**Unit 3 Language and Religion Summary**

**Language and Religion**

**Introduction:**

According to an old adage, one should never discuss religion or politics, as these topics are sure to create conflict.   But why do so many religions in the world have constant conflicts, especially if they have beliefs in common? In this unit you will compare and contrast the major world religions and discover the basis for many of the ongoing conflicts in the world. Along with the cultural dimension of religion, language also plays a large role in defining who we are. But similar questions present themselves, how can languages be so different if they have the same origin? These similarities and differences between religions and languages will be explored in this unit.

**Essential Questions:**

* What are the origins of language and religion?
* How are cultures and environments changed due to their practices?
* What are the similarities and differences between language families?
* What are the similarities and differences between world religions?

In order to be defined as a religion, a belief system must meet some predetermined characteristics. These characteristics are highly debated, but generally a religion must have a deity (or deities), a holy text or shared stories, a route to the afterlife and common expectations for behavior. When the religions of the world are viewed with these characteristics in mind, many similarities emerge. The same holds true for language. Although there are thousands of spoken languages in our world, the majority of these languages can be traced back to the Indo-European language family (and even the Proto-Indo-European Family) in Anatolia, which is modern-day Turkey. These shared characteristics could potentially unite people, but in reality the differences are more often stressed and lead to great conflict.

# Lesson 1: The Components of Language

* Focus on the where and why of language
  + **Language** is simply a collection of sounds and symbols with meaning for communication
    - The sounds create an **oral tradition** and **written communication** creates a literary tradition (requires **literacy** or the ability to read and write)
  + In modern history language has become so important that nations name an **official language** for laws and public announcements
    - Nations with only one official language are **monolingual** (only one official language), but some nations are **multilingual** (Belgium & Switzerland)
  + When a language is needed to communicate between two or more diverse languages a **lingua franca** is chosen (English is becoming the most obvious example). A lingua franca is a common language selected because of its common use or familiarity to a large group of people.

*English Language*

* + English is spoken by over one billion people worldwide and is the most commonly spoken language internationally (it is not the largest native language - Mandarin Chinese, Hindi and Spanish all have larger native speaker populations).
  + The language spread to North America through British colonization, starting with Jamestown in 1607 and Plymouth in 1620
  + The language also spread to other British colonies (Ireland, South Asia, South Pacific, Africa)
  + English began on the British Isles with Germanic tribes who brought their language from Denmark and German states
    - Most British people can trace their ancestry to the Angles and Saxons (thus **Anglo-Saxon**)

*Dialects*

* + A **dialect** (regional change in language) can be seen in vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation - the base language is the same, but certain aspects differ
    - In some cases, but not as often, there can also be differences in syntax (grammatical order) between dialects
    - When a language has several dialects, one dialect is selected as the standard language (for English is the upper-class British pronunciation)

*United States Regionalization*

* The original differences in dialect can be traced back to the origin of the colonists
  + New England from southeast England
  + Middle Atlantic from England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Netherlands and Sweden
  + Southeast from southeast England, but from diverse social classes
* The words and pronunciations associated with different dialects establish boundaries, this dividing line is perceptual and known as an **isogloss**
  + For example, the use of the word sneakers in the Northeast, but tennis shoes in the South

**Lesson 2: Language Families and the Growth of Languages**

* Indo-European Language Family
  + English comes from the world's largest **language family** (collection of related languages - older than written history)
    - Language family is the largest grouping
    - **Language branch** (part of a family - a collection of language with a common ancestral language) can also be referred to as a sub-family
    - **Language group** (collection of languages with a recent connection)
    - Some time languages develop on their own, unrelated to any families, these are known as **isolated languages** (Basque)

**Language Families**

* Indo-European (the largest and most widespread language family)
* Sino-Tibetan (located in China and Southeast Asia - includes Mandarin, which is the world's most spoken native language - Chinses languages are based on logograms)
* Afro-Asiatic (located in Southwest Asia and North Africa - includes Arabic and Hebrew)
* Niger-Congo (located in sub-Saharan Africa - includes Swahili)
* Austronesian (located in Southeast Asia - includes Javanese and the other languages of Indonesia)
* Dravidian (located in South Asia - mainly southern India and Sri Lanka - includes Tamil)
* Altaic (located in Central Asia - includes Turkish)
* Japanese (includes both phonetic and logogram, which are symbols that represent words)
* Tai-Kadai (located in Thailand and China - closely linked to Austronesian)
* Austro-Asiatic (located in Southeast Asia - includes Finnish)
* Nilo-Saharan (located in north central Africa - includes Nubian)

**Branches of Indo-European**

* Indo-Iranian (Southwest and South Asia - includes Hindi and Farsi)
* Romance (Southwest Europe and Latin America - includes Spanish, French, Italian)
* Germanic (Northwestern Europe and North America - includes English, German, Swedish)
* Balto-Slavic (Eastern Europe - includes Russian and Polish)
* Albanian
* Armenian
* Greek
* Celtic

