Major Belief Systems

Most of these belief systems have impacted world history from their inception through the present era. At this point, we are looking at their impact during the ancient and classical eras. We will learn more about their impact on later world events as we move through the year.

Most of the major religions have had _______________ (divisions), resulting in a variety of subgroups or sects. For the most part, AP test writers focus on the overall religion rather than particular sects (exceptions include the Protestant Reformation, the Sunni/Shia split in Islam, and the rise of fundamentalism in Islam).

In addition to understanding core beliefs of each religion, it’s important to focus on the ___________ they had on social, political, cultural, and even military developments.

Pay attention to where each belief system started as well as where and how it _______________. This will help you understand conflicts and interactions with religions and cultures.

Polytheism

- Believe in ________________ gods who impact life on earth to varying degrees, sometimes for good, and sometimes not.

- The vast majority of ancient civilizations were polytheistic.
  - Through 600 CE, the religions of all the ________________ and ________________ empires (including the Greeks and Romans – prior to the rise of Christianity), except for the Hebrews and the Christians.
  - In the east, Aryan religions, Hinduism, and traditional Chinese systems were polytheistic as were some Buddhist and Daoist sects.
  - In ancient ________________, the gods were often considered benevolent and kind, while in ancient ________________, the gods were feared and therefore had to be appeased on a regular basis.

  Broader Impact
  - It was at the center of ________________ in most civilizations. Most of the grand works of these civilizations were ________________ to the gods, or made to ________________ them.
  - Because the practice of polytheism was very complicated and filled with ____________, it led to the rise of a ________________ class, whose members controlled most of the communication between the people and their gods. Rigid ________________ structures with priests at the top quickly developed.
  - Many civilizations had separate gods for each ________________, as well as collective gods for the civilization as a whole. As a result, the rise and fall of various ________________ was thought to play out on earth, as well as in the heavens
Judaism

- Practiced by the ____________; founded about _______ BCE
- Holds that God (Yahweh) selected a group of people, the Hebrews, and made himself known to them. If they followed his laws, worshipped him, and were faithful, he would preserve them for all time. This group became the Jews, and Judaism became the first of the great ___________ religions.
- At the center of Judaism is the awareness of a unique ___________ with God. Jews believe they were created by God and live in a world created by a personal, sovereign God who created the world for humans to live in and enjoy and exercise ___________. The destiny of the world is ___________, reached by human beings with divine help.
- The task of human beings is to ___________ and ___________ God by following the Laws of ___________, as contained in the ____________ (the Jewish Bible, made up of the first five books of the Old Testament), to promote the ___________ of the prophets, and maintain the ___________ of the people. Judaism, therefore, is both a religious ___________ and a societal _____________.
- It is not centered on many of the concepts typically associated with a religion, although a belief in an afterlife, a set of traditions and doctrines, philosophy, and personal salvation are part of its makeup.
- Judaism did not become a Proselytizing religion (seeking ____________).

Broader Impact

- Judaism was the first of the major monotheistic faiths; as such, it spawned the other two major monotheistic religions, ___________ and ____________.

Branches of Judaism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characterized by</th>
<th>Orthodox</th>
<th>Reform</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submission to the law</td>
<td>Response to change</td>
<td>Preservation of the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Dates back to time of Talmud. Only form of Jewish practice before 18th century.</td>
<td>Emerged in late 18th century in Germany.</td>
<td>Emerged in 19th century in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching about Torah</td>
<td>God personally revealed himself at Mt. Sinai. Words of Torah are divine and authoritative. Changeless revelation of God’s will.</td>
<td>Revelation is a continuous process. Torah is human document, valuable for moral and ethical insight.</td>
<td>Written and Oral Law may be interpreted by the rabbis to reflect modern sensibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of the messiah</td>
<td>Personal, superhuman being who is not divine. Will restore Jewish kingdom and rule over the earth.</td>
<td>Mankind is progressing toward a better age. Not focused on one person as messiah.</td>
<td>Similar to reform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Conservative dress. Men wear skullcap called yarmulke (Yiddish) or kippah (Hebrew). Men may also wear fringes as a reminder of God’s commandment.</td>
<td>Contemporary dress.</td>
<td>Contemporary dress.</td>
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Christianity

