Three Marks of Existence

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| Overview & Purpose To introduce the three marks of existence. Students should come away understanding the importance that they have on Buddhist perspectives of the nature of the universe. | | | Education Standards Addressed | |
| **Activity** | **Aims** | **Time Given** | | **Other** |
| Open lesson by asking students what 3 things they think define existence. Encourage them to think on a large scale. Remind them that it must apply to everything in existence | To get students to think critically about the nature of the universe. | 5 Minutes | |  |
| Introduce the three marks of existence one at a time. *Dukkha* is a good starting point for this. Read the passage from the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* which outlines the different types of *dukkha*. Write them out on the board and ask students to write examples for each type. | Students should be able to apply Buddhist theory to modern day issues. | 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. |
| Explain to the students that *anicca* applies to everything that exists within *samsāra*. As a result everything is in a constant state of flux. How does this make the students feel? Ask how this relates to Buddhism being the Middle Way? | Students should be able to recall previous lessons on the Middle Way. They should also be aware of how radical this idea must have been at the time. | 10 Minutes | | Analogies from the Pali Canon might be helpful in explaining the relationship between *anicca* and the Middle Way, the Kevaddha Sutta is a good example of this. |
| Explain to students that within Buddhist thought there is the concept of *anatta*. There is no ‘self’ that goes from life to life. Stress to students that there is a ‘conventional’ self, the identity of the individual but it is one that changes, thus impermanent. For students who might require it use the analogy of the chariot that was given to King Milinda. | Students should be able to recognise the significance of this particular teaching and how it differs from other ideas that were present in India at the time. | 10 Minutes | | Not-Self is a better translation than no-soul. It could also be worth introducing the Middle Way into this part of the lesson. With both *anicca* and *anatta* could it be argued that Buddhism is nihilistic? |
| Get the students to divide into groups and give each group one of the three marks. Ask them to write a modern analogy explaining their particular mark. After 5 minutes get the class to share their analogies. | Students should have a knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Buddha. They should be confident in using Buddhist terminology. | 15 Minutes | |  |