The Four Noble Truths

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| Overview & Purpose The Four Nobles Truths are an important part of Buddhist practice and set out many of the key themes that are found later in the syllabus. | | | Education Standards Addressed | |
| **Activity** | **Aims** | **Time Given** | | **Other** |
| Introduce the Four Noble Truths as being taught as if the Buddha was a doctor. There are the symptoms, the cause of the disease, recognition that one can be cured and the cure. | Students should be aware that the Four Noble Truths are important as they can assist one to attain enlightenment. | 5 Minutes | |  |
| Explain the first truth: *dukkha*. If students are familiar with the three marks of existence get them remember the different types and why *dukkha* is problematic for the Buddha. If this is the first time that students have encountered *dukkha* read the passage from the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* which outlines the different types of *dukkha*. Write them out on the board and ask students to provide examples for each type. | There should be an understanding of the nature of *dukkha* and be able to understand that everything will eventually be tainted by it. | 10 Minutes | | Try to get students to use the Pali/Sanskrit terms for the marks rather than English.  *Dukkha* as unease is a more accurate translation than suffering. |
| Introduce the second truth: *samudaya* and *tanha*. *Dukkha* is caused by ignorance of the way things are. Refer this to the three fires. Go through the 12 *Nidanas* with the students. An additional task would be to look at the types of craving a person might have. Ask the students to provide examples. | If students have already encountered the three fires and the 12 *Nidanas* this will require students to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts. If this is the first time students have looked at craving and the nidanas they should be able to place it in context with other Buddhist teachings such as *anicca* and Dependent Origination. | 10 Minutes | | The Tibetan Wheel of life provides a colourful and interesting interpretation of the 12 *Nidanas*. Students could be asked to provide their own imagery to convey the *nidanas* |
| For the third truth, *nirodha*, there should be an explanation of *nirvāṇa*. *It is worth reminding students that samsara and nirvāṇa are not places but types of existence.* The Buddha did not disappear when he became enlightened. Discuss with students the differences between *samsaric* and *nirvāṇic*  existence. In particular look at how greed, hatred and delusion no longer dictate action. For those who are confident with *karma* discuss how this is affected by *nirvāṇa*. | Students should be able to link the first two truths to the three fires. From this they should be able to recognise that the third truth states that they can be overcome. | 10 Minutes | |  |
| For the fourth truth, *magga*, students should look at the eight-fold path. If there are further lessons planned on the area ask students whether they think that eight-fold path would help an individual attain enlightenment. If not ask what would they think would act as a cure. If this is the only time which the eight-fold path is looked at get the students to write down what the implications of the eight-fold path are and whether they think they could abide by them. |  | 10 Minutes | | Students could be asked why the Four Noble Truths were presented like an illness. Why wouldn’t the Buddha just present a cure? |
| Ask the students to write a short summary of the Four Noble truths. | Students should be able to recall the main features of the Four Noble truths | 5 Minutes | |  |