

RE Plan Years 1-6

Summer 2: Buddhism and 'Is Everything What It First Appears To Be?'

This plan addresses the overarching question, "Is everything what it first appears to be?" through exploring Buddhist teachings, focusing on perception, reality, and enlightenment. Each activity is designed to help students grasp these abstract ideas in a tangible way.

Year	Key Concept	Objectives	Key Lessons
1 – Introduction to Buddhist Beliefs and Appearances	• Perception • Symbols • Change	• To introduce the basic principles of Buddhism. • To understand the symbolism of the lotus flower in Buddhism. • To explore the meaning behind Buddhist statues.	• Explain who Buddha is and the story of how Prince Siddhartha became enlightened. Discuss how he discovered that not everything is as it first seems. Activity: Use a storytelling approach with a puppet or illustrations to retell the story of the Buddha. Students then create a simple drawing of the Buddha's journey, focusing on moments of discovery. • Explain how the lotus flower grows in muddy water but blooms beautifully. Relate this to the idea that something may appear dirty but transforms into something beautiful. Activity: Have students make paper lotus flowers, discussing how the flower's growth represents inner transformation and not judging by appearances. • Discuss how Buddha statues are often seen in a meditative pose, which represents peace and wisdom. Talk about why the statues might look different depending on the country. Activity: Students sculpt or draw their own Buddha statue, explaining what peaceful qualities they imagine it represents
2 – Perception and Reality in Buddhism	• Perception • Reality • Change	• To understand how different perspectives can affect our understanding of reality. • To explore how meditation can help us see things clearly. • To explore the idea of change in Buddhism.	• Share the Buddhist parable of the blind men and the elephant, where each man feels a different part of the elephant and believes it's something else. Activity: Create a class elephant collage where each student decorates a part without seeing the whole. Discuss how their understanding changes when they see the completed elephant. • Introduce the practice of meditation, explaining how it helps Buddhists clear their minds and see things as they truly are, beyond first appearances. Activity: Lead a short, guided meditation. Afterward, ask students to draw or describe how they felt before and after meditating. Discuss how stillness helps us see things differently. • Explain how Buddhists believe in the impermanence of all things, meaning that everything, including ourselves, changes over time. Activity: Have students create a "timeline" of themselves, with pictures showing how they've changed from baby to now, discussing how things are not always as they appear because they constantly change.
3 – The Middle Way and Wisdom	• Moderation • Wisdom • Balance	• To introduce the concept of the Middle Way in Buddhism. • To explore the importance of compassion in Buddhism.	• Explain how Buddha taught that life should not be lived in extremes but in a balanced way. Not everything is what it first appears—both indulgence and strict discipline may seem good but can lead to unhappiness. Activity: Have students sort cards into "too much," "too little," and "just right" categories, then discuss what it means to live in balance. • Share the story of Buddha showing kindness to others, even when they appeared to be enemies. Discuss how compassion helps us see beyond appearances. Activity: Role-play scenarios where students practice compassionate responses to different situations, discussing how appearances can be deceiving and how kindness can reveal the truth.

		To understand how Buddhists strive to see the world clearly through wisdom.	Introduce the idea of Buddhist wisdom and how meditation, study, and kindness can help Buddhists see things beyond surface appearances. Activity: Create "wisdom glasses" where students decorate glasses and use them to "see" and discuss situations differently. They then share what wisdom helps them understand.
4 – The Nature of Reality	- Reality - Illusion - Mindfulness	- To explore how reality can be different from what we first think. - To understand how mindfulness helps Buddhists see reality more clearly. - To explore the Four Noble Truths and how they reveal reality.	- Discuss the Buddhist concept of reality and how Buddhists believe the world we perceive is often an illusion (Maya). Activity: Show optical illusions and discuss how our eyes can sometimes trick us. Students then create their own simple optical illusions and discuss what they learned about appearances. - Teach the importance of mindfulness in Buddhism and how it encourages people to focus on the present moment to avoid being deceived by appearances. Activity: Have students practice mindful eating, focusing on the texture, smell, and taste of a piece of fruit. Discuss how it helps them experience things more deeply. - Introduce the Four Noble Truths and how they help Buddhists understand the reality of suffering, its causes, and the path to overcoming it. Activity: Create a "Four Truths" wheel where each section represents one of the Four Noble Truths. Students decorate it and write or draw an example of each truth.
5 – Illusion and Enlightenment	- Enlightenment - Suffering - Truth	- To explore how material things may not bring lasting happiness. - To introduce the Eightfold Path as a guide for seeing the world clearly. - To understand the concept of enlightenment.	- Discuss how Buddhists believe that seeking happiness in material things is an illusion and doesn't lead to lasting joy. Activity: Give students a scenario where they receive a gift they really wanted, then discuss how they feel about it after a while. Ask them to reflect on whether it brings lasting happiness and why. - Explain how Buddhists follow the Eightfold Path to live rightly and see the world beyond illusions. Activity: Create an "Eightfold Path" map with students, labeling each part (e.g., Right Speech, Right Action) and discussing examples of how they can practice each one in daily life. - Explain how the Buddha achieved enlightenment by seeing the truth of reality. Discuss how enlightenment helps Buddhists escape the cycle of suffering. Activity: Create a "Path to Enlightenment" board game, where students move through challenges (illusions, suffering) and toward enlightenment by making wise choices.
6 – Seeing Beyond Appearances	- Wisdom - Truth - Insight	- To explore how Buddha's enlightenment revealed the true nature of reality. - To explore the cycle of rebirth (samsara) and the idea of Nirvana. - To understand the Buddhist concept of impermanence.	- Retell the story of Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, emphasizing the moment he realized the truth of existence and how nothing is as it first appears. Activity: Have students illustrate key moments in Buddha's journey to enlightenment, focusing on the illusions he overcame. Discuss what the story teaches us about seeing the truth. - Discuss how Buddhists believe in the cycle of rebirth (samsara) and how Nirvana represents escape from suffering. Compare samsara (illusion) with Nirvana (truth). Activity: Create a "cycle of samsara" diagram where students draw or write about the different stages of life and death. They then create a separate Nirvana illustration, showing peace and freedom from illusions. - Introduce the Buddhist teaching of Anicca (impermanence), explaining how nothing stays the same and how change is part of life. Activity: Create mandalas out of sand, then discuss the significance of how Buddhists often destroy them to symbolize impermanence. Afterward, students create their own mandalas and discuss the beauty of change.