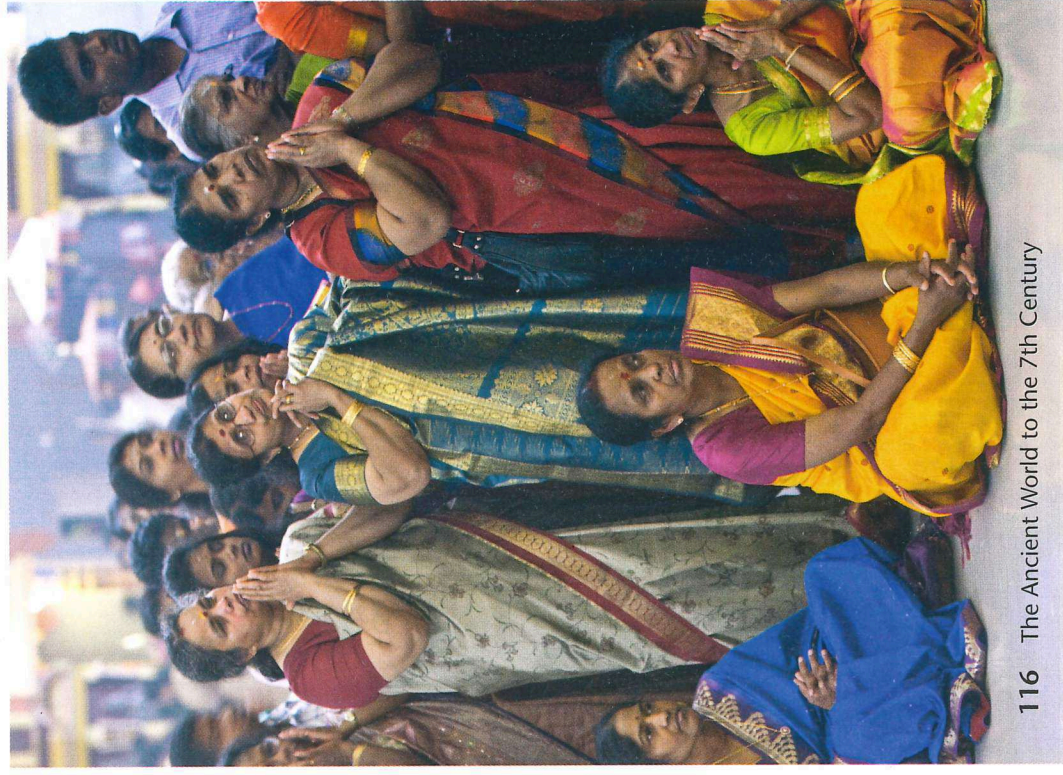
Dharma is a duty to support the person, family, and society. Hindus believe that all living things are part of an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. At death, the soul (or spirit) enters the body of another creature where it continues to exist. This cycle is known as **reincarnation**.

Hindus believe that the sum of an individual's actions—called **karma**—will determine what becomes of that person in the next life. If someone has followed the four goals of life, that person will have good karma. After death, his or her soul will re-emerge in a higher state.

**It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.**

—Mahatma Gandhi, 1930

What does dharma tell us about what ancient peoples were thinking?



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THE FOUR GOALS OF LIFE	
<b>Kama</b>	Enjoy the pleasures of life and love within marriage.
<b>Artha</b>	Earn an honest living to provide for your family.
<b>Dharma</b>	Apply yourself to the right way of living by doing your duty, showing compassion, being patient, and avoiding cruelty, jealousy, and greed.
<b>Moksha</b>	Be honest and moral to lead your soul to freedom.

▲ Hinduism calls on people to live by four goals. Look at each goal in turn. How would achieving that goal help society? How would it help the individual?

Why might ancient people want to live in a society in which everyone embraced the four goals of life?

▲ Hindu devotees pray together in 2009 during the Chariot Festival held in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

## How Did Buddhism Develop?

More than 1000 years after the Aryans composed the *Vedas*, a new religion emerged in response to the Hindu religious tradition.

Hatred never lessens hatred in this world. By love alone is hatred lessened. This is a law eternal.  
—Dhammapada (verse 5)



▲ The Buddha can come in different forms. The Laughing Buddha reminds people to laugh at problems. How would laughter make problems easier to deal with?

### Who was Buddha?

In 563 BCE, Siddhartha Gautama was born into a royal family in what is now Nepal. He grew unhappy despite his wealth. He saw that life was filled with sickness, old age, and death. To seek a solution to this suffering, Siddhartha began a life of fasting and meditation. Finally, he was struck with the idea that the best strategy was to reject both luxury and poverty. Through moderation, a person could achieve happiness. For this reason, Buddha's teachings are sometimes called "The Middle Way." This understanding gave Siddhartha

**enlightenment**—a state of perfect wisdom. Siddhartha became the Buddha, meaning "The One Who Has Awakened." Buddha began gathering followers to his new ideas. After his death, a network of monasteries was established as the new religion expanded. Over the next 500 years, Buddhism spread throughout India, Tibet, China, and Southeast Asia.

### What early Hindu ideas did Buddha reject?

- the worship of a god
- some religious rituals, such as animal sacrifice
- the caste system, based on hereditary social status
- belief in an independent, eternal "self"

### What early Hindu ideas did Buddha accept?

- that people should follow a moral code so that they will be reborn as a higher being
- that everything in life is temporary
- that the cycle of suffering and rebirth can be ended when a person achieves an enlightened state called "nirvana"

### What new ideas did Buddha offer?

- that people can end the cycle of rebirth through personal effort
- that people should take personal responsibility for achieving enlightenment
- that compassion and non-violence should guide people's lives

What can you tell about early Buddhists by what they rejected in Hinduism and what new beliefs and values they embraced?

▲ What questions could you ask to better understand Buddhist beliefs?

## What Are the Links Between Tibetan Religion and Identity?

Anthropologists study societies and cultures. Some of them live among people of a particular culture for long periods to learn about them.

They ask questions such as these:

