








Buddha and the Eightfold Path

Overview:


Students will learn about the origins and tenets of Buddhism. They will practice a short meditation in the garden and participate in a mindful eating exercise.

Objectives:

At the end of the lesson students will be able to:

-  Describe who Buddha was and the transformation he went through.
-  List Buddhism's Four Noble Truths and give an example of each.
-  Give an example of one of the guiding principles in Buddhism's Eightfold Path.
-  Practice a brief meditation in the garden where they will calmly focus their minds.
-  Eat a snack mindfully.







Vocabulary:

 Buddha	 enlightenment
 Buddhism	 mindfulness
 Nirvana	 meditation
 ascetic	 selflessness




Learning Activities:

- I. Warm-Up (5 min.)
 - A. In the garden, ask students what they have learned about Buddhism in their ancient History class.
 - B. Ask students: Why was it surprising that Buddha became a spiritual leader?
 - He was born as a prince with many riches in his life, but decided to give all this up to lead an ascetic and spiritual life.


Materials:

-  Map of the world
-  Map of Ancient India (see attached)
-  Handout: "The Four Noble Truths and the Eight Fold Path"
-  Teacher Supplement: "Mindful Eating"
-  Image of Buddha to be projected
-  Yoga bell


On the Board:

-  The Four Noble Truths
-  The Eightfold Path
-  Student Reflection Questions

Suggested Snack:

-  Serve fresh fruit that you could find in India: maybe guava, coconut, lychee, or mango.

Other Resources:

-  Leading a meditation:
 - <http://www.meditationinschools.org/resources/>
 - <http://www.nelrc.org/managingstress/pdfs/lessons/Guided%20Meditation%20Lesson%20Plan%20-%20Gimbel.pdf>

2. Presentation: The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path (10 min.)
 - A. Tell students that a prince named Siddhartha saw a lot of suffering in the world.
 - He wanted to find a way to reach *enlightenment* (to find deep truth and be free of suffering) and eventually *nirvana* (an ideal state of happiness and peace).
 - On his spiritual journey, Siddhartha became Buddha (project his image) as he tried living the life of an *ascetic*: a person who gives up worldly pleasures (like possessions, fine clothes, money, and shelter). However, he found this life to be too extreme.
 - Instead, he developed a “middle way” (he would be neither prince nor ascetic) to reach enlightenment.
 - He developed the Four Noble Truths as a guide to end suffering.
 - B. Ask students to read aloud the Four Noble Truths written on the board and explain what each means to them.
 - C. Ask students to read aloud the Eightfold Path written on the board.
 - Ask students to think about the last point in the Eightfold Path: right concentration.
 - Ask students why they think concentration is an important part of Buddha’s plan? (Buddha believed that through *meditation* [to think deeply or focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence, for spiritual purposes or as a method of relaxation], he could quietly focus his mind on spiritual questions.)
3. Activity: A Garden Meditation (20 min.)
 - A. In the garden, have students sit in a circle with both legs on the ground and their hands folded on top or opened to the sky. Tell students they will try meditating in order to clear their minds, reduce stress levels, and relax.
 - B. Using the websites listed in “Other Resources” lead a ten minute seated meditation.
 - C. Ring a yoga bell to start and end the meditation.
 - D. Lead a short conversation asking the students what they thought of the exercise. How did it make them feel? Was it easy, difficult to do? Why?
 - E. Tell students they can always use the garden as a place to come and meditate, and/or they might want to try this other times when they are stressed.
4. Snack: Mindful Eating (10 min.)
 - A. Serve students a simple snack of fresh fruit that they would find in India, but tell students not to start eating yet. Tell students they now will attempt to bring the idea of mindfulness into their eating habits.

- B. Ask students what they think *mindfulness* means. (Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.)
 - C. Using the Teacher Supplement: "Mindful Eating," lead a ten minute mindful eating exercise.
5. Have students answer the Reflection Questions in their garden journals. (5 min.)

