

The Nature, Use And Importance Of Buddhist Places Of Worship

Learning outcomes:

To **describe** what a temple is

To **explain** how temples, shrines and monasteries are used in Buddhism

To **evaluate** the importance of Buddhist places of worship.

Starter:

why do religions have places of worship? Explain fully your reasons.

Key Words

- **Temple** – a place where **Buddhists** come **together** to **practice**.
- **Gompa** – a **hall** or **building** where **Tibetan Buddhists** meditate.
- **Stupa** – a **small building** in a **monastery** that sometimes contains holy relics.
- **Shrine** – an **area** with a **statue** of a **Buddha** or **Bodhisattva**, which provides Buddhists with a **focal point** for **meditation** and **devotion**.
- **Buddha rupa** – a **statue** of the **Buddha**, often sitting **cross-legged** in a **meditation** pose.
- **Monastery (vihara)** – a place where **Buddhist monks** and **nuns** live.
- **Puja** – an act of worship.
- **Chanting** – in Buddhism, reciting from the Buddhist scriptures.
- **Mantra** – a short sequence of sacred syllables.
- **Mala** – prayer beads that are used to count the number of recitations in a mantra.



Challenge!

See if you can create an image for each of the key words to help you remember them!



Temples

- What do you already know about Temples in Buddhism?
- Use the image to help you come up with some ideas on temples in Buddhism.

Temples

- Temples are **important** to **Buddhists** as the temple is the **place** that **Buddhists** can **meditate**, **study** and **practice** together. Buddhists may **listen** to **talks** given by members of the **monastic** community, and **lay** people may make **offerings**, including food to support them.
- **Temples** can be **found** in many **shapes** and **sizes**, some will consist of one building, others will consist of many buildings.
- **Watch** the **clip** and **take notes** on some of the elements you may find inside a Buddhist temple.

<https://www.truetube.co.uk/film/holy-cribs-vihara>



1. Main hall/building	Contains old, ancient books. The books represent a different sermon or a different passage of teachings the Buddha taught.
2. Meditation hall/building	When the monks are offered food.
3. Study hall	Where Buddhists practice together.
4. Shrine	Dedicated to the Buddha or in Mahayana temples to the Bodhisattva.
5. Stupa	Buddhists do not worship or pray to the statue, they use it as a focal point for their concentration. They will recite the precepts in front of the statue as well as certain offerings to the Buddha statue.
6. Function Hall	A room where events like; weddings, funerals and birthday's take place.
7. Dana	From the original Bodhi tree that the Buddha sat under when he gained enlightenment.
8. Sapling	A quiet space for Buddhists so they can meditate.
9. Statue of the Buddha	Eight spokes to represent the Eightfold Path. The wheel represents the constant cycle of dying and being born again.
10. Gompa	A hall or building where Tibetan Buddhists meditate.
11. Meditation Bell	This represents the beginning and end of the meditation session. Helps everyone to calm down.
12. Library	For meetings or lectures.
13. Wheel of Life Model	A representative of the path of enlightenment in Buddhism. It starts off with the three rings at the bottoms: concentration, wisdom and morality. The main body represents the teachings of the Buddha (Dhamma or Dharma). Towards the middle, there are four corners which represent the Four Noble Truths. Then there are the 8 rings, which represents the Eightfold Path. Finally, there is the gem at the top which represents Nirvana.

Match up
the key term
with the
definition!

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2. Meditation hall/building	b) A quiet space for Buddhists so they can meditate.
3. Study hall	c) For meetings or lectures.
4. Shrine	d) Dedicated to the Buddha or in Mahayana temples to the Bodhisattva.
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6. Function Hall	f) A room where events like; weddings, funerals and birthday's take place.
7. Dana	g) When the monks are offered food.
8. Sapling	h) From the original Bodhi tree that the Buddha sat under when he gained enlightenment.
9. Statue of the Buddha	i) Buddhists do not worship or pray to the statue, they use it as a focal point for their concentration. They will recite the precepts in front of the statue as well as certain offerings to the Buddha statue.
10. Gumpa	j) A hall or building where Tibetan Buddhists meditate.
11. Meditation Bell	k) This represents the beginning and end of the meditation session. Helps everyone to calm down.
12. Library	l) Contains old, ancient books. The books represent a different sermon or a different passage of teachings the Buddha taught.
13. Wheel of Life Model	m) Eight spokes to represent the Eightfold Path. The wheel represents the constant cycle of dying and being born again.

Did you get
your
definitions
correct?

Exam Question Practice!

Explain two reasons for the importance of temples in Buddhism. (4 marks)

A Buddhist temple is....

One reason the temple is important in Buddhism is...This is because...This supports the importance of temples because...

Another reason the temple is important in Buddhism is...This is because...This supports the importance of temples because...





