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<th>Term</th>
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Reading Comprehension - Caste System in India

Instructions: Read the story. Then, complete the activities. Be sure to highlight or underline where you find each answer.

1. About 3,600 years ago, a group of cattle herders from Central Asia settled into India. This group of people, called the Aryans, brought with them their beliefs, customs, and writing system (Sanskrit). They introduced a rigid caste structure that divided people into four classes.

2. Under this setup, Brahmins or priests made up the highest caste. They held a tremendous amount of power over everybody else. They were the only ones who could both study and teach the holy texts, known as the Vedas. They were also the only ones who could perform sacrifices and other religious rites. Because of their authority, people of other castes often gave them generous donations. By giving Brahmins (also spelled as Brahmans) valuable goods, people of other castes believed that they would be rewarded in their next life.

3. Next to the Brahmin class was the Kshatriya (pronounced "shuh-TREE-uh") class. It consisted of warriors and rulers. Kshatriyas' main duties were to govern and defend the country. Though they could learn the Vedas as Brahmins did, they could not teach the holy texts. As Kshatriyas were responsible for the national defense, they underwent extensive military training. They were the experts in archery, swordsmanship, and hand-to-hand combat.

4. The Aryans categorized farmers and merchants as their society's third caste, called the Vaishya (pronounced "VYSH-yuh"). Vaishyas were expected to tend cattle, to farm, or to trade. Like Kshatriyas, they could only learn, but not teach, the Vedas.

5. Beneath the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, and the Vaishya castes was the Shudra (also spelled as Sudra) caste. It represented the majority of the populace. People in this caste did menial, labor-intensive work. They took on the duties of servants, craftsmen, or laborers. Shudras received little informal education. They were not allowed to learn the Vedas, so they could not participate in the initiation ceremony that boys of the three upper castes were entitled to when they began learning the holy texts. The ancient Indians believed that a person who had the initiation ceremony was "twice-born." The first was, of course, the person's physical birth. The second was his spiritual birth. As Shudras could not learn the Vedas, they would never experience a spiritual birth. Thus, they had only one birth.

6. Though Shudras were the lowest of the four classes, they were still better off than the so-called outcasts. The outcastes, as the name suggests, were people who did not belong to any of the four castes. They did work that nobody else wanted to do. They swept the streets. They collected garbage. They cleaned up toilets. And they disposed of dead animals or humans. The outcastes could not live in cities or villages. They led a lonely, humiliated life. When they ate, they could only take meals from broken dishes. When they traveled, they needed to move off the path if someone from a higher caste was approaching. When they entered a marketplace, they had to strike a piece of wood to announce their presence, so that other people could avoid them. The outcastes were not allowed to drink from a public well. They were not allowed to enter a temple. And they were not allowed to study. Given that they stirred fear and were despised everywhere they went, nobody in the ancient Indian society wanted to see, hear, or touch them. This group of people in India suffered the worst fate. They simply became known as the untouchables!

7. The Aryans' caste system came from local legends. When Brahma, the god of creation, made humans, his mouth became the Brahmins, his arms the Kshatriyas, his legs the Vaishyas, and his feet the Shudras. Tales aside, the caste system was a very important element in ancient India. It followed a specific set of guidelines (called the Laws of Manu) that dictated every person's behavior. The guidelines set rules from the type of jobs a person could hold to the type of foods a person could eat. According to the Laws of Manu, each caste was
represented by a color. White was for the Brahmins, red for the Kshatriyas, yellow for the Vaishyas, and blue for the Shudras. Marrying someone within a person's own caste was norm. Marrying someone outside of a person's caste was rare, but possible. Children born from an inter-caste marriage needed to follow a different set of rules to determine what caste they belonged to.

8 The ancient Indians believed that each person had an eternal soul that could be reborn in a new body after death. While that person could never move from one caste to another in this life, he or she could be reborn to a different caste in the next life. If the person did a lot of good deeds (such as giving Brahmins generous donations) in this life, he or she would have the chance of being reborn to a higher caste in the next life. If the person did a lot of horrible things (such as committing a crime) in this life, he or she would risk being reborn to a lower caste in the next life.

9 The caste system had been prevalent in India's society for thousands of years. It was deeply embedded in the country's dominant religion, Hinduism. Though discriminations on the basis of a person's caste had already been outlawed in the 1900s, they still exist today. Because of this, the caste system has continued to be a sensitive issue in modern India. It is a topic better approached with extreme caution!

