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?

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

3. Where are eastern religions practiced?
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are three monotheistic faiths practiced primarily in the western world. The three faiths are monotheistic. Monotermism is the belief in one God. Western refers to the fact that believers are concentrated in the so-called western world of Europe and the Americas, you will also find many Jews, Christians, and Muslims throughout Africa, Asia, and Western Asia. In fact, Asia is the only populated continent where the three faiths are not predominant.

Eastern religions are practiced primarily in Asia, but like their western counterparts, you will find practitioners around the globe. The religions differ from western faiths because they are not centered in the belief in one God. Hinduism and Buddhism are practiced primarily in India, South Asia, and Japan. Shinto is the traditional religion of Japan, but religious practice in Japan has declined since World War II, when the emperor declared that he was not a living god. China has a religion since 1949, but many Chinese people observe the teachings of Confucius, a man who was considered with how people treated one another. Taoists believe they can have a more satisfying life by balancing the opposing forces of Yang and Yin.

Indigenous religions are practiced around the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Animism is the belief that natural objects, natural people, and the universe itself have spirits or consciousness. Many Native Americans are Animists.

Throughout history, people have been murdered for their religious beliefs. As many as five million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Religious conflicts persist in many parts of the world, but by understanding one another, we can hope to develop tolerance and respect for all people.

Answer in complete sentences

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

5. What is animism?