

With your group, read the following *jataka* and answer the questions that follow.

THE DEAD MEN'S FOOD JATAKA

Adapted from *Stories of the Buddha*⁶

brahman—someone who practices Brahmanism, the main religion in India during Shakyamuni's lifetime. Brahmanism contained some ideas that overlapped with Buddhism, but also advocated the sacrifice of animals, observances of religious rites, and the offering of gifts to Brahmanic priests for salvation.

mantra—a short repetitive chant or prayer

In the past, a leading teacher who was also a brahman took a goat to sacrifice on behalf of the dead. He said to his pupils, "My sons, take this goat to the river, bathe it, throw a garland around its neck, groom it and bring it back." They did so and then set it on the riverbank. The goat, aware of its own past karma and realizing what was about to happen, rejoiced, thinking, "Today I shall be released from all this ill!" And it laughed a great laugh like the smashing of a jar. But then he thought, "This brahman having slain me will acquire ill through me!" and, feeling pity, it broke into loud weeping. Then those young pupils who had washed it asked, "Good goat, you laugh loudly and you weep loudly. Why do you laugh? Why do you weep?"

"Ask me the reason before my own master." They took it, and told their teacher. The Teacher asked the goat as they had done. The goat, remembering his past births, told this: "I, brahman, in the past was a mantra-reciting brahman like you. I killed a goat on behalf of the dead. I, through the killing of that goat, have had my head cut off in five hundred lives save one. This is the five hundredth life, and I laughed to think 'This is the last time, henceforth, I shall be released.' But I wept out of pity for you, who are about to incur a fate like mine hereafter."

"Fear not, goat, I will not kill you," said the Teacher.

"Brahman, what are you talking about?" asked the goat. "Whether you kill me or not, you cannot keep me from dying today."

"Goat, fear not," said the Teacher. "We will guard you and go about with you."

"Brahman," the goat replied, "guarding me will help little for the evil I did is very strong." Nevertheless they all guarded the goat, taking it with them. The goat, no sooner free, stretched its neck over a bush growing on a rock and began to eat the leaves. At that very moment a thunderbolt fell on the rock. A splinter, torn off from a tree, fell on the goat's neck and cut off its head. A crowd came together.

The Bodhisattva, who had then been reborn as the spirit of a tree, saw those people, and sitting cross-legged in the air, thought, "These beings coming to know the fruit of evil might refrain from taking life," and he taught the Right saying this verse:

"If only men thus knew: 'This birth-series is ill,' The living would not slay the living; grief is the slayer's lot."

Instructions

As a group, review the section "India During Buddha's Lifetime" in Handout #1a, *Information About Buddhism*, and write down the answers to the following questions.

Questions

1. Why does the goat laugh? Why does the goat weep?
2. What have the past 500 lives been like for the goat? According to the goat, what did he do to deserve his fate?
3. Which of the following Buddhist beliefs does this story best illustrate?
 - Everything in life is impermanent.
 - Do not kill.
 - Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth.
 - Everyone can become a Buddha.
 - Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path.
 - Practice moderation in all things.

Raise your hand when you have finished answering all the above questions.

4. Create a cartoon strip (10–15 pictures with dialogue and narrative) that tells this story. Coordinate with your group members to decide what events, dialogue, and narrative will be in each picture. Divide the work equally and be prepared to display your work in class.

With your group, read the following *jataka* and answer the questions that follow.

THE MONKEY-LORD JATAKA

Adapted from *Stories of the Buddha*¹⁷

bodhisattva—a being who has attained enlightenment, but vows not to enter into final *nirvana* until all living things are released from suffering. *Bodhisattvas* choose to be reborn so that they can continue to work to relieve the suffering of others and try to make them aware of the Buddha's teachings. In this case, the *bodhisattva* has been reborn as the Monkey-Lord.

In the past, the Bodhisattva was reborn in the monkey world and had grown as big as a colt and very strong. He dwelt on the bank of a river. In the middle of the river was a little island, fertile in diverse fruit trees such as mangoes, breadfruit, and the like. The Bodhisattva, being as strong as an elephant, would leap from his bank to a flat rock, lying midway between his bank and the little island, and then leap over to the isle. There he would eat his fill of fruit and then return in the evening. Everyday he would do the same. This was how he kept himself alive.