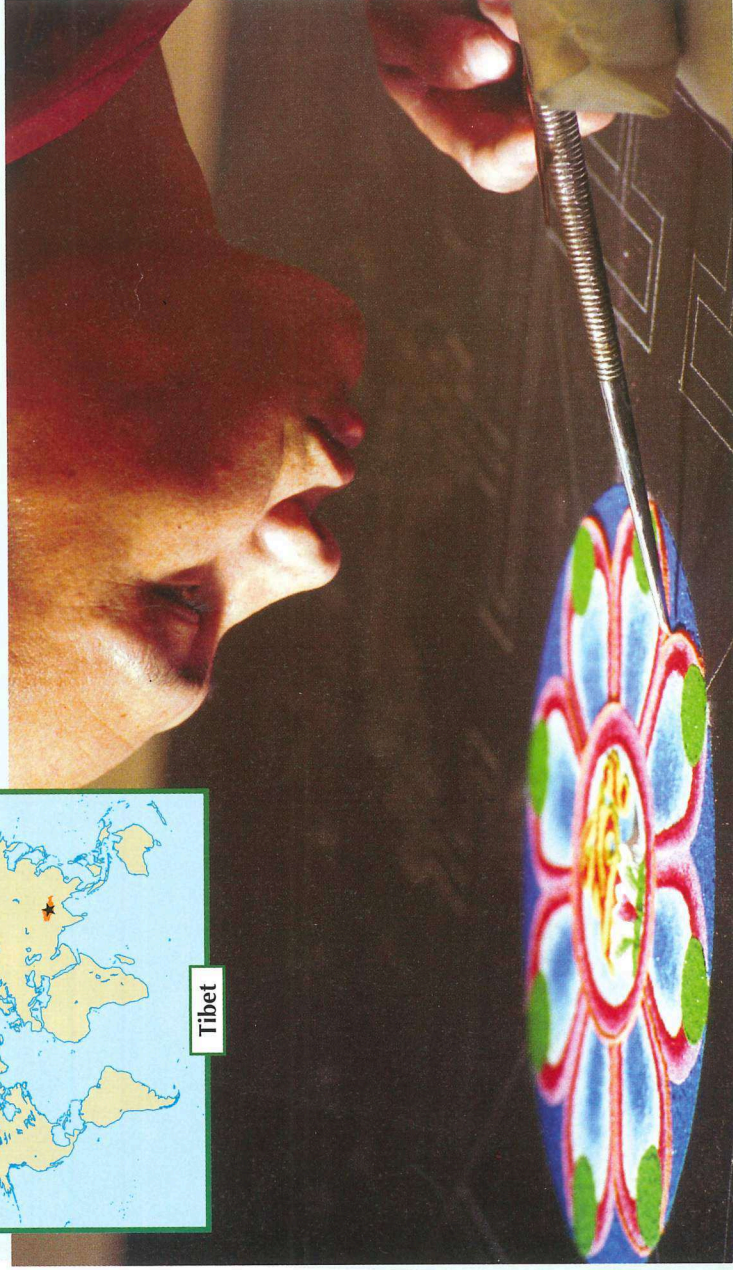
- How do groups of people interact?
- How are social and cultural values passed from one generation to the next?
- What happens when religion and identity are threatened?

Anthropologists would be curious about the threats to religion and identity that Tibet has experienced since 1951.

Buddhism came to Tibet from northern India more than a thousand years ago. Tibetans developed their own form of Buddhism. It became central to Tibetan identity. Buddhist monks—both male and female—are highly respected as teachers and caregivers. For many centuries, Tibet was ruled by the Dalai Lama, also a monk.



Tibet



▲ A Tibetan monk creates a mandala by pouring coloured sand in a pattern. Tibetan monks destroy mandalas as soon as they create them. What might this teach about the nature of material things?

China regards Tibet as part of China. In 1950, China sent 40 000 troops to Tibet and forced Tibet to accept Chinese rule.

Since then, the Chinese government has

- destroyed almost all of Tibet's Buddhist monasteries
- controlled recruitment, teaching, and leadership in the remaining monasteries
- killed, imprisoned, or tortured hundreds of thousands of Buddhist monks
- banned all images of the Dalai Lama, who lives in voluntary exile in India
- made it a crime to fly the flag of Tibet
- replaced the Tibetan language with Chinese in education, business, and government
- resettled large numbers of ethnic Chinese in Tibetan territory

Since 1951, Buddhist monks have led protests against Chinese authorities. After the brutal suppression of a protest in 1959, the Dalai Lama fled to safety in India. Monks in Tibet continue to secretly teach the Tibetan language.

Some of them communicate their views to the outside world, in spite of huge risks. The Tibetan people look to the monks for leadership in their fight for cultural survival.

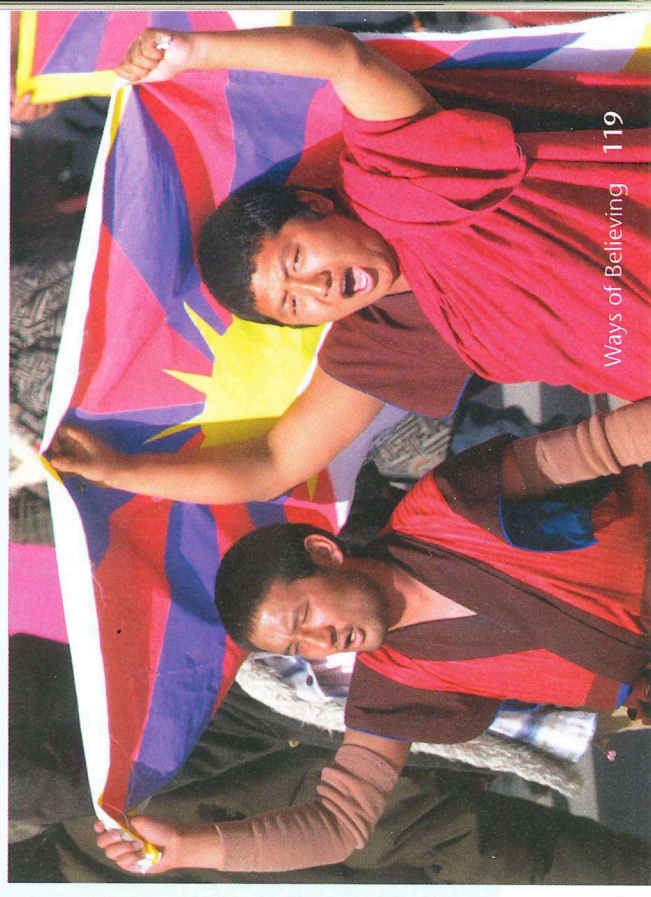
The Dalai Lama and other Tibetan monks embrace non-violent protest. How is this linked to the beliefs and values of early Buddhism?

- Speculate on why Tibetans continue to protest Chinese rule.
- How are Tibetan religion and Tibetan identity linked? What does the struggle of the Tibetan monks illustrate about the ability of religion to endure?
- How could Chinese rule be made more acceptable to Tibetans?



▲ Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, greets a woman from the Inca Kero community in Peru. In 1989, the Dalai Lama won the Nobel Peace Prize. Why might he continue to refer to himself as a “simple Buddhist monk”?

▼ Two Tibetan Buddhist monks in March 2008 in Gansu, China, an area once part of Tibet. Why would they risk prison by protesting with the Tibetan flag?



## What Do People Get From Religion?

A key benefit of religions is their power to create community. When everyone in a community shares the same belief system and comes together to pray, sing, meditate, or celebrate, individuals can feel a sense of community.

Many people turn to religion for guidance in life. Individuals can read **scripture**, which is any writing of a sacred or religious nature, and listen to religious teachers. The Buddhist Eightfold Path teaches people how to practise restraint and strive toward enlightenment.

