***Basic facts about Judaism:***

a. Tenets: is monotheistic, belief in justice and righteousness (Holt p. 147); adherence to rules and commandments from the scriptures; importance of covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, Messianic);

b. Supreme Being: G-d (Jews do not spell out full name as it is considered too holy)

c. Sacred Text: scriptures are contained in the Tanach which includes the Torah.

d. Place of Worship: Synagogue

e. Holy Land (Theme of Place) : Israel, particularly Jerusalem and the Western Wall

f. Origins (Theme of Region): Abraham is considered the father of this faith; was founded in present-day Israel; approximately 2000 BCE

g. Diffusion (Theme of Movement): Jews do not seek converts but has spread across the world through Diaspora.

h. Essential Vocabulary: covenant, Diaspora

i. Rituals, Practices and Holidays: importance of major holidays: Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Passover; observance of Kosher Laws

j. Divisions: three major branches (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform)

k. Conflict (Theme of Movement and Region): Though Judaism shares some similarities with Christianity and Islam (monotheistic, origins in the Middle East, God of Abraham) there has been periods of conflict between these three faiths. For example, the creation of the Jewish state of Israel in 1948 has led to conflict in the region.

l. Human-Environment Interaction: As Jews migrated and settled in Israel (after 1948), they worked to alter the desert environment to make it suitable for living and farming (example: drip irrigation).

***Basic facts about Christianity:***

a. Tenets: is monotheistic; belief in the deity of Christ; belief in the death and resurrection of Christ

b. Supreme Being: God; Christians believe in the Trinity which is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

c. Sacred Text: The Bible which includes the Old and New Testaments

d. Place of Worship: Church

e. Holy Land (Theme of Region and Place): Israel

f. Origins (Theme of Region): Based on the teachings of Jesus (his lineage can be traced to Abraham); was founded in present-day Israel; approximately 32 CE

g. Diffusion (Theme of Movement): Historically, Christianity spread as it became the official religion of various nations. These nations sometimes conquered other nations, thus causing the faith to spread. It also spread via trade routes. Further, Christians actively seek converts and the faith has spread through evangelism and missionary work.

h. Essential Vocabulary: evangelism

i. Rituals, Practices and Holidays: Celebration of Christmas and Easter; importance of baptism and communion

j. Divisions: three major branches (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant )

k. Conflict (Theme of Movement and Place): Though Christianity shares some similarities with Judaism and Islam (monotheistic, origins in the Middle East, God of Abraham), there has been periods of conflict between the faiths. An example includes the Crusades.

***Basic facts about Islam***

a. Tenets: is monotheistic; belief in the prophet Muhammad and one God called Allah; adheres to the

Five Pillars of Islam; the Sunnah guides Muslims’ behavior (p. 175).

b. Supreme Being: Allah

c. Sacred Text: scripture is the Qur’an

d. Place of Worship: Mosque

e. Holy Land (Theme of Place): Mecca; additional pilgrimage sites include the Al Quds mount in Jerusalem (The Dome of the Rock), and the city of Medina in Saudi Arabia

f. Origins (Theme of Region): Based on the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (his lineage can be traced to Abraham); was founded in present-day Saudi Arabia; approximately 570 CE

g. Diffusion (Theme of Movement): Historically, Islam spread as it became the official religion of various nations. These nations sometimes conquered other nations thus causing the faith to spread. It also spread via trade routes. Muslims actively seek converts and the faith has spread through evangelism

h. Essential Vocabulary: jihad (p. 175) almsgiving, Hajj

i. Rituals, Practices and Holidays: adherence to the Five Pillars of Islam (confession of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting [especially during Ramadan], Hajj);

j. Divisions: two major branches include the Shi’ia (Shi’ite) and Sunni

k. Conflict (Theme of Movement, Region, and Place): Though Islam shares some similarities with Christianity and Judaism (monotheistic, origins in the Middle East, God of Abraham), there has been periods of conflict between the faiths. An example includes the present-day conflict in the Middle East; there is also present-day conflict between the two branches of Islam.

***Basic facts about Hinduism***

1. Tenets: There is debate within Hinduism as to whether the faith is monotheistic or polytheistic because, while there are many gods, they are all part of one universal spirit called Brahman; there no actual doctrine as it is more a “way of life”
2. Supreme Being: Brahman; gods that represent the three aspects of the universal supreme God include Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma
3. Sacred Texts: include the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita
4. Place of Worship: Temple
5. Holy Land (Theme of Place): Ganges River; pilgrimage cities include Varanasi (click here for details: <http://hinduism.iskcon.com/practice/502.htm>)
6. Origins (Theme of Region): founded in the Indus Valley, approximately 3000 BCE; no founder
7. Diffusion (Theme of Movement): Hindus do not typically seek converts but the belief has still spread to many parts of South and Southeast Asia via trade routes.
8. Essential Vocabulary: Dharma, Karma, Brahman, reincarnation, ahisma, caste system
9. Rituals, Practices and Holidays: Diwali— celebration of the “Festival of Lights”
10. Example of Conflict (Theme of Region: Historically, Hinduism has been relatively peaceful. Currently, however, there is conflict between the Hindu nation of India and surrounding Muslim nations over the region of Kashmir.
11. Theme of Human-Environment Interaction: some Hindu beliefs (such as the sacred cow and bathing in the Ganges) have lead to interesting environmental concerns.

***Basic facts about Buddhism***

a. Tenets: No actual doctrine exists; There are no gods in Buddhism; Buddhists pursue “enlightenment” which comes when you are liberated from delusion caused by desire, anger, and ignorance. This is accomplished by following the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

Beliefs are often communicated through stories called Jakata Tales.

b. Sacred Texts: The Sutras

c. Place of Worship: Temple

d. Holy Land (Theme of Place): pilgrimage sites include, Dharmasala, Lumbini, and Bodh Gaya (click here for details: http://www.buddhist-temples.com/buddhistpilgrimage.

html)

e. Origins (Theme of Region): Founded by Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha) in India; approximately 500 BCE; there are some similarities between Hinduism and Buddhism (believe in Karma, reincarnation)

f. Diffusion(Theme of Movement): Buddhism spread through missionary work and through trade on the Silk Road. Conquests by Muslims in the 11th century and the spread of communism in the 20th century caused Buddhism to decline. Today, some of those nations are seeing a resurgence of Buddhism and the number of followers is increasing in Europe and the Americas.

g. Essential Vocabulary: Enlightenment, asceticism, “the middle way,” Nirvana, Silk Road

h. Example of Conflict (Theme of Region, Movement): Historically, Buddhism has been relatively peaceful. However, in 1950, conflict arose when China invaded Buddhist Tibet and forced the Dalai Lama (Tibet’s spiritual and political leader) into exile in India where he remains today.