

Monotheistic Religions

Abrahamic Religions

Bradly Cusack, Amber Hale, Corey Quebedeaux
Published by *K20 Center*

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License

Grade Level	10th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	85 minutes
Subject	Social Studies	**Duration**	1 session
Course	World History		

Essential Question

How do the connections and distinctions between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam shape our understanding of history, belief systems, and cultural interactions?

Summary

In this lesson, students assume the role of detectives and investigate core beliefs, practices, and historical development of the three major monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. During their investigation, students uncover similarities and differences among these faiths, explore cultural and historical impact of each, and present their findings. By the end of the lesson, students will gain a deeper understanding of the influence and impact of monotheism in world history.

Snapshot

Engage

Students activate prior knowledge by brainstorming everything they know about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Explore

Students analyze articles about religion and share their findings with peers.

Explain

Students summarize their knowledge of one religion into a one-slide visual summary.

Extend

Students create visual representations of their understanding of the three religions, connecting shared elements and drawing distinctions between them.

Evaluate

Students present their visual representations and reflect on their discoveries, highlighting the most impactful findings.

Standards

ACT College and Career Readiness Standards - Reading (6-12)

CLR401: Locate important details in somewhat challenging passages
CLR402: Draw logical conclusions in somewhat challenging passages
IDT403: Summarize key supporting ideas and details in somewhat challenging passages
REL402: Identify clear comparative relationships in somewhat challenging passages

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: World History (9th through 12th grade))

WH.1.2: Describe the origins, major beliefs, spread and lasting impact of the world's major religions and philosophies, including Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Sikhism.

Oklahoma Academic Standards SOCIAL STUDIES (Modern World History)

MWH.C.1.2: Analyze the influence of religious, political, and philosophical ideas on society.
MWH.C.1.2.A: Compare the origins and spread of the world's major religions and philosophies, including Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Sikhism.

Attachments

- Christianity Dossier—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.docx
- Christianity Dossier—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.pdf
- Christianity Dossier—Monotheistic Religions.docx
- Christianity Dossier—Monotheistic Religions.pdf
- Islam Dossier—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.docx
- Islam Dossier—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.pdf
- Islam Dossier—Monotheistic Religions.docx
- Islam Dossier—Monotheistic Religions.pdf
- Judaism Dossier—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.docx
- Judaism Dossier—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.pdf
- Judaism Dossier—Monotheistic Religions.docx
- Judaism Dossier—Monotheistic Religions.pdf
- Key Notes Shared Slides—Monotheistic Religions - Spanish.pptx
- Key Notes Shared Slides—Monotheistic Religions.pptx
- Lesson Slides—Monotheistic Religions.pptx
- Monotheism Mission Briefing—Monotheistic Religions.docx
- Monotheism Mission Briefing—Monotheistic Religions.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Key Notes Shared Slides (attached)
- Monotheism Mission Briefing handout (attached; one per three students)
- Judaism Dossier handout (attached; one per three students)
- Christianity Dossier handout (attached; one per three students)
- Islam Dossier handout (attached; one per three students)
- Manilla folders
- Balls
- Poster-sized sticky notes
- Markers
- Tape or thumbtacks
- Yarn (three colors)
- Student devices with internet access

Preparation

Prior to the lesson, prepare multiple manilla folders to serve as “case files” for the Explore phase of the lesson. Prepare one manilla folder per three students. In each manilla folder, include one copy of the **Monotheism Mission Briefing** handout, one copy of the **Judaism Dossier** handout, one copy of the **Christianity Dossier** handout, and one copy of the **Islam Dossier** handout. The three dossiers will serve as the primary source documents for students. Set these folders aside until the Explore phase.

5 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Activity Purpose

Use this activity to assess prior knowledge and prepare students for further exploration.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to facilitate the lesson. Display **slides 2–4** to share the title of the lesson, essential question, and learning objectives. Emphasize that the essential question will be addressed throughout the lesson.

Organize students into groups of three and have each group take out a sheet of paper. Have each group select a member to serve as the recorder to write down the group's ideas. Display **slide 5** and share the Collective Brain Dump strategy. Have groups brainstorm everything they know about Christianity, Judaism, and Islam on their papers. Begin the five-minute timer on the slide and allow students time to work.

Invite a representative from each group to share out their ideas with the whole class.

15 minutes

Explore

Display **slide 6** and share the premise for the activity: Historical files on monotheistic religions have been stolen. Students must recover lost historical details and trace connections and differences between monotheistic religious traditions.

Distribute the prepared manilla folders to each group, each containing one copy of the **Monotheism Mission Briefing** handout, **Judaism Dossier** handout, **Christianity Dossier** handout, and **Islam Dossier** handout.

Have students read the Monotheism Mission Briefing to gain a better understanding of the activity. Then, have students engage in the Jigsaw strategy to divide up the dossiers so that each person in the group reads about a different religion.

Before students begin reading, number each group from 1–7. Display **slide 7**. Share that each numbered group should look for particular details about one of the following aspects that corresponds with their assigned number as they read their assigned articles.

1. Origins
2. Sacred Texts
3. Beliefs about God
4. Prophets and Key Figures
5. Practices and Rituals
6. Ethical Teachings
7. Historical Interactions

For example, if a group is assigned the number four, each person should read one of the articles about Judaism, Christianity, or Islam while focusing on prophets and key figures.

Have students begin reading their assigned articles.

25 minutes

Explain

Have students form new groups based on which dossier they read. There should be one group for each of the three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Display **slide 8** and share the Hot Potato strategy with students. Give each group one ball to serve as the "hot potato." Have students stand or sit in a way that they can easily pass the ball between themselves.

Call out one of the topics from the previous slide (origins, sacred texts, etc.). Have students begin passing the ball among themselves in their groups. When a student catches a ball, they should share key facts related to the topic with others in the group. Once they share, they should pass the ball to another student, who should share relevant details or clarifications.

When you believe students have shared enough information on the topic, call out a new topic and have them repeat the process. Continue with as many topics as you see fit.

Have students return to their original groups and lead a whole-class discussion in which students review concepts from the Hot Potato activity.

Teacher's Note: Shared Slides

The next activity has students add information to a slide as part of a shared slide deck. Prior to this activity, consider sharing the slide deck **Key Notes Shared Slides** with students in your learning management system or via other digital methods.

Display **slide 9**. Have each group create a one-slide summary about their assigned religion's origins, sacred texts, beliefs, key figures, and practices. Have students also cite at least two credible sources to validate their information.

Provide adequate time for students to contribute to the shared slides.

20 minutes

Extend

Transition to **slide 10** and introduce the Detective Board instructional strategy. Ask students if they have heard of a detective board before. Help students picture what a detective board is by showing the clip *Peter Makes an Evidence Board* from the movie *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*.

Display **slide 11** and have students return to their original Jigsaw group in which each student read about a different religion. Give each group three poster-sized sticky notes, three different colors of yarn, markers, scissors, and tape.

Teacher's Note: Modeling

Model how to link common components across the three religions (e.g., monotheism, shared figures like Abraham) so students understand the process.

Show **slide 12** and have students begin working to create their Detective Boards. Have them designate one of the three posters for each religion and record information about each religion on the posters. Once they have recorded all important information, have them visually link key concepts between religions using yarn connections and any text explanations.

As students work, have each group select one member to act as their “lead detective” during the final presentations. The lead detective will answer questions from the class and guide the presentation.

Allow students time to work and finalize their boards.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Display **slide 13**. Have students present their completed boards and explain their findings and key discoveries.

Have each group present by bringing their board to the front of the room. Have each of the non-presenting groups select one person to act as a "prosecutor." As the presenting group shares, have the prosecutors circulate the room and ask challenging questions, pushing the presenting group to justify their choices and make deeper connections. Share that prosecutors could ask questions like, "Why do you think Abraham is a central figure in all three religions?" or "How is your yarn connection between law and ethics across traditions supported by evidence?"

As students share, assess learning through presentation quality, detective boards, or group discussions.

After all groups have presented, display **slide 14**. Have students engage in the 3-2-1 strategy to reflect on their learning by responding to the following prompts:

- What are 3 things you learned?
- What are 2 things you are still considering?
- What was 1 thing you found most surprising or impactful during your investigation?

Alternative Activity

As an alternative or supplement to the mock-trial Detective Board activity, you may opt for a detective team discussion format. In this version, have groups remain seated around their board and engage in a collaborative debrief, similar to detectives around a case wall in a TV show or film. Have students sift through their "evidence" (such as dossiers, quotes, or concepts), debate theories, and justify decisions out loud.

This format supports classroom dynamics where a mock trial may not be ideal, while still encouraging critical dialogue, teamwork, and the evaluation of claims.

Resources

- Armstrong, K. (2002). *Islam: A short history*. Modern Library.
- Ehrman, B. D. (2004). *Truth and fiction in the Da Vinci Code: A historian reveals what we really know about Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Constantine*. Oxford University Press.
- Esposito, J. L. (2011). *Islam: The straight path* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Hocken, V. & Bikos, K. (n.d.). *Common era (CE) and before common era (BCE)*. Time and Date. https://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/ce-bce-what-do-they-mean.html
- Hodgson, M. G. S. (1974). *The venture of Islam: Conscience and history in a world civilization*. University of Chicago Press.
- K20 Center. (n.d.). 3-2-1. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Collective brain dump. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/111
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Detective board. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/3530
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/179
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Hot potato. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/4465
- Lapidus, I. M. (2014). *A history of Islamic societies* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- McGrath, A. E. (2006). *Christianity: An introduction*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Morgan, M. H. (2007). *Lost history: The enduring legacy of Muslim scientists, thinkers, and artists*. National Geographic.
- Nasr, S. H. (2003). *Islam: Religion, history, and civilization*. Harper One.
- Neusner, J. (1992). *A short history of Judaism*. Fortress Press.
- Sanders, E. P. (1993). *The historical figure of Jesus*. Penguin UK.
- Sarna, J. D. (2004). *American Judaism: A history*. Yale University Press.
- Schama, S. (2013). *The story of the Jews: Finding the words 1000 BC–1492 AD*. Ecco.
- Stark, R. (1996). The rise of Christianity: A sociologist reconsiders history. Princeton University Press.
- Telushkin, J. (1991). Jewish literacy: The most important things to know about the Jewish religion, its people, and its history. William Morrow.
- Winchester, L. J. (2021, March 5). *Peter makes an evidence board | The Amazing Spider-Man 2 (2014)* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Afyd92nr558
- Wright, N. T. (2003). *The resurrection of the Son of God*. Fortress Press.