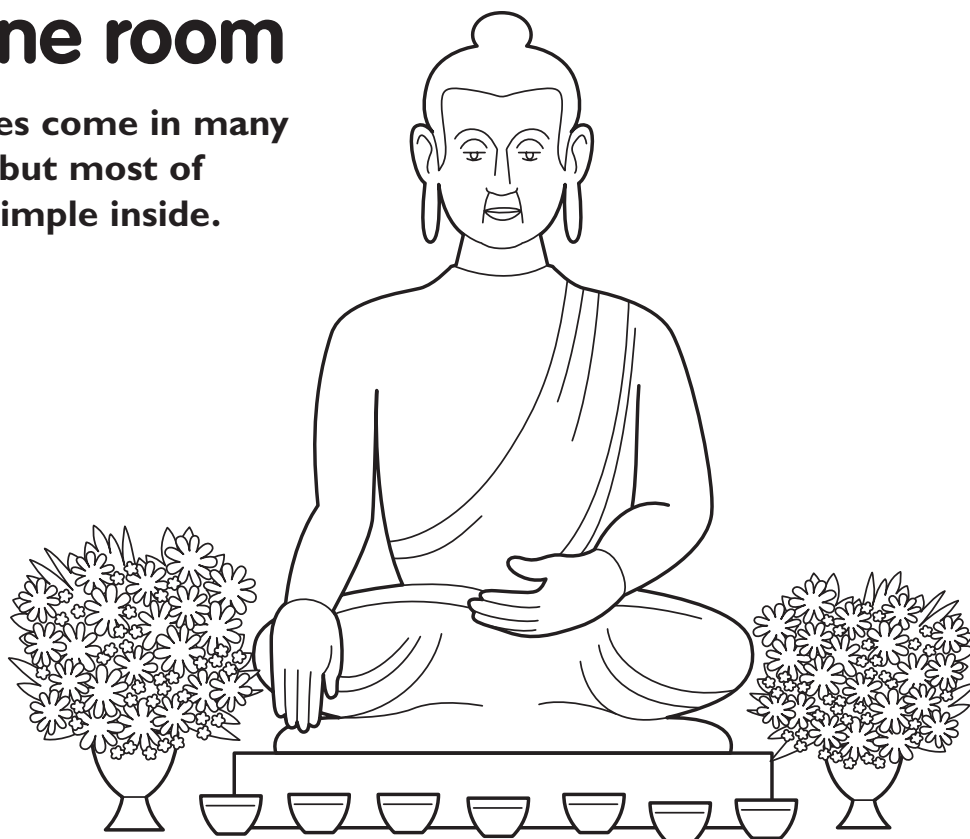


The shrine room

Buddhist temples come in many different styles, but most of them are very simple inside.



Q1. Why are there no chairs inside the shrine room?

.....

Q2. What can you always find inside the shrine room?

.....

Q3. Why do people leave offerings on the shrine?

.....

Q4. What do offerings of candles remind people of?

.....

Q5. Why are fruit and flowers used as offerings?

.....

Q6. Why won't you find bright lights or loud noises in the shrine room?

.....



Answers

1. Because people sit on the floor to worship.
2. A statue or image of the Buddha.
3. To show respect for the Buddha.
4. That the light of knowledge and learning can send away the darkness of ignorance.
5. They remind people that nothing lasts forever and they should value what they have now.
6. Because the shrine room is a place for peace and quiet.

Lesson objectives

- To explore the parts of the shrine room.
- To understand the purpose of some of the things in the shrine room.

Teaching notes

Most temples have one or more shrine rooms which are used for both formal and informal worship. In purpose-built temples these are usually separate buildings and may be highly decorated. There may also be many statues or images of the Buddha in the shrine room, along with offerings of flowers and burning incense.

It is important that children understand that Buddhists do not actually worship the Buddha or the statue of the Buddha, although it may look like that is what happens. When Buddhists leave offerings or bow to the Buddha, they are acknowledging the importance of the Buddha and his teachings. The offerings serve as reminders of the Buddha's teachings and also as a way to create positive thoughts by focusing the worshipper's mind on the meaning of the offering.

In some temples, especially in South East Asia, there may be hundreds of statues of the Buddha, including statues made of gold or covered in gems. Giving these expensive statues to the temple is another way that people show their respect and love for the Buddha and his teachings.

Other offerings found on the shrine may include a miniature stupa, which represents the mind of the Buddha; prepared food; a cup of tea; a butter lamp (in Tibetan temples); and a twig from a tree or long grass (in Thai temples).

If there are bowls of water on the shrine, there will usually be seven of them. These stand for the seven ways to pray: bowing, making offerings, confession, rejoicing in the goodness in yourself and others, asking Buddha to remain in the world, asking Buddha to teach others, dedicating merits (saying or chanting prayers).

Lesson outcomes

- The children understand that the shrine room is a focus for worship in the temple.
- The children can describe the basic features of a shrine room.

Complementary work

The children use secondary sources to find out about some of the offerings made in different countries.

Resources

Secondary sources about Buddhism around the world See www.buddhanet.net.