

Historian Tip # 13: Historians learn about the lives of important historical figures.

Today's investigation: **The Life of Buddha**

Outcome of the investigation: Our historians will be able to

1. recap pivotal moments in the life of the Buddha
2. analyze artistic representations of the Buddha for commonalities
3. hypothesize why differences exist between representations

Vocabulary: Buddha
enlightened

Materials: Buddha, by Susan L. Roth
three or four different visual images of the Buddha

Introduction: Remember that in Confucianism, it was the ruler's job to be a good role model for all his subjects. During the time after the Han dynasty (refer to time line), China split into different pieces again and there was no head ruler to lead the system anymore. So even though people still followed Confucianism, they began to listen to other ideas too. One of these new ideas was a religion which developed at the same time as Confucianism and Daoism, during the Warring States Period. This religion developed in India, a country which borders China (point to India on map). The religion is called Buddhism, and now we are going to learn a little about the man who started the religion, Siddhartha.

Read-aloud: Buddha, by Susan L. Roth (may have students jot notes as you read)

Activities: Students, in small groups, will look at three or four different visual images of the Buddha. They will compare and contrast these images, keeping lists of the similarities and differences in their Historian's notebook. The group will hypothesize multiple reasons why differences exist when the representations are of the same person.

Mini lesson: Now that you have had a chance to look at some pictures of the Buddha, let's hear a report of a few of the similarities you found (briefly chart). Now a lot of these similarities have

symbolic meaning. For example, the big head represents the idea that Buddha has a bigger brain than us; long earlobes remind us that Buddha used to be rich (wearing long, heavy earrings), but gave up his wealth; the third eye helps him “see” more than the rest of us. Good. Now let’s go over some of the differences. (Ask for a few differences, and hypotheses. For the remainder of your time, guide conversation toward the idea that as Buddhism traveled to other places, it began to adapt to local culture).

Connecting past to present: In your historian’s notebook, search your neighborhoods and ask people about any representations you or they have seen in connection with any religion. What are the symbols? What do they represent?