A Global View

Religion is defined as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices, and worship that centers on one or more gods. As many chapters in this book explain, religion has had a significant impact on world history. Throughout the centuries, religion has guided the beliefs and actions of millions around the globe. It has brought people together. But it has also torn them apart.

Religion continues to be a dominant force throughout the world, affecting everything from what people wear to how they behave. There are thousands of religions in the world. The following pages concentrate on five major religions and on Confucianism, an ethical system. They examine some of the characteristics and rituals that make these religions and systems similar as well as unique. They also present some of each religion’s sects and denominations.

The Study of Religions

Encourage students to examine each religion on its own terms and not to judge it by the standards of other religions. You might explain to students that this approach may involve trying to deal in a non-biased fashion with concepts that run counter to their own beliefs.

Recommended Resources

Books


Videos and Software

Beliefs and Believers. RMI Media Productions, 1992. 800-745-5480. Twenty-four one-hour videos dealing with myth, doctrine, ritual, and ethics in world religions.


Religions of the World. CD-ROM. SVE & Churchill Media. 800-829-1900. Explores the diverse beliefs and practices of four of the world’s major religions: Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Buddhism.
Creating Bar Graphs

**Class Time** 45 minutes

**Task** Creating bar graphs showing religious affiliations in different areas of the world

**Purpose** To present and compare information presented in different visual formats

**Instructions** Have student pairs work together to create bar graphs showing the data presented in the pie charts on these pages. Tell them that the vertical axis of each graph should display percentages from 0% to 100%, and the bars should represent the major religions. You may want to draw a sample graph on the board to demonstrate. Encourage students to plot the graphs manually on graph paper, or by one of the many available computer-graphing programs.

After student pairs have created their bar graphs, have them compare the pie charts with the bar graphs. Ask students, which format allows them to compare religious affiliations within a country or region more easily? Which allows them to compare religious affiliations throughout the world more easily? Challenge students to describe what they think are the strong points of each format.