
Suppression of Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty

Goals & Objectives

Students will learn about the suppression of Buddhism in the late Tang Dynasty. Students will analyze and evaluate primary source documents to determine the reasons for the suppression. As students analyze primary source documents, they will source, close read, contextualize and corroborate sources.

California State Content Standard

7.3 Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious, and social structures of the civilizations of China in the Middle Ages.

7.3.1 Describe the reunification of China under the Tang Dynasty and reasons for the spread of Buddhism in Tang China, Korea, and Japan.

Vocabulary

The key terms for this lesson will be discussed prior to the lesson. Students will use the key terms frequently in the student engagement activity as they analyze primary sources. The key terms include:

- *Primary source*
- *Secondary source*
- *Context*
- *Corroborate*
- *Suppression*
- *Edict*

Lesson Introduction

The teacher will display images of the Longmen Caves/Grottoes built during the Tang Dynasty to demonstrate the importance of Buddhism in medieval China. The teacher will ask the students to reveal the ways these caves signify importance.

Content Delivery

The lesson will focus on the use of primary sources to answer a pertinent historical question. The teacher will explain and demonstrate how to analyze primary source documents using the SCCC (Source, Close Reading, Contextualize, Corroborate) approach. The approach is outlined in detail on the [Reading Like a Historian](#) website.

The teacher will provide background information on Buddhism in Tang China through a short reading. The teacher will review the information in the reading by asking specific comprehension questions. The teacher will inform the class that they will be exploring the reasons why Buddhism was suppressed in China through analyzing multiple primary

source documents with the following historical question in mind, “What drove the suppression of Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty?”

Student Engagement

The students will be given three documents to analyze:

1. Mouzi’s Disposing of Error
2. Memorial on the Bone of the Buddha
3. Emperor Wuzong’s Edict on the Suppression of Buddhism: The Edict of the Eighth Month

As students read the documents they will answer guiding questions to help them source, read closely, contextualize and corroborate. Students will identify and select evidence from the documents that support probable reasons for the suppression of Buddhism. Students will record the selected evidence on a web graphic organizer with the probable reasons for suppression in the main frames of the organizer and the evidence on the spokes. After the documents have been thoroughly examined and the graphic organizer complete, the students will weigh the evidence to determine the dominant reason for the suppression of Buddhism in the late Tang Dynasty.

The students will use the evidence they gathered from the documents and placed on the graphic organizer to write a short essay about the reasons for the suppression of Buddhism during the Tang Dynasty. In their essays, they must provide adequate evidence to support their claim.

Lesson Closure

The students will engage in “Document Discourse” where they will share with each other (Think-Pair-Share) what they believe to be the most compelling piece of evidence that helped them determine the reason for suppression of Buddhism in the Tang Dynasty.

Assessment (Formative and Summative)

Formative – As students are working on reading the documents and answering/discussing the guiding questions, the teacher will roam the room looking at and listening to student responses to ascertain if students are suitably probing the sources and making meaning from them.

Summative – The teacher will read the student responses to the document questions and assess the graphic organizer to determine if students have adequately provided reasons and evidence for the suppression of Buddhism in Tang China. The teacher will evaluate the student essays for appropriate use of evidence and writing skills.

Accommodations for English Learners, Striving Readers and Students with Special Needs

The teacher will provide additional vocabulary support for English Learners, striving readers and students with special needs, including a list of more common, but difficult terms with definitions and images.

The teacher will provide documents with scaffolding supports built in, such as sections highlighted for analysis and sections of the documents re-written in simpler terms.

Lesson Resources

[Asia for Educators](#)

[Asia Society](#)

[Discovery Education](#)