

Teaching Islam/Buddhism/Hinduism

Instructor: Christine Aurelio

Students: Various grade levels

Background:

After introducing the particular unit on these three religions and having students answer questions from their workbooks, I went to the library and checked out most of the books that were presented to us at the last workshop.

Materials:

1. Books referenced at the workshop (ESTABLISH HYPERLINK HERE?)
2. Additional activities if students finish early

Procedures:

1. First, determine the concepts and objectives you wish to learn as well as which books provide the best information on each religion.
2. Have students get into cooperative groups.
3. Give each group a different set of books with a handout that explains the concepts they are to research.
4. Have each group get to work and see what they come up with. My students keep a sketch/notebook of everything they do all year, so they were instructed to decide amongst group members how to record the information they found. For examples, a group of girls researching the role of women in Islam chose to categorize their findings in a chart while another group drew a mosque and labeled the different parts.
5. If time permits, each group can research each topic or just rotate between groups that finish early.
6. After the research day or days conclude, have the groups present their findings to the class. Groups can either photocopy their research/give handouts or students can take notes on each other's presentations.

Extensions:

After students have studied at least two major world religions, they should be able to create comparison Venn diagrams or other graphic organizers. Beliefs, traditions, and religious stories can be compared in these so that students may recognize the similarities that most religions share.

Feedback:

This lesson went extremely well for me. The kids loved the books and it was so much better to let them explore the books rather than me showing one book at a time to an entire class.

I encouraged them to take the time to read about things that interested them, even if it was not part of their objective and to look at all the pictures and captions. Many took notes on other ideas and details as well as what they were instructed to do.

The students also appreciated the freedom they had to determine how to organize their notes: allowing for graphic organizers, sketches and charts, etc. This made it much more interesting for them than straight note-taking (although some did this as well. However, they found out that their hand-outs were not as well received by the rest of the class).

The biggest issues to consider are reading levels of the books, the quantities of books, and alternate activities for those who finish earlier than other groups. For the groups researching Buddhism and Hinduism, I had them read stories from the religion and then discuss the meanings and moral lessons taught in each. For the group researching Islam, I provided a copy of Arabic script and provided activities with that script. For another group researching Buddhism, I gave students copies of blank mandalas and asked them to color them using the appropriate colors and designs that they had learned about.