Now at this time, there was a crocodile and his wife living in that river. The wife, seeing that Bodhisattva go by time after time, hungered for the monkey's heart flesh, and told her mate of her craving. The crocodile said, "Very good, you shall get it," and thought, "Today as he comes back at evening from the island I'll catch him." He went and lay down on the flat rock. The Bodhisattva, having spent the day on the island, stood and looked over to the rock. He thought, "That rock appears higher today, what's the reason?" Every day, the monkey would determine the height of the water and of the rock and thus the difference concerned him. "Today there is neither fall nor rise in the height of the water, yet the rock has become bigger; I wonder now whether there's a crocodile lying on the rock to catch me? I'll first test him." And standing there as if talking with the rock, he said, "Master rock!" After three calls, getting no reply, he said, "Why, master rock, is it that today you make no reply?"

The crocodile thought, "Why surely on other days this rock has been giving answer to the monkey; I'll now answer him," and he said: "What is it, master monkey?"

"Who are you?" asked the monkey.

"I'm a crocodile."

"What are you lying there for?"

"Hoping I'll get your heart's flesh," replied the crocodile.

The Bodhisattva thought: "There's no other way for me to go; today I'll have to get around that crocodile." And he said to him: "Good crocodile, I'll give myself up to you. Open your mouth and catch me as I come."

Now crocodiles, when their mouths are open, shut their eyes. This is what happened with this crocodile, he not seeing the plan. And so he lay.

feat—accomplishment

resolve—firm
determination

The Bodhisattva, seeing how he was, mouth open, eyes shut, sprang from the island on to the crocodile's head, and like a flash of lightning, leapt again and landed on the river bank. The crocodile, seeing the feat, thought, "It's a marvel what this monkey has done," and saying, "Master monkey, a man in this world who has four things overcomes his enemies; all four are inside you, I reckon." The crocodile then spoke this verse, "In whom are these four things, lord monkey, as in you, Truth, Right, Resolve, Surrender, he outruns the foe." Thus praising the Bodhisattva, the crocodile went back to his own place.

Instructions

As a group, review the sections "*Nirvana*" and "How to Achieve *Nirvana*" in Handout #1a, *Information About Buddhism*, and write down the answers to the following questions.

Questions

1. What is a *bodhisattva*?
2. In what ways does the monkey follow the Eightfold Path?
3. Which of the following Buddhist beliefs does this story best illustrate?
 - Everything in life is impermanent.
 - Do not kill.
 - Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth.
 - Everyone can become a Buddha.
 - Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path.
 - Practice moderation in all things.

Raise your hand when you have finished answering all the above questions.

4. Create a cartoon strip (10–15 pictures with dialogue and narrative) that tells this story. Coordinate with your group members to decide what events, dialogue, and narrative will be in each picture. Divide the work equally and be prepared to display your work in class.

With your group, read the following *jataka* and answer the questions that follow.

THE DECAYED WELL JATAKA

Adapted from *Stories of the Buddha*¹⁸

In the past, the Bodhisattva was born in a trader's family and became a caravan leader. Having collected many things and having filled many carts, he led many traders on their journey. On passing through the jungle he saw a well. There those traders, saying, "We will drink water," dug about the well, and in their work discovered much iron and other precious stones. Though they had found much treasure they were not content and went on digging, saying, "There will be other things here more beautiful than this." Then the Bodhisattva said, "Traders my masters! Greed is the root of ruin; much wealth have we gained; be content and dig no further." They, though warned, went on digging.

But that well was haunted by Nagas (cobras who could assume human shape). The king of the well, dwelling below, his mansion being broken by falling clods and sand, was angry and killed them all with the wind of his nostrils, all except the Bodhisattva. Coming forth from the Naga realm, the king had carts harnessed and filled with gems. He placed the Bodhisattva on a lucky wagon and bid young Nagas to propel the carts. The Bodhisattva was sent home where he spent his wealth making the whole of India better, gave gifts, observed the moral code, kept holy days, and at the end of life, arrived in the Bright World.

The Teacher, having brought up this past, and being very enlightened, spoke these verses:

"Digging a worn-out well traders in need of water
Came upon iron and copper and tin and lead—those traders
Silver and gold and pearls and cat's eyes—lots of them.
They therewith not contented yet more, yet more went on digging.

Them the serpent there, fearsome and fiery, with fire slew.
Hence let him who digs dig not too much; over-dug is of evil.
And the wealth, that is won by digging by over-digging is ruined."

Instructions

As a group, review the third paragraph under "The Legend of Shakyamuni" in Handout #1a, *Information About Buddhism*, and write down the answers to the following questions.