- Originally a ________ group of Jews practiced the religion, but it quickly expanded into the non-Jewish community and throughout the ________ Empire.
- It came into existence with ________ of Nazareth, a charismatic Jewish teacher who claimed to be the Son of God, the Messiah, for whom Jews had long awaited. Many people were attracted to his teaching of ________ to God and ________ for human beings. The Roman and Jewish leaders were not among them, and so in 30 CE, Jesus was ________. His followers believe that he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and Christianity was born.
- Christianity is based on both the ________ and ________ Testaments of the Bible. Christians believe that Jesus Christ is the ________ of God and that ________ of sins, and ultimately ________ life, is achievable only through belief in the divinity, death, and resurrection of Christ.
- The Christian view is that the world was made by a personal and sovereign God (like Judaism), but that the world has fallen from ________ with God’s will. As the Son of God, Christ was the ________ between God and human beings.
- Human beings are expected to seek to ________ God, to ________ him, and to practice love and ________ to him and to other human beings.
- Many early Christians (and many Christian sects today) believed that it was their duty to ________ this message with the unconverted.

Broader Impact

- Christianity was spread by the ________ of Jesus and by ________ of Tarsus. Paul originally was an extreme anti-Christian who was ________ by a vision of Christ and became a principle figure in ________ the new religion.
- With its emphasis on compassion, grace through faith, and the promise of eternal life regardless of personal circumstance, Christianity appealed widely to the ________ classes and ________.
- By the 3rd century CE, Christianity had become the most influential religion in the Mediterranean basin. Following a period of persecution, it became ________ within, and then the ________ religion of, the Roman Empire; it continued to branch northward and westward into regions beyond the boundaries of the Roman Empire.
- In coming centuries, this marriage of ________ and ________ would profoundly affect developments in a large segment of the world.
Greek and Hellenistic Philosophy

- Although the Greeks did not build a ___________ state until the short reign of Alexander of Macedon, they did serve to ___________ the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions through colonization, commerce, and cultural interaction.
- Through their unprecedented abilities as sea ___________, and later through the ___________ provided by the Hellenistic empires, the Greeks left a rich cultural legacy of politics, philosophy, art, literature, and science that would go on to shape the ___________ and ___________ worlds for centuries.

- Some of the enduring innovations for which the classical Greek cultures are best known include...
  - The earliest form of ___________, the best realization of which was found in ___________ under the leadership of the statesman ___________.
  - The establishment of hundreds of ___________ throughout the Mediterranean basin and southwest Asia.
  - Unique contributions to ___________ in the forms of mythology, poetry, drama, and essays.
  - The contributions of the ___________ philosophical thought of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and later the Epicureans, the Skeptics, and the Stoics.

- **Socrates**
  - Socrates is one of the few individuals whom one could say has so-shaped the cultural and intellectual development of the world that, without him, ___________ would be profoundly different.
  - He is best known for his association with the Socratic method of ___________ and ___________, his claim that he was ignorant (or aware of his own absence of knowledge), and his claim that the unexamined life is not worth living, for human beings.
  - Socrates was a widely recognized and ___________ figure in his native Athens, so much so that he was frequently mocked in the plays of comic dramatists.
  - He is portrayed in the works of Plato and Xenophon as a man of great ___________, integrity, self-mastery, and ___________ skill.
  - He focused on questioning to uncover ___________ about human ethics and morality

- **Plato**
  - One of his most influential contributions to philosophy was the ___________.
    - In basic terms, Plato’s Theory of Forms asserts that the ___________ world is not really the ‘real’ world; instead, ultimate reality exists ___________ our physical world.
      - Plato discusses this theory in a few different dialogues, including the most famous one, called *The Republic*.
  - Plato's philosophy asserts that there are two realms: the physical realm and the spiritual realm.
    - The physical realm is the ___________ stuff we see and interact with on a daily basis; this physical realm is ___________ and ___________, as we know all too well.
    - The ___________ realm, however, exists beyond the physical realm. Plato calls this spiritual realm the Realm of Forms.
    - Plato's Theory of Forms asserts that the physical realm is only a ___________, or image, of the true reality of the Realm of Forms.
It is believed that this Greek concept of another realm of perfection, above our own, eternal, and unchanging was the inspiration for the ________ concept of Heaven.

