|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name: |  | Date: |  |

## Preparation

* Three colors of colored pencils, pens, or highlighters

## Purpose

Before you get into this activity on beliefs and religion, it’s helpful to first have an idea of what a belief is, what a religion is, and how they are both similar to and different from each other. Understanding how beliefs and religion are related can help foster tolerance of belief systems other than your own, and encourage respectful dialogues around these topics. This activity should also provide you with some understanding of how historians think about belief systems.

## Process

In this activity, you are going to really dig into what systems of beliefs are and how they relate to religious beliefs. To do this, you will create a concept map and come up with class definitions of “belief system” and “religious system.”

* First, brainstorm as many words as you can that relate to the word *belief*.
* Next, brainstorm as many words as you can that relate to the word *religion*.
* Finally, brainstorm a list of words related to the word *system*.

Now, take out the Belief vs. Religion worksheet and create a concept map using the words you brainstormed. First, pick two or three words from each category. Then, add them to the worksheet, and then decide which words are related to the circles in the middle. Once you’ve decided, draw lines from the words you added to the circled words in the center. On the lines, add some quick notes about why and how those words are related.

Once everyone is done creating their concept maps, create a class definition of “belief systems” and a class definition of “religious system.” There may be some overlap, but they should still be distinct. While belief systems and religion are similar, there are differences. The article “Overview of Belief Systems” sums this up nicely. “Historians generally refer to religious systems and belief systems interchangeably; however, it’s important not to equate ‘systems of belief’ precisely with religious beliefs or with religious organizations, sacred books, special buildings (such as temples), and holy practices. Of course, these are all important parts of human history. Many religious people—including most Jews, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians and many Buddhists—consider their beliefs, rituals, and practices as sacred because they come from God (or gods). But many other people have participated in systems of belief without referring to the divine, as you will see in your studies of Confucian China or Ancient Greek philosophies.”

**Directions:** Add two or three words from each of the brainstorming categories to the paper below. Use a different colored pen or highlighter when you add the words (for example, religion words in blue, belief words in black, and system words in green). Then, draw lines from the words to each of the circled words that they relate to, but are not synonyms for. On the lines, add your reasoning for how and why these words are related.