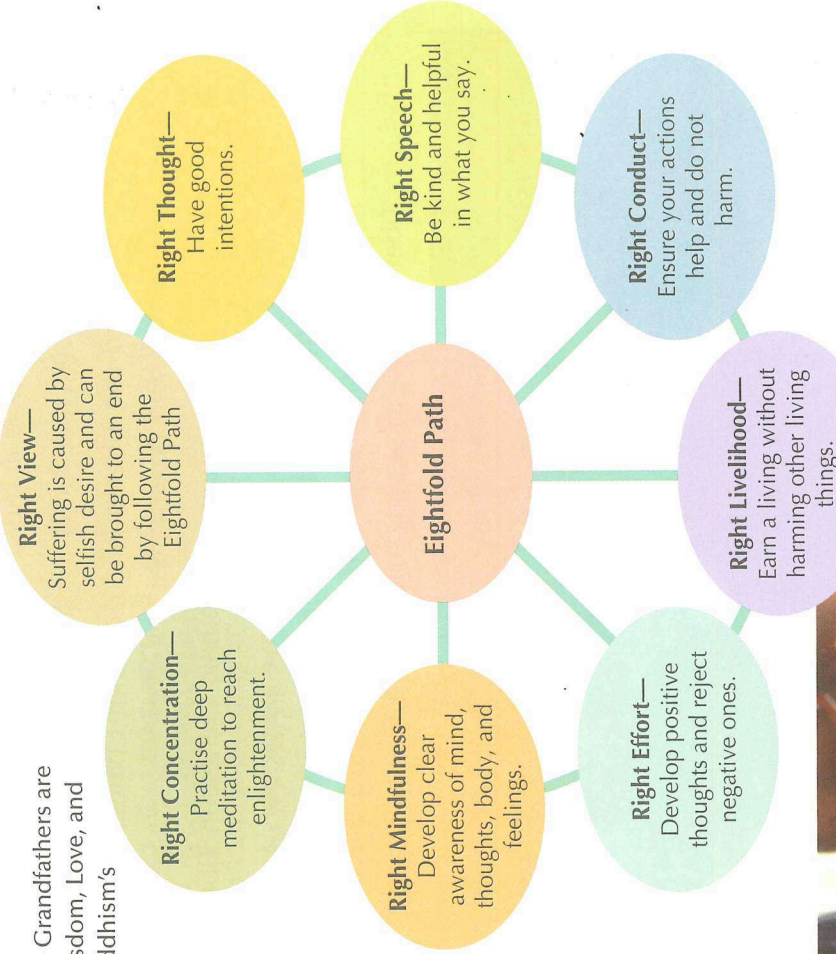
▶ The Teachings of the Ojibwe Seven Grandfathers are Truth, Respect, Humility, Bravery, Wisdom, Love, and Honesty. How do they align with Buddhism's Eightfold Path? Why would they?

### A Need for Order

In ancient times, religions had a huge impact on shaping a community. They affected how people behaved every day. Regular community worship gave structure to the week. Religious festivals gave structure to the year. Religious ceremonies for life events (such as a wedding) gave order to people's lives. Why might people welcome this kind of order?

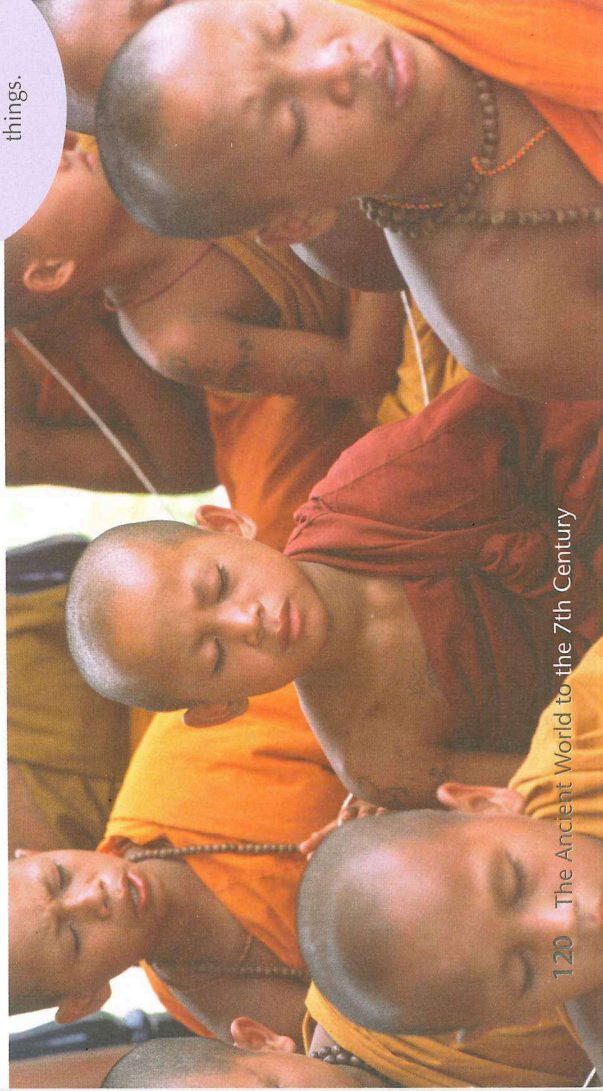
### Buddhism's Four Noble Truths

1. Life is characterized by suffering and dissatisfaction.
2. Suffering is caused by selfish desire.
3. Suffering can end.
4. There is an eightfold path that leads to the end of suffering.



How could a religion that encouraged "right" living help a ruler to run a society? How could it also support the ruler's power over people?

◀ Meditation is essential for any Buddhist trying to follow the Eightfold Path. How would meditating with others benefit the individual? How might it help build community?



## Religious Festivals

Most religions hold celebrations or festivals to mark particularly holy days. For example, Holi is an ancient Hindu spring festival held for two days in late February or early March. This joyful celebration is so popular that participation has spread beyond India and the Hindu religion.

Holi recognizes the end of winter. It is a time to refresh friendship with others. Among Hindus, the festival honours the god Vishnu—the preserver and protector of the universe.

Holi begins with evening rituals and prayers around a Holika fire, into which people symbolically throw old evils and hurts. On the second day of the festival, people enjoy Rangwali Holi. Children and youth sneak up on friends and strangers to spray them with brightly coloured powder and water. Adults smear each other's faces with colour. Later in the day, families visit together and share a feast.

▲ The celebration of Holi is for everyone. How might ancient festivals have helped build ancient people's sense of belonging in their communities?

List all of the communities you belong to, and record the values that are most important to each community. Put stars next to the community and the values that are most important to you.

## Check Your Learning

1. Create a table to compare the origins, beliefs, and practices of Hinduism and Buddhism.
2. Create a graphic to show how the belief systems of the Indus Valley civilization, Hinduism, and Buddhism are related. Include sketches, symbols, lines, or labels to show the connections.
3. What questions did Hinduism and Buddhism answer for ancient peoples? Are their answers still relevant today? Why or why not?

## Make Connections

4. Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms forbids discrimination against others based on many reasons, including culture and religion. It also guarantees freedom of religion.
  - List ways that a person might experience cultural and religious discrimination.
  - List ways that people's right to practise their religion could be restricted.
  - Is freedom of religion and freedom from religious discrimination important to you? Why or why not?

# Why Have the Monotheistic Religions Lasted So Long?

## MYSTERIES IN HISTORY

New religions tend to grow out of older religions. How might that explain the endurance of monotheism?

Today, more than half of the world's population belongs to either Christianity or Islam. Both of these religions have roots in an even older one: Judaism. All three ancient religions emerged in the Middle East. They were different from most other religions at that time because they were **monotheistic**: they teach that there is only one god. What was it about this idea that gripped so many people in the ancient world?

The word **monotheism** comes from *mono*, meaning "one," and *theism*, meaning "belief in god or gods." Since *poly* means "many," what would **polytheism** mean?

How might the idea of being a chosen people strengthen Judaism?

### What Are the Core Beliefs of Judaism?

Judaism is much older than either Christianity or Islam. Jewish scripture, called the Torah, says that God made a covenant—a binding agreement—with the Jews. The Jews would worship Him alone and do what He wanted. In return, God would regard them as His chosen people.

The Torah provides 613 commandments, or rules for living. The rules guide human behaviour toward everything from loving kindness to the preservation of political freedom. One rule, for example, forbids the holding of grudges. Following the rules demonstrates one's faith.



