2.2 In-depth study: Buddhism

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 30 marks**

KEY WORDS Four Noble Truths • Noble Eightfold Path • enlightenment • impermanence • craving • bodhisattva • Middle Way

Objective

Study **Buddhism** in depth: the life of the Buddha, the **Four Noble Truths**, the **Noble Eightfold Path**, the **three marks of existence**, and the main schools, **Theravada** and **Mahayana**.

You must be able to:

- outline the life of the Buddha and its meaning
- explain the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path
- explain the three marks of existence
- compare Theravada and Mahayana
- evaluate how Buddhists understand suffering

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

The life of the Buddha

Siddhartha Gautama, a prince, saw the **four sights**: an old man, a sick man, a dead body and a holy man. He left home, tried extreme self-denial, then chose the **Middle Way** between luxury and harshness. Meditating under the Bodhi tree, he gained **enlightenment** and taught for the rest of his life.

The teaching

Three marks of existence: **anicca** (impermanence), **dukkha** (suffering, dissatisfaction), **anatta** (no fixed self).

Four Noble Truths: (1) life involves dukkha; (2) its cause is craving (*tanha*); (3) it can end: **nirvana**; (4) the way is the **Noble Eightfold Path**: right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration, grouped as wisdom, ethics and meditation.

The Five Precepts for lay Buddhists: avoid killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech and intoxicants.

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■ **Schools**

	Theravada	**Mahayana**
where	Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar	China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam; Tibet (Vajrayana)
ideal	the **arhat**, who gains nirvana	the **bodhisattva** , who delays final nirvana to help all beings
texts	the Pali Canon	also the Mahayana sutras, e.g. the Lotus Sutra, Heart Sutra

2 Practice

2.1 Name the **three marks of existence**. [2]

2.2 The Eightfold Path has 8 parts in 3 groups: wisdom (2 parts), ethics (3) and meditation (3). Calculate the fraction of the Path that is ethics, and explain why ethics comes before meditation in practice for many Buddhists. [3]



2.3 Explain how the **four sights** led Siddhartha to seek enlightenment. [4]

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2.4 Compare the **arhat** and **bodhisattva** ideals. [6]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 *(Paper 2 style.)* "The Four Noble Truths are a diagnosis and a cure." Discuss this description of the Buddha's teaching. [15]



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Solutions

Marking: **M1** a correct method, **A1** the correct answer, **B1** an independent mark.

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

anicca: impermanence; dukkha: suffering / dissatisfaction; anatta: no fixed self

2.2

$3/8 = \mathbf{37.5}\,\%$; ethical conduct calms the mind and removes harmful habits; a calm, honest life is the basis for concentration and insight in meditation

2.3

old age, sickness and death showed him that all beings suffer and change; the holy man showed a way of life devoted to finding an answer; so he left his palace to seek the end of suffering

2.4

arhat: a person who has gained nirvana by their own practice (Theravada); bodhisattva: a being who seeks enlightenment and vows to help all beings to it (Mahayana); compassion (karuna) central for the bodhisattva; similarity: both aim at freedom from suffering; difference: individual path vs saving all beings; example, e.g. Avalokiteshvara (Guanyin)

3.1

Mark with the markbands: [13-15] clearly focused on the question, accurate knowledge of beliefs, practices and texts, different views within the tradition, academic (not devotional) analysis, well-developed critical analysis, different perspectives evaluated, a reasoned conclusion; [10-12] focused, mostly accurate knowledge, analysis with some evaluation; [7-9] some focus, relevant knowledge, mostly narrative or description with limited analysis; [4-6] little focus, limited knowledge, mostly narrative; [1-3] little understanding of the question. Points that may be included: the image of the Buddha as a doctor explained; truth 1 as the symptom: dukkha; truth 2 as the cause: craving; truth 3 as the prognosis: nirvana is possible; truth 4 as the treatment: the Eightfold Path; strengths of the description: practical, testable in experience; limits: nirvana is not only a "cure" but a state beyond description; the role of faith, devotion and ritual, especially in Mahayana; diversity of Buddhist understanding; a reasoned conclusion

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