

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Understanding Others

We study different religious practices in order to understand one another. Many people have strong convictions, and it would be impossible to understand them without first understanding their beliefs.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are monotheistic faiths practiced by about half of the world's population. Monotheism refers to the belief in one God. The three faiths are often called western religions to distinguish them from the eastern religions practiced primarily in Asia. Believers in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are found on every populated continent, but tend to be concentrated in North and South America, Europe, Australia, Western Asia and North Africa. Christianity and Islam are growing influences in sub-Saharan Africa, often replacing indigenous faiths.

While western religions are centered on the belief in one God, many believers of eastern religions seek to find enlightenment by looking within themselves. Hinduism and Buddhism are popular faiths in India, Southeast Asia, and Japan. Shinto is the traditional religion of many Japanese people, but the practice of Shintoism has declined since Japan's defeat in World War II. Since becoming a communist nation in 1949, China has

discouraged religious practices. Many people in China, however, continue to adhere to the teachings of Confucius. Confucius was not a religious leader, but he was a wise man who was concerned with how people treated one another. Taoism is another philosophy centered in China. Taoists seek to balance what they call the opposing energies of yin and yang. Taoists believe this balance leads to freedom from desire and a more satisfying life.

Indigenous religions are practiced throughout the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Indigenous faiths are often animistic. Animism is the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe itself possesses a soul or consciousness. This is similar to the traditional beliefs of the Native Americans of North and South America.

People are often mistreated for their beliefs. In the last century as many as six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Religious conflicts persist in many parts of the world. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 were at least partly the result of a religious conflict. By understanding one another, we can hope to develop tolerance and respect for all people.

## Answer in complete sentences

1. Why are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam called western religions?

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2. What do the three primary religious faiths of the western world have in common?

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3. Where are eastern religions practiced?

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### Fill in the Blanks

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are three m\_n\_th\_i\_t\_c faiths practiced primarily in the w\_s\_e\_n world. The three faiths are monotheistic. M\_n\_t\_e\_s\_m is the b\_l\_e\_f in one G\_. While W\_s\_e\_n refers to the fact that believers are concentrated in the so-called western world of E\_r\_p\_ and the Americas, you will also find many Jews, Christians, and Muslims throughout Africa, \*A\_s\_r\_l\_a, and Western A\_i\_. In fact, Asia is the only populated continent where the three faiths are not predominant.

Eastern religions are practiced primarily in A\_, but like their w\_s\_e\_n counterparts, you will find practitioners around the globe. The e\_s\_e\_n religions differ from western faiths because they are not centered in the b\_ in o\_ God. H\_n\_u\_s\_m and B\_d\_h\_s\_m are practiced primarily in I\_d\_a, S\_u\_h\_a\_t Asia, and J\_p\_n. S\_ is the traditional r\_l\_g\_on of J\_, but religious practice in Japan has declined since World War II, when the \*J\_p\_n\_s\_ emperor declared that he was not a living god. China has d\_s\_o\_r\_g\_d religion since 1949, but many Chinese people observe the teachings of C\_n\_u\_i\_s. Confucius was a w\_ man who was c\_n\_e\_n\_d with how people t\_e\_t\_d one another. T\_o\_s\_m is another p\_a\_t\_c\_e centered in C\_i\_a Taoists believe they can have a more s\_t\_s\_y\_n\_g life by b\_l\_n\_i\_g the o\_p\_s\_n\_g forces of Y\_ and Y\_.

Indigenous religions are practiced around the w\_, particularly in sub-S\_h\_r\_n Africa. I\_d\_g\_n\_us faiths are often a\_a\_i\_t\_c. Animism is the b\_ that natural o\_, natural p\_e\_o\_e\_a, and the u\_ itself have s\_ or c\_n\_c\_o\_s\_e\_s. Many N\_ Americans are \*a\_i\_i\_t\_.

Throughout history, people have been m\_s\_r\_a\_e\_d for their r\_l\_g\_o\_s beliefs. As many as s\_ million J\_ were m\_ in the H\_. Religious conflicts persist in many parts of the world, but by u\_d\_r\_t\_n\_i\_g one another, we can hope to develop t\_l\_r\_n\_e and r\_s\_e\_t for all people.

### Answer in complete sentences

4. How do eastern religions differ from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

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5. What is animism?

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