

Teacher's Guide: **Religions – Maps and Data**

Overview: Students match maps with the names of the major religions of the world. Then they write the names of two countries where each religion is especially important. This can be done inductively, from the maps, or by using other sources such as the CIA Factbook or textbooks.	Grade: 6 - 12
	Related Discipline: History
	CC Standard: math, writing
	Time: ½ to 1 class period

Setup: Religion is an especially important influence on human behavior. Religious organizations run hospitals, provide shelter, serve meals, run schools, and offer many other services. Religious organizations have also tortured people, incited terrorist acts, launched missiles, and triggered wars. It's a complicated story. And a basic mental map of religions is one key foundation for understanding the role of religion in human life. Unfortunately, textbooks often show religion on a single map, with countries colored according to the dominant religion (or, even harder to read, percentages of adherents of a given religion). Those maps can be good reference sources, but they are difficult teaching aids.

Procedure: This activity page can support a number of activities, including whole-class discussions, individual matching efforts, mathematical calculations of percentages and growth rates, and so forth.

Answers: The countries named here are listed in order of total number of believers. Students, however, need not list them in exactly this order – the goal is simply to associate religions, countries, and general regions of the world.

Buddhism – Map D, China, Thailand, Japan, Myanmar

Hinduism – Map E, India, Nepal, Bangladesh

Islam – Map B, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Iran

Roman Catholicism– Map C, Brazil, Mexico, United States, Philippines, Mediterranean countries

Orthodox Christianity – Map A, Russia, Ukraine, Balkan countries, Ethiopia

Protestant Christianity – Map F, United States, Nigeria, northern European countries, East Africa,

Debrief: The important message is that the religions of the world have clear geographic patterns, with occasional areas of significant overlap. The core areas of the patterns are important. So are the places with fairly sharp boundaries (e.g., between Islam and Hinduism in South Asia, or between Islam and Christianity in Nigeria). It is also important to see areas where several religions coexist. See the Southwest Asia clickable miniAtlas for a more detailed look at Sunni and Shi'a Islam.

Vocabulary: religion adherent believer denomination

Extension: Use a source such as the CIA Factbook to get information about religion within individual countries.