

Aspects of Culture

Important Vocabulary

Culture

Customs

Animism

Hinduism

Buddhism

Judaism

Christianity

Islam

Sikhism

Gender Roles

Urban

Rural

Multicultural

Social Class

Social Mobility

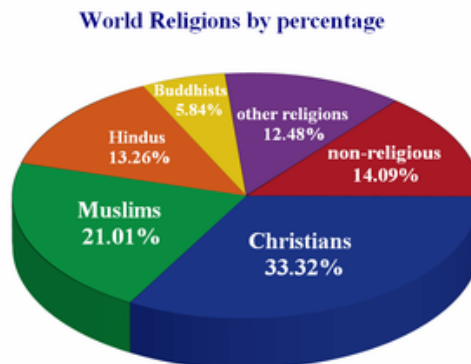
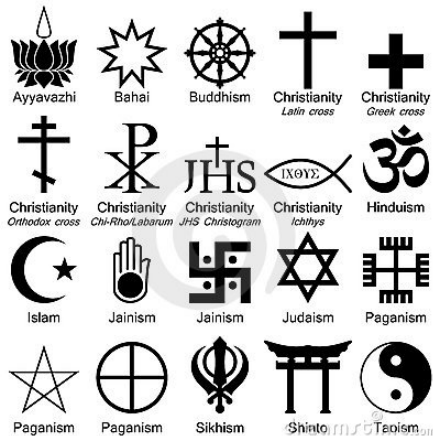
What is Culture?



- A way of life
- How people meet their basic needs for food and shelter
- It includes their language, literature, music and art
- It includes their beliefs about the world and religion
- It includes people's technology and their material objects

1. Customs
 - a. Things people usually do
 - i. Clothing
 - ii. Food
 - iii. Holidays
 - iv. Turning points in life (birth, coming of age, marriage, parenthood, life and death)
2. Roles
 - a. Rules for the proper behavior of individuals in particular positions and situations
 - b. Once a role in society is learned, people know how they are supposed to act
 - c. These roles also form part of a society's culture
3. Institutions
 - a. Organizations developed by each society to make social roles clear and to take care of social needs
 - i. Families
 1. Arrange for reproduction
 2. Care for family members and the upbringing of the young
 - ii. Schools
 1. Teach the young the values of society
 2. Prepare them for the responsibilities of adulthood
 - iii. Governments
 1. Protect us from outsiders
 2. Promote social cooperation
 3. Regulate individual behavior
4. Cultural Perceptions
 - a. Culture also affects how people perceive those from other cultures

Major World Religions



What is religion?

- A set of beliefs about the meaning of life, the nature of the universe, and the existence of the supernatural (including God or a Supreme being)
- A set of customs and practices that relate to the worship of God (or several gods) and a set of rules for the conduct of a good life
- An organization, such as a church or other place of worship, which oversees the conduct of religious practices
- Most religions designate some special places as sacred or holy

Today, seven major religions have the greatest number of followers around the world:

- Animism
- Hinduism
- Buddhism
- Judaism
- Christianity
- Islam
- Sikhism

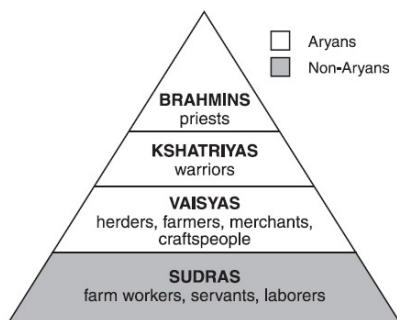
1. Animism

- a. The belief that things in nature have their own spirit
- b. One of the earliest forms of religion
- c. Largely practiced in Sub-Saharan Africa
- d. Medicine men attempted to make contact with the spirit world
- e. Native Americans
 - i. Each group of families, known as a clan, identified with a particular animal and never harmed or ate that animal
- f. In ancient Japan, people believed in spirits known as kami
 - i. These animistic spirits gave rise to the Japanese religion known as Shintoism