**Aristotle**
- Aristotle’s intellectual range was vast, covering most of the sciences and many of the arts, including biology, botany, chemistry, ethics, history, logic, metaphysics, rhetoric, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, physics, poetics, political theory, psychology, and zoology.
- He ___________ Plato’s Theory of Forms.
- He believed philosophers should rely on their _______ and their _________
- to sort out the mysteries of the world
- The father of the field of ____________, he was the first to develop a formalized system for reasoning.
- “The master of those who know”
- Wrote more than 200 works but only 31 survived

**Legacy of Greek Philosophy**
- Some of their observations proved ______ over time, but it was the __________
- they established, rather than the actual conclusions they drew, that were so revolutionary.
- Although our modern understanding of the world differs in many ways from theirs, these three men are still revered today as the fathers of ____________.
- Legacy of Greek philosophy
  - Intellectual authorities for _______ philosophers until 17th century
  - Intellectual inspiration for _______ and _________ theologians

**Hellenistic Philosophy**
- Historians refer to the age of __________ the Great and his successors as the Hellenistic age – an era when Greek cultural traditions ___________ their influence beyond Greece to a must larger world.
- The Hellenistic empires helped to _______ the economies and societies of distant regions. They facilitated trade, and made it possible for beliefs, values, and religions to _______ over greater distances than ever before.
- With the Hellenistic empire, the _______ (city-state) lost power and influence to the larger society. As a result, Greek philosophy and religion also changed.
- The Hellenistic philosophers: search for personal tranquility
  - **Epicureans**: identified _______ as the greatest good
  - **Skeptics**: _______ certainty of knowledge, sought equanimity (mental calmness) over strong political and social issues
  - **Stoics**: taught that individuals had a duty to ______ others and lead virtuous lives

**Religions of Salvation**
- The ideas of the philosophers appealed to educated elites but the _________
- looked to religions of salvation for guidance
- Spread through trade routes
  - _______ religions promised eternal bliss for believers
  - The popular Cult of _________ (Egyptian) – salvation for those who led honorable lives
  - Speculation about a single, universal god emerged
- Much like Hellenistic philosophies, they addressed the search for _________
- in a _________ world
Confucianism
- Widely practiced throughout ___________ from around 400 BCE onward.
- Confucius had a strong-will and ideas that were often at odds with ___________ policy so his ambitions for a government position were never achieved. Instead he served as an ___________ and political ___________.
- His thoughts and sayings were collected in the ___________ and would have a profound influence on Chinese thinking, both politically and culturally.
- It is a political and social ___________ – not a religion!
  - Moral and ethical in character, but also thoroughly ___________, dealing almost solely with the question of how to ___________ political and social order
  - Does not deal with philosophical or religious issues such as salvation or an afterlife.
- Five fundamental ___________: ruler and subject, parent and child, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. When each person in these relationships lives up to his or her obligations of those relationships, society is ___________ and ___________.
- Concentrates on the formation of ___________ – individuals considered because they are educated, conscientious, and able to put aside personal ambition for the good of the state. They would lead by example and would encourage enlightened leadership.
- Key values:
  - Ren – a sense of humanity, ___________, and benevolence
  - Li – a sense of propriety, courtesy, ___________, and deference to elders
  - Xiao – ___________, which means a respect for family obligation, including to the extended family
- Women were considered of ___________ status, although children were taught to honor their mothers as well as their fathers.

Broader Impact
- It was ___________ with other religions meaning a person could, for example, practice both Buddhism and Confucianism simultaneously. This flexibility enabled it to flourish.
- ___________ leaders embraced it because it was intended to create an orderly society.
- It led to a distinctive Chinese culture in which communities became extremely tight-knit; members had duties and responsibilities to many others in the community from birth to death.
- It did not have similar impact on the rest of world as it evolved only within the context of the Chinese culture

Daoism
- Some Chinese practiced Daoism, from around ___________ onward.
- The Dao (also spelled Tao) is defined as the way of ___________, the way of the ___________.
- Founded by Lao-tzu, a legendary Chinese ___________.
- The Dao is ___________ and yielding; it accomplishes everything yet does nothing. Daoists sometimes use the image of ___________, soft and yielding, yet capable of wearing away stone. From this comes the idea that humans should tailor their ___________ to the passive and yielding nature of the Dao.
Ambition and activism only bring ___________ in the world.

*Wuwei* = disengagement from worldly affairs leads to a ___________ life in harmony with nature.

Not completely passive. Daoist priests often used ___________ intended to influence the spirits.