Shrines

“The time and effort required to keep the shrine clean and replenished with flowers and other offerings is considered a skillful activity to focus one’s mind in the spiritual practices.”
Lama Choedak Rinpoche
(Tibetan Buddhist Monk)

What does this quote tell us about the purpose and importance of a shrine?



Shrines

Annotate the picture using the following key aspects/key terms:

- An offering of light (such as a candle) symbolizes wisdom, because the light of the candle drives away the darkness of ignorance.
- An offering of flowers (which will wilt and decay) reminds the Buddhists that all things are impermanent.
- An offering of incense symbolizes purity, reminding Buddhists of the importance of practicing pure thoughts, speech and conduct.
- Buddha Rupa – statue of the Buddha sitting cross-legged in a meditation pose.

Challenge! What else can you annotate from the image? What is the meaning of the other aspects of the shrine?



Exam Question Practice

Explain two purposes of a Buddhist Shrine. You must refer to scripture in your answer. (5 marks)

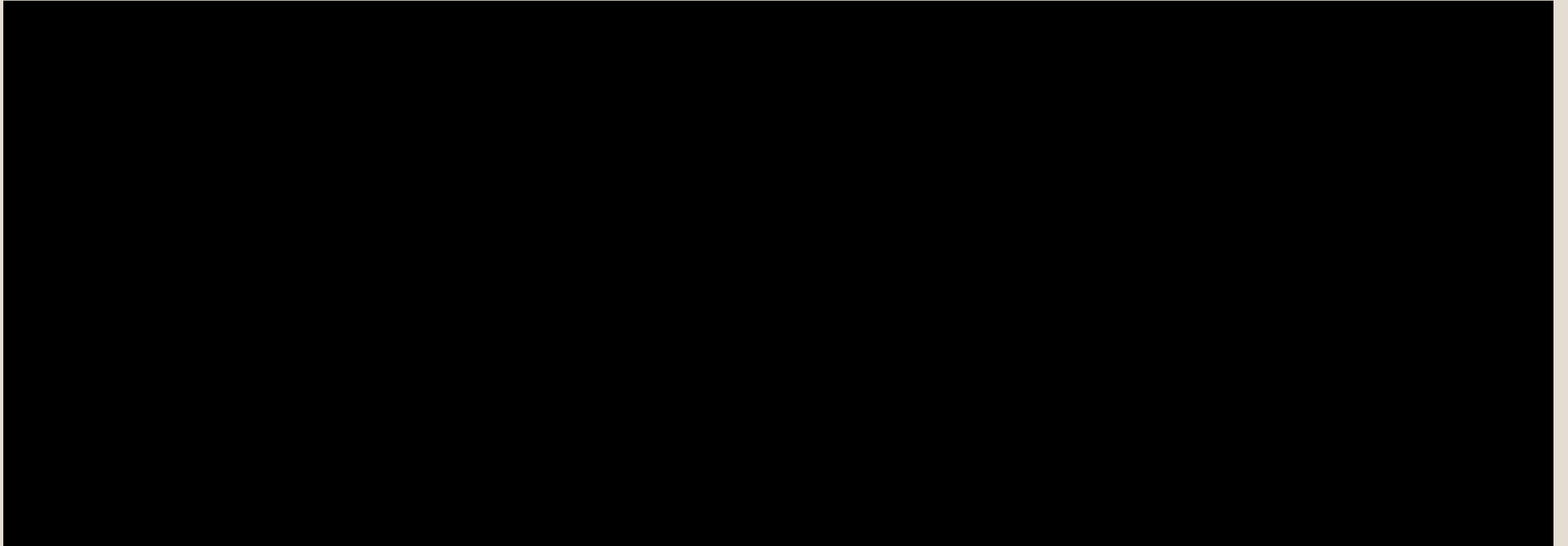
A Buddhist shrine is....

One purpose of a shrine is...This is important for Buddhists because...
Evidence to support this view is....This support the purpose and importance because...

Another purpose of a shrine is...This is important for Buddhists because...



What is it like to live in a monastery?



Take notes as you watch the clip. This will help you
with the next task.

<https://www.truetube.co.uk/film/day-life-buddhist-monk?tab=film>



“It has given my life purpose...”

Discussion Questions

- How does wanting things (or at least, wanting the *wrong* things) lead to suffering?
- How long do you think you could live without money?
- **What do a Buddhist Monk's eight possessions say about the way they live and what they think is important?**
- Is it possible to go through life without doing any harm? How could people reduce the harm they do to the world in everyday life?
- **Why would a Buddhist monk want to dedicate their life to their spiritual practice?**
- **What does the monastery provide for monks and nuns? Why is this important?**

“Worshipping at a shrine at home has no significance for a Buddhist.” Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Refer to religious teachings or scripture
- Give detailed arguments in support of this statement
- Give detailed arguments in support of a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion

(12 marks)

Some Buddhists may agree with this statement because...Evidence...This supports their view because...

