Death, Dying and Rebirth

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| Overview & Purpose The purpose of the lesson is to demonstrate the processes of death and rebirth in Buddhist thought. The lesson will cover topics that have been previously taught whilst providing students with further information about rebirth. | | | Education Standards Addressed | |
| **Activity** | **Aims** | **Time Given** | | **Other** |
| Explain to students that death, dying and rebirth show a number of different Buddhist doctrines working together. Ask students to provide a quick description of *saṃsāra*, *karma*, and the three marks of existence. | The students should be able to provide a quick and accurate explanation of Buddhist theories. | 10 minutes. | | If it has been covered students can also be asked to explain the main principles of Dependent Origination. |
| Using a handout or powerpoint, show pupils what happens when a person dies. Briefly explain that beings are reborn. For this part the 5 (sometimes 6) rebirth destinations can be explained. Then explain that the ideas behind a good and bad death and how this is shaped by *karma*. Also explore how this can affect the rebirth of an individual. | Students should be provided with a basic knowledge of rebirth and how it is guided by *karma*. | 10 minutes. | | Students could be asked what they think constitutes a good death/bad death before looking the Buddhist point of view. It could provide an interesting and memorable debate for students.  For more advanced students the 31 levels of existence could be explored. |
| Split the students up into groups and give them a list of what Buddhists can do to aid a dying person. The groups will then have to discuss with each other why each point on the list could help a dying person. | Students should be able to recognise that religious actions produce good *karma* and therefore positive mental states, that crying and grieving can create negative mental states and that a calm atmosphere can produce a calm mind. | 10 minutes. | |  |
| Return to the handout or powerpoint presentation. Describe the mechanics of rebirth and how the *karma* of the individual causes a new being into existence. Also discuss the differing attitudes that Buddhist schools have about rebirth. Look in particular at the instant rebirth of Theravāda and the *bardo* of Tibetan Buddhism. Discuss the implications of this. | Students should understand the role of Dependent Origination within rebirth. They should understand the problems with intermediate states such as the *bardo*. | 10 minutes. | |  |
| Spend the last ten minutes recapping what students have learnt during the lesson. Make sure that students understand how various Buddhist teachings can be seen through this process. | Students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of Dependent Origination, *karma*, *saṃsāra* and the types of rebirth. | 10 minutes. | | If students are confident with the subject matter then the time could be used to discuss what can be done after death. There are no last rites or specific funerary practices. Students could look at merit making practices found in Theravāda cultures or ancestor practices in China. |