The Middle East

*If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.*

*Happy is the man who finds wisdom...for the gain from it is better than gain from silver.*

*Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.*

*Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles: lest the Lord see it and be displeased.*

*If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? Yet, if I am for myself only, what am I? And if not now, when?*

▲ Reword these ancient Jewish teachings to communicate their main message. Describe possible situations in which these teachings would be helpful today.

### What Happened to the Ark of the Covenant?

The Torah says that, sometime between 1391 and 1271 BCE, God gave the Jewish **prophet** Moses the Ten Commandments—10 fundamental rules. They were carved onto two stone tablets. At the time, the Jews were travelling from Egypt, where they had been enslaved, to their homeland in Israel. They carried the tablets and other sacred items in a wooden chest plated with gold. This chest is what we now call the "Ark of the Covenant."

After the Jews conquered Jerusalem in 1000 BCE, they placed the Ark in a massive temple. In 586 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed the temple. The Ark disappeared.

*Did the Babylonians destroy it?*

*Did Josiah, king of Judah, hide it in a cave near the Dead Sea?*

*Did Menelik I, the first Jewish king of Ethiopia, bring it to Ethiopia?*

*Is it hidden under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem?*



A religious **prophet** is a leader believed to have a special connection to God.

The Ark and what it held were sacred objects.

- What sacred objects do you know of? How do people treat them?
- How could faith in the sacredness of certain objects strengthen an ancient religion?



Research the different theories about the location of the Ark. Which seems most likely to you?

What do you notice in this painting? What do you wonder? Record all the questions you have.

◀ This 3rd-century wall painting was discovered in a long-buried Syrian synagogue. (A synagogue is a Jewish place of worship.) The painting shows Israelites carrying the Ark into a battle against the Philistines. The Philistines captured the Ark, but returned it seven months later.

## What Are the Core Beliefs of Christianity?

### The Two Parts of the Christian Bible

The scripture of Christianity is made up of two parts: the Old Testament (the first part of which is the Jewish Torah), and the New Testament. The New Testament includes four Gospels (meaning “the good news”). They give four accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus.

In many ancient communities, everyone embraced the same belief system.

- How would that affect people’s daily lives?
- How would it affect the ability of a religion to last through many generations?

Look at this picture. What do you notice? What questions do you have?

At the time the Lindisfarne Gospels were made, very few copies of the Gospels existed anywhere. How would this make the Lindisfarne Gospels especially significant?

- ▶ This is a page from the Lindisfarne Gospels. It was painted by a Christian monk around the year 700 CE at Lindisfarne, a small island off the coast of England. It shows Saint Matthew the Evangelist.

A single individual can spark a religion.

Siddhartha Gautama began Buddhism. Similarly, Jesus of Nazareth was the spark that began Christianity. Both new religions drew beliefs or practices from another.

The Jewish Torah includes a prediction of a messiah, a person who would deliver the Jews from their enemies. The followers of Jesus of Nazareth believed that he was the Messiah and the Son of God. This angered Jewish leaders who did not think Jesus was the Messiah. The Romans crucified Jesus by nailing him onto a raised wooden cross.

According to the New Testament, all people are sinners, or imperfect beings. Through faith, they can be saved and go to heaven after they die. How might this message affect people both in ancient times and today?



## Why Did Christianity Spread?

Jesus urged his followers to spread His teachings to all nations. Within a century, the Gospels were written.

The followers of Jesus taught their beliefs about him to many people. Would Christianity exist today if they had not? Explain.

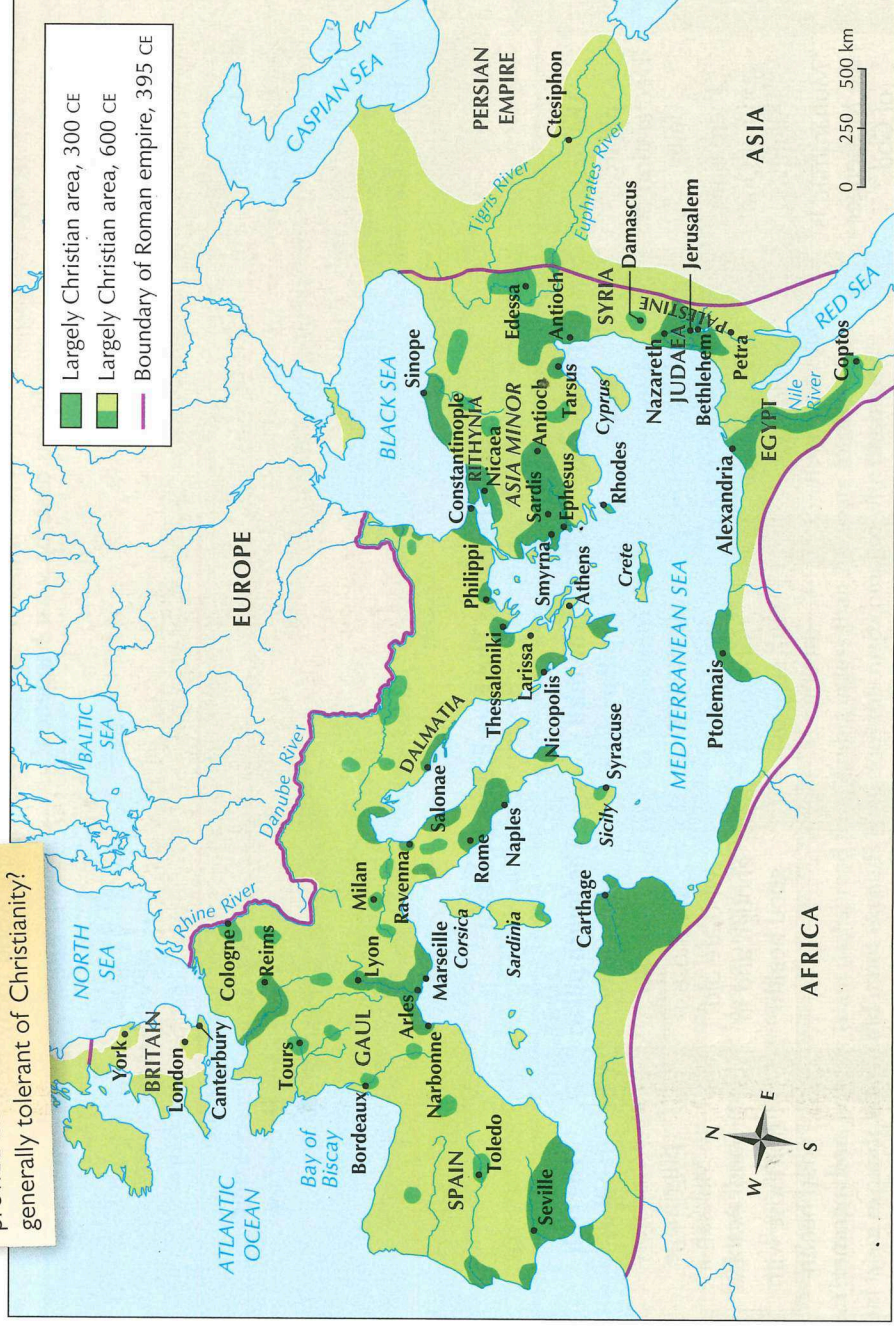
Then Jesus came to [His apostles] and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”  
—Matthew 28:18–20a

### How would these factors influence the spread of Christianity?

- One Christian teacher, Paul, travelled widely throughout the Roman Empire, spreading the message of Christianity.
- In 313 CE, Emperor Constantine became a Christian and decriminalized Christianity within the Roman empire.

