

Programme One

The Buddha

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The Life of the Buddha

An illustrated booklet for children, relating the key events of the Buddha's life in simple terms. It may be photocopied and reproduced as A5 children's booklets or as an A3 class book

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The Life of the Buddha

The founder of Buddhism was not a god, a prophet or a messiah, but a human being. Through his own efforts, he became completely awake to the truth of How Things Really Are. By fully realising his own potential he became Enlightened; he gained Nirvana. The title "Buddha" means "One who is awake".

He was born Siddhartha Gautama, a member of a wealthy aristocratic family of the Shakya clan in an area of what is now Nepal and northern India, around the year 560 BCE (Before Common Era).

The Buddha did not write down his teachings, but they were preserved through a strong oral tradition. About five hundred years later, these orally-transmitted teachings were finally written down, and thus began the Buddhist scriptures, or the canonical literature of Buddhism. Those written in the Pali language are often referred to collectively as the Pali Canon.

Although the Pali Canon does not contain a complete life of the Buddha, his story can be pieced together from the many references in the texts. This body of material is traditionally known as the Tipitaka - the "three collections" or "baskets". It consists of the Vinaya Pitaka, or Collection of Monastic Discipline; the Sutta Pitaka, or Collection of Discourses; and the Abhidhamma Pitaka, or Collection of Further Doctrine.

The Life of the Buddha

The Parinirvana

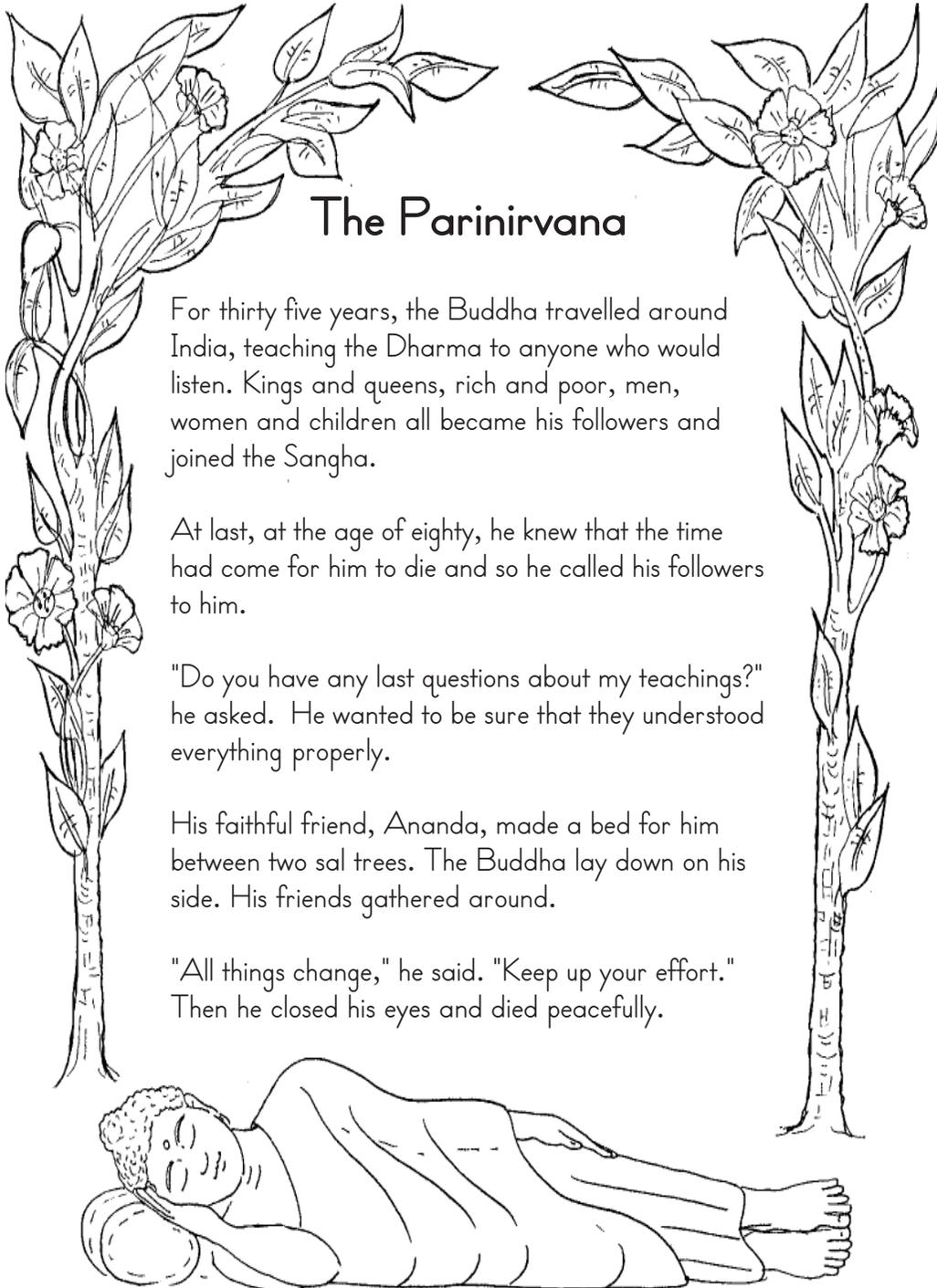
For thirty five years, the Buddha travelled around India, teaching the Dharma to anyone who would listen. Kings and queens, rich and poor, men, women and children all became his followers and joined the Sangha.

