

Interfaith Literacy Quiz

Think you've got what it takes? This 10-question quiz tests your knowledge of interfaith cooperation in diverse religious and ethical traditions.

1. Which U.S. President, while addressing a Jewish community and affirming America's commitment to interfaith cooperation, insisted that "the Government of the United States...gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance"?
 - a. William J. Clinton
 - b. George Washington
 - c. John F. Kennedy
 - d. Ronald W. Reagan
2. Who was the first U.S. President to host an *iftar*, the sundown meal when Muslims break their daily fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, at the White House?
 - a. Barack Obama
 - b. George W. Bush
 - c. George H. W. Bush
 - d. Thomas Jefferson
3. Which religious or ethical leader, while marching arm in arm with Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. from Selma to Montgomery to rally for voter rights, reflected, "I felt my legs were praying"? What was his or her tradition?
 - a. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Judaism
 - b. Pauli Murray, Christianity
 - c. A. Philip Randolph, Humanism
 - d. Thich Naht Hahn, Buddhism
4. What organization, founded and led by evangelical Christians, has become a worldwide leader in the affordable-housing movement, and which self-described born-again evangelical U.S. president is one of its most prominent supporters?
 - a. Samaritan's Purse and President Ronald Reagan
 - b. Points of Light Foundation and President H.W. Bush
 - c. Habitat for Humanity and President Jimmy Carter
 - d. Mercy Housing and President Lyndon B. Johnson

5. Which poet, mystic, and religious thinker was translated and lauded by Ralph Waldo Emerson, promoted by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and quoted admiringly by Sherlock Holmes in a short story by Arthur Conan Doyle?
 - a. Moses Maimonides
 - b. Saint John of the Cross
 - c. Edmund Spenser
 - d. Hafiz of Shiraz

6. Esther Peterson was a fierce advocate for women's rights, consumer rights, fair minimum wage, and labor unions. She successfully lobbied for labeling of foods with their nutritional values, and according to her obituary in *The New York Times*, she "has an impact on Americans every time they buy a can of soup." What tradition was Esther Peterson?
 - a. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
 - b. Reformed Jewish
 - c. Episcopalian
 - d. Roman Catholic

7. Which tradition's core text articulates a vision of "a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good ...[demanding] a shared life in a shared world"?
 - a. Quakerism
 - b. Jainism
 - c. Secular Humanism
 - d. Buddhism

8. Which major world religion, in the 1965 document *Nostra Aetate* (Latin for "In Our Age"), recognized shared philosophical questions in Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism, affirmed the unity of all people in God, decried all forms of religious discrimination, and affirmed the possibility of truth in other traditions, in so far as those truths aligned with the faith's teaching?
 - a. Greek Orthodoxy
 - b. Anglicanism
 - c. Orthodox Judaism
 - d. Roman Catholicism

9. Mahatma Gandhi once wrote that "the bold and brave resistance, full of wisdom" of which religious or spiritual figure inspired his own non-violent resistance philosophy?
 - a. Buddha
 - b. Moses
 - c. Rama
 - d. Jesus Christ



10. All religious and ethical traditions have some version of the “golden rule” at their heart. Can you match the iteration of the golden rule on the left to its corresponding tradition?

_____ a. “I am a stranger to no one, and no one is a stranger to me, indeed, I am a friend to all.”

_____ b. “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary.”

_____ c. “Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.”

_____ d. “Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.”

_____ e. “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

_____ f. “This is the sum of duty: do not do unto others what would cause pain to you.”

1. Christianity

2. Buddhism

3. Judaism

4. Sikhism

5. Islam

6. Hinduism



Answers

1. b. George Washington

In 1790, President Washington travelled to Rhode Island, where he met with leaders of several religious groups, including a fledgling Jewish congregation. Moses Seixas, one of the officials of the congregation, presented an impassioned letter to the President praising the government's commitment to religious and civil freedom. Washington, moved by the congregation's letter, responded with his now famous "Letter to the Hebrew Congregation at Newport, Rhode Island," which articulates America's early commitments to pluralism.

2. d. Thomas Jefferson

At sundown on December 9, 1805, President Jefferson hosted the first *iftar* at the White House when Tunisia's Muslim envoy to the United States visited the country during Ramadan. President George W. Bush made the White House iftar an annual celebration during his eight years in office, a practice his successors have continued.

3. a. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, Judaism

Rabbi Heschel was one of the most prominent Jewish theologians of the 20th century and a powerful advocate for civil rights throughout the 1960s. An Orthodox Jew who escaped to the United States from Poland shortly after the start of WWII, Heschel (like King) held a theological perspective grounded in the Israelites' liberation from slavery and a commitment to nonviolence.

But Heschel was not the only leader inspired by religious and ethical values to work with King. Pauli Murray, rejected from Columbia University for being a woman and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill for being African-American, went on to become a lawyer, an activist for both racial and women's equality, and the first female African-American Episcopal priest.