What evidence does the map provide that the Romans were generally tolerant of Christianity?

### The Spread of Christianity



- ▶ This map shows where Christianity spread from Jerusalem. How does the pattern change over time?

## What Are the Core Beliefs of Islam?

Like Christianity and Buddhism, Islam began, in part, because of the influence of a single individual. Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in 570 CE in Makkah, Arabia. At that time, Arabic culture was polytheistic: Arabs believed in many gods.

Like Buddha, Muhammad's life changed after he had a spiritual experience while meditating. He later told his wife that the angel Gabriel had appeared to him and told him that there is one true God, and his name is Allah. Muslims believe in the teachings of the Jewish and Christian prophets, but they believe that Muhammad's revelations were most accurate. They are recorded in the Qur'an, the sacred scripture of Islam.

How can studying ancient spirituality and religions help us live together today?

Thou shalt believe in One God, in His angelic messengers, in His revealed books, in the Last Day [of Judgment], And in the determination of Good and Evil by God.  
—Prophet Muhammad

Today, Muslim populations are growing faster than Christian populations. How will that affect the significance of Islam?

### THINKING LIKE A... Demographer

By 700 CE, Islam was the religion of 3 percent of the world's people. Find out the population of the world today, and the number of Muslims. Then calculate the percentage of Muslims in the world today. How would you describe what happened?

Why might ancient people want to live in a community where everyone lived according to the Five Pillars of Islam?

▼ To be Muslim, a person must live by the Five Pillars of Islam. The Qur'an outlines these practices. The first pillar identifies the core beliefs, while the other four summarize the way to live a good life that honours Allah.

### Living the Faith: The Five Pillars of Islam

**The first pillar:**  
Declaration of faith  
"There is no god but God [Allah]."  
"Muhammad is the Messenger of God."

**The second pillar:**  
Mandatory prayer five times daily (before dawn, midday, late afternoon, after sunset, after dark)

**The third pillar:**  
Mandatory almsgiving: the Zakat (for those with surplus income)

**The fourth pillar:**  
Mandatory fasting (for those who are old enough and in good health)

**The fifth pillar:**  
Mandatory pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia (for those with good health and income)

## Why Did Islam Spread?

The new faith soon spread rapidly across large areas of Asia and North Africa.

How would these factors influence the spread of Islam?

- Muhammad united the Arabs. Later Muslim leaders began to conquer neighbouring peoples. Muslim rulers did not demand that conquered people embrace Islam. However, they did charge non-believers a special tax.
- Growing trade networks within the empire meant that more people learned about Islam.

As long as people had faith, ancient religions offered certainty. Why would ancient people find this certainty so compelling?

### The Spread of Islam



Name two important things you learned from reading this map. Why are they important?

▲ This map shows how far Islam had spread from Arabia in less than 200 years. Where did Islam expand? Where did it not expand? How does this map compare with the map showing the spread of Christianity?

## One Building, Two Faiths

Hagia Sophia is a World Heritage site in Istanbul, Turkey. The current structure was built by the Christian Byzantine emperor Justinian in 537. The inside of the cathedral was decorated with elaborate mosaics, paintings, and statues showing scenes important to Christians. The Greek architects designed domes that rise almost 60 metres into the air.

How might people feel when seeing a building such as Hagia Sophia? How might a large, beautiful religious building help a belief system endure over time?

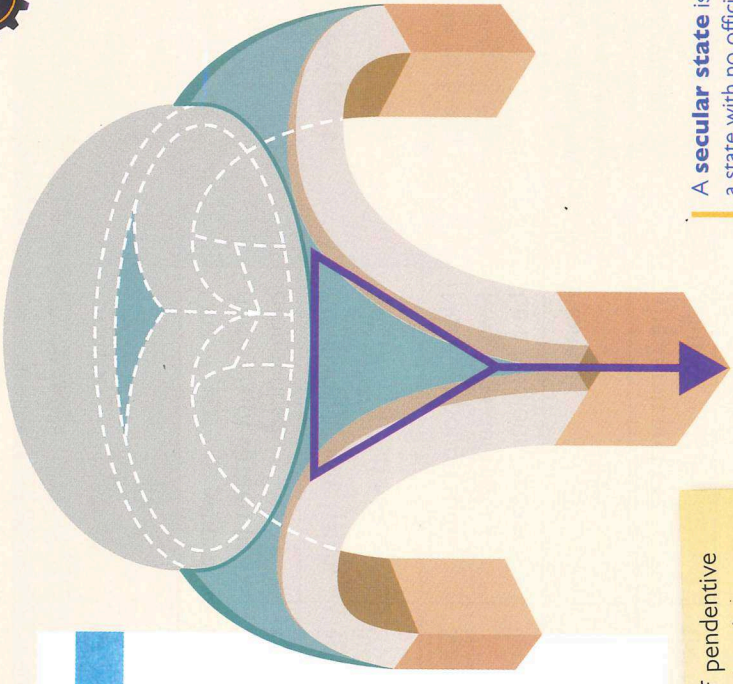
For more than 900 years, Hagia Sophia was a church. Then, in 1453, the Islamic Ottomans captured Constantinople (now Istanbul). They converted Hagia Sophia into a mosque. Christian images were covered with plaster. Four minarets—tall, slender towers for calling Muslims to prayer—were added. For almost 500 years, Hagia Sophia was a mosque.

### INNOVATIONS

#### How Do You Build a Dome?

Today, architects can use material like aluminum to build lighter domes. In 537 CE, the designers of Hagia Sophia had only stone and brick. How could they design a building to support a dome that was 30 metres wide and very heavy? They devised an entirely new system of pendentive arches to solve the problem. The dome sits on four connected triangles. Each triangle takes a quarter of the weight of the dome and directs that weight downward onto a supporting pillar.

Several religions have inspired the creation of beautiful domes and other architectural feats. Find out about one and share it with your class.



What evidence of pendentive arches can you find in the photograph of Hagia Sophia?

