

## Religious Education 35

**Outcome D: Students will explore and respect how other World Religions understand their sacred texts as guides to moral living.**

- Students will research how other world religions understand their sacred texts as guides to moral living.
- Students will compare and contrast the Catholic understanding of Scripture with sacred texts from other World Religions.

### **Sacred Text Assignment**

#### **Teacher Preparation:**

Read *World Religions Sacred Text Review* at the end of this document.

#### **Materials:**

(Student photocopies or make available digitally) Sacred Text Assignment

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#### **Procedure:**

1. Review Sacred Text Assignment sheet with students along with the Planning/Research Chart.
  2. Have students conduct research and fill in the Planning/Research Chart.
  3. Have the students create a multi-media presentation that compares and contrasts the Catholic understanding of Scripture with sacred texts from other World Religions. Explain how each World Religion understands their sacred text as a guide to moral living.
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## **World Religions Sacred Text Review**

### **Catholicism**

Sacred Scripture: Bible

Sacred Scripture is the written testimony of the divine Word, the canonical memory that attests to the event of Revelation. However, the Word of God precedes the Bible and surpasses it. That is why the centre of our faith isn't just a book, but a salvation history and above all a person, Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh.

The relationship between Christ, the Word Made Flesh; and the Scriptures, the written Word of God, lies at the heart of what the Church calls Sacred Tradition:

It is precisely because the Word of God embraces and extends beyond Scripture that, in order to properly understand it, the Holy Spirit's constant presence, who guides us "to all truth," is necessary. It is necessary to place ourselves within the great Tradition that has, with the Holy Spirit's assistance and the Magisterium's guidance, recognized the canonical writings as the Word that God addresses to his people, who have never ceased meditating upon it and discovering inexhaustible riches from it.

The Bible is a form of God's revelation to man, but the most complete form of that revelation is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures arose out of the life of the Church—that is, out of the life of those believers who encountered Christ, both personally and through their fellow believers. They were written within the context of that relationship with Christ, and the selection of the canon—of the books that would become the Bible—occurred within that context. But even after the canon of Scripture is determined, Scripture remains only a portion of the Word of God, because the fullness of the Word is found in the life of the Church and her relationship to Christ.

In fact, Sacred Scripture is the Word of God in that it is written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Sacred Tradition, instead, transmits the Word of God in its entirety, entrusted by Christ the Lord and by the Holy Spirit to the Apostles and their successors, so that these, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, might faithfully preserve it with their preaching, might expound and propound it.

Excerpt from: Pope Francis: "The Word of God Precedes the Bible and Surpasses It" by Scott P. Richert <http://catholicism.about.com/>

## Judaism

Sacred Scripture: Torah, Talmud and Tanakh

The Torah is Judaism's most important text. It is composed of the Five Books of Moses and also contains the 613 commandments (mitzvot) and the Ten Commandments. The word "Torah" means 'to teach'.

<http://judaism.about.com/od/judaismbasics/a/What-Is-The-Torah-Chumash.htm>

World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective

Chapter 4: Central Beliefs of Judaism pages 125-134

The basic story is found in the **Torah**, the first five books of the scriptures. The Torah remains the heart of Jewish faith as it tells of God making a covenant with a people.

The **Talmud** is second in importance to the **Tanakh** and is an enormous book of Jewish civil and religious laws and ethical teachings.

## Islam

Sacred Scripture: The Qur'an

World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective

Chapter 6: The Story of Islam-central beliefs pages 207-213

The Qur'an- this book is the voice of Allah spoken to the Prophet Muhammad by the Angel Gabriel. The Qur'an gives guidance on how to worship, behave, and see the world. Most learn Arabic early so they can read the Qur'an in its original language.

“The Quran is organized into chapters called *surah*, and verses called *ayat*. In addition, the entire text is divided into 30 sections called *ajiza'*, in order to facilitate its reading over a month-long period.” <http://islam.about.com/od/quran/tp/Quran.htm>

## Hinduism

Sacred Scripture: Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita  
World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective  
Chapter 7: Central Beliefs pages 242-243

The oldest Hindu scriptures are the Vedas, named for the Sanskrit word for knowledge. Upanishads were shared orally for more than 1000 years before they were written down. Each of the Upanishads is like a conversation in which a person sits down beside a wise teacher to learn about the Vedas.

For Hindus, all of the Vedas are revelations, but the conversations in the Upanishads came to be seen as the heart of the Vedas and have had the strongest influence on Hinduism to this day.

Second type of Hindu scriptures are the traditional or “remembered” scriptures. Best-known examples: Ramayana and Bhagavad Gita.

“The Vedas are considered the earliest literary record of Indo-Aryan civilization, and the most sacred books of India. They are the original scriptures of [Hindu](#) teachings, and contain spiritual knowledge encompassing all aspects of our life. [Vedic literature](#) with its philosophical maxims has stood the test of time and is the highest religious authority for all sections of Hindus in particular and for mankind in general. Veda means wisdom, knowledge or vision, and it manifests the language of the gods in human speech. The laws of the Vedas regulate the social, legal, domestic and religious customs of the Hindus to the present day. All the obligatory duties of the Hindus at birth, marriage, death etc. owe their allegiance to the Vedic ritual. They draw forth the thought of a successive generation of thinkers, and so contain within it the different strata of thought.” <http://hinduism.about.com/cs/vedasvedanta/a/aa120103a.htm>

## Buddhism

Sacred Scriptures: Tripitakas (Three Baskets)  
World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective  
Chapter 8: The Community and Scriptures pages 272-273 and Central Beliefs pages 274-276.

Theravada Buddhists believe in the *Tripitakas* (Three Baskets), which are often called the first Buddhist scriptures.

Students may include the following terms and explanations: samsara, karma, The Three Jewels, the Three marks of Existence (Three Universal Truths), The Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path

“Buddhism is a religion of practice and experience rather than belief. This is a bit hard for some to grasp. In our culture, “religion” is a belief system, and “faith” means accepting those beliefs. But the Buddha taught us to accept no teaching without testing it. Instead of believing in teachings, we practice the teachings to realize the truth of them for ourselves. And the first teaching from which all other teachings flow is that of the Four Noble Truths.”

<http://buddhism.about.com/od/basicbuddhistteachings/u/basics.htm>

“There is one other reason that there is no Buddhist Bible. Many religions consider their scriptures to be the revealed word of God or gods. In Buddhism, however, it is understood that the scriptures are teachings of the historical Buddha -- who was not a god -- or other enlightened masters. The teachings in Buddhist scriptures are directions for practice, or how to realize enlightenment for oneself. What's important is to understand and practice what the texts are teaching, not just "believe in" them.”

<http://buddhism.about.com/od/sacredbuddhisttexts/a/buddhist-scriptures.htm>

## **Sikhism**

Sacred Scriptures: Guru Granth Sahib  
World Religions: A Canadian Catholic Perspective  
Chapter 9 pages 300-301

Originally Sikh teachings were guided by the current Guru. The Fifth Guru Arjun began work on the Adi Granth a collection or writing a scripture from many authors. Tenth Guru Gobind Singh completed the scripture called the Guru Granth Sahib and named this book as the final and eternal Guru. Sometimes the scripture is simply referred to as the Granth.

[http://sikhism.about.com/od/Sikhism\\_Glossary\\_G/g/Granth-Scripture.htm](http://sikhism.about.com/od/Sikhism_Glossary_G/g/Granth-Scripture.htm)