

The Story of Buddha

A young prince named Siddhartha was born in Northern India in the sixth century BCE.

1. The prince grew up within the palace walls, having no contact with the outside world. He learnt the skills and engaged in the pastimes of princes. Prince Siddhartha married a beautiful princess and they had a son. They all lived happily together within the world of wealth and power.

Until one day, when Prince Siddhartha finally persuaded his father to let him go outside the palace walls to see the city. What Siddhartha did not know was that his father had ordered the city streets cleared of anyone who was old or sick. So when Siddhartha and his servant set out for their tour of the city in chariots they saw many young and happy people.

2. However, they happened upon a feeble old man lying at the side of the road. This was different from anything Siddhartha had ever seen before, and he asked his servant to explain what was wrong with the man. It was only then that Siddhartha learned about how people get old. Siddhartha was very moved by the suffering of the old man.

3. Siddhartha next encountered someone who was ill. The man was burning and trembling with fever, coughing so uncontrollably that he could scarcely catch his breath. Again, Siddhartha was dismayed at suffering in the midst of a world that seemed so full of joy to him.

4. Then Siddhartha came upon a funeral procession with family members wailing in mourning. He was so touched by this display of emotion that it became difficult to go on. He kept asking himself, "How can people continue in their everyday lives when they are surrounded by such suffering? How can I enjoy the pleasures of the palace knowing that we cannot escape illness, old age and death? These pleasures that we seek are truly temporary."

5. Siddhartha gave up his family, home, and possessions and became a wandering beggar in search of enlightenment. Siddhartha joined a group of men who called themselves "ascetics." They practiced meditation, fasted, and denied themselves all the comforts of life. After a time, Siddhartha realized that this path of self-denial was not the answer. It was just an extreme—as extreme as seeking pleasure by doing everything one wanted to do. Siddhartha was looking for a Middle Path between these two extremes.

6. After leaving the ascetics, he had to nurse himself back to health as a result of their practices. He sought shelter under a Bodhi ("wisdom") tree. While meditating under the Bodhi tree, Siddhartha reflected on the passing away of all living things, attained nirvana and became the Buddha, or "Enlightened One." While meditating, the Buddha realized the Four Noble Truths.

Name _____ Section _____ Date _____

LT: I can identify the origin and concepts of Buddhism

Do Now: What is a successful life? What do you do to live a successful life? _____

Buddhism: Origins & Concepts

Directions: As you read the "Story of Buddha" handout, draw a sketch in the numbered boxes below.

1	2
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3	4
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5	6
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The Four Noble Truths teach us how the world works.

Buddha's Four Noble Truths

1. _____
2. _____

This desire can be not only for long life, pleasure, wealth, and power, but also for ideas, opinions, and beliefs. Being attached to these things makes us unhappy, because none of them last forever. For example, we are attached to looking young and will do anything to stay young, even though everyone must age.

3. _____
4. _____

Buddha's Eightfold Path



The Eightfold Path teaches us how to achieve peace & enlightenment.

Before you go...

Look back at your do now. How would Buddha's definition of success differ from yours?

Do you think Buddha's idea of how the world works and how to achieve enlightenment is realistic in 21st century United States? Explain.