2. Hinduism

- a. A very ancient religion
- b. Has no single holy book, but uses from a collection of writings in the:
 - i. Upanishads
 - ii. Bhagavad-Gita
- c. Many Hindus believe that God is revealed through the ancient laws and principles which speak of the struggle between order and chaos
- d. Third largest religion in the world
- e. Most popular religion in India and Nepal
- f. About 1 billion followers today
- g. Major beliefs
 - i. Gods
 1. There are many gods and goddesses
 2. Each of these gods is a manifestation of one Supreme Being
 - ii. Reincarnation
 1. After death, a person's soul is reborn as another living thing
 2. Reincarnation creates an endless cycle of rebirth for each soul
 - iii. Karma
 1. The behavior in one life that determines that person's form in the next life
 2. People who live a good life will be born into a higher caste
 3. Those who do not are born into a lower caste
 - iv. Sacred Objects
 1. Hindus believe that the Ganges River is sacred and has the power to wash away sin and evil
 2. The cow is considered sacred. As a result, Hindus do not eat beef



Source: *Guide to the Essentials of World History*,
Prentice Hall, 1999 (adapted)



Lord Shiva



3. Buddhism

- a. Began in Nepal around 500 B.C. (BCE)
- b. Founder: Prince Siddhartha Gautama
 - i. Lived a life of great luxury
 - ii. Still felt “emptiness”
 - iii. Left his family in search of truth
 - iv. After many years, he came to believe that suffering was caused by human desire
 - v. The way to end suffering was to end desire
 - vi. Accept the world as it is and block out desire
 1. He became the first Buddha
- c. Major beliefs
 - i. Basic philosophy
 1. Self-denial and meditation
 2. Reincarnation
 - ii. Gods and holy books
 1. Do not believe in a single Supreme Being
 2. Do not have a primary holy book
 3. Basic beliefs are found in books called Sutras
 - iii. Four Noble Truths
 1. Life means suffering
 2. The origin of suffering is attachment or desire
 3. To end suffering, you must end desire
 4. To end desire, you must follow the “Eightfold” Path
 - iv. The Eightfold Path

1. Give up wealth
2. Act in a worthy manner
3. Speak truthfully
4. Live righteously
5. Respect all living things
6. Meditate



v. Nirvana

1. By following the Eightfold path, a person can escape the soul's endless reincarnations and achieve nirvana-a state of total bliss.



4. Judaism

- a. Monotheistic: belief in a single God
 - i. One of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam
- b. The oldest monotheistic religion
- c. Emerged 4,000 years ago along the Mediterranean in present day Israel, Lebanon and Jordan
- d. According to tradition, the ancient Hebrews migrated from Israel to Egypt to escape food shortages and remained in Egypt for hundreds of years, where they became enslaved by Egyptians
 - i. Moses led the Jews out of Egypt and back to Israel
 - ii. Moses, spoken to by God, presented the Jews with the Ten Commandments
- e. Key features of Judaism
 - i. Monotheistic: belief in one God
 - 1. Animism, Hinduism and other religions are polytheistic: the belief on more than one god
 - ii. Ten Commandments
 - 1. The Jewish religion emphasizes the importance of living justly and following God's commandments. Ex.
 - a. Do not believe in false gods
 - b. Do not steal
 - c. Do not murder
 - d. Do not commit adultery
 - iii. Old Testament
 - 1. The history of the Hebrews and their relationship with God
 - 2. The first five books of the Bible are called The Torah



5. Christianity

- a. Began about 2000 years ago
- b. Based on the teaching of Jesus, a Jew born in Bethlehem
 - i. Jesus preached forgiveness, mercy and sympathy for the poor and helpless

- ii. Jesus claimed he was the Messiah that the Jews have been waiting for
- iii. Jesus said that he “was the Way, Truth and Life” and that there was no other way to heaven except through belief and acceptance of his “gift of salvation”
- c. The Romans crucified Jesus for claiming he was the Messiah or Savior
- d. After his death, a band of followers, known as Apostles, believed Jesus rose from the dead to redeem mankind.
 - i. This prompted more followers to spread Christianity
- e. Though Christians were condemned at first, Christianity later became the official religion of the Roman Empire
- f. Later, Christianity divided into:
 - i. Orthodox Christians
 - ii. Catholics
 - iii. Protestants
- g. The Pope is the head of the Catholic Church
 - i. Catholics believe he is God’s “deputy” on Earth
- h. Orthodox Christians are mainly found in Greece and Russia



- i. Protestants reject the Pope’s (ultimate) authority and believe that people should be able to interpret the Bible for themselves.
- j. Today, Christianity is the principle religion in Europe and the Americas
- k. Christianity is the world’s most popular religion

