

Buddhism Artefacts Collection

Guidance Notes for Teachers

See, feel and discuss a range of Buddhist artefacts to enhance faith learning. Use this core selection of artefacts as a starting point for any Buddhism topic. The artefacts in this pack predominantly focus on Tibetan Buddhism which is practiced in the Himalayan regions of Northern India, Bhutan and Nepal.



Contents:

- 1 x Buddha Figure
- 1 x Set of Incense
- 1 x Incense Holder
- 1 x Prayer Beads
- 1 x Set of Puja Bowls
- 1 x Set of Buddhist Prayer Flags

Please note contents and designs may vary.



The resources in the Buddhism Artefacts Collection shown in the pictures on the left can be used in KS1, KS2 and KS3 classrooms.

- Provide an engaging artefact handling opportunity with high-quality resources.
- Create cross-curricular links and cover elements of the RE, Geography and Art and Design curriculum.
- Introduce the resources during whole class teaching and provide time for hands-on exploration in small groups.
- Enhance classroom displays and promote discussion by displaying the items.
- Add the resources to tabletop areas and promote independent investigation.
- Put faith learning into context by using as aids for teaching Buddhist festivals, daily worship and more.
- Provide opportunities for wellbeing and mindfulness.



Activity 1 – Artefact Identification

- Use the information below to identify and name each of the artefacts.
- Give time for pupils to explore the artefacts.
- How are the artefacts used and what do they represent?

Activity 2 – Fact Sharing

- Use the information below and the *Explore further* suggestions, to create fact files about Buddhism.
- Put the fact files together to create one shared piece of information.
- Find out if someone in the school or wider community would like to visit and share their experiences of Buddhism.

Activity 3 – Create a Shrine

- Consider the different elements of Buddhist worship (puja).
- Create a respectful shrine within the classroom drawing on known facts from the information below and any further research.
- Encourage the pupils to design and make their own shrines.

Activity 4 – Meditation and Mindfulness

- Talk about the importance and purpose of meditation in Buddhism.
- Provide a safe space for those pupils who would like to participate.
- Allow time for reflection and personal mantras to be created.

Activity 5 – Geography Investigation

- Use a world map to locate Nepal, India and Tibet.
- How did Buddhism evolve and spread?
- Choose a location to research further. Think about the flag, culture, food, history and significant landmarks. What is special about the flag of Nepal?

Activity 6 – Art and Design

- Use the prayer flags as inspiration to create own set of flags, include images and personalised mantras or messages.
- A mandala is a symbolic and complex representation of the universe. Use coloured sand/large chalks to create bright mandalas. Use flowers to create 3D mandalas.
- Draw and decorate lotus flowers and include the mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum*.

➤ Buddha Figure

Siddhartha Gautama was born to a privileged family over 2,500 years ago, in Lumbini, which then was part of northern India, but is now part of Nepal. For most of the early years of his life his father shielded him from the sights and stories of the poverty and suffering that went on outside the palace. Aged 29, Siddhartha left his life of luxury and comfort and went to find spiritual awareness. After six years of searching Siddhartha meditated under the Bodhi tree and thought about why suffering happened and how it could be overcome. After meditating for six days and nights he opened his eyes and realized he understood the nature of suffering. He became enlightened and from then on was known as Buddha, which means 'awakened one'. Buddhists believe that Buddha is the wisest and most kind-hearted person in this world. Buddhists do not worship the Buddha statue, rather it is seen as a symbol that can be helpful in creating devotion, uplifting the mind, focussing attention and as a reminder of Buddha's teachings.

Explore further – Look further into the story of Siddhartha Gautama. Research the different postures of Buddha statues. What are the Four Noble Truths?

➤ Set of Incense

This incense is made from various aromatic herbs found in the high-altitude regions of Tibet and Nepal. This incense is widely used by Buddhists and many others for the purposes of meditation, relaxation, purification and offerings. Tibetan incense is different from other styles because it is not composed of a mixture of essential oils but from woods mixed with other natural ingredients found in the Himalayan region. It is handmade according to the ancient monastic tradition and without a stick inside which gives the incense a deep, rich, earthy aroma. The burning of an incense stick, resulting in fragrant smoke, is a good way to show respect, to symbolically purify your space, to soothe your mind and to aid your meditation practice.

Explore Further – In Buddhism, using incense is seen as a sacred offering; what else may be offered at a shrine?

