

An overview of buddhism book review example

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



1. Summarize the central themes, theses, issues, or arguments of the reading assignment.

In the reading, the author John Ferguson (1978) gave an overview of Buddhism.

He provided a background on the life of Siddhartha Gautama who would later come to be known as Buddha. He described how seeing an old man, a sick man, and a monk led Buddha to leave his comfortable life in order to seek enlightenment. After discerning the truth, Buddha spent the rest of his life preaching his gospel of salvation throughout India.

The author then described the guiding principles that Buddhists use in their search for and practice of the enlightenment. These include the Three Jewels of Buddhism; the Dharma, which consists of the Four Noble Truths and the Eight Fold Path; and the Five Precepts.

The author also described Buddhism's teachings about violence - that taking another life and participating in wars are forbidden - and how Buddhist monks got involved in violence anyway. However, the author also cited instances when Buddhism became a vehicle for peace.

2. Summarize at least four key points made by the authors. In the case of multiple authors, indicate which author you are referring to for each point.

One key point made by the author was Buddha's realization that life was suffering and that to extinguish suffering, the "desire or attachment to the world" must also be extinguished" (Ferguson, 1978, p. 41). The author also pointed out that although Buddhism was centered on the belief of

renouncing the world, that Buddha sought the middle way, which was “between sensuality and extreme ascetism and mortification of the flesh” (Ferguson, 1978, p. 42).

A third point that the author made was that according to Buddhism, violence could be overcome through loving kindness or benevolence, which could be achieved through meditation. However, the author also pointed out that even Buddha encouraged violence if it was for the defense of the Order or if killing one meant saving two. There was also a belief that existence was an illusion, that in reality, no soul and no self is killed. In addition, violence was justified in that it was better to kill someone than allow them to kill.

3. Raise at least two or more questions, critical or informational, related to the reading.

We hardly hear of Buddhist terrorists or Buddhism-related violence in our modern times that it surprises me how explicitly Buddhism provides guidelines for the permission to incite violence. However, despite this, we don't hear about any or many Buddhist fanatics. My question would then be how modern Buddhists can keep their beliefs in check and avoid getting on the verge of fanaticism, which is a tendency that other religions have.

On the other hand, it seems that every religion has provisions for justifying violence. Another question would then be if it's possible through Enlightenment - which entails the complete detachment from worldly things -- to achieve a world that's totally free from violence.

4. In a paragraph, characterize your critical reflections on the ideas presented in this reading assignment.

I am surprised to learn that Buddhism has such clear guidelines on when violence is justified, and these can easily be subjected to the wrong interpretation. It confuses me how Buddhism seems to teach that the ends justify the means - for example, that it's better to kill someone than allow that person to kill. This just makes me think that beliefs - religious or otherwise - are very subjective. One's belief may not be shared by another, but that despite this, we often use our beliefs - twisted or not - to justify our actions. As such, there is then no wonder that violence of all forms continue to be prevalent in our world. This has also led me to think that despite what our religions teach us, in the end, our actions will really be guided by our own personal values and judgment.

References

Ferguson, J. (1978). Chapter 4: Buddhism. In *War and peace in the world's religions* (pp. 141-154). United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.