



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Center for Middle Eastern Studies

Oneness: Great Principles Shared by all Religions

**Lesson plan developed by Deb Holland,
D'Evelyn Jr/Sr High School, Denver, CO**

Description

In a world filled with uncertainty and tragedies, when emotional and political tensions run high and we look for differences as opposed to similarities, the book *Oneness: Great Principles Shared by all Religions* is a rare testimony to the universal beliefs shared by people around the world. Author and researcher Jeffrey Moses tasked himself with uncovering universal principles that are shared by almost every world religion. He states in *Oneness*, “when their inherent similarities are revealed, the collected wisdom of the world’s religions shows a profound ‘Oneness’ of the human spirit.” Comparing beliefs side-by-side, the essential tenets among global religions are profoundly the same. So much so, that it is difficult to note as to which tenet came from which religion.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama states in his introduction to *Oneness*:

“A comparison of sayings from the different religious traditions, such as the ones in this book, will certainly engender a deeper awareness of the qualities they have in common. This in turn will contribute to a greater sense of harmony and respect between them.”

As an educator, I wanted to share an important lesson with my students: that human beings are more similar than different, and that humanity does not have lines drawn between religions, ethnicities, races, economic levels, or genders. These universally shared beliefs highlighted in *Oneness* have the power to bring understanding to our students, hopefully leading to compassion and respect for others.

Subject(s) and Levels

World religions, world cultures, and social studies for Middle or High School levels

Time Required

One class period, with time for discussion

Materials

Student worksheet and teacher key
Access to technology, if desired

Objectives

Students will

-Identify key principles shared by all religions
-Research quotes/statements that are associated with major world religions
-Discuss universal beliefs with their peers

Procedure

1. To introduce key principles shared by all religions, have students brainstorm shared human beliefs and universal ideas. Have students list messages that are written in great holy works/books, including but not limited to the Bible, the Koran, and the Torah. How many can they come up with? Probably not that many (students tend to recall the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule). (5 minutes)
2. Have students brainstorm other major world religions and their holy books/works. (5 minutes)
3. Have students work in partners or small groups to complete the student handout. Encourage students to look online when necessary. (10-15 minutes)
4. Go over answers.
5. Discuss these beliefs with your students. Potential questions to ask:
 - a. Which statements were particularly surprising or challenging?
 - b. Which statements challenged your world view?
 - c. Which statements go against your beliefs?
 - d. How are these statements practiced in the United States? Globally?
 - e. Where do we see differences between religions?
 - f. Are these ideas just “good ideas” or can we act upon them?
 - g. How are these ideas practiced by different cultures? Genders? Races?
 - h. Do people in the world act upon these beliefs? Where do we see this? Where don't we see this?

Extension Ideas

- Similar to the assignment, have students choose one main tenet that holds significance to them and research various scriptures from which it came. For example, students could choose the belief “Honor your parents,” and then would find this tenet in various religious books.
- *Assign* a world religion for each student to research and have the student look for quotes that support a specific tenet. For example: a student can be assigned Buddhism and the tenet, “Honor your parents.” The student would then look through Buddhist texts for quotes that support this specific belief.
- Have students choose a world religion that he/she is interested and research various tenets from the one religion.

Source

Moses, Jeffrey. *Oneness: Great Principles Shared by all Religions*. NY: Ballantine Books, 2002.