➤ Prayer Beads

Also known as – Mallah, Mala, Malla

These Fair Trade wooden prayer beads are a type of Buddhist Rosary crafted in Nepal. These sacred beads are carefully strung together and finished with a decorative tassel. It consists of 108 beads, a profoundly auspicious number in Buddhism. The number 108 can be interpreted in many ways, but a popular interpretation is that the 1 represents the one true path, the 0 represents the circle of life and the 8 represents the infinity loop. This purposeful design is believed to help facilitate a profound connection with one's inner self during moments of reflection and devotion. Practitioners chant a mantra for each of the beads and by doing this Buddhists believe that the invisible thread which links the person to the divine and their higher self is awakened. 'Om Mani Padme Hum' is a quintessential Buddhist chant, commonly translated as 'the jewel is in the lotus'. Often referred to as a mini mantra, this six-syllable mantra is said to bring peace, compassion, and wisdom to those who recite it.

Explore Further – A mantra is a sound, word or phrase which is repeated and believed to have a special spiritual power. Spend time creating personal mantras that are significant to the individual.



➤ Puja Bowls

Buddhist worship is called 'puja' and offerings of water are amongst the most common forms of offering at Buddhist shrines. Puja bowls are used on a shrine and each bowl stands for a different part of the ritual:

- 1 – Prostrating to Buddha
- 2 – Offerings to Buddha
- 3 – Confessing wrongs
- 4 – Rejoicing the good qualities of oneself and others
- 5 – Requesting Buddha's guidance
- 6 – Asking Buddha to remain with you
- 7 – Dedication

Offerings of flowers, candles, incense and pure water are made at a shrine. One reason why water is offered in the bowls is because it has traditionally been considered a plentiful substance in Tibet and all offerings should be made as freely as we would give water. It is important that the bowls are displayed in a straight line and an equal distance apart, preferably the length of one grain of rice or barley. Empty bowls should not be placed on the shrine, and the first full bowl should fill the following six. During worship people chant to show their love for Buddha and to give thanks for his teachings.

Explore Further - Prostration is performed by dropping the body forward and stretching full length on the floor with arms outstretched. The hands are then brought together and placed on the crown of the head, then to the mouth and then heart. Allow time for those pupils that would like to try this. Look at images of Buddhist shrines.

➤ Buddhist Prayer Flags

Prayer flags have been used for centuries in Tibetan Buddhist cultures to promote peace, compassion and positive energy. These brightly coloured flags, typically adorned with sacred symbols and mantras (*including Om Mani Padme Hum*), are believed to bring good fortune to those who display them. The practice of hanging prayer flags goes back thousands of years and pre-dates Buddhism. When Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, the practice of using prayer flags was incorporated into the religion.

Each colour of the prayer flags holds a different meaning and represents a different element:

- Blue symbolizes the sky and represents the space element
- White symbolizes the air and represents the wind element
- Red symbolizes fire and represents the fire element
- Green symbolizes water and represents the water element
- Yellow symbolizes earth and represents the earth element

When these elements are in balance it is said that internally, health can be achieved for the mind and body, and externally, by bringing harmony to the environment. In addition to the colours, the symbols and mantras on the flags also hold deep significance. For example, Lung-Ta, the “Wind Horse”, is pictured on many prayer flags representing good fortune and the ability to rise above obstacles. It is believed that when the Lung-Ta prayer flag blows in the wind, the spiritual powers of the sacred images benefit all of those around.

Prayer flags are deliberately not hemmed and after some time will naturally fade and fray, symbolising the passing nature of all things. When that happens, the flags are traditionally burned to carry their blessings to the heavens and then replaced by new flags that contain renewed wishes. Alternatively, people may simply put new ones over the old ones.

Prayer flags can be hung both inside to increase harmony and spiritual awareness, or outside (the higher the better) to benefit the environment and all beings touched by the wind. In Tibetan culture, prayer flags are often strung along mountain trails or placed at the top of mountains, where they can spread their positive energy as far as possible. It is important to remember that prayer flags should be treated with respect as they contain sacred text and symbols. When hanging the flags, it is also important to have the correct intentions: “May all beings benefit” rather than something self-motivated such as “I will benefit.” It is traditional for new flags to be hung up during the Tibetan New Year, Losar.



Photo credits: Siesta



➤ Fair Trade

Fair Trade is a worldwide movement that aims to help farmers and producers in less economically developed countries. The term Fair Trade means that producers receive a fair price for the goods they produce.

The items included in this pack can be a way to teach and learn about the principles of Fair Trade. Teaching the principles of Fair Trade provides learning opportunities in many areas of learning, including PSED, Understanding the World and Geography. The items have been sourced by a supplier who is a member of BAFTS (the British Association for Fair Trade Shops and Suppliers) for over 25 years and is also a BAFTS recognised Fair Trade importer.

Most of the suppliers of the artefacts in this pack are small family businesses employing only a few people; and try to keep them in continuous work enabling their businesses to grow.

Explore further – What are the 10 Principles of Fair Trade? How does Fair Trade help producers? Research the many organisations around the world, including Fairtrade Foundation, the British Association for Fair Trade Shops and Suppliers (BAFTS) and World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO).