

# Beliefs and Values in Ancient China: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism

## Oral Task

Use <https://vocaroo.com/> or <https://online-voice-recorder.com/>

**Part 1:** Describe the picture, 3–4 minutes

- Time, place, person, clothing, color, season, what people are doing.
- People's expressions, ages, and guess their professions.
- Describe anything that seems special/interesting to you in the picture.

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**Part 2:** Answer the questions, 4–5 minutes

- What story does this picture tell?
- How does this picture describe the story?
- As far as you know, what religions did most people practice in ancient China?
- Do you have beliefs or values? How do they affect you?
- Why are beliefs and values important?
- How do beliefs and values affect our lives?

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**WORKSHEET**

# Beliefs and Values in Ancient China: Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism

## Reading comprehension

Based on what you read, answer the following questions.

The painting shows a gathering underneath a pine tree next to a bridge. Reading from left to right, the three figures are: Laozi, founder of Daoism; Siddhartha Gautama (also known as Shakyamuni), founder of Buddhism; and Confucius, founder of Confucianism. Confucius approaches from the right, folding his hands in a bow to Shakyamuni, the Historical Buddha. Shakyamuni, barefooted, wears a red robe. He can be easily identified by his *ushnisha*, a cranial bump that symbolizes wisdom. Laozi stands behind Shakyamuni and looks at him with a happy smile. He holds a roll of book in his hands, most likely his Daodejing (The Classic of the Way and Virtue).

1. Summarize the main idea of the paragraph.
2. What does this painting describe?
3. Who are the three characters in the painting?
4. What are Confucius's actions?
5. How did Shakyamuni dress?
6. What is Laozi doing?
7. What is the book in Laozi's hand?

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Based on what you read, answer the following questions.

The composition of the painting seems to have borrowed from depictions of The Three Laughers at Tiger Creek, a popular allegorical story about the meeting of three famous figures. The Buddhist monk Huiyuan (334–416) lived in a temple as a recluse and had vowed to never cross the stone bridge over Tiger Creek. One day, the Confucian poet Tao Yuanming (365–427) and the Daoist philosopher Lu Xiuqing (406–477) came to visit Huiyuan. The three men became so deeply absorbed in conversation that when Huiyuan eventually walked with his friends to say farewell, he crossed the bridge without noticing he had done so. Hence, the three men laughed together, signifying the harmony among the three main religions of the time. The artist of this painting has cleverly replaced the three historical figures with the three spiritual founders.

1. Summarize the main idea of the paragraph.
2. Which story is used for the composition of this painting? What story does it tell?
3. What oath did the monk Huiyuan swear?
4. At the end of the story, why did the three characters laugh together?
5. What does this painting represent?
6. What is the difference between these two stories?

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Based on what you read, answer the following questions.

Confucianism and Daoism are the two great indigenous philosophical traditions of China. Confucianism became accepted as state ideology in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE). Daoism came to the fore as a popular belief system around the same time. Meanwhile, Buddhism was introduced to China from India. The three beliefs have since then both conflicted with and complemented each other. The actual blending of the three philosophies did not begin until the tenth century. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), when this painting was created, the harmony among the three faiths became a prevalent thought.

1. Summarize the main idea of the paragraph.
2. What are the two indigenous traditional philosophies in China?
3. In what dynasty was Confucianism regarded as an official school of thought?
4. Apart from Confucianism, what were the popular beliefs in the same period?
5. In what dynasty was Buddhism introduced to China?
6. When will the three philosophies truly merge?
7. What thought does this painting express?

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