6. Islam

- a. Means “submission” (to Allah) in Arabic
- b. A follower of Islam is called a Muslim, or “one who submits to Allah”
- c. Founded by Muhammad around 600 AD (BCE)
 - i. He had a vision that commanded him to convert Arab tribes to the belief in a single god, known as Allah
- d. Muhammad’s followers believed that he was God’s last prophet
- e. His teachings are contained in the Qu’ran (Koran), Islam’s holiest book



f. The Five Pillars of Faith

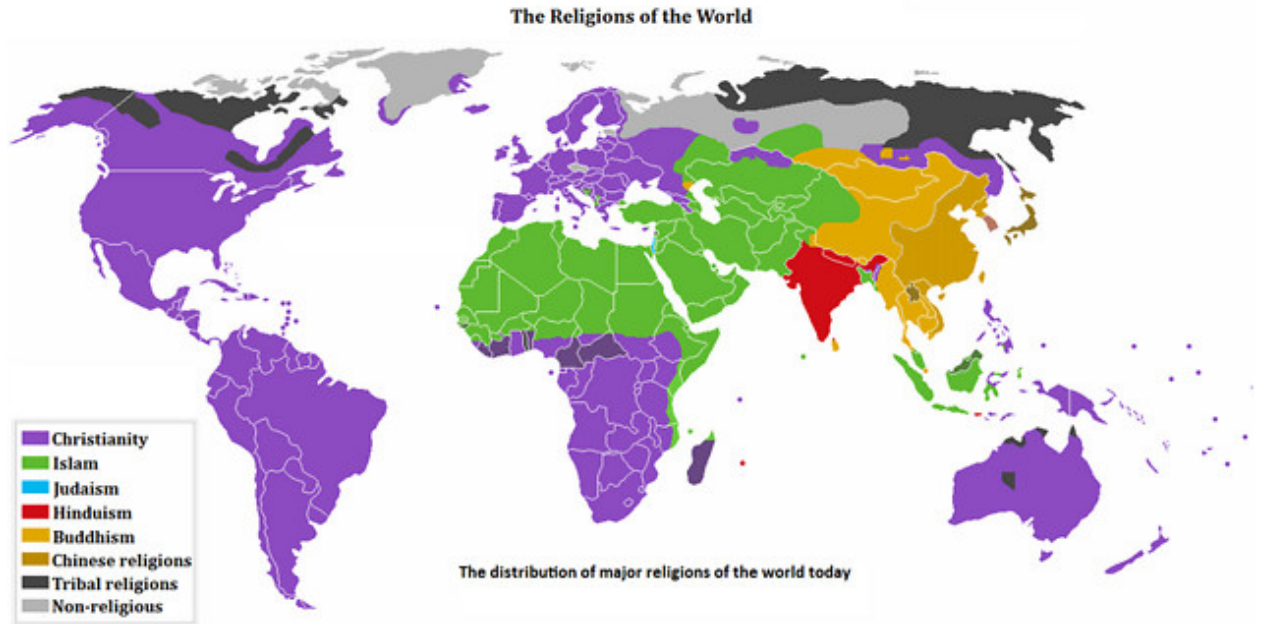
- i. These are the basic religious duties that all followers of Islam must fulfill:
 - 1. Confession of Faith: Muslims must affirm: “there is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet”
 - 2. Prayer: Muslims must pray five times a day while facing toward the city of Mecca
 - 3. Charity: Muslims must give money to the poor and pay taxes to the Mosque
 - 4. Fasting: During the month of Ramadan, Muslims cannot eat or drink during the daylight hours
 - 5. Hajj: If physically able, a Muslim must make a pilgrimage (religious trip) to Mecca at least once in his/her life



7. Sikhism

- a. Live mainly in Northern India
- b. Combines both Hindu and Muslim beliefs
 - i. Like Hindus, Sikhs believe in reincarnation
 - ii. Like Muslims, they believe in one God
- c. God can be known through meditation (a form of deep contemplation)
- d. The goal of every Sikh is to build a close and loving relationship with God
- e. They believe that everyone has equal status in the eyes of God
 - i. Therefore, there is no caste system (hereditary social class)
- f. Sikh men do not cut their hair. It is often worn under a turban





Rural or Urban Setting

1. Another aspect of culture is how people live together
 - a. Traditional
 - i. Rural in some cases
 - ii. In some cultures, people live mainly in the countryside
 - iii. Small huts
 - iv. Simple cottages
 - v. Farmers
 - vi. Livestock herders
 - vii. Village craftsman
 - viii. Many spend their lives communicating only with those in their immediate vicinity
 - ix. Many are illiterate (cannot read or write)
 - b. Modern
 - i. Urban
 - ii. Large cities
 - iii. Advanced levels of technology
 - iv. Infrastructure is strong
 - v. Roads, bridges, buildings constructed of steel, concrete and glass
 - vi. Enjoy hot and cold, running water, sewage systems, electricity, telephones, internet
 - vii. People read newspapers, watch television, attend school, travel regularly
 - viii. Generally more opportunities than those in rural villages