### Comprehension Questions (Highlight or underline where you find each answer)

1. How many castes were there in India?
   - A. One
   - B. Three
   - C. Two
   - D. Four

2. The untouchables worked as servants, craftsmen, and laborers.
   - A. False
   - B. True

3. In ancient India, who were responsible for fending off intruders?
   - A. Untouchables
   - B. Kshatriyas
   - C. Brahmins
   - D. Shudras

4. Under India's current law, it is illegal to discriminate against an untouchable.
   - A. False
   - B. True

5. Which of the following colors would a Brahmin wear?
   - A. White
   - B. Red
   - C. Orange
   - D. Yellow

6. According to legends, Brahma created Vaishyas from his ______.
   - A. Legs
   - B. Feet
   - C. Mouth
   - D. Arms

7. Which of the following about ancient India's caste system is correct?
   - A. Priests were in a caste lower than rulers.
   - B. Both Brahmins and Kshatriyas could teach the Vedas.
   - C. Vaishyas were twice-born.
   - D. Inter-caste marriages could never happen.

8. Who introduced the caste system to India?
   - A. The Arabs
   - B. The British
   - C. The Aryans
   - D. The Chinese

9. Which of the following about the untouchables is not true?
   - A. They could not live in cities or villages.
   - B. They could not eat meals from broken dishes.
   - C. They could not go to a temple.
   - D. They could not drink from a public well.

10. In ancient India, who were responsible for exporting goods to other countries?
    - A. Vaishyas
    - B. Kshatriyas
    - C. Brahmins
    - D. Shudras
Hinduism

Hinduism:

1. Is Hinduism a polytheistic or monotheistic religion? ________________
2. How did the religion of Hinduism develop?
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
3. Hindu's believe that the world is all part of what all-powerful spiritual force?
   ____________________________________________________________________
4. What are the three most important gods for a Hindu?
   a. ___________________________________________________________________
   b. ___________________________________________________________________
   c. ___________________________________________________________________
5. What does every person have in Hinduism? _______________________________
6. What is the ultimate goal of existence in Hinduism?
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
7. How do you achieve moksha? _____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
8. How long does it typically take a person to achieve moksha? _____________
   ____________________________________________________________________
9. How do you attain a better life when you are reincarnated?
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________________
10. How does karma impact your next life?
    ____________________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________________
    ____________________________________________________________________
Using the picture on page 60 of your text book as an example, please recreate the Aryan Caste System using a figure that you choose. It can be a picture of anything your brain can come up with. Be sure to label it appropriately using the terms on page 60. Add a label for the "untouchable" that are mentioned in that section as well (below your drawing).

***** This picture MUST HAVE COLOR!!!!!! *****
Caste System

Aryans

1500 B.C.E.

Hinduism

India

No Single Founder

Sacred Writings

Vedas

Upanishads

Karma

Beliefs

Dharma

Atman

Reincarnation

Brahman

Ahimsa

Moksha

One God With Many Faces

Brahma

Vishnu

Shiva
Quotations from Hindu Scripture

Hindu Teachings of the Right Way to Live

“Wound not others, do no injury by thought or deed, utter no word nor pain thy fellow creatures. . . . He who pays reverence to the aged obtains an increase of four things: length of life, knowledge, fame, and strength. Depend not on another, but lean instead on thyself. . . . True happiness is born of self-reliance. . . . One should speak truth, and speak what is pleasant. . . .”

The Ordinances of Manu

Karma

“A man is the creator of his own fate. . . . A person’s karma is the principal factor in determining his happiness or unhappiness in life. . . . A man reaps—that which he had sowed in his previous birth.”

Garuda Purana

Marriage Ceremony

“I take hold of your hand for—good fortune, so that with me, the husband, you may attain to old-age; the solar deities give you to ma for conducting domestic life. . . . I am the words and you are the melody; I am the melody and you are I the words. . . .
(To the two the priest says) : May you be not separated; may you reach your full years, sporting with sons and grandsons and delighting in your home.
(To the bride):. Flourish thou, without fierce looks and without harming your husband, be good to animals, be of amiable mind and of great splendor; be the mothers of heroes, be devoted to the gods and the bringer of happiness. . . . Endow this bride with excellent sons and fortune; give her ten sons and make her husband the eleventh.”

Rig Veda

CREMATION

“Let your eyes go to the Sun; your life to the wind; by the meritorious acts that you have done, go to heaven, and then for rebirth to earth again.”

Rig Veda
One Way to Reach Brahman

“At the hour of death, when a man leaves his body, he must depart with his consciousness absorbed in me (Brahman). Then he will be united with me. What ever a man remembers at the last . . . will be realized by him in the hereafter, because that will be what his mind has most constantly dwelt on during this life. Therefore, you must remember me at all times and do your duty . . . Make a habit of practicing meditation, and do not let your mind be distracted. In this way, you will come, finally to the Lord, who is the light-giver, the highest of the high."