Questions

1. In what way does Shakyamuni first try to reach enlightenment? Why did he quit? What method does he believe is better?
2. Why do the traders continue to dig around the well, even after they had found many jewels?
3. Which of the following Buddhist beliefs does this story best illustrate?
 - Everything in life is impermanent.
 - Do not kill.
 - Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth.
 - Everyone can become a Buddha.
 - Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path.
 - Practice moderation in all things.

Raise your hand when you have finished answering all the above questions.

4. Create a cartoon strip (10–15 pictures with dialogue and narrative) that tells this story. Coordinate with your group members to decide what events, dialogue, and narrative will be in each picture. Divide the work equally and be prepared to display your work in class.

With your group, read the following *jataka* and answer the questions that follow.

THE SUJATA (WELL-BORN) JATAKA

Adapted from *Stories of the Buddha*¹⁹

stupa—a dome-shaped monument

lamenting—grieving, weeping and wailing

In the past, the Bodhisattva was born in the house of a landowner, and was called Sujata. When he had come of age his grandfather died. Then his father, from the day of the grandfather's death, steeped in grief, brought the cremated remains of the grandfather's body, and making a clay stupa in his own park, laid them there. From time to time he did honor to the stupa with flowers, contemplating and lamenting. He lived without bathing or anointing or taking meals or minding his business.

Seeing this, the Bodhisattva thought: "From the time grandfather died, my father lives overwhelmed with sorrow. No one but I can make him understand this. There's one plan by which I will make him lose his sorrow." Going out of the city he saw a dead ox. He fetched grass and water and laying them before it called: "Eat, eat! Drink, drink!" Passersby said: "My good Sujata, are you crazy? You give grass and water to a dead ox." He answered nothing. Then they went up to his father and said, "Your son has gone crazy. He is giving grass and water to a dead ox." Hearing that, the father-griever went to the son-griever. He said, "Are you not a wise man, dear Sujata? For what reason are you giving grass and drink to a dead ox?" And the father uttered two verses:

"Why in a hurry cut
Green grass and say 'Eat! Eat!'
To creatures that are gone,
To aged worn-out cow.

verily—in truth

Not verily by food,
Nor drink will you raise up
An ox that is no more.
Vainly you call on him,
Showing you're slow of wit."

vainly—uselessly

Thereupon, the Bodhisattva uttered two verses:

"The head's yet there, the feet,
Front, hind, and eke the tail
Are still the same—methinks
The ox may yet rise up.

methinks—"I think..."

But of the grandsire's head,
Hands, feet are nothing seen.
Weeping beside clay tomb
You only, slow of wit!"

transient—not regular or permanent

Hearing that, the Bodhisattva's father thought, "My son is wise. He knows what should be done as to this world and the next. He has done this deed in order to make me understand." And saying "Dear wise Sujata, I know the saying, 'All things are transient'; henceforth I will not grieve. I will be able to stop grieving because I have such a son who is able to dispel his father's grief." And he praised his son.

Instructions

As a group, review "The Four Noble Truths" in Handout #1a, *Information About Buddhism*, and write down the answers to the following questions.

Questions

1. What do the Four Noble Truths say about why "life is suffering"?
2. Why does the father in this story decide to stop mourning the death of his own father?
3. Which of the following Buddhist beliefs does this story best illustrate?
 - Everything in life is impermanent.
 - Do not kill.
 - Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth.
 - Everyone can become a Buddha.
 - Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path.
 - Practice moderation in all things.

Raise your hand when you have finished answering all the above questions.

4. Create a cartoon strip (10–15 pictures with dialogue and narrative) that tells this story. Coordinate with your group members to decide what events, dialogue, and narrative will be in each picture. Divide the work equally and be prepared to display your work in class.

With your group, read the following Buddhist parable and answer the questions that follow.

PARABLE (1)

Excerpted from the *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*
(*The Lotus Sutra*)²⁰