**Broader Impact**

- Daoists advocated the formation of small, self-sufficient ___________ and served as a counter-balance to ___________ activism.
- Daoism promoted ___________ discoveries and led to great astronomers, chemists, and botanists.
- Daoism is notable because it ___________ with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Legalism in China.
  - It added to the ___________ of China, which in turn added to the uniqueness of China and other Eastern civilizations as separate and distinct from the Western world.

**Legalism**

- Practiced almost entirely in China, specifically during the ___________ dynasty.
- Developed at around the same time as Confucianism and Daoism.
- It maintained that peace and order were achievable only through a ___________, tightly ___________ state.
- Legalists didn’t trust human nature, and therefore, advocated the need for ___________.
  - Believed that people would be made to _______ through harsh ___________, strong central government, and unquestioned ___________.
  - Focused only on things that were ___________ or that sustained society.
  - Believed that two of the most worthy professions were ___________ and the ___________.

**Broader Impact**

- By adopting Legalism, the Qin Dynasty was able to accomplish the ___________ of China swiftly, and the completion of massive projects like the building of the ___________.
- Because Legalism also caused widespread ___________ among the common people, who suffered under it, Legalism inadvertently led to wider ___________ of Confucianism and Daoism.
Hinduism

- Practiced by the various cultures of the __________ subcontinent since 1500 BCE.
- Began in India with the __________ invaders.
- Believe in one supreme force called __________, the creator, who is in all things.
  - Hindu gods are manifestations of Brahma – notably __________, the preserver, and __________, the destroyer.
  - The life goal of Hindus is to merge with __________ but that task is considered impossible to accomplish in one lifetime. Therefore, Hindus believe that who you are in this life was determined by who you were in a past life; and how you ______ yourself in your assigned role in this life will determine the role (__________) you are born into in a future life.
  - If you behave well and follow the ________ (the rules and obligations of the caste you’re born into), you’ll keep moving up the ladder toward unification with Brahma. If not, you’ll drop down the ladder.
  - This cycle of life, death, and rebirth continues until you achieve ________, the highest state of being, one of perfect internal ________ and release of the soul.
- No central sacred __________ but the Vedas and the Upanishads guide Hindus with prayers, verses, and descriptions of the origins of the universe.

Broader Impact

- Hinduism is a religion as well as a __________ system (the caste system).
  - You are __________ into your caste, and if you are dissatisfied with it, it’s an indication you are not following the dharma; therefore, you will have an even worse lot in the next life.
  - This is why most faithful Hindus quietly __________ their station in life.
    They knew social __________ within one lifetime was out of the question, but they were confident they would accomplish it at death if they lived according to the tenets of Hinduism
- Its connection to Indian social structure and customs prevented its __________ in other parts of the world.
- Today Hinduism as a whole remains a powerful force even though some modern Hindus are beginning to __________ against the caste system

Founder – biography
Hinduism has no single founder or central holy person

Sacred Texts

- Vedas
- Rig-Vedas
- Bhagavad Gita
- Upanishads – writings which formed the basic religious construct of Hinduism
- Rayamana
Core beliefs/basic doctrines

⇒ Believe in a divine force (aka universal soul, divine essence) informing the universe and every creatures soul is thought to be a part of the divine life force
⇒ Polytheistic with multiple manifestations of the One divine essence
  o Lord Brahma – The Creator
  o Shiva the Destroyer
  o Vishnu the Preserver
  o Ganesh (elephant-headed) god of wisdom and learning
⇒ Gods and Goddesses regulated natural forces and possessed human qualities
⇒ Goal is to achieve nirvana or oneness with the universal soul
⇒ People achieve nirvana through reincarnation through multiple life cycles
⇒ Karma is the moral force of a humans actions that determine if they enter a higher or lower caste in the next life
⇒ Four principle aims of human life:
  1. Dharma: obedience to religious and moral law
  2. Artha: pursuit of economic well-being and honest prosperity
  3. Kama: enjoyment of social, physical, and sexual pleasure
  4. Moksha: salvation of soul

Impact on society
Hinduism and the Caste system form the social construct of India and provide the moral basis and ethical standard for behavior in India. It is the dominant characteristic of India's history

Spread/growth
Hinduism has never spread beyond the region of India. It did spread within the region of India as it was propagated by early Brahmin leaders and gurus taught the concepts of the divine essence and reincarnation.

