

World Religions

Religious celebrations in Australia

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Easter Eggs

Provide the students with A5 stencils with outlines of Easter eggs. Ask the students to decorate two sides of an egg outline in bright colours and interesting patterns. Carefully staple the two halves together, leaving a small gap. Have the students crumple small pieces of paper or newspaper to stuff their egg, making it 3-dimensional. Hang the eggs up around the classroom. Ask the older students to bring in a whole eggshell which has been emptied (or a boiled egg) to decorate or paint.

The Easter Bunny

Discuss with the class the role of the Easter Bunny. Have them talk about what the Easter Bunny means to them and why they think it is linked to Easter celebrations in Australia. Find a copy of the song 'Here comes Peter Cottontail' to teach and sing with the class.

Chinese New Year

Display pictures of Chinese New Year celebrations focusing on the dragon festivals. Divide the students into groups and provide them with art and craft resources to make their own group dragon. Discuss the fact that Chinese New Year is the most important celebration in the Chinese year. Discuss why firecrackers are lit and musicians beat drums during the celebrations (to scare away bad spirits and bring good luck).

FURTHER STUDY: THE FIVE MAJOR RELIGIONS OF AUSTRALIA

Buddhism

Buddhism was founded in India in approximately 500 BCE by Siddhartha Gautama who was later known as the Buddha.

There are between 150–300 million Buddhists worldwide. Buddhists believe that life involves suffering and that by following four noble truths one can overcome and remove this suffering. When this happens one has achieved Nirvana, which is a state of being at peace by becoming one with the universe. Buddhists believe in reincarnation, determined by the state of one's karma in a previous life. The temple is the place of worship for Buddhists.

Christianity

Christianity is the largest of the five major world religions, with over 1.7 billion followers worldwide. Christianity is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Christians believe in one God who created the universe and made humans in his image, with freedom of choice. They believe God came to Earth in the form of Jesus Christ, who was without sin. The central belief of Christianity is that Jesus Christ was crucified, suffering this death as the punishment for the sins of all humanity. Those who believe this can be forgiven their sins and receive eternal life with God. The Holy Bible is the sacred text of Christianity and believed to be the word of God. Since European settlement, Christianity has been the dominant religion within Australian society. The church is the place of worship for Christians.

Easter

Easter began as a celebration of spring in the northern hemisphere. Eggs were exchanged and cakes were baked for Eostre, the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring. Later, Christians added to this festival the remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross. Greek Easter usually occurs a week later.

Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the oldest of the five major world religions. Hinduism was founded in India around 2000 BCE. It has an estimated worldwide following of more than 700 million. Hindus worship a variety of gods, such as Brahma (the creator of the universe), Vishnu (its preserver) and Shiva (its destroyer). Hindus believe in Samsara, the cycle of the rebirth of souls. This is influenced by the principle of karma, the consequences of one's actions, either good or bad. Life consists of many reincarnations, each being dependent upon one's karma in a previous life form. A person with enough good karma can escape Samsara and be at one with Brahma for the rest of eternity. The temple is the place of worship for Hindus.

Islam

Islam was founded in Arabia by the prophet Muhammad between 610 and 632 CE. Islam has an estimated worldwide following of 1 billion. Islam is the dominant religion in Africa, the Middle East and sections of Asia and Europe. Followers of Islam are called Muslims. Indonesia is the country with the largest population of Muslims in the world. Muslims believe that they must submit to Allah, the one true God. They obey Allah's commands as set out in the Koran by his prophet Muhammad and in the Islamic sacred law. There are five pillars of faith that Muslims practise to demonstrate their submission to Allah. The mosque is the place of worship for Muslims.

Judaism

Judaism is one of the oldest major world religions and was the first to teach the belief in one God. Both Christianity and Islam developed from Judaism. Judaism has an estimated following of approximately 13.5 million worldwide. The basic teaching of Judaism is that there is one God who wants people to do what is just and merciful. Major festivals include Passover, Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement. The synagogue is the place of worship for Jews.