*Origins and Diffusions*

* The languages of the modern world have contributed to **language divergence** through relocation diffusion
  + You can tell which language was or is the most powerful by the **toponyms** (names of cities or important landmarks)
* It is believed the Indo-European languages all came from **Proto-Indo-European** (a pre-historic language family also known as Nostriatic)
* Two theories of diffusion for the Proto-Indo-European language family:
* **Conquest theory (Kurgan Theory)** - from the Kurgan hearth in the steppe region of Central Asia, this group moved conquering areas in their path
* **Agricultural migration theory (Renfrew Hypothesis)** - from the Anatolian hearth in Turkey, these people migrated trading their agricultural

*Language Acquisition*

* When people acculturate they face **language replacement**, but when the one learns a simplified version of the language it is known as **pidgin** (a basic or rudimentary form of a language)
  + In some cases, entirely new languages were formed when groups from various locations came together, this is known as a creole language (the most famous example is Creole - a blending of French, Native American languages and African languages - notice that the Creole language has a capital "C)
  + Early simplified communications created the necessity of **trade languages**
* When the assimilated people give up their language totally they have experienced **language extinction** (for example, languages from the eastern Germanic group)
  + There are currently **endangered languages** such as Celtic and Welsh (original to the UK isles)
  + Hebrew and Native American languages are being actively revived

**Lesson 3: Universalizing Religions**

* Religion is a set of beliefs and practices that help us understand our place in the world and the divine
* Religions can be broken down into large categories:
  + **Monotheistic** or **Polytheistic**
    - One God or many Gods
  + **Universalizing** or **Ethnic**
    - 60% of people belong to a **universalizing religion** - which appeal to people worldwide
    - 25% belong to an **ethnic religion** - which appeal to just one group in one place
    - 15% have no religion affiliation
      * This might include:
        + **Secularists** - people who want a separation of religion and other areas of society
        + **Agnostics** - people who believe that the divine is unknowable to humans
        + **Atheists** - people who do not believe in a God(s)
* In any faith a person or group can be categorized as **fundamental** , meaning strict adherence to principles and guidelines (there are instances where this can lead to extremist actions)

 Some countries are so involved in religion that the government is run by religious rulers, theocracy

*Universalizing Religion*

* Also known as **global religions** or **proselytic** (convert others)
* Have precise origins and have diffused from those hearths
* Holy sites tend to be associated with the specific founders
* These religions tend to have a similar creation story ( **cosmogony** )
* Calendars and holidays tend to be based on the life of the founder
* These faiths are usually connected to central leadership
  1. Exceptions can be seen in Protestant Christians and Muslims, who tend to have **autonomous religions** and self-governing congregations
* There are three major universalizing religions
  1. **Christianity, Islam** and **Buddhism**
     1. **Sikhism** and **Baha'i** are smaller examples
* These religions are divided into sections:
  1. **Branches** - large fundamental difference within a religion
  2. **Denominations** - division of a branch that unites groups
  3. **Sects** - Small group that has broken away from a different denomination

Learn more about each of the major religions by viewing the book below. Clicking on the "Click to Read" icon on the book allows it go to full-screen mode to make the information easier to read. Once in full-screen mode, you can also zoom to make the print even larger if needed.

**Lesson 4: Ethnic Religions**

**Ethnic Religions**

* Also known as a **local religions**
* Most ethnic faiths have unclear origins and have remained in one location because they do not attempt to convert people
* These religions only diffuse if followers move and are not forced into a new religion
* Holy sites tend to be associated with the specific environment of the region
* These religions usually lack central leadership
* These religions have various creation stories ( **cosmogony** )
* Calendar and holidays tend to be based on the geography of the homeland; understanding the calendar helps with agriculture and rituals
  1. Each **solstice** , change of the seasons, is also important
* Most ethnic religions are located in regions of Asia and Africa

**Conflicts in Religion**

* Conflicts can be between religions ( **interfaith**) or within a religion ( **intrafaith**)
  1. These can cause **enclaves** (people of one religion surrounded by another faith) and missionary work or relocation can create exclaves (people of one religion separated from other believers)
* Examples of religious conflicts:
* Taliban in Afghanistan
* The Hindu caste system
* Communistb powers in East and Southeast Asia forbid the practice of Christianity, Islam and Buddhism
* Sikhs in India
* Divisions of Yugoslavia and the ensuing attempts at **genocide**
* Conflicts and division of Sudan
* Judaism, Christianity and Islam all believe that modern-day Israel belongs to their religion, this has led to 2000 years of conflict
  + Jerusalem houses the Dome of the Rock (Islam), the Western Wall (site of destroyed Jewish temples) and the site of the death and resurrection of Christ (Christianity)
* Crusades by Christians to regain the Holy Land during the 12th and 13th centuries
* Arab-Israeli conflicts over the creation of Israel 1948 to the present
  + IRA and British forces in Northern Ireland
  + Ethnic cleansing in Rwanda