**Now that you have created your own definitions, let's dig a little deeper..... our tools are our brains!** 

Read and Discuss as you read!

Religion is not an easy thing to define. For many people, religion is an organized form of worship that takes place in a temple, church, synagogue or mosque. For others, religion is personal - a practice that they conduct in a private way. Religion depends upon people’s beliefs that one or more gods exist. A god is a "being" or a "spirit" that we think of as more capable and powerful than human beings. There are people who are monotheistic, meaning they believe in only ***one god***. There are people called atheists who don’t believe in ***any god,*** and there are people who are polytheistic because they believe in ***many gods.***  With so many different views, it’s no wonder that people have been debating, or arguing back and forth, the meaning of the word “religion” for centuries.

**STOP AND DISCUSS!**

1. **WHAT ARE THE CENTRAL IDEAS EXPLAINED IN THE INFORMATION YOU JUST READ?**
2. **WHAT ARE YOUR MAJOR UNDERSTANDINGS FROM WHAT YOU JUST READ?**
3. **WHAT KEY VOCABULARY WORDS RELATE TO ONE GOD, MANY GODS? FIND THE WORD FOR NOT BELIEVING IN ANY GOD.**

One thing we know for certain- we know that religion has been around since the ***dawn of mankind.*** In the Stone Age, people prayed to the spirits of nature. They asked for simple things such as rain or a good hunt. Later, people moved from nature worship to idol worship.  ***Idols*** were ***statues that represented the gods.*** Ancient people believed they could influence, or, in other words, sway or persuade the gods by offering gifts to their idols. As time progressed however, many people rejected idol worship and new religions were formed.

**STOP AND DISCUSS!**

1. **What is an idol? Can you think of an example of an Idol?**
2. **What kinds of gifts do you think the ancient people offered to the idols?**

The root of today’s major religions- ***Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shinto*** go back thousands of years. That's a lot of different religions, right? Although they differ from each other in many ways, the major religions have some things in common. The major religions all offer answers to important questions that people ask all the time. One question many people ask is  **“What is the meaning of life?”** Another question often asked is this question -  ***"Is there life after death?”***  People have different points of views on these questions depending on their beliefs. ***All of the major religions teach their believers that life has a purpose.*** Most religions promise that ***when death comes, good people will be rewarded and bad people will be punished.***

**STOP AND DISCUSS!**

1. **Summarize this reading section with your partner.**
2. **From the list of today’s major religions, discuss with your partner which ones you have heard of before now.**
3. **What do the major religions have in common?**
4. **What about these religions might make them different from each other?**

Another thing most major religions have in common is a belief in some kind of ***higher, divine (godlike) power.* Monotheistic** religions believe there is **only one god. Polytheistic** religions believe in more than one god. Religions have ***rituals,*** or formal celebrations, to honor, appeal to or serve their god or gods.  ***Rituals include such things as services, prayers, wedding and funerals.***

Every major religion has a ***code of conduct.***  This is basically a set of rules to live by. These rules tell people how to act towards each other and how to act towards their god or gods. Sometimes, these rules even explain things such as what to eat and whom to marry. **These rules are often written in sacred books and stories.**

**STOP AND DISCUSS!**

1. **Quiz each other on the meaning and spelling of polytheistic and monotheistic.**
2. **Discuss what a code of conduct is.**
3. **What is your viewpoint on a code of conduct that tells you what to eat? Whom to marry?**
4. **What is a ritual?**
5. **Watch the video below to see how people still appreciate conducting marriages with traditional rituals. Discuss any specific Mayan traditions you see during this marriage ritual.**

[**Mayan Wedding Ceremony Riviera Maya**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDiFGgIjE40)