At last, at the age of eighty, he knew that the time had come for him to die and so he called his followers to him.

"Do you have any last questions about my teachings?" he asked. He wanted to be sure that they understood everything properly.

His faithful friend, Ananda, made a bed for him between two sal trees. The Buddha lay down on his side. His friends gathered around.

"All things change," he said. "Keep up your effort." Then he closed his eyes and died peacefully.



A Prince is Born

A long time ago, in India, a Prince called Siddhartha was born.

A wise old man came to see the baby. He wanted to tell his fortune. "This little one will be a great king one day, or will leave home and become a great holy man," he said, holding the baby in his arms.

The king was upset. "He will be a king," he said. "I shall see to that!" and he called his chief servant. "The Prince is to have everything he wants," he said. "Make sure he sees nothing to upset him or make him unhappy."

From that day on, only young and beautiful people were allowed in the palace. The young Prince was brought up to be a king. He learned to shoot with a bow and arrow, to ride a horse and to hunt. He was taught all the things a future king would need to know.



Teaching the Truth

The Buddha walked the long journey to Sarnath to look for his five friends. He found them in a deer park. They were sitting under a tree. They could see at once that he looked different. As he talked to them they listened carefully.

One by one, they too became free. They understood; they became Enlightened. "The whole world needs to hear the Truth," said the Buddha, so he and his followers set out to teach the Dharma to anyone who would listen.

The Buddha had not forgotten his family, however. One day, he decided to visit them. What a day that was! His wife Yashodhara, his son Rahula, and even his father the King, became his followers.

"Now I understand," said the King.