	The Buddha...proclaimed...:	The ghosts and demons
	Suppose that, for example, a great man	Raised their voices in a scream.
	Had a great house.	The eagles and other birds...
	The house, since it was old,	Milled about in a panic, unable to get out....
	Was in a state of collapse:	At that time the householder,
precarious—lacking in stability	The halls were lofty and <u>precarious</u> ,	Standing outside the door,
	The bases of the pillars crumbling and rotten,	Heard someone say,
	The beams and ridgepoles aslant,	"Your children
gribble—a type of marine animal	The stairways and landings disintegrating...	A while ago, in play,
	Totally misshapen	Entered this house.
	And full of assorted filth.	Being little and knowing nothing,
malignant—bad, evil	There were five hundred persons	They are enjoying themselves and clinging to their amusements."
	Dwelling within.	Having heard this, the great man
milled—moved slowly	Kites, owls and eagles...	Entered the burning house in alarm,
	Newts, snakes, vipers, and <u>gribbles</u> ...	To save them...
	Weasels, badgers and mice,	He uttered a warning to his children....
asunder—into parts and pieces	And other <u>malignant</u> beings	"This is a <u>woeful</u> and troublesome place;
	<u>Milled</u> back and forth in a crisscross....	How much the more so with a great fire!"
woeful—sad	Here and there and all about	The children, knowing nothing,
	Were ghosts and demons....	Though they heard their father's <u>admonitions</u> ,
admonition—warning	This old and decayed house	Still, addicted as before to their pleasures,
	Belonged to one man.	Amused themselves ceaselessly.
	The man had gone a short distance from the house	At that time, the great man
expedient—something that is a means to an end; something used to meet an urgent need	When, before he had been gone very long,	Had this thought:
	In the rear apartments	"The children, being this way,
	Suddenly a fire broke out,	Make my cares even more acute.
	From all four sides at once	Now this house
	Raging in flame.	Has not one pleasant feature,
	The ridgepoles and beams, the rafters and pillars,	Yet the children,
	Shaking and cracking with a sound of explosion,	Steeped in their games
	Broke <u>asunder</u> and fell,	And not heeding my instructions,
	While the walls and partitions collapsed.	Will surely be injured by the fire."
		Then... devising some <u>expedients</u> ,
		He announced to the children:
		"I have various

adorned—decorated

Precious playthings,
 Lovely carriages adorned with fine
 jewels...
 Now outside the door.
 Come out, all of you!...
 When the children heard him tell
 Of carriages such as these,
 Straightway, racing one another,
 They ran out at a gallop...
 The great man, seeing his children
 Able to get out of the burning
 house...
 Joyfully said to himself,
 "Now I am happy!..."
 At that time the children,
 Knowing that their father was
serenely seated,
 All went before their father
 And addressed him, saying:
 "We beg you to give us
 The three kinds of jeweled chariots

serenely—peacefully

That you promised us a while ago..."
 These lovely carriages He gave equally
 to all the children....
 I, too, am like this...
 The Father of the World.
 All the living beings,
 All my children,
 Are profoundly addicted to worldly
 pleasure
 And have no wise thoughts.
 The three spheres, completely insecure,
 Are just like a house afire,
 Being full of many woes
 Most frightful,
 Constantly marked by birth, old age,
 Sickness, death and care—
 Fires such as these,
 Raging without cease....
 From which I alone
 Can save them....

Instructions

As a group, review "The *Dharma*, Reincarnation and *Karma*" and "The Four Noble Truths" sections from Handout #1a, *Information About Buddhism*, and write down the answers to the following questions.

Questions

1. In this parable, the house is an analogy for something else. What is this parable comparing the house to?
2. Why do the children not want to come out of the house at first?
3. Which of the following Buddhist beliefs does this story best illustrate?
 - Everything in life is impermanent.
 - Do not kill.
 - Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth.
 - Everyone can become a Buddha.
 - Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path.
 - Practice moderation in all things.

Raise your hand when you have finished answering all the above questions.

4. Create a cartoon strip (10–15 pictures with dialogue and narrative) that tells this story. Coordinate with your group members to decide what events, dialogue, and narrative will be in each picture. Divide the work equally and be prepared to display your work in class.

With your group, read the following Buddhist parable and answer the questions that follow.

PARABLE (2)

Excerpted from the *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*
(*The Lotus Sutra*)²¹

