

Name:

Date:

Understanding Others

We study different religious practices in order to understand one another. Many people have strong convictions, and it would be impossible to understand them without first understanding their beliefs.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are monotheistic faiths practiced by about half of the world's population. Monotheism refers to the belief in one God. The three faiths are often called western religions to distinguish them from the eastern religions practiced primarily in Asia. Believers in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are found on every populated continent, but tend to be concentrated in North and South America, Europe, Australia, Western Asia and North Africa. Christianity and Islam are growing influences in sub-Saharan Africa, often replacing indigenous faiths.

While western religions are centered on the belief in one God, many believers of eastern religions seek to find enlightenment by looking within themselves. Hinduism and Buddhism are popular faiths in India, Southeast Asia, and Japan. Shinto is the traditional religion of many Japanese people, but the practice of Shintoism has declined since Japan's defeat in World War II. Since becoming a communist nation in 1949, China has

discouraged religious practices. Many people in China, however, continue to adhere to the teachings of Confucius. Confucius was not a religious leader, but he was a wise man who was concerned with how people treated one another. Taoism is another philosophy centered in China. Taoists seek to balance what they call the opposing energies of yin and yang. Taoists believe this balance leads to freedom from desire and a more satisfying life.

Indigenous religions are practiced throughout the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Indigenous faiths are often animistic. Animism is the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself possesses a soul or consciousness. This is similar to the traditional beliefs of the Native Americans of North and South America.

People are often mistreated for their beliefs. In the last century as many as six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Religious conflicts persist in many parts of the world. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 were at least partly the result of a religious conflict. By understanding one another, we can hope to develop tolerance and respect for all people.

Answer in complete sentences

1. Why are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam called western religions?

2. What do the three primary religious faiths of the western world have in common?

3. Where are eastern religions practiced?

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Fill in the Blanks

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are three m_n_th_i_t_c faiths practiced primarily in the w_s_e_n world. The three faiths are monotheistic. M_n_t_e_s_m is the b_l_e_f in one G_. While W_s_e_n refers to the fact that believers are concentrated in the so-called western world of E_r_p_ and the Americas, you will also find many Jews, Christians, and Muslims throughout Africa, *A_s_r_l_a, and Western A_i_. In fact, Asia is the only populated continent where the three faiths are not predominant.

Eastern religions are practiced primarily in A_, but like their w_s_e_n counterparts, you will find practitioners around the globe. The e_s_e_n religions differ from western faiths because they are not centered in the b_ in o_ God. H_n_u_s_m and B_d_h_s_m are practiced primarily in I_d_a, S_u_h_a_t Asia, and J_p_n. S_ is the traditional r_l_g_on of J_, but religious practice in Japan has declined since World War II, when the *J_p_n_s_ emperor declared that he was not a living god. China has d_s_o_r_g_d religion since 1949, but many Chinese people observe the teachings of C_n_u_i_s. Confucius was a w_ man who was c_n_e_n_d with how people t_e_t_d one another. T_o_s_m is another p_a_t_c_e centered in C_i_a. Taoists believe they can have a more s_t_s_y_n_g life by b_l_n_i_g the o_p_s_n_g forces of Y_ and Y_.

Indigenous religions are practiced around the w_, particularly in sub-S_h_r_n Africa. I_d_g_n_us faiths are often a_a_i_t_c. Animism is the b_ that natural o_, natural p_e_o_e_a, and the u_ itself have s_ or c_n_c_o_s_e_s. Many N_ Americans are *a_i_i_t_.

Throughout history, people have been m_s_r_a_e_d for their r_l_g_o_s beliefs. As many as s_ million J_ were m_ in the H_. Religious conflicts persist in many parts of the world, but by u_d_r_t_n_i_g one another, we can hope to develop t_l_r_n_e and r_s_e_t for all people.

Answer in complete sentences

4. How do eastern religions differ from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

5. What is animism?