Other Buddhists may disagree with this statement because...Evidence...This supports their view because...

However, Mayahana/Theravada Buddhists may....Evidence...This supports....

In conclusion, I believe the strongest argument is...because...Therefore the weakest argument is....because....

F – For

A – Against

R – Specific religious view

M – My opinion on which argument is the strongest/weakest

What is the purpose of worship?



What is the purpose of worship?

Puja (worship) allows Buddhists to express their gratitude and respect for the Buddha and his teachings. It gives them an opportunity to acknowledge how important the Buddha is in their lives. It also allows them to focus on their faith and to deepen their understanding of the Buddha's teachings.

From performing puja and reciting verses from scripture, Buddhists are able to acknowledge the Buddha's qualities and their commitment to following his example. They remind themselves of his teachings on the nature of existence and the way of life, leading to the wisdom and compassion of enlightenment. Through dwelling on these teachings, they may absorb them more deeply and find their lives changing for the better, as they become more wiser and more compassionate towards themselves and others.

Explain in your own words the purpose of worship for Buddhists!

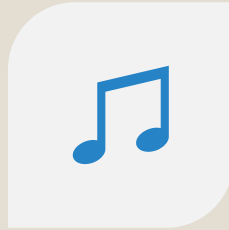
Challenge!

Include the three places of worship we have looked at so far in your explanation!

How do Buddhists worship?



How do Buddhists worship?



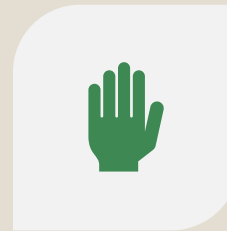
CHANTING



MAKING
OFFERINGS



MEDITATING



BOWING



RECITING
MANTRAS

In the early days of Buddhism, before technology, the only way to share the Buddhist texts was to memorize them and pass them on. Monks would chant the texts in order to learn and remember them. Today, Buddhists still chant from sacred texts. Examples might include:

- Chanting the Three Refuges
- Chanting the Five Moral Precepts
- Chanting the Bodhisattva Vows

Chanting is a devotional practice and may increase a Buddhist's receptivity towards the Buddha and his teachings. It can also be used to help calm and concentrate the mind.

Task:

Explain how and why Buddhists use chanting as part of their worship.

Challenge! Find examples of one of the chants a Buddhist might say and add it into your explanation!

Chanting



Example of Buddhist
Chanting:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4PkLg_2cII

Mantra Recitation - The Meaning of Om Mani Padme Hum

Om Mani Padme Hum

Listen to the video on
the explanation of this
mantra and annotate
the words!

Mantra Recitation - The Meaning of Om Mani Padme Hum

Means: AUM symbolize the impure of the practitioners speech and mind. Reminder that all Buddhists have the ability to become a Buddha by developing body, speech and mind...

Om Mani Padme Hum

Means: Jewel, this is the method aspect of the path. Just like a jewel removes a persons poverty, this path can take you away from poverty and lead you to samsara/enlightenment.

Means: lotus. Lotus represents wisdom. This wisdom will place you in a place of non-contradiction. It will give you the nature of reality.

Means: Indivisibility unity of method and wisdom. One consciousness, developing method and wisdom as one which cannot be disturbed by anything.

The Dalai Lama has said that this mantra should be recited as a reminder that we shouldn't look outside of ourselves for Buddhahood, the aspects to Buddhahood are within.

Explain the importance of Mantra Recitation in Buddhist Worship. You must refer to scripture. (5 marks)

Mantra recitation is....

One reason mantra recitation is important in Buddhist worship is...because...Evidence to support this is...This supports the importance because..

Another reason mantra recitation is important in Buddhist worship is...because...This supports the importance because...

Use pages 50-51 to help you.

Challenge!

Include the following key words in your explanation:

Mala, mantra, puja, Avalokiteshvara, Tibetan Buddhists, Bodhisattva.



Let's test
your
knowledge!

Match the key elements involved in Buddhist worship with the correct definition!

1. Offerings
2. Mala
3. Bowing
4. Chanting
5. Sacred Text
6. Reciting Mantras
7. Meditation

- A. Reciting a passage from a Buddhist text.
- B. A spiritual practice of reflecting deeply on the Buddha's teachings and the nature of reality.
- C. Repeating 'om mani padme hum' over and over again.
- D. A chain of beads used to count recitations.
- E. Bending the body three times in front of a shrine, to recall the three refuges.
- F. A text containing the Buddha's teachings.
- G. Flowers and incense on a shrine.