Spoken by Vishnu incarnated as Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita, part of the Mahabharata.

1. What is the right way a Hindu should live? Include 5 points in your answer.
2. What is the belief in karma?
3. What is the role of a woman and wife as indicated in the wedding-ceremony?
4. What does the last sentence of the wedding ceremony mean?
5. What belief of Hindus is implied in the cremation prayer?
6. How can a person reach Brahman or God according to Krishna?
India’s Sangam age lasted from about 100 B.C. to A.D. 250, a period after the Maurya empire when India was divided into small kingdoms. The Sangam culture was centered in the southeast (present-day Tamil Nadu). Poetry was important in both the royal court and everyday life. In fact, when a king defeated in war starved himself to death, as he was required to do, he took his court poets with him.

Collections of Sangam poetry are the oldest nonreligious Indian poetry, and a surprising number of surviving poems are by women, who apparently had considerable freedom and power. One type of Sangam poetry is mainly personal—stories of love and friendship—while another type deals with daily events, bravery in war, and political life.

As you read, try to imagine the lives of these women poets. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

**Vocabulary** Before you begin reading, find the meaning of these words in a dictionary: lotus, corpse, lute.

**Women Poets of Ancient India**

**What She Said**

Shall I attack these people, shall I strike them?
I do not know.
Or shall I find some reason and cry out
to this city that sleeps
not knowing my suffering
while the moving wind swirls
and pulls me to and fro.

— Auvaiyar (in Kuruntokai)

You cannot compare them with a lute.
The tenses are wrong, the meanings unclear,
and yet the words of a little son
fill a father with love.
The words of my mouth are like that also,
O Netuman Anci
who have taken many enemy forts with guarded walls,
for they make you show your love.

— Auvaiyar (in Purananuru)
You stand and hold the post of my small house,
and you ask, “Where is your son?”
Wherever my son is, I do not know.
This is the womb that carried him,
like a stone cave
lived in by a tiger and now abandoned.
It is on the battlefield that you will find him.

— Kavar Pentu (in Purananuru)
Buddhism:

1. Who founded the religion of Buddhism?

2. Why did Gautama leave the palace and never return?

3. Who did Gautama become after he sat under a tree for 48 days trying to determine the mystery of life?

4. What are the Four Noble Truths?
   I. 
   II. 
   III. 
   IV. 

5. What is the Eightfold Path?
   I. 
   II. 
   III. 
   IV. 
   V. 
   VI. 
   VII. 
   VIII. 

6. What is the final goal of a Buddhist?

7. What is the sacred text of Buddhism?
1. Study the way Buddhism spread throughout much of Asia. Which had a larger area of core influence in 500 B.C., Hinduism or Buddhism?

2. When did Buddhist influences reach Central Asia?

3. Where do both Hinduism and Buddhism begin?

4. How many years were there between the arrival of Buddhist influence in Sri Lanka and in Angkor Wat?

5. At what time does Buddhism spread to Korea?

6. Name four countries impacted by the spread of Buddhism.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 

7. Roughly what is the longest distance of spread in miles for the Buddhist faith? And from where to where does this occur.
HISTORYMAKERS Siddhartha Gautama

Enlightened One

“Let a man overcome anger by love, let him overcome evil by good. Let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth.”—Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha

Section 2

Born a prince in a warrior family, Siddhartha Gautama lived in northern India during a time of turmoil. From a young age, he was disturbed by the suffering of his world. Unsatisfied with the life of ease, he hoped to find deeper meaning in his life. He tried many ways of reaching inner peace, but none worked. When he finally discovered his path, he decided to teach others how to reach that same state—and in doing so, founded a new religion.

Siddhartha was born near the foot of the Himalaya Mountains. His father ruled a small kingdom and hoped that his son would follow after him. Siddhartha was not the typical prince, however. He was concerned more with spiritual matters and wrestled with deep questions about human life. He asked himself, “Why is there suffering and what is death?” Hoping to settle his son down, the king built him a palace, but Siddhartha continued to be restless. At age 29, he later recalled, he broke with his comfortable life:

In the days before my enlightenment . . . I bethought me that a hole-and-corner life is all that a home can give, whereas a wandering [religious man] is as free as air . . . So the time came, when I was quite young and with a wealth of coal-black hair untouched by gray and in all the beauty of my early prime—despite the wishes of my parents, who wept and lamented—I cut off my hair and beard . . . and went off from home.

