Section 3
Beginnings of Buddhism

Chapter 4
Ancient India
Objectives

- Learn about the Buddha and his teachings.
- Find out how Buddhism was received inside and outside India.
Key Terms

- **meditate** to focus the mind inward in order to find spiritual awareness or relaxation
- **nirvana** the lasting peace that Buddhists seek by giving up selfish desires
- **missionary** a person who spreads his or her religious beliefs to others
A young man, age 30, who was once a prince began to wonder why humans suffered so greatly (loss of riches, death, etc).

The man, Siddhartha Gautama, gave up everything to search for the reasons of human suffering.

Gautama’s quest led to the discovery of Buddhism.
Buddha and His Teachings

- As Gautama traveled he wanted answers to his questions about life.

- He began by asking Hindus, but couldn’t accept that priests were the only ones allowed to pass along knowledge.
Gautama decided to stop looking to others for the cause of suffering and began to look inside himself for the answers.

He used meditation – focus the mind inward in order to find spiritual awareness.
He fasted (didn’t eat) and meditated for 49 days until he found his answer.

For the next 45 years, Gautama traveled across India to spread his knowledge.

His followers called him the Buddha which meant “enlightened one.”
The Middle Way

- Buddhism teaches people to follow the Eightfold Path, also called the Middle Way.

- By following this path, Buddhism teaches that a person will avoid a life of extreme unhappiness.
Buddha believed that power, wealth, and pleasure causes humans to suffer.

In order to end suffering, you must give up these things and follow the Eightfold Path.

A Buddhist must learn to be wise, behave correctly, and develop their mind.
Release from Reincarnation

To find this Middle Way, Buddha taught people to act unselfishly toward others and treat people fairly.
Tell the truth at all times.

Avoid violence and the killing of any living thing.

If a person does these things, suffering will end and they will find **nirvana** – lasting peace.

By finding nirvana, people will be released from the reincarnation cycle.
Followers of Buddhism

- Buddhism taught that all people are equal.
- Anyone could follow the path to nirvana, regardless of their social class.
- This appealed to many people in the caste system.
Buddhism has priests, and anyone can work to become one.

Buddha encouraged building monasteries where his followers could learn, meditate and teach.

He also urged them to be missionaries – people who spread their beliefs to others.
Reading Check

Why do Buddhists try to follow the Middle Way?

Buddhists try to follow the Middle Way so that they can avoid suffering.
Buddhism Inside and Outside India

- After Buddha’s death, his teachings spread all over India and throughout Asia.

- Eventually Buddhism died out in India as Hinduism took over.
Hindus and Buddhists: Shared Beliefs

- When Hinduism and Buddhism both existed in India, a number of basic ideas came to be shared by both.
- Both religions said harming living things was wrong.
- Both preached nonviolence.
Some Hindus came to honor Buddha as a reincarnation of Vishnu, but because Buddhists did not accept the ancient Hindu texts, Hindus did not worship Buddha as an avatar.
Buddhism Spreads to Other Countries

- Buddhism was accepted by millions of people in other lands. Missionaries and traders carried Buddha’s message throughout Asia.

- Buddhism first went to China, and then to Korea and Japan. The religion still exists in these countries today.
Reading Check

What other countries has Buddhism spread to?

Buddhism has spread to China, the Koreas, Japan, Tibet and Vietnam.
Section 3 Assessment

1a. Identify
Who was Siddhartha Gautama?

Siddhartha Gautama was a seeker of the meaning of life. He shared his knowledge with others and became the founder of Buddhism.
1b. Infer
Why did Siddhartha Gautama look for the cause of human suffering?

He had lived a sheltered life, but once he witnessed the pain and suffering of life, he decided to find the answer to such misery.
1c. Identify Cause and Effect

According to Buddhism, how is human suffering connected to human desires?

According to Buddhism, selfish desires cause human suffering.
2a. Explain what happened to the Buddha’s teachings in India after he died?

The Buddha’s ideas spread across India, but Buddhism eventually died out in the country.
What is the relationship between Buddhist and Hindu beliefs?

Buddhism and Hinduism share some common beliefs. The two religions coexisted in India in ancient times.
2c. Analyze
Why do you think that Buddhism was accepted in so many countries outside of India?

It teaches that all people are equal and that if people follow the Buddha’s path, their suffering will end.