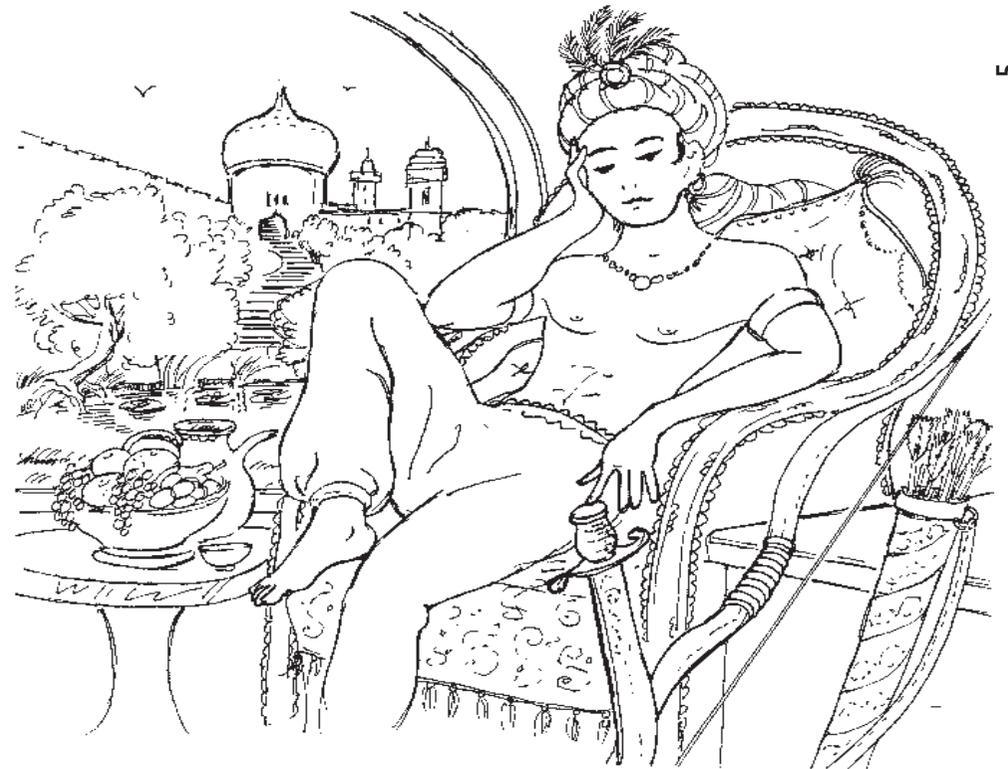


The Young Prince

As time passed, Siddhartha grew up. He married the beautiful Princess Yashodhara and they had a son called Rahula. The King was delighted; his plan was working.

"How happy Siddhartha is here in the palace with his beautiful princess and his baby son," he thought. "He has his own parks and swimming pools and everything he could wish for. He will never want to leave. One day he will be a great king."

But prince Siddhartha wasn't happy at all. "I don't want to be shut up in the palace all day. I need to go out and see the world for myself," he said.



The Four Sights

One day, Prince Siddhartha went out into the city with Chanda, his chariot driver. Soon, they met an old man leaning on a stick and walking very slowly. His hair and teeth were falling out.

Siddhartha was puzzled. "What's that?" he asked.
"Old age," said Chanda. "Everyone grows old."
This sight upset the prince.

The next day, they went out again. This time he saw someone lying groaning in the street.

"What's happened?" he asked.
"Sickness," said Chanda. "Everyone gets ill sometime in their life."
Siddhartha was shocked. He had never before seen anyone who was ill.

On the third day, he went out again and saw something even worse. He saw a funeral.

"Death has come," said Chanda. "Everyone has to die."
"That's terrible!" said Siddhartha. "Why is there so much suffering? What can I do?"

On the fourth day, they saw a man dressed in simple robes and carrying a bowl.

"There's a holy man," said Chanda. "That's all he owns."
"And yet he looks so peaceful and happy," said Siddhartha. "How strange!"



The Enlightenment

Siddhartha washed in the river and ate some food. Then he sat down to meditate in the shade of a tree. He felt much stronger.

"I will sit here until I have won," he said. "I will never give up, even if I have to stay here until my blood dries up."

He meditated all night. In the morning, just as the sun rose, he knew he had won.

"I have done it.
I am free from suffering.
I understand.
At last I am awake to the Truth.
Now I am a Buddha.
I am Enlightened."



Leaving Home

That very night, Siddhartha decided to leave the palace. He kissed his sleeping wife and child. "Goodbye," he whispered. "I must go and find an end to suffering for us all." Silently, Siddhartha and Chanda crept out of the palace gates and rode off into the night.

