

Historian Tip # 14: Historians look at the stories told by religious leaders to understand their teachings.

Today's investigation: **The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path**

Outcome of the investigation: Our historians will be able to

1. illustrate ways in which people suffer all over our world
2. outline the four noble truths and the eightfold path
3. analyze a Buddha story to extract the lesson of the eightfold path it is teaching
4. present the Buddha story to the class pairing it with a specific teaching from the eightfold path
5. defend the pairing to the class using evidence from the story to bolster opinion.

Vocabulary: abstract
concrete
enlightened
parable

Materials: Buddha Stories, by Demi (a collection of stories told, each with a "moral" that is fairly easy to match with one or more of the tenets of the Eightfold Path)

Mini lesson: After Siddharta gave up all of his earthly possessions, he spent six years living in the forest trying to become "enlightened," which means understanding the truth about life and death. One day while sitting under a tree, the answers came to him. He spent the rest of his life trying to teach this truth to whoever would listen. The first part of what Buddha taught were the

Four Noble Truths:

1. **All life is suffering**
2. **The cause of suffering is desire**
3. **The end of desire leads to the end of suffering**
4. **The way to end desire and suffering is by following the**

Eightfold Path.

Activities: Select five stories out of the ten present in the book. Each of five groups should be assigned a story. That group is responsible for reading the story, and becoming "experts" on it. They will be

responsible for orally “passing it on” to the rest of the class. Give each group a hand-out describing the eightfold path. After a group reads a story, they should discuss which part (or parts) of the Eightfold Path they believe it is trying to illustrate. The group should have evidence to support why they chose to match it with a certain part of the path.

The Eightfold Path:

1. Right Understanding (seeing things for what they really are)
2. Right Thought (being loving and unselfish)
3. Right Speech (always speaking honestly, never saying anything bad about another or gossiping)
4. Right Action (being careful of the rights and feelings of others)
5. Right Livelihood (having a job that does not hurt any animals or people)
6. Right Effort (letting go of bad thoughts and holding on to good ones)
7. Right Mindfulness (focusing more on the present than on the past or the future)
8. Right Concentration (focusing on the peace in your heart)

Group share: Each of the five groups present their story, and the Buddhist teaching they feel it relates to most directly. The class should feel free to challenge conclusions drawn by any particular group.

Connecting past to present: In your historian’s notebook, ask people whether they have ever tried to change another person’s religious beliefs, or whether another person has ever tried to change their religious beliefs. In what ways have people tried to spread their own religious messages?