



CONFUCIANISM, DAOISM, AND BUDDHISM

How do different belief systems fit together in one country?

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

Students will explore three major belief systems in China—Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism—through art and artifacts. Through discussion and object-study, students will wrestle with how these different belief systems co-existed in China, and how they influenced and informed each other.

If you are planning to use this as part of a visit to The Field Museum, see the field trip guide on page 6.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

China has many faiths and philosophical traditions. For centuries, these belief systems have influenced each other, and people's daily practices honored different ideas and customs.

The Cyrus Tang Hall of China explores three central belief systems: Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Each tradition has distinct historical roots and contributed to many practices. As they became more imbedded across China, the different belief systems shaped and influenced each other. These belief systems were not exclusive—one person could practice Daoism, patronize Buddhist temples, and follow Confucian rituals.

Daoism emerged sometime during the Spring and Autumn or Warring States periods (770-221 BC), a time of intense conflict and political instability, but also of profound intellectual creativity. Daoism celebrates the “oneness” of all nature and advocates a natural course of action, or in some cases, inaction. It is one of China's indigenous belief systems with roots in nature worship.

Confucianism is based on the writings of Kong Fuzi, also known as Confucius (551-479 BC), a philosopher and teacher who developed a system of thought that



Image: Figure of a seated bodhisattva, 14th century AD. China, possibly Jiangxi Province, Jingdezhen. © The Field Museum, Cat. No. 119332, Photographer John Weinstein

explained an individual's place in society and a ruler's responsibility to his people. Like Daoism, Confucianism gained prominence during the Warring States period. It emphasizes family structure and respect for one's elders and ancestors, along with moral virtue that is often translated as “perfect goodness” or “benevolence.”

Buddhists follow the guidance of Siddhartha Guatama, who was believed to have lived in what is now Nepal

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Lens: history, geography, art, and anthropology

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (CONTINUED)

and India around the fifth century BC. He is commonly known as the Buddha, which means “the enlightened one.” According to Buddhist teachings, anyone can reach Buddhahood by following the “Eightfold Path” of ethical conduct, mental discipline (including meditation), and wisdom. Buddhists traditionally do not believe in one all-powerful creator, or god, but they do highly esteem and pray to the Buddha and other enlightened beings for help in life and for salvation. Buddhism is believed to have come to China from India along the Silk Road trading routes.

COMPELLING QUESTIONS

How do these belief systems fit together?
 How did Buddhism fit in to existing belief systems?
 How do ancient shrines, symbols and objects of worship compare to practices we might be familiar with today?

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

Where do specific belief systems originate?
 Who are the central figures?
 What practices are associated with specific belief systems?
 What objects represent specific belief systems?
 What common elements are seen across belief systems?
 What unique aspects are present in specific belief systems?

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism.
 Students will analyze the religious art and artifacts in the exhibit, and their meanings in Chinese culture.
 Students will formulate opinions of the differences between Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism.
 Students relate the conceptual use of symbols, shrines, religious places, and art of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism to contemporary society.

STANDARDS

C3 Framework

D2.Civ.14 Compare historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.
D2.Geo.5 Analyze the combinations of cultural and environmental characteristics that make places both similar to and different from other places.
D2.His.12 Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to identify further areas of inquiry and additional sources.

Common Core

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade level topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CPS Framework Alignment:

Grade 6, Unit 1: Introduction to Geography; Unit 7: Rise of Asia,
Grade 9, Unit 1: Introduction to Geography

APPROXIMATE TIME

1-2 class periods

GALLERY OF FOCUS

Gallery 2 Link: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-2>

Gallery 4 Link: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-4>

Overlapping Objects:

Stone sculpture- Laozi in the pose of the Buddha:

http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-4/case-403/g4-3_m1_b2

Stone Stele – Celebrating Daoism with Buddhist Symbols:

http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/gallery-4/case-403/g4-3_m1_b1_exploration.

PREPARATION NOTES

Students will be working in groups to explore content both in the classroom and in the museum exhibit or online exhibition: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>. You may wish to pre-select groups.

OTHER MATERIALS

Access to museum content in exhibit or online:

<http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>

Graphic organizer

Clipboards (in exhibit)

PROCEDURES

› Engage

Ask students, “What belief systems—religions or philosophies—exist in our country?”
Generate a list of students’ ideas.

Ask students, “What religions do you think people might practice in China today and in the past?”
Make a list of religions associated with China.

Share a picture of the Stone Sculpture and ask, “What do you observe about this object?”
“What can you infer about what religion it is from?”

After a discussion, share information about the object. It is a Daoist object, but it uses Buddhist symbols.
Ask students if they have heard of Daoism. In this activity, they will learn about different religions in China, and how they sometimes borrow from each other in style and symbolism.

Ask if they have seen any belief systems borrow from each other.
Do different religions use similar images or practices?

› Explore (Questions and Inquiry)

Explain that students will be exploring three important belief systems in China: Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism.

Split students into groups to three groups to explore the different belief systems.

Content can be explored in one of two ways:

- Visiting the museum in person.
- Using the Online Exhibition: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>

Have students use the graphic organizer to research the supporting questions:

- Where does this belief system originate?
- Who are the central figures?
- What practices are associated with this belief system?
- What objects represent this belief system? How is the belief system represented in art and artifacts?

Students can work in pairs to focus on different objects within the belief system.

When they are done exploring, have the three groups discuss the different objects they observed, and come together to answer the supporting questions. They will be sharing this information with the other groups.