At last they came to a river at the edge of the forest. Siddhartha cut off his long hair and put on simple robes. He gave his rich clothes, jewels and horse to Chanda. "Please return to the palace with these. I am no longer your master the Prince, I am Siddhartha the wanderer. I now go forth to find the Truth."

Chanda watched sadly as Siddhartha crossed the river and went off alone into the dark forest.



The Wandering Holy Man

For six years, Siddhartha wandered in the jungle. He went to famous holy teachers. He learned all they had to teach him, but was still not satisfied. "I have still not learned the Truth," he thought.

Then he lived with five friends. They were ascetics. They thought that by living a hard and uncomfortable life they would find the Truth. Siddhartha became an ascetic, too.

He ate less and less food until he was living on only one grain of rice a day. He almost starved to death. "This isn't helping," he said. "I am still no nearer the Truth. A very rich life in the palace was not the way. A very hard and uncomfortable life is not the way. I will try a middle way."

His friends did not agree. Siddhartha ate some milk-rice that a woman gave him. When the five ascetics saw this they didn't like it.

"He's given up," they said, and they left him.





Listening Quiz Instructions

There is a listening quiz for each programme. The questions help the children focus on the key points as they look out for the answers.

Using the Listening Quiz

Before watching

Working individually, in pairs, or as a class, the children read through the questions. They may like to try and predict the answers.

During the programme

The children look out for the the answers to the questions.

After watching

The children return to the questions and mark in their answers. The teacher goes through the questions and answers as an oral whole-class activity. The teacher may use some of the alternatives in the multiple choice answers to prompt discussion.

The listening quiz may be used by the teacher as an oral activity, without the sheets. The answer sheet is overleaf.

Listening Quiz

Answer Sheet

1. What is the name of the famous holy place for Buddhists?

- a) Benares
- b) Bodhgaya
- c) Manchester

2. What is the name of the Prince in the story?

- a) Prince Mudra
- b) Prince Bodhi
- c) Prince Siddhartha

3. The Prince saw four special things. Tick which they were.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| a baby <input type="checkbox"/> | a wedding <input type="checkbox"/> | a sick person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| an old man <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | dancing <input type="checkbox"/> | a funeral <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| an elephant <input type="checkbox"/> | a holy man <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | |

4. Why did Prince Siddhartha leave home?

- a) He wanted to see the world.
- b) To search for an escape from suffering in the world.
- c) He didn't like his father

5. Where did he decide to meditate?

- a) Under a tree
- b) In a cave
- c) By a lake

6. What happened under the Bodhi tree?

- a) Prince Siddhartha became the Buddha.
- b) Prince Siddhartha saw the Four Sights.
- c) Prince Siddhartha met the King.

7. What does Buddha mean?

- a) "The one who is awake"
- b) A holy man
- c) The brave one

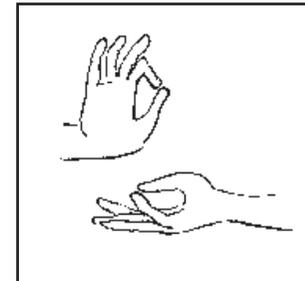
8. What is a mudra?

- a) A place to wash.
- b) A piece of clay.
- c) A special hand position.

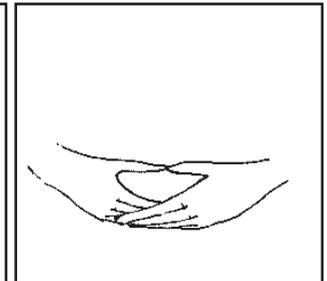
9. Scheherazade learned three mudras. Tick the right one for each picture.



- a) waving
fearlessness
calmness



- b) teaching
lifting
measuring



- c) reading
meditating
holding

10. Why could Kisa not get any mustard seeds?

- a) No-one had any left.
- b) In every house someone had died.
- c) The shops were shut.

