

Beliefs and Boundaries

Read how Hindu ideas and social groups shaped ancient Indian life.

SS.6.W.4.2 "Explain the major beliefs and practices associated with Hinduism and the social structure of the caste system in ancient India."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three details about Hindu beliefs or practices, circle three details about the caste system, and use the marks to compare how religion and social structure shaped daily life.

Life in Ancient India

- ① In ancient India, Hinduism developed over many centuries from several traditions. It did not have one founder or one single holy book. Many Hindus worshiped one or more forms of Brahman, a divine reality believed to be present in all things. Important deities included Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Shiva, the destroyer and renewer. Families might pray at home, offer food or flowers, and visit temples. Priests led many temple ceremonies for their communities.
- ② Hindus taught that each person has an atman, or soul. They believed the atman could be reborn after death, a cycle called reincarnation. Karma meant that a person's actions had consequences. Helpful or harmful actions could affect the person's future, including a later rebirth. Many Hindus hoped to reach moksha, freedom from the cycle of rebirth. They believed people could seek moksha through devotion, learning, meditation, and doing their duties responsibly. These beliefs guided choices in daily life.
- ③ Ancient Indian society was often organized into social groups called varnas. Brahmins were priests and teachers. Kshatriyas were rulers and warriors. Vaishyas were farmers, herders, and traders. Shudras worked in service and craft jobs. Over time, many smaller groups, called jatis, were linked to family work and birth. This system is often called the caste system. It placed limits on marriage, work, and social contact. People outside the varnas faced harsh discrimination. Although Hindu ideas included duty, or dharma, the caste system shaped society differently across places and times.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How were karma and reincarnation connected in Hindu belief?

2 What did many Hindus hope to reach, and name two ways they could seek it.

3 What was the difference between varnas and jatis?

4 Name two parts of life that the caste system could limit. Who faced harsh discrimination?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label explaining how Hindu beliefs guided daily choices and how the caste system organized society. Include the connection between karma and reincarnation, one way to seek moksha, two social groups or an excluded group, and one effect of the caste system.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three details about Hindu beliefs or practices, circle three details about the caste system, and use the marks to compare how religion and social structure shaped daily life. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How were karma and reincarnation connected in Hindu belief?	A person's actions created karma, and that karma could affect the person's later rebirth in the cycle of reincarnation.
2	What did many Hindus hope to reach, and name two ways they could seek it.	They hoped to reach moksha. They could seek it through devotion, learning, meditation, or doing duties responsibly.
3	What was the difference between varnas and jatis?	Varnas were broad social groups, while jatis were many smaller groups often linked to family work and birth.
4	Name two parts of life that the caste system could limit. Who faced harsh discrimination?	It could limit marriage, work, and social contact. People outside the varnas faced harsh discrimination.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hindu beliefs taught that karma, or the results of a person's actions, could affect a later rebirth in reincarnation. A person could seek moksha by meditating and doing duties responsibly. The caste system organized society into groups, including Brahmins, who were priests and teachers, and Vaishyas, who farmed and traded. It also limited marriage and work, while people outside the varnas suffered discrimination.

Accept equivalent wording for the Hindu beliefs, practices, social groups, and restrictions stated in the passage. For the museum label, check that all required ideas are accurate and connected in four sentences.