



Name:..... Form:.....

See **pages 20 and 21** of Buddhist temple

Living as a monk or a nun

Here is an actual day in the life of a monk in Thailand.

4:00am Wake up, bathe and dress in robes. Then all of the monks meditate together for one hour, followed by one hour of chanting prayers.

6:00–8:00am Alms collecting, walk around the neighbourhood barefoot with an alms bowl. People put food (vegetarian) and drink in the bowl or hand it to the monks. After each person puts something in the bowl a blessing is said. All the food is brought back to the temple.

8:00am Breakfast in a group, followed by a blessing for world peace.

9:00–12:00am Work and chores, such as cleaning and laundry, around the temple.

12:00noon Lunch, the last meal of the day.

1:00–6:00pm Classes in Buddhist teaching. Some monks attend school outside the temple in things that can be used to help the temple or local community. Children who are school age would also study regular school subjects such as maths or languages at this time. Some adult monks may do other kinds of work outside or inside the temple at this time, for example running a computer web site for the temple or teaching.

6:00–8:00pm Meditation and prayer.

8:00pm Individual study, homework for children.

9:00pm Bed.

On a separate sheet, write a schedule for a school day in your own life.

1. What are some of the differences between your day and the day of a monk or nun?

2. What do you think it would be like to live as a monk or a nun?

3. What are some of the things that you would find difficult about being a monk or a nun? What benefits might there be?

Activity objectives

- To let the children think about what it would be like to live in a temple.

Preparation and resources

Worksheet opposite, paper, writing materials.

Introducing the activity

Explain that some countries where most of the people are Buddhist, it is common for children and adults to spend some time living in a temple as a 'temporary' (novice) monk or nun. The schedule opposite is from a real-life monk in Thailand and this is a chance for the children to imagine what it might be like to live as a monk or nun.

Teaching notes

In Thailand there are more than 29,000 temples, and around 200,000 monks (and nuns) and around 85,000 novices at any time. However, each year an additional 100,000-200,000 people may spend the 'rains retreat' (the rainy season and the Buddhist 'lent') as monks and nuns. Most Thais will spend at least a few months as a monk or a nun at some point in their lives.

A typical day for a monk or nun can vary considerably from culture to culture, although the pattern of prayer, meditation and work is usually similar to this. Alms are not collected in the streets in all temples around the world. For example, in the UK and other countries where most people are not Buddhist, donations are instead brought to the temples by worshippers whenever they visit. The time given to meditation and prayer and the type of meditation and prayer also varies from place to place, or even from temple to temple.

Activities also vary considerably depending on the age of the monk. Children may spend more time studying regular school subjects, or even attend school outside the monastery. Older,

ordained monks may spend less time studying Buddhist thought and more time working in the temple or in the local community.

Children who live in temples in Thailand often have access to TV, video games and other non-spiritual things. But the children should be encouraged to think about what life would be like without TV, dinner, snacks, clothes other than robes, personal possessions and toys. While monks can and do play games and sports, they do not own anything. So, no personal consoles or stereos or things of that nature.

Concluding the activity

Let the children compare their schedules. They can also interview other people – family members or teachers, for example, about their day – and compare the different ways that people live.

Activity outcomes

- The children can draw conclusions about life as a monk or nun.
- The children can read and compare schedules.

Complementary work

The children could interview a monk or nun about their life during their visit to the temple. Then they could write an article about a day in the life of a monk or nun. The children could also investigate a typical day for monks or nuns in other Buddhist countries.

Resources

A monk or nun, or access to a computer and the internet. Almost any temple will have a monk or nun and they are usually very happy to talk about Buddhism. Or try contacting the Harnham Buddhist Monastery at www.ratanagiri.org or the London Buddhist Centre at www.lbc.org for assistance.