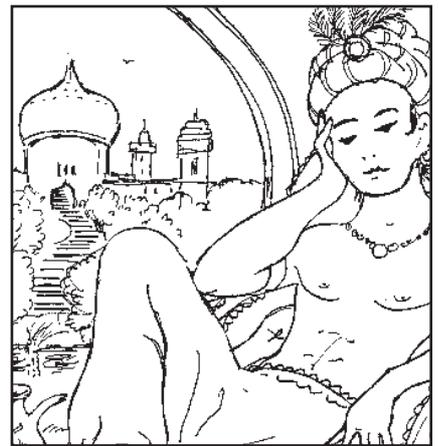
Listening Quiz

Programme One – The Buddha

Name.....

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- b) Bodhgaya
- c) Manchester



2. What is the name of the prince in the story?

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- b) Prince Bodhi
- c) Prince Siddhartha

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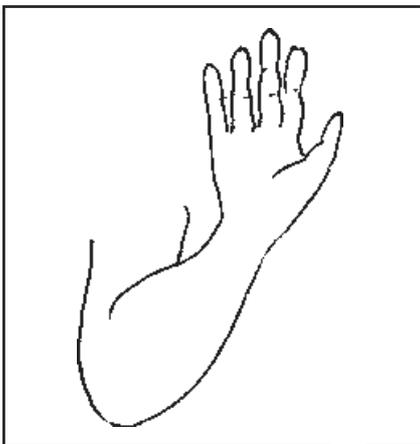
- a) "The one who is awake"
- b) "A holy man"
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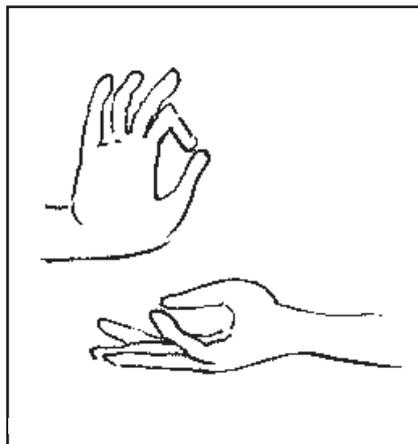
- a) A place to wash
- b) A piece of clay
- c) A special hand position

9. Scheherazade learned three mudras.

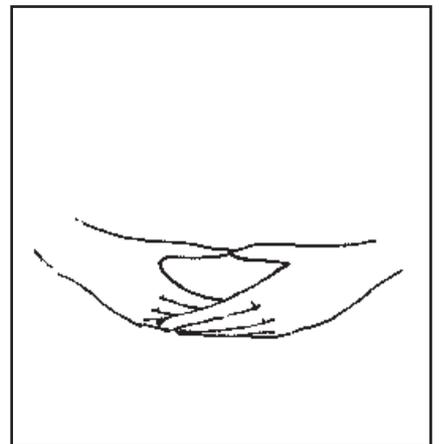
Tick the right one for each picture.



- a) waving
- fearlessness
- calmness



- b) teaching
- lifting
- measuring



- c) reading
- meditation
- holding

10. Why could Kisa not get any mustard seeds?

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Sequence I Pilgrims visiting Bodhgaya

Bodhgaya, in northern India, is traditionally held to be the place where the Buddha gained Enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree. It is a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists throughout the world.

Pilgrimage is not a religious obligation for Buddhists, as it is for Muslims, for example, but nevertheless Buddhists naturally feel reverence for, and a desire to visit, sites of significance to them.

❶ **Lumbini** - where Queen Maya gave birth to Prince Siddhartha on her way to her parents' house