Buddhism

● Practiced in _____________ civilizations, most notably in India, China, and Southeast Asia
● Founded by a young Hindu prince named Siddhartha Gautama who lived in Nepal from 562-483 BCE. He rejected his wealth to search for the meaning of human ___________. After meditating under a sacred Bodhi tree, he became the Buddha, or _____________ One.
● There is no supreme being in Buddhism.
● Buddhists follow the Four Noble Truths:
  o All life is suffering
  o Suffering is caused by ___________.
  o One can be freed of this desire.
  o One is freed of desire by following the Eightfold Path.
The Eightfold Path is made up of right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right meditation. Following this path enables one to move toward nirvana, the state of perfect peace and harmony.

The goal in one’s life is to reach nirvana, which may or may not take several lifetimes. This means that Buddhists also believe in rebirth.

Buddhism holds that anyone can achieve nirvana, it is not dependent on an underlying social structure, such as the caste system.

After the death of Buddha, Buddhism split into two large movements: Theravada (Hinayana) or Mahayana.

- **Theravada** (little raft) = emphasis on meditation, and an interpretation of nirvana as the renunciation of human consciousness and of the self; Buddha himself is not considered a god, and other gods and goddesses have very little significance; requires men and women to seek a life to reach the degree of meditation for enlightenment; dominant in Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia.

- **Mahayana** (big raft) = more complicated and involving greater spiritual enlightenment and therefore they hypothesized that other forms of salvation were possible; the Buddha becomes a deity; other deities appear, including the Buddha’s right hand or those who have achieved nirvana but chose to remain on earth; relied more on and people can lead a lay life and still pursue enlightenment with the help of monks and nuns in their communities.

**Broader Impact**

- Because it rejected social hierarchies of castes, Buddhism appealed strongly to members of rank.

- Because it isn’t attached to an underlying social structure, it can apply to almost anyone, anywhere which is why it spread to other cultures throughout Asia.

- It became a major force in Asia when the Mauryan Emperor converted to it and supported the efforts.

- Eventually, it was reabsorbed into Hinduism in India but continued to thrive in China, Japan, and Southeast Asia as it spread via routes.

**Background**

It emerged in the predominantly Hindu backdrop of India.

**Founder – biography**

⇒ Siddartha Gautama – rich prince groomed to become a governor who when he observed the suffering of the lower castes decided to abandon his families wealth and live a life of meditation and personal discipline. He left his wife, family, and the comforts of wealth to become a holy man.

⇒ During his wandering Siddartha spent 49 days sitting under a bodhi tree meditating and trying to understand suffering. He endured temptations from demons but eventually achieved “enlightenment” and earned the title “Buddha”
**Sacred Texts**
- Tripitaka
- Mahayana Sutras
- Tibetan Book of the Dead

**Core beliefs/basic doctrines**
- Main teachings: Four Noble Truths
  - First: life is full of suffering
  - Second: suffering is caused by desire
  - Third: The way to end suffering is to end desire
  - Fourth: The way to end desire is to follow the Eight-Fold path
  - Eight-Fold path: right belief, right resolve, right speech, right behavior, right occupation, right effort, right contemplation, and right meditation
- The goal is the achievement of nirvana, oneness with the universal soul
- Buddhist reject the caste system
- Buddhist believe you can achievement enlightenment breaking the cycle of reincarnation to arrive at nirvana in a single life cycle
- Egalitarian nature of Buddhism along with the preaching of Buddhist monks and the zealous building of monasteries after the conversion of Ashoka led to significant growth of the religion
- Over time Buddhism divided into several lines of thinking
  - Theravada Buddhism was closely connected to the original example set by Siddartha and was an extreme ascetic approach of self-denial and self-sacrifice
  - Others began to view Buddha as a divine being who is to be the object of worship and devotion
  - Bodhisatva – meaning “enlightened being” people who had reached enlightenment of the perfected state and who earned the reward of nirvana but intentionally delayed their entry to nirvana so that they could help others achieve enlightenment
  - Mahayana Buddhism – version of Buddhism with simpler requirements based on acts of generosity and compassion

**Impact on society**
At first Buddhism because of its rejection of the caste, was persecuted by the Hindu religious leaders. Buddhism gained a big boost when the Mauryan Emperor Ashoka converted to Buddhism and made Buddhism legal within India.

**Spread/growth**
Buddhism took root and grew when it was made legal by Ashoka. Buddhism developed a system of monasteries for monks to go and meditate and seek enlightenment. Buddhism spread as monks following established trade routes began to seek out new places to establish monasteries. Buddhism spread throughout SE Asia and across the silk roads all the way to China, Korea and Japan.