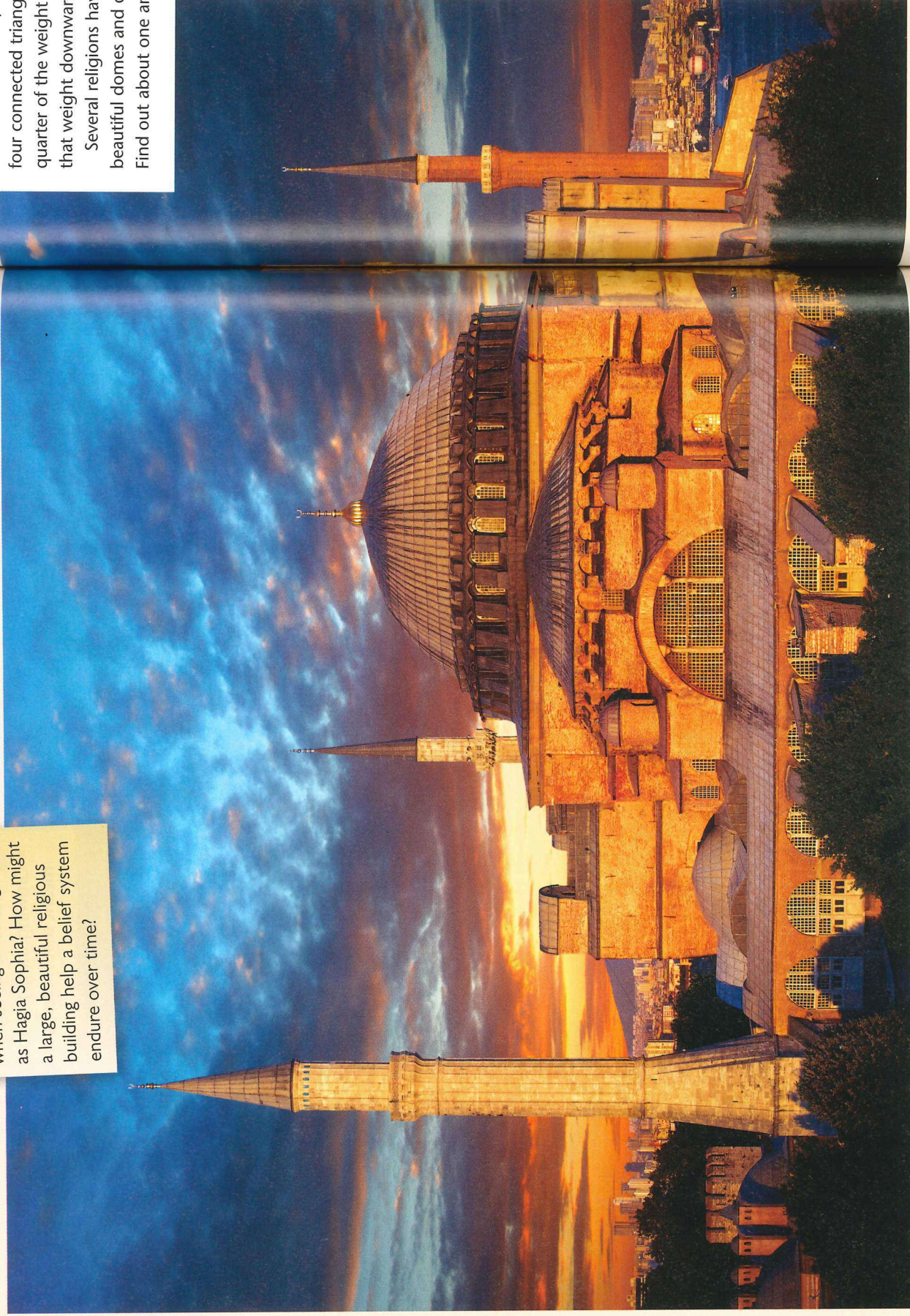
A **secular state** is a state with no official religion, where all religions are regarded as equal.

## Why Is the Future of Hagia Sophia in Doubt?

In 1928, Turkey became a **secular state** like Canada. Turkey does not have an official religion, even though most Turks are Muslim. In 1935, Hagia Sophia was falling into disrepair. The government restored Hagia Sophia, took the plaster off the Christian images, and turned it into a museum. More than a million visitors go to Hagia Sophia every year. Yet some Turks want to change how the building is used.

- Should it be turned back into a mosque? There are 3000 mosques in Istanbul, many underused. Restored Christian artwork would be covered over.
- Should it be turned back into a church? The Christian population of Istanbul is very small.
- Should it be kept as a museum? People could continue to learn about the history of Islam and Christianity in Istanbul.

Whose perspectives should be considered when deciding what to do with Hagia Sophia? How do you think the situation could be resolved?



▲ Hagia Sophia draws tourists from around the world. Why would people visit this building?

## How Do the Monotheistic Religions Compare?

How might people of one of these faiths feel about similarities with the other two?

### COMPARING THREE MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS

	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
<b>Number of Gods</b>	One: Y_____, whose name is not written or pronounced	One: God (in three forms: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)	One: Allah
<b>The Prophets</b>	Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, and others	Same prophets as Judaism	Same prophets as Christianity plus Jesus and Muhammad
<b>Role of Jesus (4 BCE–30 CE)</b>	None, although some Jews consider him to be a religious teacher	Son of God	A prophet, but not the Son of God
<b>Role of Muhammad (570–632 CE)</b>	None	None	The last prophet and the Messenger of God
<b>Holy Books</b>	The Torah and the Talmud	The Bible, particularly the New Testament	The Qur'an
<b>An Afterlife</b>	Yes, but it is not a major focus of the Jewish faith.	Yes: After death a person's soul faces a last judgment: heaven or hell.	Yes: After death a person's soul faces a last judgment: heaven or hell.
<b>Major Annual Events</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Passover: recalls escape from bondage in Egypt</li> <li>Hanukkah: marks the rededication of the Second Temple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easter: marks the resurrection of Jesus from the dead</li> <li>Christmas: celebrates the birth of Jesus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eid al-Fitr: marks the end of Ramadan, the holy month of fasting</li> <li>Eid al-Adha: celebrates the annual pilgrimage</li> </ul>



▲ Note that all three faiths interpret the role, life, and message of the prophets in different ways. How does this chart confirm, contradict, or expand what you already know?

### Check Your Learning

- What are the most significant similarities among the three monotheistic religions? What are their most significant differences?
- Why did so many people in the ancient world embrace monotheistic religions? Why have those religions endured?
- What evidence do you see that the three monotheistic religions continue to influence our lives today? What does that look like?

Pick one religion and write a summary using no more than 50 words. Did you include all of the important details? If not, what did you choose to leave out? Why?

## What Is the Significance of Ancient Belief Systems?

### Examine

How have ancient religions affected what you believe? how you worship (if you do)? what you wear? how you interact with others? who you know? where you go to school?

Ancient belief systems were created thousands of years ago. In those times, people's lives were very different from our own. There were no cars, computers, or cell phones. Most people knew little about the world beyond their own community. Most people could not read or write.

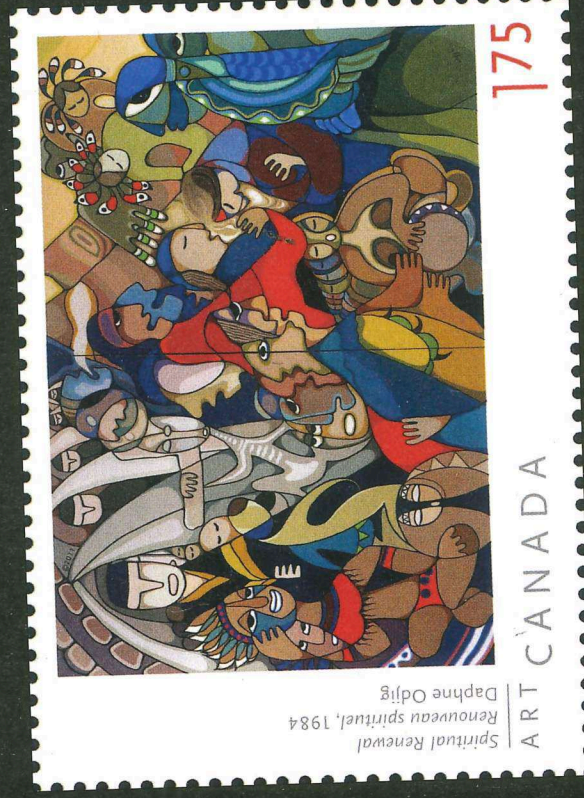
If ancient belief systems were created for ancient peoples, whose lives were so different from our own, are their belief systems still significant to us today? To begin to answer that question, think about the impacts that ancient spirituality and religion have had.

- Did they change the way people lived?
  - Did those changes last a long time?
  - Are they still having an impact on us today?
- If so, then learning more about ancient belief systems could help us better understand who we are and where we come from.

