

World Religions and the Natural World

World Religions · Answer Key · 8 Questions

1. In Jainism, the principle of ahimsa (non-violence) extends to all living beings, including insects. Which specific practice is mandated by this principle concerning the environment?

- A) Devout Jains are forbidden from cultivating crops that require extensive land clearing.
- B) Jains must purify water sources by filtering out microscopic organisms.
- C) Monks are instructed to sweep the ground before them to avoid stepping on small creatures.**
- D) The construction of temples must strictly utilize fallen trees and natural formations.

2. Within the Abrahamic traditions, the concept of 'Tikkun Olam' (repairing the world) in Judaism has influenced environmental stewardship. Which of the following is a direct application of this concept in relation to natural resources?

- A) The prohibition of cultivating genetically modified organisms to preserve natural diversity.
- B) The emphasis on sustainable agricultural practices and avoiding waste of resources, as exemplified by the 'Shemittah' (sabbatical year) observance.**
- C) The religious obligation to actively reforest areas degraded by human activity.
- D) The belief that all natural disasters are divine punishments for environmental neglect.

3. In Shinto, the reverence for kami (spirits or deities) is deeply intertwined with nature. Which natural element is considered particularly sacred and often associated with powerful kami, leading to its protection and veneration?

- A) Volcanic ash, representing creative destruction.
- B) Crystals and geodes, seen as concentrated earth energy.
- C) Mount Fuji, a prominent stratovolcano and symbol of Japan.**
- D) Desert sands, symbolizing the ephemeral nature of existence.

4. Buddhism's Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path have ethical implications for environmental interaction. Which aspect of Buddhist practice most directly addresses the interconnectedness of all sentient beings and the natural world?

- A) The practice of mindfulness, which fosters awareness of the present moment and one's impact.
- B) The concept of karma, which dictates that harmful actions towards nature will result in negative repercussions.
- C) The doctrine of dependent origination (pratityasamutpada), illustrating the web of cause and effect between all phenomena, including the environment.**
- D) The pursuit of Nirvana, leading to detachment from worldly concerns, including environmental issues.

5. In Hinduism, the sacredness of the cow is a prominent aspect of its relationship with nature. This veneration is rooted in practical considerations and symbolic meanings. Which of the following is a historically significant practical reason for the cow's elevated status?

- A) Cows were historically believed to possess supernatural powers to purify polluted water.
- B) The cow's milk, dung (used as fuel and fertilizer), and labor were essential for agrarian societies, making their preservation crucial for survival.**
- C) Cows were considered divine messengers capable of predicting weather patterns with remarkable accuracy.
- D) Their hides were exclusively used for creating sacred religious texts and artifacts.

6. Sikhism emphasizes selfless service (seva) and the equality of all beings. This translates into environmental consciousness. Which of the following actions is a practical manifestation of this principle in Sikh tradition?

- A) The establishment of communal kitchens (langars) that prioritize locally sourced, organic produce and minimize food waste.**
- B) The ritualistic planting of specific trees to purify the air within Gurdwara premises.
- C) The prohibition of using any form of animal product in religious rituals.
- D) The belief that deforestation is a direct sin against the divine.

7. Indigenous belief systems often hold animistic views, attributing spirits to natural phenomena. Among Native American tribes, specific animals often hold significant spiritual importance. Which animal is frequently revered as a symbol of wisdom, connection to the spirit world, and transformation across various tribes?

- A) The Coyote, often associated with trickery and creation myths.
- B) The Bear, symbolizing strength, healing, and introspection.
- C) The Eagle, representing spiritual power, vision, and connection to the Creator.**
- D) The Wolf, signifying community, loyalty, and guidance.

8. In Zoroastrianism, the Amesha Spentas (immortal holy ones) are divine emanations that embody cosmic principles. Which Amesha Spenta is specifically associated with the earth, agriculture, and the protection of the natural world?

- A) Vohu Manah (Good Mind)
- B) Asha Vahishta (Truth and Righteousness)
- C) Spenta Armaiti (Devotion and the Earth)**
- D) Haurvatat (Wholeness and Health)