He tried for six years to find the solution to his spiritual longing. In the end meditation provided the answer. He experienced the Bodhi, or moment of enlightenment. Life is suffering, he decided, but people do not realize this fact and try to achieve pleasure. By following Siddhartha’s eight rules or the Eightfold Path, one can end desire and bring about the needed understanding. Then the person experiences a release from suffering, a state called nirvana. Siddhartha came to be called the Buddha, or “Enlightened One.” He quickly went to a park in the Indian city of Benares and preached his first sermon. He continued for 46 years, traveling throughout India. Soon he had many followers. The Buddha had great compassion for people, and he strongly rejected the inequality that was a central part of India’s caste system. In this system, the Brahmans, or priests, were considered the most worthy of people. The outcasts, or untouchables, were shunned by all others. People lived in the caste into which they were born. The Buddha once said, “Not by birth does one become an outcast, not by birth does one become a Brahmin by deeds one becomes an outcast, by deeds one becomes a Brahmin.” He was reinforcing the message made clear in another saying: “Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love.”

The Buddha gathered large numbers of followers. He did not want to create a religion that relied on a strict hierarchy to grow. He once told his followers, “Be ye lamps unto yourselves. Be a refuge to yourselves. Hold fast to the truth as to a lamp. Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves.”

Even in his death, the Buddha showed his feeling for others. As the story goes, the Buddha was 80 years old when he took a meal offered by a poor believer. The food was spoiled, but the Buddha did not wish to hurt the feelings of his host and ate it anyway—although he prevented his followers from joining him. Soon after, he was taken sick. He laid down in a grove of trees and gave his final instructions to his followers. As he lay dying, he sent a messenger to the poor man who had cooked the fatal meal to reassure the man that he should not feel any blame. Soon after, he died. According to Buddhist belief, his soul passed into nirvana.

Questions

1. **Drawing Conclusions** Explain what you think the Buddha means by the quote on this page.
2. **Forming and Supporting Opinions** Do you agree with the Buddha’s idea that all life is suffering? Explain.
3. **Hypothesizing** How could the Buddha’s message about the caste system undermine Hindu society?
The Origins of Buddhism

A prince was born in India between 566-563 B.C.E. His name was Siddhartha Gautama. According to legend, his mother dreamed that a radiant white elephant descended to her from heaven. Because of this dream and other signs, a prophet predicted that the young boy would someday become a wandering holy man. His father, who ruled a kingdom near the Himalayas, did not want his son wandering about or to know anything of old age, suffering, and death. So, Gautama led a life of luxury in the palace, but was kept away from ordinary people.

One day, when the prince was 29 years old, he secretly left the palace. His charioteer drove him around and for the first time Gautama saw a struggling old man, a diseased man covered with boils, and a corpse about to be cremated. He was very upset by these scenes of misery. Until that day, he had only seen beautiful, healthy, young people. He would spend the rest of his life trying to figure out why people suffer.

Late that night, he left his beautiful queen and young son. Gautama gave up all his wealth and spent the rest of his life searching for the truth. This was called the Great Renunciation. He followed a life of strict discipline in the effort to find wisdom. He fasted, meditated, and tortured himself so intensely he almost died.

After six years, Gautama felt he had found the answers to his questions while meditating under a giant tree for 48 days. At that moment, according to his followers, he became known as Buddha, which means the Enlightened One. Dressed in a yellow robe, he preached his message to people and began to gather followers. His beliefs can be summarized in the Four Noble Truths: (below)

I. All human life contains suffering & sorrow.
II. Greedy desires are the cause of suffering & sorrow.
III. Rejecting desire frees people from suffering & helps their souls find peace and escape the endless cycle of reincarnation.
IV. Following the Eightfold Path (below) leads to the denial of desire and the attainment of nirvana, or the peace that comes with the end of reincarnation.

1. Know the truth – see things as they really are.
2. Resist evil.
3. Say nothing to hurt others – right speech.
4. Respect all life.
5. Work for the good of others (do not hold a job that hurts others)
6. Free your mind of evil.
7. Control your thoughts – be aware of yourself & have a positive mindset
8. Practice meditation.
Venn Diagram List – Hinduism & Buddhism

- Belief in many forms of one god
- No God
- The Eightfold Path
- Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva
- Started around 1500 B.C.E.
- Started around 500 B.C.E.
- Reincarnation
- Non-Violence
- Goal is to reach Brahman
- Goal is to reach Nirvana
- Salvation is Moksha
- Holy Writings
- Fasting
- Vedas

- Buddha
- Rejects Caste System
- Accepts Caste System
- Originated in India
- Meditation
- Most Complex Religion
- Largest Religion in India
- Jainism
- 4 Noble Truths
- Karma
- No Founder
- Dharma
- Tripitaka

*** Do NOT Glue in your notebook ***
Hinduism and Buddhism Venn Diagram: Place each word in the appropriate location
Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Oh My!

