

Transcript for **Guide for Introduction to Buddhism and *Siddhartha*** Photostory

1. Good morning--or good afternoon—depending on when you have class. In our last series of lessons in our Indian Literature unit, we learned a tiny little bit about Hinduism and we read from some of their important books, including the *Rig Veda*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Now it's time to talk a tiny little bit about Buddhism since it's an element of our next novel, *Siddhartha*. This Photostory will give you a brief overview of the key concepts of Buddhism and will then more specifically introduce *Siddhartha*. Please complete the guide I gave you as we move along. When we're finished, I'll make sure to ask if there are any questions. By the way, notice the spelling of "Buddhism." I will expect you to write it correctly from now on. Don't forget the "h." In case you can't see or read the caption on the picture, it says, "Do not follow the ideas of others, but learn to listen to the voice within yourself." This is an idea we'll come back to, later.

2. Buddhism is sometimes regarded as having emerged from the Hindu way of life in that it shares beliefs in karma, dharma, and reincarnation. Buddhism had over 300 million followers and is the world's fourth largest religion after Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism.

Just like Hinduism, for many people, Buddhism goes beyond religion and is more of a philosophy or way of life.

It was founded Siddhartha Gautama. (Sometimes you will see his last name spelled G-o-t-a-m-a—or even in other ways.) Siddhartha Gautama was born into a royal family in India in 563 BC. At the age of 29, he realized that wealth and luxury did not guarantee happiness, so he explored the different teachings, religions, and philosophies of the day, to find the key to human happiness. After six years of study and meditation, he finally found what he called "the middle path" and was enlightened and called "Buddha," which means "enlightened one." He spent the rest of his life teaching the principles of Buddhism until his death at the age of 80.

He was not, nor did he claim to be, a god. He was just a man who taught a path to enlightenment from his own experience.

3. Buddhists sometimes pay respect to images of Buddha, but not in worship and not to ask for favors. A statue of the Buddha with his hands resting gently in his lap and a compassionate smile reminds individuals to strive to develop peace and love within themselves. Bowing to the statue is an expression of gratitude for his teachings.

4. There are many different types of Buddhism, because the emphasis changes from country to country due to customs and cultures. What does not vary is the essence of the teaching.

5. The Buddha taught many things, but the basic concepts in Buddhism can be summed up by the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path to Righteousness.

6. The First Noble Truth is that Life is Suffering. This means that life includes pain, getting old, disease, and ultimately death. We also endure psychological suffering like loneliness, frustration, fear, embarrassment, disappointment, and anger. This fact cannot be denied. It is realistic rather than pessimistic because pessimism is expecting bad things to happen. Instead, Buddhism explains how suffering can be avoided and how we can be truly happy.

7. The Second Noble Truth is that Desire is the Cause of Suffering. Desire refers to craving. This means that we will suffer if we expect other people to conform to our expectations, if we want others to like us, if we do not get something we want, and so on. In other words, getting what you want does not guarantee happiness.

8. The Third Noble Truth is that Suffering can be Eliminated by Eliminating Desire. This means that true happiness and contentment are possible. If we give up useless craving and learn to live each day at a time (including not dwelling in the past or waiting for the future), then we can become happy and free. We then have more time and energy to help others, which is a part of Nirvana.

9. The Fourth Noble Truth is that Desire can be Eliminated by Following the Eightfold Path to Righteousness. This is the path that leads to the end of suffering. So, then, what is this Eightfold Path to Righteousness?

10. The path involves the Right views, Right intentions (or motivations), Right speech, Right conduct (or behavior), Right livelihood, Right effort (or ambition), Right mindfulness (or attitude), and Right meditation (or inner contemplation). The next logical question, then, is what is the right view, the right intention, the right speech, etc. The tricky part is that there is no single answer. Everything depends on the individual. Remember the first picture in this presentation with the caption that read, "Do not follow the ideas of others, but learn to listen to the voice within yourself"? This reflects the idea that finding one's path is a personal journey. But the reward for figuring it all out for oneself is inner peace.

11. This idea is echoed here, in some different words of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha: "Do not believe in anything simply because you have heard it. Do not believe in anything simply because it is spoken and rumored by many. Do not believe in anything because it is found written in your religious books. Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders. Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations. But after observation and analysis, when you find anything that agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it." This, again, refers to finding an independent path to righteousness.

12. I also like this idea from the Dalai Lama, a Buddhist monk: "This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness...there isn't anyone who doesn't appreciate kindness and compassion." Remember when we learned that Hinduism believes in "unity and diversity...in universal love and peace"? This idea is common to both ways of life.

13. The novel we're going to read, simply titled *Siddhartha*, involves Buddhism, but it is not a religious text or even a true study of the way of life. Rather, it is a narrative, a story, reflecting the author's internal struggle to understand his own life as a spiritual process.

The author of the novel is Hermann Hesse (his last name is pronounced either Hesse or Hess), and *Siddhartha* is his 9th novel. Hesse wrote the story in German, and it was first published in 1922 after Hesse spent some

time in India in the 1910's. It was later published in the United States in 1951, and became especially popular and influential in the 1960's. Hesse referred to his novels as "biographies of the soul" and the author became somewhat of a cult hero to the youth of the 1960's who themselves were searching for their place in a troubled and confusing world. In the novel, the main character's name, of course, is Siddhartha. However, this is not Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. It's someone else named Siddhartha, who happens to share some of the same situations. In any case, this fictitious Siddhartha originally follows Hinduism and is an especially intelligent Brahman, a member of the highest caste of the religion. He seems to have a perfect life—he has plenty of material things and everyone loves him—yet he feels empty—or spiritually hollow. He's experiencing a personal crisis and a private agony. So, Siddhartha goes on a journey of self-discovery, searching for some sort of inner peace. The story follows this journey—which mirrors the author's life to an extent.

14. The novel places an emphasis on soul-searching, stillness, harmony, balance, and peace.

15. There is universality to the novel. The "search for self" or one's place in the world is a universal experience. Most people cope with feeling "lost" or "alone" at some point in their lives. And I suspect that although none of us are Brahmans like Siddhartha, and we don't live in ancient India, we'll all still share a connection to the story. Also, again, our study of the book will not be as an analysis of Buddhism—you'll do that in World Cultures class—but more of an exploration of a character's search for happiness and fulfillment.

16. Every time I think of this book, I can't help but be reminded of the movie *City Slickers*, which some of you may know. It was made in 1991 and stars Billy Crystal and Jack Palance. The story, which is a comedy, revolves around Billy Crystal's character that is experiencing a mid-life crisis. The way he explains it is that he "can't find his smile." To get away from real-life for a while, goes on a two-week cattle-driving vacation with some friends, where they pretend to be cowboys. During the process or journey of driving the cattle, they all experience life-changing and life-enhancing moments. This reminds me of the journey Siddhartha goes on to "find his smile" or his way in life.

17. Finally, we're going to study some vocabulary with this story, like we did with *The Chosen*. Like we did with *The Chosen*, I'm going to give you the definitions for the words. Your job will be to learn them and understand them. Eventually we'll have a test on them.

Here are the definitions for the words from the first two chapters...

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| 1. Emanating | verb | coming out from a source; emit; spring |
| 2. Ablutions | noun | the washing of one's body as in a religious rite; bathing |
| 3. Transient | adjective | passing quickly into and out of existence; brief |
| 4. Inhalation | noun | the act of taking in (breathing in) |
| 5. Exhalation | noun | the act of giving off (breathing out) |
| 6. Insatiable | adjective | incapable of being satisfied; quenchless |
| 7. Idle | adjective | inactive; lacking worth; lazy |