Paths of Belief

Compare how five religions began, what they teach, and how they spread.

7.H.2 "Describe, compare, and contrast the historical origins, central beliefs and features, and spread of major religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each religion's starting place or time, circle one belief or practice for each, and number the five descriptions of how the religions spread so you can compare their paths.

Beliefs Beyond Borders

1. A traveler in ancient South Asia might encounter several religious traditions, not one single beginning. Hinduism grew there over many centuries, with no single founder. The Vedas are among its early sacred texts, and many Hindus understand karma as actions shaping future lives. Hindu ideas and practices later reached Southeast Asia through trade and cultural exchange. Buddhism began in northern India with Siddhartha Gautama, called the Buddha, around the fifth century BCE. It teaches a path to end suffering. Monks and merchants carried Buddhism across Asia, where communities adapted its practices.

2. In ancient Israel, Judaism took shape around belief in one God and a covenant, or special relationship, between God and the Jewish people. The Torah contains teachings central to Jewish life. After wars and displacement, Jewish communities lived in many lands, a movement called the diaspora. Christianity began in the first century CE in Roman Judea, among followers of Jesus, who was Jewish. Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead. Missionaries traveled on Roman roads and beyond, sharing Christian teachings across the empire and later in other regions.

3. Islam began in seventh-century Arabia, where Muslims believe God revealed the Quran to Muhammad. Muslims worship one God and practice duties called the Five Pillars, including prayer and giving to those in need. Merchants, travelers, and expanding states helped carry Islam into North Africa and Asia. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all teach belief in one God, but they arose in different times and places. Like Buddhism and Hinduism, each traveled beyond its starting region. These journeys did not make all communities identical: people maintained core teachings while developing varied local customs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How were the beginnings of Hinduism and Buddhism different? Give one belief or teaching from each.

2. How are the beginnings of Judaism and Christianity connected, and how are they different?

3. How did both Buddhism and Islam spread beyond where they began? Name one difference in who or what helped carry them.

4. What belief do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share? Contrast one feature of Christianity with one feature of Islam.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label comparing Hinduism and Judaism. Include where each began, one belief or feature of each, how each spread, and one clear similarity or difference.

ANSWER KEY

Paths of Belief

GRADE 7 · 7.H.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each religion's starting place or time, circle one belief or practice for each, and number the five descriptions of how the religions spread so you can compare their paths. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How were the beginnings of Hinduism and Buddhism different? Give one belief or teaching from each.	**Hinduism grew over many centuries in South Asia without a single founder; many Hindus understand karma as shaping future lives. Buddhism began in northern India with the Buddha around the fifth century BCE; it teaches a path to end suffering.**
2	How are the beginnings of Judaism and Christianity connected, and how are they different?	**Christianity began among followers of Jesus, who was Jewish. Judaism took shape in ancient Israel, while Christianity began later, in first-century Roman Judea.**
3	How did both Buddhism and Islam spread beyond where they began? Name one difference in who or what helped carry them.	**Both spread through people who traveled, including merchants. Monks also carried Buddhism, while expanding states helped carry Islam.**
4	What belief do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share? Contrast one feature of Christianity with one feature of Islam.	**All three teach belief in one God. Christians believe Jesus rose from the dead, while Muslims practice duties called the Five Pillars.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Hinduism developed over many centuries in South Asia, while Judaism took shape in ancient Israel. Many Hindus understand karma as shaping future lives, while Jewish teachings include a covenant with one God. Hindu ideas reached Southeast Asia through trade and cultural exchange, while Jewish communities spread after wars and displacement. Both religions traveled beyond their starting regions, but they followed different paths.

Accept accurate paraphrases grounded in the passage. For the museum label, look for four sentences that address both religions and state a clear comparison.