Social Structure

1. Another aspect of every culture is “social structure”
 - a. In every known society, some members enjoy greater wealth and wider opportunities than others
 - b. People who enjoy similar wealth, power, and prestige are said to belong to the same “social class”
 - i. Upper class
 1. Earns or inherits wealth
 2. Owns a large share of the property in their society
 3. Lead a luxurious lifestyle
 4. Often serve in various leadership roles
 - ii. Middle Class
 1. Intermediate group
 2. Educated and mostly successful people
 3. Managers, professionals, shopkeepers, small business owners
 - iii. Working Class
 1. Composed mainly of manual workers
 - a. Factories
 - b. Miners
 - c. Transportation industry
 - d. Independent craftsmen
 - iv. Peasants
 1. Farm workers
 - a. Subsistence farming: farming to meet your immediate needs
 2. Have little education
 3. Limited experience of the world outside of their own vicinity
 4. Cottage industry: small industry, individuals making items and selling them for survival. Ex. Beaded necklaces, embroidery, straw hats
 - v. Lower class
 1. Often uneducated and unskilled
 2. Can take only the least desirable and worst-paying jobs
 3. Often face prejudice and other hardships from members of the higher social classes
2. Social Mobility
 - a. Refers to the ease with which a person is able to change one’s social class
 - b. The differences between social classes vary from culture to culture
 - i. Pre-industrial Revolution
 1. Upper-class and Peasantry (very small middle class)
 - ii. Industrial Societies
 1. Upper-class, substantial middle class, a large working class, and a lower class

- c. In some societies an immense gulf separates the different social classes
 - i. Traditional Hindu Society and the caste system

Family Structure and Gender Roles

Another aspect of culture

- In some societies, children leave their parents when they graduate from school
 - In others, extended families live under the same roof for their entire lives
1. Gender Roles
 - a. Roles specifically assigned to men and women
 - b. In most societies, past gender roles were very restrictive
 - i. Greater opportunities were given to men over women
 2. Changing Gender Roles
 - a. Early 20th century, things began to change
 - i. American and many European women were given the right to vote
 - b. In modern societies today, men and women enjoy equal rights
 - i. Earn the same pay for the same work
 - ii. Women often remain under-represented in the top jobs in government and business
 3. Traditional Gender Roles
 - a. In some societies, women still lack the same opportunities as men
 - b. Women may be required to stay home or wear special clothing
 - c. Example: Some Islamic countries
 - i. Women must cover their face and body when they're out in public
 - ii. They must be accompanied by a male when in public
 - iii. They cannot drive a car
 - iv. They may even require permission from their husband to leave the home



Multi-Cultural Societies

It is important to consider how a culture treats its ethnic and religious minorities

An ethnic group refers to a group of people with a common ancestry and a common culture, often based on religion and language.

Around the world there are two basic types of societies:

1. Homogenous societies
 - a. Saudi Arabia
 - i. Most everyone belongs to the same ethnic group
 - ii. Shares the same language
 - iii. Shares the same religion
 - b. Japan
 - i. Non-Japanese make up about 1% of Japan's population
2. Multi-cultural societies (heterogeneous)
 - a. Contain a mix of people and cultures
 - b. United States
 - c. Some countries, such as those in Western Europe, were once largely homogeneous but are now becoming increasingly multi-cultural
 - d. Even in multicultural societies, there is usually one dominant ethnic group, and several minorities
 - i. A minority is any ethnic or religious group other than the dominant group
 - ii. Special problems faced by some minorities:
 1. Ethnic prejudice
 - a. Some may be seen as inferior to dominant group
 - b. May be denied political power
 2. Discrimination and Exclusion
 - a. Denied civil and political rights
 - b. May not be allowed to own property or use public facilities and transportation
 - c. Intermarriage may be illegal
 3. Expulsion and Genocide
 - a. Extreme actions
 - b. Nazi-ism: attempted to eliminate Jews of Europe by murdering over 6,000,000
 - c. Ethnic Cleansing: ethnic massacres



Notes created by Audrey Alamo, PreAP World Geography based on excerpts from "Mastering the TEKS in World Geography," Jarrett Publishing.