

COMPARISON – BELIEF SYSTEMS

Preparation

- Download “Judaism”
- Download “Christianity”
- Download “Hinduism”
- Download “Islam”

Purpose

In this activity, you’ll be comparing across time and place to find similarities and differences between belief systems. From a broader perspective, belief systems may all seem the same; however, by comparing and contrasting, we are able to see the differences between similar concepts. You will also continue to evaluate how historical events and processes relate to the course frames, which will deepen your understanding of how frames can be used to make sense of large periods of time.

Practices

Reading, writing

You’ll use your close-reading skills to pull out information from the articles to complete the Comparison Tool, which is included in the worksheet. Comparison provides structure and organization to idea development and writing. In addition, you’ll be writing thesis statements in response to two comparison prompts.

Process

The belief systems (philosophies or faiths) that people have can tell us a great deal about the mindsets of people living in a community or society. In this activity, you’ll explore the history and teachings of four different belief systems: Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam. Comparing these belief systems will help you learn how these faiths shaped societies as they spread across networks to become some of the first world religions.

First, your teacher will ask you the following questions:

- How did local, communal religions become shared belief systems that are now practiced by millions of people across the world?
- What do these major world religions—Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam—share in terms of their common beliefs about the world and our place in it?

Next, your teacher will break the class into small groups and assign two articles to each group. Your teacher will either hand out or have you download the Comparison – Belief Systems worksheet and your assigned articles.

In your group, read your assigned articles and complete the Comparison Tool’s Part 1: Identifying and Describing, which is included in the worksheet.



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Then, your group will share the similarities and differences you found by writing them on the chart your teacher creates on the board. Take a few minutes to read what the other groups found and look for similarities and differences across all of the belief systems. Discuss the following questions with your class: What similarities are shared by all of these belief systems? What are some of the main differences between these belief systems?

Finally, use these similarities and differences to develop two thesis statements in response to the prompts:

- *To what extent did these belief systems impact networks similarly?*
- *To what extent did these belief systems impact communities differently?*

Your teacher will collect your worksheets and thesis statements at the end of the activity to assess your understanding of the topic and this historical thinking practice.

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Name:

Date:

Directions: Follow the steps below.

Part 1: Identifying and Describing

- 1. Write the topic of comparison at the top of the chart, and then add the cases you’re comparing and their associated time periods.
- 2. Respond to the questions in the Part 1 chart for each case you’re comparing. Use the resources provided for this comparison.
- 3. After responding to the questions for each case, identify and describe the similarities and differences between these cases.

Part 2: Analyzing

- 1. If you were going to write two essays about the similarities and/or differences you’ve identified for this topic, what are two thesis statements you might use? Write one thesis statement about similarities and one about differences.
- 2. If required, use your thesis statements to craft a response to the comparison prompt for this activity.

Topic of Comparison

Part 1: Identifying and Describing

Cases You’re Comparing				
Time Period				
Location				

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Name:

Date:

Community <i>How did these belief systems impact communities?</i>		Similarities	
		Differences	
Networks <i>How did networks help make these belief systems become world religions?</i>		Similarities	
		Differences	
Gender and Society <i>How does each of these belief systems address gender?</i>		Similarities	
		Differences	

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Part 2: Analyzing

Thesis Statement 1: Similarities	
Thesis Statement 2: Differences	
Response	