

ACTIVITY!

Inquire & Investigate



VOCAB LAB



Write down what you think each word means: **religion, belief, ritual, polytheistic, relic, parable, faith, worship, sacred text, and philosophy.**

Compare your definitions with those of your friends or classmates. Did you all come up with the same meanings? Turn to the text and glossary if you need help.



WHAT IS RELIGION?

Defining religion can be a difficult task. Often, our definition of religion is shaped by our family, experiences, traditions, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and many other factors. Understanding these influences in your life can be helpful as you compare and contrast the five major religions in this book. Ask a group of friends or classmates to help you explore the definition of religion and discover how different your answers are.

- **For 15 minutes, everyone in the group writes the answer to the following questions.** What is religion? Is there a god? Is there more than one god? How does religion encourage you to behave a certain way?
- **After you have finished writing, each person takes a turn to read out loud what he or she has written.** What similarities did you find in the answers? Were there any central elements that were included in the majority of the answers? How are the answers different?
- **Now go around the group so each person can share a little bit about their personal background and experience with religion.** How do you think their backgrounds affected their answers? How did your background affect your answer? Can you draw any conclusions from your discussion?

To investigate more, create a list of criteria that you and your classmates believe are essential to a religion. Why did you include these criteria? Are there any less common religions that you know of that do not meet your criteria? In what ways do faiths other than your own meet your criteria? In what ways do they not meet them?