	This day we, Having heard the Buddha's spoken teaching Dance for joy That we have gained something we had never had before	What shall I do with them?" At that time, the poor son, In quest of food and clothing... From kingdom to kingdom, Now getting something, Now not.
buddha—a title meaning "awakened one."	For the Buddha says that voice-hearers Shall be able to become <u>Buddhas</u> ...	Hungry, weak, and <u>emaciated</u> he was... Eventually, in his passage,
multitude—many	For example: suppose that a boy, Young and knowing nothing, Forsaking his father and running away, Arrived far off in another land,	He reached the city in which his father dwelt... At length arrived at his father's house...
myriad—a great number	Then went about through several countries For more than fifty years.	The poor son, seeing his father Rich and powerful, stern and majestic,
deference—respect	His father, tormented by grief, Sought him in all four directions; Then when weary with the search, He settled in a city, Where he built himself a house...	Thought, "This is a king, Or the equal of a king." In his <u>consternation</u> he wondered Why he had come hither.
decrepit—weakened, worn out	The house was great and rich.... <u>Multitudes</u> in the thousands of <u>myriads</u> of millions Surrounded him in <u>deference</u> , And by kings he was constantly Loved and cherished...	Repeatedly he thought, "If I stay long, I may be driven Or <u>coerced</u> to work."
grief-stricken—sorrowful	For this reason Those who came and went were numerous. Such were his power and wealth. Having great power, But being of advanced and <u>decrepit</u> age, He was all the more <u>grief-stricken</u> in recalling his son.	When he had had these thoughts, He ran off in haste, Inquiring about poor villages, For he wished to go to one to work for hire.
emaciated—extremely thin, especially as a result of starvation	Morn and night he thought: "When my time to die was about to arrive, My stupid son left me, Now more than fifty years since. My treasure houses and everything in them—	The great man, at this time Seated on his lion throne, And seeing his son from a distance, Silently recognized him. Accordingly, he commanded messengers To overtake him and bring him back. The poor son cried out in alarm...
consternation—great fear		"If these men have seized me, It must mean that I am going to be killed..."
coerced—forced to act or think in a certain way by use of pressure or threats		The great man knew his son To be foolish and mean: "He will not believe my words,

imposing—impressive,
frightening

menial—unskilled

diligence—careful effort

suffice—to meet present
needs or requirements

kin—one's relatives

vassals—subordinates,
dependants

He will not believe this is his father."
Accordingly...

He sent other men...

Persons of no imposing appearance
[And told them]: "You may talk to him,

Saying, 'We will hire you
To clear away dung and other filth,
Giving you a double wage.'"

The poor son, hearing this
And following them joyfully,
At their behest cleared away dung and
filth

And cleaned the rooms and
apartments.

The great man through his window
Constantly saw his son,
And was mindful that the son, being
foolish and inferior,

Enjoyed doing menial work.
Thereupon the great man,

Putting on torn and filthy garments
And taking in hand a dung-shovel,
Went to his son's work place...
And talking to him, he caused him to
work with diligence:

"I have already increased your wage
And anointed your feet with oil.
Your food and drink suffice,
And your bedding is thick and
warm."

He spoke to him sternly:
"You must work hard!"

He also used gentle words:
"You are like my son."

The great man, being wise,

Eventually permitted him to enter
and leave,

Throughout twenty years

Having charge of the great man's
household affairs.

He showed him his gold and silver...
The income and expenditure of his
various things,

Making him responsible for all.
Yet, the son still lived outside the gate...

And thinking of his own poor state:
"I have none of these things."

The father, knowing that his son's
thoughts

Were at last broad and great,
And wishing to give him his treasure,

Straightway assembled his kin,
The king and his ministers...

And in this great multitude
Said, "This is my son!....

Everything I have,

My houses and my vassals,
I make over entirely to him,

To do with as he pleases."
The son, who still had in mind his
former poverty

And his lowly ambitions,
And who now, in his father's presence,
Was the great recipient of precious
gems...

And all manner of treasure,
Was overjoyed,

Having gained something he had
never had before.

Instructions

As a group, review the section, "India During Buddha's Lifetime" in Handout #1a, *Information About Buddhism*, and write down the answers to the following questions.

Questions

1. In what ways are Buddhist ideas different from the ideas that had existed previously in India?
2. How is the son different at the beginning of the story from the end of the story? How did this change come about?

3. Which of the following Buddhist beliefs does this story best illustrate?

- Everything in life is impermanent.
- Do not kill.
- Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth.
- Everyone can become a Buddha.
- Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path.
- Practice moderation in all things.

Raise your hand when you have finished answering all the above questions.

4. Create a cartoon strip (10–15 pictures with dialogue and narrative) that tells this story. Coordinate with your group members to decide what events, dialogue, and narrative will be in each picture. Divide the work equally and be prepared to display your work in class.

JATAKA AND PARABLE THEMES

Read each cartoon that represents the *jatakas* or parables read by the class. Match the description that best describes the message of each group's cartoon or story.

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|--|--------------|
| 1. Everything in life is impermanent. | Group A ____ |
| 2. Do not kill. | Group B ____ |
| 3. Life is suffering, and therefore one's goal should be to escape the cycle of rebirth. | Group C ____ |
| 4. Everyone can become a buddha. | Group D ____ |
| 5. Lead a life that follows the Eightfold Path. | Group E ____ |
| 6. Practice moderation in all things. | Group F ____ |