*Without faith, nothing is possible. With it, nothing is impossible.*

—Mary McLeod Bethune, Educator, Author, and Civil Rights Leader, 1875–1955

What makes art an effective way to express a message? When is photography a better choice? Or a graph?



◀ This 2011 stamp features a painting called *Spiritual Renewal* by First Nations artist Daphne Odjig. At left you can see the arrival of Christian missionaries, people who imposed their religion on First Peoples. On the right, the painting also shows drumming and dancing—part of a spiritual ceremony that Odjig attended before a Wikwemikong powwow. Does it show a positive impact, a negative impact, or both?

Why might the artist call the painting *Spiritual Renewal*?

## Impacts: Positive or Negative?

The impacts of an ancient religion can be either positive or negative. For example, many people have been comforted by religion's assurance that they will be reunited with their loved ones after death. You might view this as a positive impact. Religion has also caused many people to worry about what will happen to them after death. You might view this as a negative impact.

Here are two impacts of belief systems with ancient roots. Which impacts have affected many people for a long time? Does either one make a belief system with ancient roots significant to humanity?

*Religion...saves the rich from being massacred by the poor.*

—Napoleon Bonaparte, 1769–1821, emperor of France

Why is it possible for a religion to have both positive and negative impacts on human society?

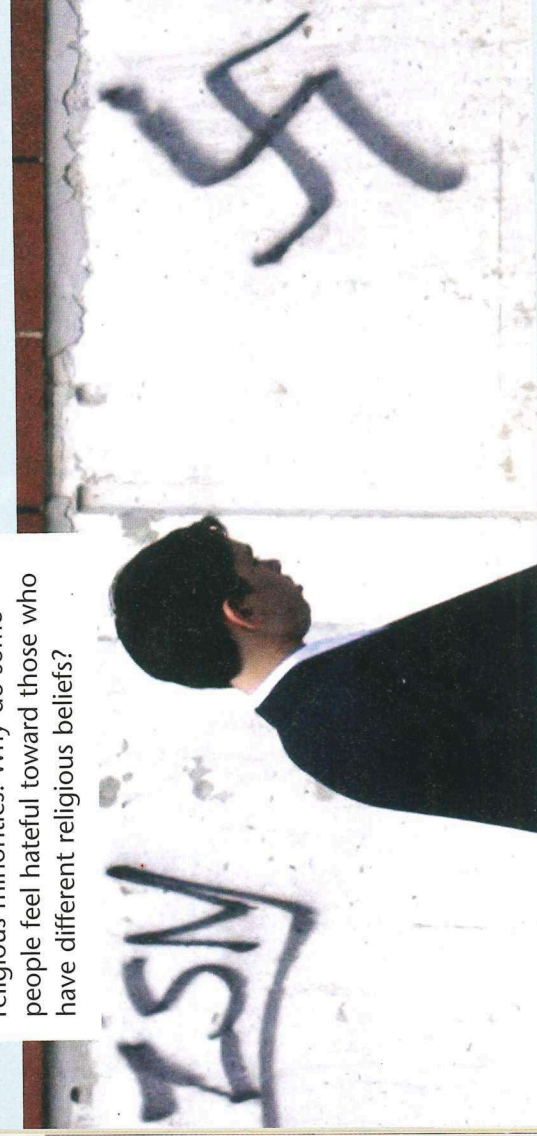
## Guidelines for Ethical Conduct

Spirituality and religion give people guidance on how to live together. Virtually every religion or spiritual community has guidelines for right living, such as the Eightfold Path of Buddhism and the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee. What links might there be between Canadian laws and religious guidelines for right living?

► Police officers in Vancouver work together to make sure that people obey Canadian laws. How do our laws help us live together? Why would ancient peoples want guidelines for ethical conduct?

## Religious Intolerance

Some people use religion to justify discrimination and hate crimes against religious minorities. Why do some people feel hateful toward those who have different religious beliefs?



◀ Joel Hameiri, 13, is a member of the congregation at the Beth Shalom Synagogue in Ottawa. In this 2004 photo, he surveys graffiti spray-painted on his synagogue.

## Are Ancient Belief Systems Relevant Today?

Since the time when ancient belief systems began, people's lives have changed drastically. What are the forces that have caused social change? Have these changes made ancient belief systems irrelevant or all the more necessary?

Should religions change to better meet the needs of people today? Or should they stay the same so we can have continuity with our past?

## Forces of Change

► In Canada, many people live in large cities instead of small communities, families are smaller, and our population is far more diverse than it was in the past. How could these and other changes affect the importance of religion?

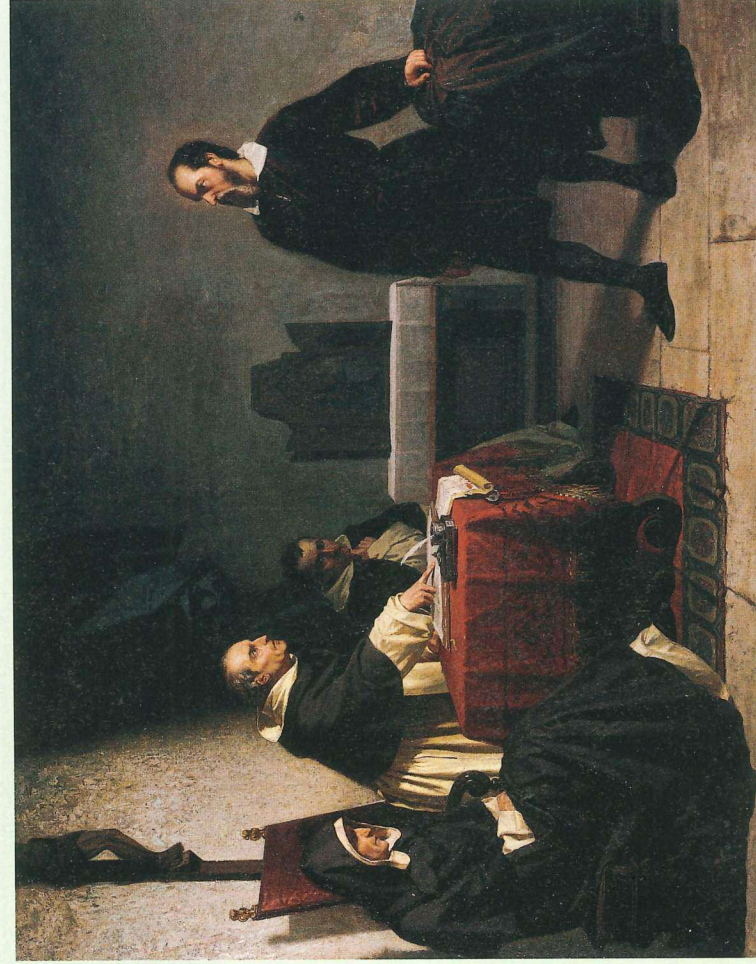


**Economic Change:**  
In the 19th century, large industries began to produce goods cheaply and in large quantity. How would this development affect what ordinary people could afford to buy?

**The Rise of Technology:**  
Over time, technological developments have given ordinary people the use of cars, telephones, televisions, and computers. How might these developments affect the degree to which people interact face to face?

**Political Change:**  
With the rise of democracy, many countries decided that government should not promote religion. People gained the right to choose or reject religion. In some other countries, religion was attacked.