› Explain (Apply Disciplinary Lens)

Students will share their research from the museum with the other groups. This can be done in small groups of one student from each belief system research group, or as a whole class. Students can share images of the objects they discovered in addition to the content they learned, and show other students how the religion is represented in the art and artifacts.

› Elaborate (Gather and Evaluate Evidence)

Either in small groups, or in a whole class discussion, return to the opening question—how do different belief systems fit together in one country?

Have each group think and respond to the following questions:

- What does the belief system you studied have in common with the other belief systems?
- What makes it stand out?
- How did these different belief systems fit together in one country?

› Evaluate (Develop Claims, Communicate and Critique Conclusions)

Students can reflect on this question in writing, using both historical content discovered in the exhibit and the contemporary examples they identified in the opening activity.

After writing, students can evaluate each others work using the rubric included below.

ENRICHING THE LESSON

Background Knowledge Needed:

Students will develop background knowledge on the artifacts from Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism and their roles in religious practice.

Anticipated Misconceptions:

Students may be surprised to find out about the different religious groups in China, and how they have existed together over the course of Chinese history.

Methods to Build Empathy:

Historical Empathy

Students will be engaging in perspective-taking by both identifying their present day perspectives on religious practice and also by separating these perspectives from past perspectives.

Social empathy

Students will be working together in groups and forming consensus around critical cultural issues in China. This will require active listening, restating each other's ideas, and engaging in discussion.

Cultural Empathy

Students will explore different historic and contemporary belief systems and draw parallels to the systems they see in daily life.

Opportunities for Informed Action and Contemporary Connections:

Students may wish to explore commonalities between local belief systems and study organizations that work on building understanding across belief systems.

DIFFERENTIATION

For an additional challenge, encourage groups to explore the Tibetan Gallery and include information on Tibetan Buddhism.

For students who may need additional support, use Venn diagrams for comparing and contrasting different materials and what objects they were used to create.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

The Dao of Zhuangzi: The Harmony of Nature by Tsai Chih Chung, Brian Bruya (Translator), Chih-Chung Ts'ai, Brian Bruya (Translator)

The Tao Speaks: Lao-Tzu's Whispers of Wisdom by Tsai Chih Chung (Illustrator), Chih-Chung Ts'ai, Zhizhong Cai, Brian Bruya (Translator)

Zhuangzi Speaks: The Music of Nature by Tsai Chih Chung, Brian Bruya (Translator), Zhuangzi

Confucius Speaks: Words to Live By by Tsai Chih Chung, Chih-Chung Ts'ai, Zhizhong Cai, Brian Bruya (Translator)

LESSON GLOSSARY

These concepts are embedded in the museum content and may be unfamiliar to students.

filial piety – a central virtue of Confucian thought, the respect of one's father, elders and ancestors.

ancestor worship – the custom of honoring deceased family members and the belief that their spirits have influence on the affairs of the living.

shrine – a place of worship.

enlightenment - the final spiritual state in Buddhism, the absence of desire and suffering.

NOTES FOR FIELD TRIP PLANNING

Before

The “Engage” section of the lesson plan can be used as a pre-activity. It might be helpful to share images of the objects with students before they enter the exhibit so they can easily locate them when they arrive, and to show students how the interactive works (very similar to the online exhibition: <http://chinahall.fieldmuseum.org/>).

During

While in the museum, students can do the research described in “Explore.” Objects about Confucianism can be found in Gallery 2, Daoism in Gallery 4, and Buddhism in Galleries 4 and 5.

Students studying Buddhism can also explore the Tibetan Gallery across the hall on Level 3 of the museum to learn more about Tibetan Buddhism.

After

After visiting the exhibit, students will share their findings in the museum and engage in the discussion and writing described in “Explain,” “Elaborate,” and “Evaluate.”

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Graphic Organizer

Where does this belief system originate?

Who are the central figures in this belief system?

What practices are associated with this belief system?

What objects represent this belief system?
How is the belief system represented in art and artifacts?

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Rubric

	4 Exceeds Expectations	3 Meets Expectations	2 Approaches Expectations	1 Does not meet Expectations
Make a clear argument relevant to the content	Argument is clear, and illuminates something new about the content	Argument is clear and connected to the content	Argument is either unclear or not connected directly to the content	Argument is neither clear nor connected to the content.
Use evidence from objects or readings	Student uses 3-4 pieces of evidence from objects or readings, describing them fully	Student uses 1-2 pieces of evidence from objects or readings, describing them fully	Student uses 1-2 pieces of evidence from objects or readings, but does not describe them fully	Student does not mention specific objects or readings, or uses unrelated objects/readings
Explain why the evidence supports their argument	Explanation of connection between evidence and argument offers innovative interpretation and illuminates something new about the content.	Explanation of connection between evidence and arguments is clear and convincing	Explanation of connection between evidence and arguments is unclear or disconnected	No explanation of connection between evidence and argument
Listen to others and restate their ideas	In Speaking			
	Clearly restates the ideas of others and incorporates other's ideas into their own argument, whether agreeing or disagreeing	Clearly restates ideas of others before returning to original argument	Incorrectly restates the ideas of others before returning to original argument	Does not restate the ideas of others before returning to original argument
	In Writing			
	Addresses other perspectives and/or counter arguments and uses them to strengthen their argument	Addresses other perspectives and/or counter arguments and clearly explains reasoning for their original argument	Addresses other perspectives and/or counter arguments but does not connect them to original argument	Does not address other perspectives and/or counter arguments.

STUDENT HANDOUT

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The China Educator Toolkit was generously supported by:

