



The Three Vinegar Tasters

East Asian Religions



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Grade Level	10th Grade	Time Frame	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	150 minutes
Course	World Geography, World History		

Essential Question

What impact does religion have on a society? What can we learn about a culture from its religions?

Summary

In this lesson, students will examine the three East Asian religions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism using the traditional painting "The Vinegar Tasters" as a visual guide. Students will work in groups to read about these religions and teach the class what they learned. After completing a Venn diagram to compare all three religions, students return to "The Vinegar Tasters" to reflect on what they have learned. This lesson can function as a companion to the "Monotheism: Everyone Prophets" lesson.

Snapshot

Engage

Students analyze and deconstruct the painting "The Vinegar Tasters" using an I Think, We Think strategy.

Explore

Students use the Jigsaw and Why-lighting strategies to study articles about three major East Asian religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

Explain

Students form groups to discuss one of the three major East Asian religions and use a Cornell Notes/Two-Column Notes strategy to record their findings. Then, each group prepares a presentation to teach the class.

Extend

Each student rejoins their original group and completes a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

Evaluate

Students return to the I Think, We Think activity to re-think "The Vinegar Tasters" painting based on what they have learned.

Standards

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

7.3.3: Evaluate the impact of a region’s major religions, including geographic hearths, major beliefs, customs, and the significance of religion in contemporary societies; explain how religion can both unify or divide people.

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

WG.3.5: Explain how cultural characteristics, such as language, ethnicity, and religion impact different regions.

Attachments

- [I Think, We Think—The Three Vinegar Tasters - Spanish.docx](#)
- [I Think, We Think—The Three Vinegar Tasters - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [I Think, We Think—The Three Vinegar Tasters.docx](#)
- [I Think, We Think—The Three Vinegar Tasters.pdf](#)
- [Lesson Slides—The Three Vinegar Tasters.pptx](#)
- [Three East Asian Religions Reading—The Three Vinegar Tasters - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Three East Asian Religions Reading—The Three Vinegar Tasters - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Three East Asian Religions Reading—The Three Vinegar Tasters.docx](#)
- [Three East Asian Religions Reading—The Three Vinegar Tasters.pdf](#)
- [Venn Diagram—The Three Vinegar Tasters - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Venn Diagram—The Three Vinegar Tasters - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Venn Diagram—The Three Vinegar Tasters.docx](#)
- [Venn Diagram—The Three Vinegar Tasters.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson slides (attached)
- I Think, We Think handout (attached, one per student)
- Three Religions reading (attached, one per group of three students)
- Highlighters
- Document camera and projector (optional)
- Chart or tablet paper (optional)
- Google Doc-enabled devices (optional)
- Venn Diagram handout (attached, one per student)

Engage

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the lesson. Introduce the lesson title on **slide two**, then display **slide three**. Share these Essential Questions with students: *What impact does religion have on a society? What can we learn about a culture from its religion?* This lesson explores these two questions by studying three major East Asian religions.

Move to slide four. Tell the class that the picture on the slide is a traditional painting. Ask students to read the questions on the slide (also listed below) and consider their thoughts on the painting.

- What do you see?
- What do you think is taking place?
- Where in the world do you think this painting is set?
- What do you think the image is about?

Pass out the attached **I Think, We Think** handout and introduce students to the [I Think, We Think](#) learning strategy. Invite students to record their answers and other thoughts about the painting in the "I Think" column of the handout. Allow 1–2 minutes for students to write.

Now, have students form groups of three. Move to **slide five**. Ask the students in each group to share their "I Think" responses on the painting with their group members. Ask each group to decide what they all agree on about the painting. Students should write their group consensus in the "We Think" column of the handout. Allow a few minutes for each group to come to a consensus. Ask students to keep the I Think, We Think handout for later use in the Evaluate phase of the lesson when they will complete the "We Re-Think" column.

Move to **slide six**. After students have the chance to read about the painting (see the explanation on the slide or below), ask each student how the slide's explanation is similar or different to what they recorded during the I Think, We Think activity. What could be the reason for those similarities and differences? Invite volunteers from each group to share what they wrote.

Teacher's Note: The Three Vinegar Tasters

The painting in question is an ancient Chinese painting that represents the founders of the three major religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism (pronounced and sometimes spelled as Daoism). In the painting, all three figures are tasting from a jar of vinegar. The jar of vinegar represents the bitterness and disappointments people encounter in life. The vinegar tasters are Buddha, Lao Zi (pronounced low-zuh), and Confucius.

Ask students if they have any prior knowledge about these religious figures or religions. Call on any volunteers that may be able to share information with the class.

Explore

Have students remain in their groups of three. Number off students within each group from one to three. Display slide seven. Pass out a copy of the attached **Three East Asian Religions Reading** to each group. Hand out a highlighter to each student, if available. Ask the "ones" in each group to read the section about Confucianism; "twos" to read the section about Buddhism; and "threes" to read the section about Taoism. Have students to use the [Why-lighting](#) strategy, shown on **slide eight**, to highlight main ideas for their assigned reading and jot notes in the margins of the article as they read. If highlighters are not available, students can underline important passages instead.

Once each student has read and Why-lighted their article, ask students to share the information they chose with their groups with the [jigsaw](#) strategy.

Explain

Ask students to leave their current groups and form new groups with other students who read the same text of Confucianism, Buddhism, or Taoism. You may wish to limit these groups who read the same text to only four students so that the groups are not too large.

Introduce students to the next activity by inviting each group to teach the class about the religion they read studied. Having more than one group teaching about the same religion, if you chose to use smaller groups, is acceptable. To begin, ask students to prepare three pages of notebook paper for the [Cornell Notes](#) (Two-Column Notes) learning strategy. Ask students to title the first page of their notes: "What is [name of the religion they read about]?" In the left column, have students write the questions below, leaving enough space to write the answers on the right side of the page:

1. Who is the founder and where did this religion begin?
2. What are the main beliefs?
3. What do we know about followers of this religion?
4. What impact has this belief made on modern society?

These questions and the two-column format are also shown on **slides 9–10**. Answer any student questions and clarify misconceptions where possible. Ask students to prepare their two remaining pieces of notebook paper with the same questions, titled with headings to reflect each of the remaining religions. In other words, each student should have a page ready to take notes on Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, respectively.

Teacher's Note: Two-Column Notes Preparation

If your students have not created two-column notes prior to this lesson, you can also introduce the strategy with this brief YouTube tutorial: [Two Column Notes](#) (link also found in Resources). Students can create two columns on a page of notebook paper by folding the right side of the paper to the left so that the right-side edge touches the red rule line. When unfolded, this creates two columns. The left side is for main topics, questions, chapter headings, or big ideas. The right side is for detailed notes. To use these notes for studying, students can hide or fold over one of the columns and try to guess the information on the other side, similar to flash cards.

Ask each group, using the page matching the religion they studied, to answer each question in the left-hand column by writing detailed notes in the right-hand column. Give groups a few minutes to compile their highlights and agree on what notes to include.

Invite each group to present its findings to the rest of the class. You may choose to have students use a document camera to share their completed two-column notes, recreate their note chart on tablet paper, use a Google Doc to share information, or use other presentation methods to teach and engage with the rest of the class. In turn, ask the audience to take notes using the notebook paper they prepared for the religion being presented.

Extend

After presentations, ask students to return to their original groups of three. Pass out a copy of the attached **Venn Diagram** handout to each student. Move to slide 11 to show instructions on how students should work with their groups to fill out the Venn diagram. Using their notes, Why-lighted readings, and classmates' presentations, ask each group to determine what similarities each religion shares and what is unique about each religion.

Evaluate

Move to slide 12 to return to the painting of The Vinegar Tasters. Read aloud each question on the slide: 1) Buddha tasted the bitterness of life (the vinegar) and had no expression. Why? 2) Confucius tasted the bitterness of life and made a scowling face. Why? 3) Lao Zi tasted the bitterness of life and smiled. Why? Ask each group to discuss these questions. Then, ask for volunteers from each group to share their opinions in a class discussion on why each religious leader reacted differently to the bitterness of life. Ask students how each religious leader's reaction represents what they believed.

Possible Student Responses: Interpreting The Three Vinegar Tasters

Students may interpret in their own way each religion's founders' reaction to the vinegar. Scholars believe that Confucius tastes the vinegar and scowls because Confucianism teaches that life can be "sour" without rules to make society more harmonious and morally upright. The Buddha tastes the vinegar and has no expression because Buddhism teaches that life can be bitter and dominated by pain and suffering, but that looking inward brings peace (hence a neutral expression). Lao Zi tastes the vinegar and smiles because Taoism teaches that life is fundamentally good, though one must be flexible to accept life's challenges. These reactions denote the predominant beliefs of each major East Asian religion or philosophy.

Ask students to return to their I Think, We Think handouts. In the "We Re-Think" column, invite students to re-think with their groups what they now know about Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, and the Three Vinegar Tasters. Students can review their Why-lighted reading and two-column notes.

The I Think, We Think handout, two-column notes, and Venn diagram can be used as assessments of this lesson.

Resources

- Author Unknown—Traditional (5 June 2016). Vinegar tasters. Wikipedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Vinegar_tasters.jpg
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Cornell note system. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/424cdc46cbbf68e0b9de3007cb0064eb>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). I think, we think. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5065bfd>
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- RPS Elementary Literacy (15 November 2014). Two Column Notes. Youtube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXHhqcV3wCE>