**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ Assignment:\_\_\_\_**

**Hinduism and the Caste System**

**Directions:** Please read the following excerpts about Hinduism and the caste system. Then, complete the notes on each section as well as the “Summarizing Key Concepts” Graphic Organizer.

**Part I: Reincarnation**

Hindus believe in a process of reincarnation known as***samsara***, a perpetual series of rebirths in which a soul can take on any form of life (vegetable, animal, or human) at each birth. The process has no beginning and for most individuals, no end. **Karma** determines the form in which an individual is reborn. A person's karma is determined by his or her conduct in life; every action and thought in a present life dictates what form that person will take in his or her next life. Thus, Hindus believe that a person's fate is determined not by good or bad luck, but rather by the good or bad deeds of past lives. That concept helps justify the Hindu [caste system](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/129705?terms=caste+system), which grants each person a status according to his or her birth.

**Directions:** Make the title of the section into a question and then answer the question using the space below.

**Renamed Section (as a question):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

**Part II: Religious Sects (Groups) of Hinduism**

**Renamed Section (as a question):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

There are thousands of different Hindu sects. The lower [castes](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/129705?terms=caste+system) often restrict their religious practices to deities [gods] that exist in trees, water, and other natural elements. They frequently incorporate astrology and occult practices. Black magic, exorcism, and the worship of snakes are all elements of the many different brands of folk Hinduism that can be found throughout India (particularly in rural India). Journeys to such sacred places as temples, Harwar in the Himalayas, the Bay of Bengal, and the [Ganges](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/129705?terms=caste+system), the most holy of rivers, also play a major role in folk Hinduism. Though not limited to folk Hinduism, the worship of cows is another significant part of a Hindu's life.   
**Now, take notes on three major ideas from the reading…**

**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

**Part III: Hindu Festivals**

**Renamed Section (as a question):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

In addition, hundreds of festivals are held to observe sacred occasions, including births, deaths, victories, and other significant events of Hindu heroes and gods. Many festivals are seasonal and may be observed through worship, the offering of gifts, drinking, games, fairs, chants, bathing, [gambling](http://worldgeography.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/129705?terms=caste+system), the lighting of lamps, and many other acts. One of the more significant religious festivals is the **Divali**(Cluster of Lights), a four- or five-day event celebrated in October or November to commemorate the actions of several gods, including Shiva and Vishnu. This festival consists of the lighting of lamps, gambling, worship, fasting, and finally a visit by Hindu males to a female relative to receive dinner and offer gifts. Another Hindu festival is the **Holi,** a carnival-like celebration held in February or March when bonfires are lit to burn evil demons.   
**1.**

**2.**

**3.**

**Part IV: The Caste System**

For thousands of years a dominating aspect of social organization in South Asia (especially amongst Hindus) has been the [**caste**](http://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/318963) **system**, which is a strictly regulated social group into which one is born. Each **caste** has its own origin myth and rules relating to kinship, occupation, diet, and various other forms of behavior. In general, a person is expected to marry someone from the same caste. Within a village, all the members of the same caste recognize strong ties with each other and a sense of mutual obligation.

Castes are graded in a social and ritual hierarchy in which each expects respect from inferior groups and gives respect to superior ones. There are thousands of *jati*s, but most may be grouped into four great social classes called ***varna*s**. The highest are the **Brahmins**, the priestly class that traditionally dominated the learned professions and still wields great influence. Next are the **Kshatriyas**, traditionally warriors, rulers, and large landowners. Third are the **Vaishyas**, once mainly farmers but now chiefly associated with commerce (business). Lowest are the **Shudras**, who constitute the mass of India’s artisans and laborers.

Below the Shudras are a number of castes with no *varna* designation. Traditionally these groups were regarded as **“Untouchables,”** because their touch was to be avoided. They were considered to be ritually impure and able to convey pollution to others because of their association with unclean occupations, such as leatherworking and street sweeping. These groups have always been subject to considerable prejudice. The nationalist leader [Mohandas Gandhi](http://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/274487), who tried to ensure that they were treated humanely, bestowed on them the name **Harijan**, meaning “children of God.” More recently, members of these groups have begun to call themselves Dalit, meaning “oppressed,” and have worked to end caste discrimination. Many Dalit have renounced the caste system completely and converted from Hinduism to other religions, especially Buddhism.

Now, using the information from this section and the previous three, complete the “Summarizing key Concepts” Graphic Organizer.

**Citation:** "India." *Britannica School.* Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2013. Web. 18 Dec. 2013. <http://school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/275043>.

**Common Core Objectives:**

**R.H.9-10.2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

**R.H.9-10.10:** Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Assignment #\_\_\_

**Summarizing Key Concepts: Caste System Graphic Organizer**

**Directions:** Using the information from the “**The Caste System**” handout , please complete the following graphic organizer. Write “The Caste System” in the center and complete the boxes using detail.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Definition (from a text)**  **Definition (in your own words)**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **Key Word** | **Characteristics (At least 4)** |
| **Examples** (Make sure to include  the 4 major groups of the caste  system here with definitions!) | **3 sentence summary of the topic** |

**Any questions you still have:**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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