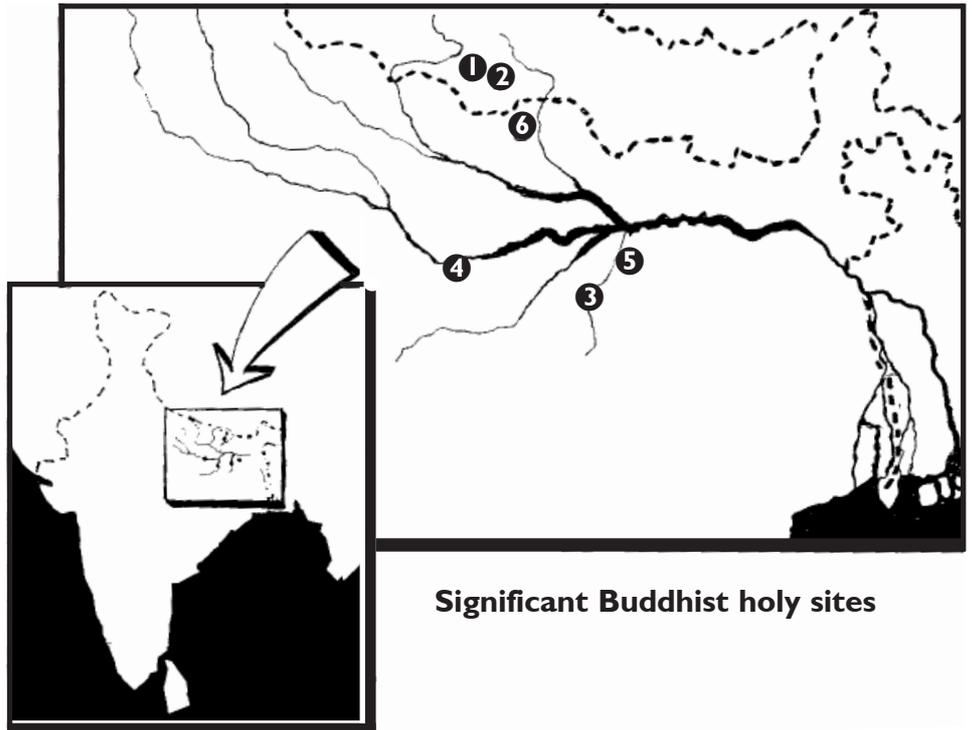
❷ **Kapilavastu** - where the young prince grew up

❸ **Bodhgaya** - where the Buddha gained Enlightenment

❹ **Sarnath** - where the Buddha gave his first teaching

❺ **Rajagriha** - near the Vulture's Peak and the bamboo grove where the Buddha often stayed

❻ **Kushinara** - where the Buddha died



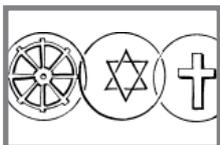
Significant Buddhist holy sites



Links with the child's experience - Special places

Discuss places that are special or significant but not necessarily connected with religious observance.

- What are these places?
- Why are they important?
- What special things do people do there?



Links with other religions - Pilgrimage

Most religious traditions have places of special significance, that become the focus of pilgrimage.

- What are the places of pilgrimage for other religions?
- What happened at these places that makes them special?
- Why do people want to visit them?
- What do people do when they visit them?



Sequence 2

The Four Sights

The "Four Sights" are a highly significant event in the life of the Buddha. They are traditionally presented in this dramatic way in order to emphasise the spiritual crisis or turning point they represented in his life.



Activity sheet 1a - The Life of the Buddha

The activity emphasises six of the key events in the life of the Buddha.

- Birth
- Upbringing
- The Four Sights
- Going Forth
- Enlightenment
- Death

In pairs, groups, or as a class the children read and discuss the story in the booklet "The Life of the Buddha".



They give an account of his life by completing the blanks on the activity sheet with words and pictures.



Activity sheet 1b - The Four Sights

In pairs, groups, or as a class the children discuss the Four Sights.

- What were they?
- What effect did seeing them have on the Buddha?
- Is there any link between what Scheherazade saw on her trip to the Buddhist Centre and the Four Sights the Buddha saw?

Use drama to explore the Four Sights and their impact.



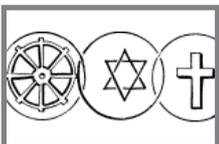
After discussion the children draw either the traditional sights as Prince Siddhartha saw them, or the equivalent of the Four Sights in modern times, using their own experience.



