# Key Unit Vocabulary

This guide provides a summary of key vocabulary for this unit. For each word, you will find the definition, part of speech, word forms (plurals/tenses), synonyms, and examples of how the word, or forms of the word, are used in a sentence.

## animism

* the belief that spiritual beings or souls can exist without a body to house them or in plants, animals, and other objects

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | animistic, animist |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | Immigrants from various Asian countries have brought the belief in animism to various US communities. |

## assimilate

* to absorb and incorporate (an ethnically distinct group) into the dominant culture of an area

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| Part of speech: | verb |
| Word forms: | assimilates, assimilating, assimilated |
| Synonyms: | integrate, naturalize |
| In a sentence: | The villagers were forcibly assimilated into the society of the conquerors. |

## belief system

* a set of principles or tenets which together form the basis of a religion, philosophy, or moral code

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | belief systems |
| Synonyms: | value system |
| In a sentence: | Cheating on a test violates her personal belief system. |

## caste system

* a social structure in which one’s class in society is determined by heredity

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | caste, caste systems |
| Synonyms: | social hierarchy, social classes |
| In a sentence: | The Indian caste system was very rigid and made it difficult for someone of a lower class to move into a higher class. |

## convert

* to change or influence change in someone else’s or one’s own faith or beliefs

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| Part of speech: | verb |
| Word forms: | converts, converting, converted |
| Synonyms: | compulsory, involuntary, forced |
| In a sentence: | She began the process to convert to Judaism when she became engaged to someone of the faith. |

## diaspora

* a scattering of any people with a common culture

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | diasporas |
| Synonyms: | exodus, dispersal, exile |
| In a sentence: | When war broke out in their home country, a large diaspora settled in a neighboring nation. |

## direct democracy

* a system of government in which citizens vote directly on policies

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | direct democracies |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | Ancient Athens had a direct democracy in which male citizens could vote directly on issues. |

## doctrine

* a belief or system of beliefs held and promoted by a religious, governmental, academic, or other group; dogma

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | doctrines, doctrinal |
| Synonyms: | dogma, creed, gospel |
| In a sentence: | This book compares Christian doctrine with Hindu doctrine. |

## meritocracy

* a system in which people attain power, influence, and wealth because of their intellectual abilities rather than because of their class status or family lineage

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | meritocracies |
| Synonyms: | merit system |
| In a sentence: | In order to move up in the meritocracy, all government officials must pass a series of tests used to measure their intellectual abilities. |

## monotheism

* the belief that there is only one supreme being

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | monotheist, monotheistic, monotheistically |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | Monotheism is a core belief of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. |

## origin stories

* a narrative about the beginning of the Universe or humanity

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | origin story |
| Synonyms: | narratives, oral histories |
| In a sentence: | Spiderman's origin story begins with Peter Parker being bitten by a radioactive spider. |

## pantheon

* all gods of a people, collectively; a temple dedicated to all of a people’s gods

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | pantheons |
| Synonyms: | temple |
| In a sentence: | The Ancient Greek pantheon includes the Olympians such as Zeus and Athena. |

## persecute

* to subject (especially those belonging to a different political, religious, or racial group) to persistent harassment, punishment, or ill-treatment

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| Part of speech: | verb |
| Word forms: | persecutes, persecuting, persecuted, persecution |
| Synonyms: | harass, oppress |
| In a sentence: | The Nazis wanted to persecute Jews, Roma, Poles, and political opponents, as well as people with disabilities, by sending them to concentration camps. |

## philosophy

* the study of the nature and principles of knowledge, truth, existence, and moral and aesthetic values; any system of ideas and theories based on such study

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | philosophies, philosophical |
| Synonyms: | ideology, theory, doctrine |
| In a sentence: | The philosophy of Confucius emphasized virtues such as loyalty and trustworthiness. |

## pilgrimage

* a long trip undertaken for religious purposes, such as to visit a holy place

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | pilgrimages |
| Synonyms: | journey, voyage, mission |
| In a sentence: | The family of Muslims set off on their pilgrimage to Mecca. |

## polytheistic

* the belief in more than one god

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| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | polytheist, polytheistically |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | Christianity is not a polytheistic religion because it only accepts the existence of one god. |

## portable

* capable of being carried or transported

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| Part of speech: | adjective |
| Word forms: | portably, portability |
| Synonyms: | mobile, movable, transportable |
| In a sentence: | She was able to take her portable camera everywhere with her during her trip. |

## prophet

* a teacher, leader, or spokesperson of a movement or cause, especially a religious one, who is believed to be the recipient of some special inspiration or revelation

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | prophets, prophetic |
| Synonyms: | guide, messenger |
| In a sentence: | The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. |

## syncretism

* an attempted combination or reconciliation of different principles, beliefs, or practices, especially in religion or philosophy

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| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | syncretic, syncretistic, syncretist |
| Synonyms: | unification, consolidation |
| In a sentence: | The syncretism of the two religions was made possible by their shared goal to unite the people of the river valley. |

## Sinicization

* the influence of Chinese culture on neighboring regions in Asia

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| --- | --- |
| Part of speech: | noun |
| Word forms: | Sinicize, Sinicized |
| Synonyms: |  |
| In a sentence: | Some scholars argue that Buddhism went through the process of Sinicization as it spread throughout China. |