

Celebrating the Buddha: Parinirvana Day and Wesak

1. As pupils enter

Play your chosen music and display a focus image if you wish.

2. Introduction

Tell the assembly: **Today we'll be hearing about a very special person - someone who has had an enormous impact on the world. But this special person isn't a king or a queen...they aren't a politician or an inventor...or even a famous footballer. Today this person is known as the Buddha and he was the founder of the religion called Buddhism. And we're learning about him today because the festival of Parinirvana/Wesak happens at this time of year. To find out more we're going to watch a short video and, while you watch, consider the teachings of the Buddha and what you think about them.**

3. Play the video

The duration is 4' 25". Final words: '...the Eightfold Path to Enlightenment'

4. After the video - Time to talk

Lead a discussion of the video by asking some or all of the following questions:

- **In which part of the world is Buddhism the most popular religion?** (Many Asian countries, including China, Thailand and Japan)
- **Can you remember what makes Buddhism different from other religions?** (Buddhists follow the teachings of the Buddha, rather than believing in a god)
- **Can you remember how, according to Buddhist tradition, Siddhata Gautama achieved enlightenment?** (He sat under a tree for 49 days thinking about life until he understood everything)
- **How can Buddhists today seek enlightenment?** (They can follow the Eightfold Path)
- **Why do Buddhists practice meditation?** (To clear the mind and encourage positive thinking)
- **Can you remember when Wesak and Parinirvana Day are celebrated?** (At the full moon in May and in February)
- **What are some of the ways that people celebrate during these festivals?** (Lighting lanterns, splashing with water, burning incense, decorating with flowers, visiting temples, chanting and meditation, eating together, etc)

Tell the assembly: **We heard in the video that one of the Buddha's key teachings is that change and difficult times are inevitable but can be overcome with acceptance. Please turn to the person next to you and tell them about a time you experienced a change in your life.**

Video page

5. Opportunity to sing

If your assembly is to include a song this would be a good time to sing.

6. Opportunity to reflect

As you sit quietly now, think about the wisdom of the Buddha and the things he taught his followers...

In our lives we can experience change and loss...but these things are natural and we can overcome them by accepting them...

Following the Eightfold Path means thinking, speaking and acting kindly to yourself and others...

People of all faiths - and none - can share that wisdom...

So during Wesak/Parinirvana Day - and for the rest of the year as well - we can all learn from the Buddha's teachings to make the world a better, kinder place.

7. Opportunity for prayer

Use your usual form of address and:
Thank you for the wisdom of the Buddha and all we can learn from his teaching.

Thank you for the festival of Wesak/Parinirvana Day and the opportunity to come together and celebrate.

As we learn and grow throughout our time at school, help us all to follow the path of kindness and consideration, and to achieve our own sense of enlightenment.

Amen.