Links with the child's experience - Events that make us stop and think

Sometimes we see, or experience in our lives, events that make us stop and think: illness, bereavement and loss, for example.

- What was the event?
- What was it about what we saw, or experienced, that made us stop and think?



Links with other religions - Turning points

Spiritual crises or turning points for other religious figures; Christ in the desert., for example.

Activity Sheet 1a - The Life of the Buddha

Name.....





From that day on, only young and beautiful people were allowed in the palace. The young prince was brought up to be a king. He learned to shoot with bow and arrow, to ride a horse and to hunt.









His faithful friend, Ananda, made a bed for him between two sal trees. The Buddha lay down on his side and his friends gathered round. "All things change," he said. "Keep up your effort." Then he closed his eyes and died peacefully.

The Four Sights

Name.....



Draw and write what Prince Siddhartha saw, or the Four Sights as you might see them today.



Sequence 3 "Going Forth" & Enlightenment

The "Going Forth" and the Enlightenment are key incidents in the life of the Buddha.

For twenty nine years, Siddhartha had lived a well-to-do existence but found a life devoted to material pleasures empty and unfulfilling. He experienced a deep sense of dissatisfaction, and a desire to find meaning in life. The legend of the Four Sights represents in dramatic form this spiritual crisis, or turning point. His response to this spiritual experience was to "Go Forth"; to leave behind his security and comfort in order to be free to seek an answer for himself.

In India there was, and still is, a tradition of wandering holy men and teachers. It was believed that the way to spiritual truth was through self mortification and extreme asceticism, and Siddhartha tried this. After six years, he decided extreme denial was not a useful spiritual practice. Instead, he followed a middle way between extreme material pleasure and asceticism.



Links with the child's experience -

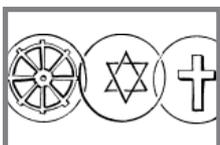
Leaving things behind in order to change and grow

The Buddha did not find it easy to leave the comfort and familiarity of his home and family. It was something he needed to do in order to be free to seek an answer to his questions.

For children, the process of growing up is, to some extent, one of leaving things behind by growing out of them. In order to move on we sometimes have to leave things behind. Changing classes at the end of a year, or going from infant to junior school, or junior to secondary, are examples of this.

Discuss with the children changes of this sort that they have experienced.

- Why did they make the change?
- What did they have to leave behind?
- What feelings did they have? (Sadness, relief, regret, etc.)
- What did they look forward to in the new situation?
- What feelings did they have? (Excitement, nervousness, etc.)



Links with other religions - **Going Forth and renunciation**

Find out about founders and leaders of religions, and saints who have given up a comfortable life in order to seek the truth or follow a religious calling. A good example from the Christian tradition is the story of Saint Francis of Assisi.



Enlightenment, or Nirvana, is the ultimate goal of all Buddhists. It is impossible to describe Enlightenment adequately; it is beyond words. It is not a place to which one can go but a state of being. Its twin aspects are wisdom, a deep seeing into the nature of Reality, and compassion, a tireless, heartfelt, appropriate response to the sufferings of existence.

Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha when, through his own efforts, he perfected himself. He overcame greed, hatred and ignorance and thereby freed himself from all negative emotions. He fully realised his potential as a human being and, in so doing, transcended the ordinary human state. Buddhists believe that everyone has the potential to become Enlightened.



Sequence 4 The Buddha Image

Depending on the culture from which they originate, images and pictures of the Buddha can look very different. However, within the tradition of his or her time and country, each artist has tried to communicate the qualities of the Buddha.



Links with the child's experience - Qualities we admire

Discuss with the children people whom they admire.

- Who are they?
- What qualities do they have?
- What qualities would 'the perfect person' have?
- How would they show them?

Follow-up to the discussion:
draw, paint or make a model of a person, showing their qualities.



Sequence 5 The Story of Kisa

This is one of the stories which illustrates the kindness of the Buddha. It can be found in the Buddhist scriptures, in the Therigatha, or "Songs of the Early Buddhist Nuns".