Name _____ Date _____

Ancient India: Origins and Core Teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism

Directions: Read the passage about two traditions that began in ancient India. Pay close attention to the words in bold, since most questions ask what words and phrases mean.

Hinduism and Buddhism: Key Terms

Two Traditions from Ancient India

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions. It has no single founder and grew over many centuries in India. Its oldest sacred texts are the **Vedas**.

Hindus believe in **dharma**, each person's duty and right way of living, and in **karma**, the idea that actions shape one's future. They believe in **reincarnation**, the rebirth of the soul in a new body. This cycle of birth, death and rebirth is called **samsara**. Their goal is **moksha**, release from the cycle.

Ancient Hindu law books ranked people in four **varnas**, or social classes. Priests came first, then rulers and warriors, then farmers and traders, then laborers. Some groups were left outside the varnas and often made to live apart. Historians note that real life was less neat than these texts. Some Hindu writings questioned the system.

Buddhism began with one teacher, Siddhartha Gautama, about 2,500 years ago. Buddhist tradition says he was born a prince at Lumbini, in what is now Nepal. It says he left his palace to seek an end to suffering and meditated under a tree at Bodh Gaya, in northeastern India. Buddhists believe he became the **Buddha**, the "awakened one."

The Buddha taught the **Four Noble Truths**: life includes suffering, suffering comes from craving, and suffering can end. He taught that the **Eightfold Path**, a guide to right thinking and acting, is the way to end it. He taught a **Middle Way** between too much comfort and too much hardship. Buddhists also believe in karma and rebirth. Their goal is **nirvana**, freedom from suffering and rebirth.

1. The passage says Hinduism has no single founder. What does this phrase tell readers?

A. No one person started it; it grew over a long time.

B. It has no sacred texts of any kind.

C. A prince started it after leaving his palace.

D. It began on one single day in one city.

2. Match each term from the passage on Hinduism and Buddhism to its meaning.
Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ dharma
2. _____ karma
3. _____ samsara
4. _____ moksha
5. _____ Vedas
6. _____ nirvana

A. in Buddhist teaching, freedom from suffering and rebirth
B. a prince who left his palace to seek an end to suffering
C. a guide to right thinking and acting
D. in Hindu belief, each person's duty and right way of living
E. in Hindu belief, release from the cycle of rebirth
F. the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism
G. the cycle of birth, death and rebirth
H. the idea that a person's actions shape his or her future

3. Buddhists call the Buddha the "awakened one." What does awakened mean in this phrase?

A. having been born into a family of rulers
B. having become the leader of a large army
C. having come to a new and deep understanding
D. having just woken up after a night's sleep

4. The passage tells where Buddhist tradition places events in the Buddha's life. Which statement matches it?

A. He was born in China and later moved west to India.
B. He was born at Lumbini and later meditated at Bodh Gaya.
C. He was born at Bodh Gaya and later meditated at Lumbini.
D. He was born and lived his whole life inside one palace.

5. Complete the sentences about two of the Four Noble Truths.

Word bank

palace • craving • Vedas • Eightfold Path

The Buddha taught that suffering comes from _____. He taught that the _____ is the way to end suffering.

6. Which person is following the Buddha's teaching about the Middle Way?

A. Someone who never leaves home or meets other people
B. Someone who lives with as much hardship as possible
C. Someone who seeks as much comfort and pleasure as possible
D. Someone who avoids both too much comfort and too much hardship

7. In the passage, what are varnas?

A. places where the Buddha taught

B. the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism

C. four social classes described in ancient Hindu law books

D. the steps of the Eightfold Path

8. The passage defines reincarnation as the rebirth of the soul in a new body. Which part of the word reincarnation means again?

A. in- B. -ation C. -carn- D. re-

9. What does the passage say historians note about the varnas?

A. Everyone in ancient India agreed with the law books.

B. Real life was less neat than the law books described.

C. The law books described only one social class.

D. The Buddha wrote the law books that described them.

10. According to the passage, which two ideas do Hindus and Buddhists share? Select 2.

☐ A. karma ☐ B. rebirth

☐ C. the Four Noble Truths ☐ D. the Vedas as sacred texts