**Buddhism**

Buddhism is named for its founder, Siddhartha Gautama (sihd•DAHR•tuh GOW•tuh•muh), who came to be known as the Buddha, or “enlightened one.” According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha was born into a noble Indian family. But he gave up his riches to seek enlightenment, or wisdom. After long study and meditation, the Buddha experienced his enlightenment. He believed he knew the true nature of suffering and how to put an end to it. He called this insight into the nature of suffering The Four Noble Truths.

1. What is Buddhism? According to tradition what is known about his life?

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2. After a period of study and meditation what insight did the Buddha receive?

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The Buddha believed that his followers could achieve enlightenment by following what he called the Noble Eightfold Path. This path involved observing the following: right opinions, right desires, right speech, right action, right job, right effort, right concentration, and right meditation. Buddhism began in India in the sixth century B.C. After the Buddha’s death, missionaries and traders helped spread the religion to China, Japan, and Korea. Today, the religion has few followers in India. Most Buddhists live in Sri Lanka, East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Japan.

3. What did Buddha believe his followers could achieve?

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4. Identify the concepts observed in following the Noble Eightfold Path.

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**Symbol**

According to legend, the Buddha was born with images of wheels on his hands and feet. The Buddha’s teaching, known as the dharma, was intended to end the cycle of births and deaths. As a result, his teaching came to be symbolized by a wheel. His followers claimed that the “wheel of the dharma” was set in motion when the Buddha gave his first sermon.

5. Why is the wheel a symbol of Buddhism? According to his followers when did the wheel begin?

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**Primary Source**

Buddhism has many sacred books. These writings, which were recorded after the Buddha’s death, contain his teachings. In the following selection, the Buddha teaches the importance of controlling self and one’s own desires.

"One who conquers himself is greater than another who conquers a thousand times a thousand men on the battlefield. Be victorious over yourself and not over others. When you attain victory over yourself, not even the gods can turn it into defeat."

6. Critical Thinking: Read the quote and explain what the text teaches about the importance of controlling self and person desires.

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