



Name \_\_\_\_\_

experience will help children understand the Buddha's teachings. Imagine what it would be like to set aside television and friends for a while to think about the eight-fold path. It may not be so easy!

Buddhist children enjoy being monks and nuns for a short time. They visit the beautiful temples that house gigantic statues of Buddha. These statues often show the Buddha sitting cross-legged, which is called the lotus position. His right arm is outstretched and his fingers touch the earth. This position is called a *mudra*, and it symbolizes the Buddha's enlightenment.

Buddhists bring presents like flowers or candy to the temple, and then they bow to the statue of Buddha, but this is not as easy as it sounds. It doesn't mean just bowing at the waist a little bit. Your knees, forearms, and forehead must touch the ground! While you bow, you shouldn't think about your growling stomach or your next math assignment. It is best to think about the Buddha's teachings while you bow. These actions, as well as meditation and chanting, help Buddhists strive for enlightenment.

Buddhists do not believe in one god, but they strive for a state called nirvana. Nirvana is a peaceful feeling of joy and freedom. Souls who achieve nirvana don't have to be born again! Buddhists are gentle and kind to all living things because compassion and peace are key parts of Buddhism. Many Buddhists practice vegetarianism so they don't harm any living thing. Even young children are taught how to meditate. They also recite chants to help them learn about inner peace.

Buddhists also celebrate lively festivals throughout the year to remember the Buddha's life, enlightenment, and death. The most important festival is Wesak, which is celebrated on the full moon in May. It commemorates Buddha's enlightenment. Buddhists clean their homes and decorate them with flags and lanterns. In Thailand, caged birds are released. In China, dancing dragons join the celebrations. In Sri Lanka, Buddhists dress all in white and bring flowers in baskets to the monasteries.

In many countries, Buddhists visit their temple for services and give the monks food, candy, and flowers for Wesak. They also perform a ceremony called "Bathing the Buddha." Water is poured

over the shoulders of the statue of the Buddha to remind everyone to free themselves of hatred, greed, and ignorance. The monks burn incense and give chants to honor the Buddha.

Buddha died in 483 B.C. He had spent fifty years spreading his teachings. Many teachings were not written down until many centuries later. Today, there are different branches of Buddhism throughout the world, especially in the countries of Tibet, China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. Many westerners have also embraced the gentle path of Buddhism.

What Is Buddhism?

## Questions

1. What did Siddhartha's father do to protect his son?  
A. He gave him magic potions.  
B. He took him to a remote island.  
C. He sent him to a monastery.  
D. He kept him inside the palace walls.
2. Which of the following did the prince see on his chariot rides?  
A. an old man and a donkey  
B. a sick man and an old man  
C. an injured animal and an elephant  
D. a broken fountain and a holy man
3. What is the symbol of Buddhism?  
A. a lotus blossom  
B. a begging bowl  
C. a wheel with 8 spokes  
D. an orange robe
4. What do Buddhist boys NOT do when they become monks for a short time?  
A. They visit Buddhist temples.  
B. They shave their heads.  
C. They fast.  
D. They wear special robes.