Directions: Read each of the following prompts and decide if it describes an aspect or characteristic of Judaism, Hinduism, or Buddhism. Then place either a "J" for Judaism, "H" for Hinduism, or "B" for Buddhism in the space provided.

_____ 1. Abraham was the "father" of this religion
_____ 2. Features the caste system for social structure
_____ 3. Nirvana is the release from selfishness and pain and represents total enlightenment
_____ 4. All social interactions and choices of occupations were determined by birth
_____ 5. The moral standards for behavior were set up by the Ten Commandments
_____ 6. Sacred writings include the Torah
_____ 7. Believed in cycles of rebirth; called reincarnation
_____ 8. People of this faith believe in polytheism
_____ 9. This faith began in India but spread to China due to the efforts of Ashoka
_____10. People who followed this faith came from the Fertile Crescent
_____11. Believes in a concept called dhanna, or "the right thing to do"
_____12. Belief in the Four Noble Truths
_____13. Believes in many forms of one major deity, Brahman
_____14. Enlightenment is the search for truth and wisdom in this religion
_____15. Yahweh is God to this faith
_____16. This faith has no single founder; its ideas evolved over time
_____17. People of this faith were led to freedom from slavery in Egypt by Moses
_____18. This faith was founded by Siddartha Gautama
_____19. Sacred writings include the Vedas and Upanishads
_____20. Jerusalem became the sacred city to followers of this faith
_____21. Hebrews are considered the ancestors to people of this faith
_____22. Believes that future reincarnation is based on present behavior (karma)
_____23. This is a monotheistic faith
_____24. This faith worships no particular gods
_____25. People of this faith were held in captivity by invading Babylonians
_____26. Influenced Indian society and is still practiced in India today
_____27. All life is suffering but that suffering can be ended by ending all desires
_____28. Moksha is the ultimate goal of reuniting individual soul with the Brahman
_____29. Belief in the Eightfold Path, a middle way between desires and self-denial
_____30. People of this Faith experienced "the Exile"
Mauryan Empire
Chandragupta Maurya

1. How does Chandragupta claim the throne?

2. What occurs in 305 B.C.E.?

3. By 303 B.C.E. how far does his empire stretch?

4. Describe the army of Chandragupta:

5. How did Chandragupta run his empire with full efficiency?

6. How does the Greek ambassador Megasthenes describe the vast empire?

Asoka

1. When does Asoka become King?

2. What Happened at the battle of Kalinga, during the war and after?

3. What idea did Asoka start preaching?

4. What did he do the road system of India to improve travel?

5. What happens in 232 B.C. and what does this lead to?

500 HUNDRED YEARS OF TURMOIL AND FIGHTING!!!

Gupta Empire

1. How did the first Gupta emperor come to power?

2. How did Samudra Gupta expand his empire?

3. What advancements were made in Astronomy, Mathematics and Medicine during the Gupta Empire (pg 178-179)
   a. Astronomy –
   b. Mathematics –
   c. Medicine -
Chapter 2: Early Indian Society

1. What was the purpose of the caste system? What is the importance of social order in India?

2. How does this early ordering of society still affect India today?

3. What were the significant developments in philosophy and thought during the fifth century BCE in India and around the world?

Chapter 2: The Story of the Buddha

4. What did Buddha find in Bodhgaya?

5. Describe the central beliefs of Buddhism. How do they contrast with Hindu beliefs?

6. The Buddha states, "Let truth be your light." What did he mean by this?

Chapter 3: "But all things must pass."

7. What Buddhist ideas appealed to the rising class of merchants?

8. What aspect of Buddhism is considered a "step too far" for most Indians? Why did Buddhism decline so significantly in India in this time period?
Chapter 4: Chandragupta Maurya

9. How did Alexander the Great and his army influence Chandragupta Maurya?

10. What does Chandragupta’s death tell us about religion and salvation in India?

Chapter 5: Ashoka’s Political Order

11. How did Ashoka’s character and beliefs change over the course of his reign?

12. How did Buddhism transform Ashoka?

13. What did Ashoka’s animal protection edicts tell us about his larger perception of the world?

14. How did Ashoka blend religion and politics?

15. Why did the modern Indian government place Ashoka’s Wheel of Law on its flag?