Student Reflection Questions:

1. Write down any thoughts you had about the seated-meditation and the mindful-eating mediation. How did they make you feel?
2. How might practicing mindfulness help you in your daily life?
3. Can you think of any other ways — apart from when eating — that you might try to include mindfulness in your daily life?

Assessment Questions:

1. What is nirvana?
 - **An ideal state of happiness and peace.**
2. What is enlightenment?
 - **To find deep truth and be free of suffering.**
3. List one of the Four Noble Truths.
 - **Suffering is present in all things, and nothing lasts forever.**
 - **Suffering is caused by cravings (desires and wants).**
 - **The way to end suffering is to give up all cravings.**
 - **The way to give up all cravings is to live life according to the Eightfold Path.**
4. List at least two elements of the Eightfold Path.
 - **Right understanding**
 - **Right purpose**
 - **Right speech**
 - **Right action**
 - **Right way to earn a living**
 - **Right effort**
 - **Right mindfulness**
 - **Right concentration**

Standards:

Common Core State Standards

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Acknowledgements:

“Guided Meditation Lesson Plan.” Lisa Gimbel, The Welcome Project.

<http://www.nelrc.org/managingstress/pdfs/lessons/Guided%20Meditation%20Lesson%20Plan%20-%20Gimbel.pdf>

“Eat your way to Enlightenment.” Jay Michelson.

<http://www.metatronics.net/>



Map of Ancient India, 600 B.C.



From: <https://www.timemaps.com/?s=ancient+india+>



From: <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/history-maps.htm>



The Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path

The Four Noble Truths

1. Suffering is present in all things and nothing lasts forever.
2. Suffering is caused by cravings (desires and wants).
3. The way to end suffering is to give up all cravings.
4. The way to give up all cravings is to live life according to the Eightfold Path.



The Eightfold Path

Right understanding	Develop a deep understanding of the Four Noble Truths.
Right purpose	Live a life of selflessness (not selfishness), love, and nonviolence.
Right speech	Be careful and truthful in what you say. Do not lie or gossip.
Right action	Do not kill, steal, or lie. Be honest.
Right way to earn a living	Do not work at a job that causes harm to people or living creatures.
Right effort	Promote good actions and prevent evil actions.
Right mindfulness	Be aware of, but not attached to your emotions, thoughts, and feelings.
Right concentration	Focus your mind with practices such as meditation.



Mindful Eating

Guide students through a short, ten minute meditation on mindful eating.

1. Before putting the food in your mouth, notice it with your other senses.
 - How does it feel in your hand?
 - What does it look like? Is it beautiful? Ugly? Something else?
 - What does it smell like? Does the smell make you think of anything?
2. Think about how you feel right now?
 - Are you hungry? Nauseated? Thankful? Something else?
 - Whatever you are feeling, just take note of it, without judgment.
3. Consider where the food you are eating came from.
 - Do you think it traveled a long way to get into your hands?
 - Think about all of the people involved in bringing the food to you: farmers, truck drivers, factory workers, storekeepers. Take a moment to consider them. How hard do they work to support themselves and their families? Think about the natural elements that created the food: sun, water, earth, and air.
 - You are holding food that is a small storehouse of the sun's energy, water from a cloud, nutrients from the soil, genetic information, and the work of pollinators, microbes, and fertilizers.
4. Then (finally!) place the food in your mouth.
 - You might keep your eyes closed for this part of the practice to really focus your attention on what is going on in your mouth, rather than on other things.
 - Before chewing and swallowing, experience how the food feels: on your tongue, the tastes, the feeling of your mouth watering.
 - What happens to your whole body when you put the food inside your mouth?
 - See if the food tastes differently in different parts of your mouth.
5. Then bite into the food and chew it slowly.
 - Do only this one thing (instead of walking, talking, or watching TV while you eat).
6. Chew your food 20 or so times and then swallow.
 - Think if the flavor changed while it was in your mouth.
 - Try to feel the bite of food moving all the way through your throat and into your stomach.
7. After you swallow, see if you can still taste the food on your tongue.