**The Rise of Science:**  
Religion is rooted in faith, not science. Increasingly, science has been providing rational explanations for how the world works. Sometimes, these explanations contradict religious or spiritual teachings.



◀ Cristiano Banti made this painting in 1857. It shows Italian scientist Galileo Galilei in court. He was charged with going against the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church by saying that the Earth circles the Sun. Would a scientist be tried for this today? Why or why not?



## No More Religion?

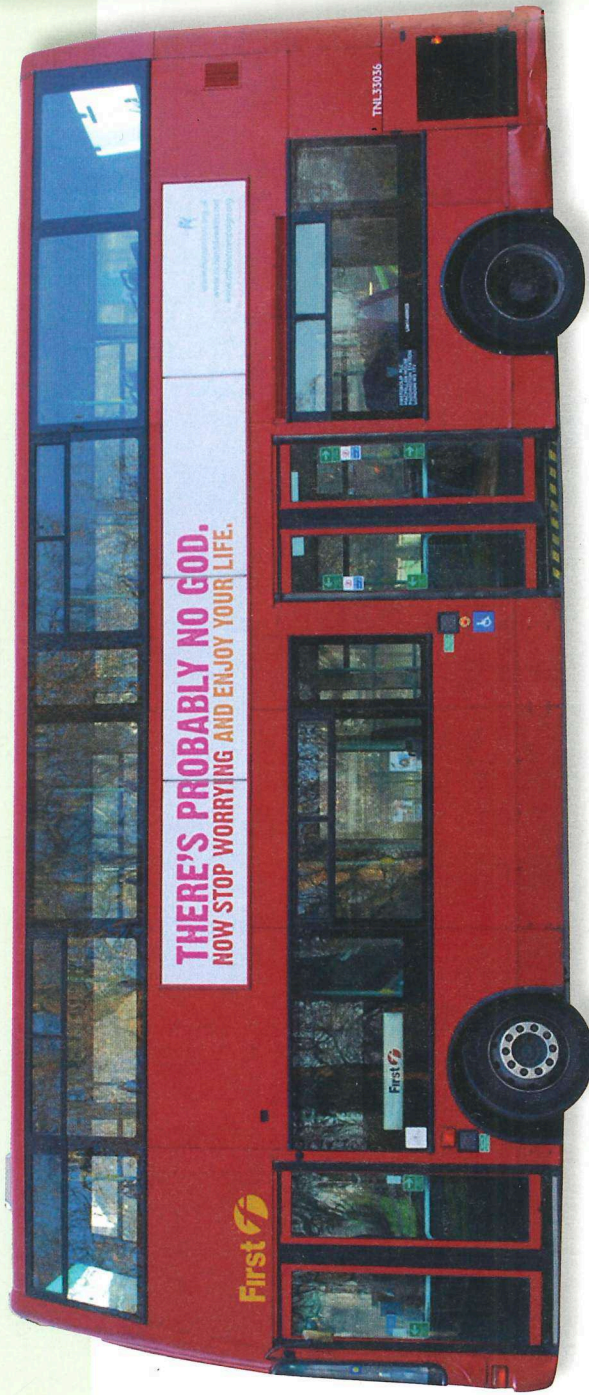
When North Americans are asked what their religion is, the most frequent answer is "Christian." The next most frequent answer is "None." The number of people who answer with "None" is rising. From 1985 to 2005, weekly attendance at religious services in Canada dropped from 30 percent to 21 percent. Why is this trend continuing?

Is atheism a belief? Explain.

An **atheist** believes that God does not exist. Atheism is not tolerated in some parts of the world. In extreme cases, the punishment is execution.

An **agnostic** does not believe either way on the question of God's existence. Some agnostics may be seeking an answer, while others are just not interested.

A **secularist** believes that religion should be kept out of both government and public education. A secularist could be an atheist, an agnostic, or a religious or spiritual person.



▲ In 2009, a group of atheists in London, England, wanted to tell people that they did not have to live in fear of going to hell. So they launched a lighthearted advertising campaign, with signs on buses. Read the fine print. What do you think of their argument?

### CONSIDER THIS!

In 1971, singer/songwriter John Lennon wrote a song called "Imagine." The song asks what the world might be like without religion, material possessions, nations, and wars. Find the lyrics or listen to the song. Do you agree that religions divide people, rather than bringing them together? Why do you think the song is still so popular today?

## Helping or Hurting Humanity?

### Do ancient teachings help people to get along?

Most religions and spiritual systems teach people to love one another. They also guide people to help those in need. However, some people use religion to justify religious intolerance and discrimination. What do you think? Does religion unite us or divide us in our everyday life?



▲ Does spirituality or religion influence how you behave at school?

### Do ancient teachings have any relevance for world peace?

Many religious and spiritual teachers around the world condemn violence. They ask for peaceful solutions to problems. Despite these teachings, racism, terrorism, and violence still exist. Wars are still fought in the name of religion. Is religion an obstacle or a support for a peaceful, less violent world?



◀ This vigil commemorates 49 people killed in a shooting in Orlando, Florida, in 2016. Many of the victims were LGBTQ. Why might some people use religion to justify violence?

Create a diagram that shows how ancient belief systems are positive, negative, or both.

Ask an adult family member or a trusted member of the community how spirituality or religion has affected his or her life. What does this tell you about the influences of ancient belief systems?

## Check Your Learning

1. Today, many people still look for answers in ancient belief systems. Others reject those belief systems. What should people do? Explain your opinion.
2. How would you create a more peaceful world? Explain why religion is or is not a part of your solution.

### Make Connections

3. Write a 140-character tweet that communicates your thinking about the relevance of ancient religion or spirituality in the world today. With your classmates, create a display of tweets. Examine the display and post a second tweet in response.

### Why do ancient belief systems endure?

#### THINKING LIKE AN... Anthropologist

Anthropologists study human societies and cultures. Sometimes they visit a community to learn about it first-hand. You have seen examples of ancient belief systems and spirituality, and explored why these beliefs endure today.

Choose one or more of these questions. Represent your thinking and learning in any way you choose.

- What similarities and differences did you discover in the perspectives of various spiritual and religious belief systems? How can our own biases affect what we think about ancient spirituality and religion? **Perspectives**

- Why do the beliefs of ancient religions and spirituality still have meaning to people today? Have these systems changed over the centuries? Why might that be so? **Continuity and Change**
- Religion has been called the greatest force for good but also the greatest source for division. What does this mean? What is your opinion about the impacts of ancient religions on the world today? **Significance**

#### Explore and Reflect

What role should ancient spirituality or religion play in your life? What role should it play for humanity?

#### Suggestions

When discussing personal spirituality or religion...

- share your beliefs only if you wish to.
- be respectful of others' beliefs.
- always keep an open mind.



▲ How might continuing an ancient spiritual practice benefit a community today?

How does ancient spirituality or religion influence people today? What evidence can we use to decide this?

#### TRY IT!

Choose an ancient belief system—it could be one that you have read about here or another one that you are interested in. What evidence can you find of its influence on people and communities today? What does this show about what people and societies want and need?



#### DEVELOPING IDEAS IN A GROUP

- Brainstorm information without judging.
- Later, filter information to eliminate what is off-topic.
- Make use of information from personal experience.
- Seek connections and common themes among your ideas.

#### TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE OBSERVATION

- Bring a notepad and pen or pencil, and avoid using electronic devices.
- Be respectful in spiritual and religious settings.
- Ask permission before taking photos.
- Note what people say, what they do, and why they do it (you may have to ask).