Buddhist priest Thich Nhat Hahn allied with Martin Luther King, Jr. to call for an end to the Vietnam War in the 1960s and sought to serve the Vietnamese by setting up schools, establishing medical centers, and helping resettle thousands of Vietnamese displaced by the war.

A. Phillip Randolph, a prominent atheist African-American in the early part of the 20th century, realized his dream for a march on Washington in 1963 which served as the platform for Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

4. c. Habitat for Humanity and President Jimmy Carter

Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller. The Fullers had been running a successful business in Montgomery, Alabama but decided to quit and dedicate themselves to a life of Christian service. As a Southern Baptist and self-proclaimed evangelical, Carter felt that Habitat exemplified the best qualities of Christian work. Today, Habitat works to maintain its commitment to its Christian identity while also recognizing the call to service in other traditions and distributes resources to support communities interested in doing "interfaith builds".



5. d. Hafiz of Shiraz

An Islamic mystic and spiritual teacher, Hafiz lived in Persia during the 14th century and has deeply influenced Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers (Emerson famously called him “the poet’s poet”). His work encompasses themes of love, spirituality, and forgiveness and touches on topics as varied as friendship, the ego, and romantic longing.

Hafiz’s poetry also demonstrates the Muslim commitment to service. In a poem called “Narrow the Difference,” Hafiz writes:

*There are always friends of God in this world.
Find one and offer service.
For their glance is generous and cannot help
But forever give.*

6. a. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon)

Peterson worked under President Kennedy as the director of the Women’s Bureau of the Labor Department, which she continued under President Johnson; President Carter named her the special assistant to the President on Consumer Affairs, and President Clinton made her a United Nations delegate. She served under Eleanor Roosevelt as the executive vice-chair for the president’s Commission on the Status of Women and won the Medal of Freedom and the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for “profound contributions to humanity.” Peterson reflected that two LDS hymns embodied her commitments to service and justice: “Do what is right; let the consequences follow” and “Have I done good in the world today? Have I helped anyone in need? Have I cheered up the sad and made someone feel glad? If not I have failed indeed.”

Esther Peterson is not alone in understanding her Mormon faith as calling her to service; according to a recent Pew Forum in Public Life Survey, 73% of Mormons believe working to help the poor is essential to being a good Mormon.

7. c. Secular Humanism

Secular Humanism is defined by the American Humanist Association as “a progressive philosophy that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good of humanity.” While the non-religious community can be very disparate, primarily united by individuals’ lack of belief in God, the Humanist movement nevertheless affirms the importance of leading ethical lives with the aim of having a positive impact on an interconnected world. The first Humanist Manifesto, written in 1933 and revised twice since, represents the secular worldview of the signers while emphasizing the importance of mutually enriching cooperation with those of diverse viewpoints. Many Humanists and atheists today share that same priority of collaborative work for the common good. Atheists and Humanists are active participants in the interfaith movement, cooperating with religious people while affirming their commitment to non-religious beliefs.



8. d. Roman Catholicism

Nostra Aetate became an official Catholic declaration at the Second Vatican Council, a worldwide gathering of 2,400 bishops to discuss the relationship between the Catholic Church and modernity. *Nostra Aetate* was adopted by the bishops present almost unanimously. According to Catholic scholar and leader Father Thomas Stransky, CSP, who was present at Vatican II, “*Nostra Aetate* helped open the church to living dialogues with other communities of faith—respecting each one’s identity, ritual, and conduct.” This dialogue begins with [as *Nostra Aetate* proclaims] “what human beings have in common and what promotes fellowship,”—not merely human efforts, but God’s mysterious initiatives, through us, in a shared history.

9. d. Jesus Christ

Gandhi believed that every educated citizen had a duty to be knowledgeable about the texts and tenets of all major religious traditions in order to engage positively with those of different backgrounds. In his study of the Christian scriptures, Gandhi was particularly drawn to Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and his command to seek first the Kingdom of God and to not resist evil (Matthew 5:37-40). Gandhi used his interpretation of the Gospel’s call to non-violence as the philosophy behind his peaceful resistance to British rule in India. Later, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., claimed that until he learned about the work of Gandhi, he never believed that Jesus’ non-violent ethic could actually be put into practice. According to King, “Jesus gave us the message ...but Gandhi furnished the method.”

- 10. **A, 4** (Sikhism, Guru Granth Sahib)
- B, 3** (Judaism, Talmud, Shabbat 31a)
- C, 2** (Buddhism, Udana-Varga 5.18)
- D, 5** (Islam, Hadith (saying of the Prophet Muhammad))
- E, 1** (Christianity, Matthew 7:12)
- F, 6** (Hinduism, Mahabharata, 5:1517)

Though religions have many real differences and disagreements, all religious and ethical traditions share a commitment to the common good and a vision to treat others with dignity and humanity. By knowing how diverse traditions speak to shared values like mercy, compassion, hospitality, and justice, you have an important tool for building relationships across lines of difference and countering negative stereotypes.



Sources

1. b. Read President Washington's letter to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, Rhode Island at the National Archives website: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135>.
2. a. Read the remarks from President Obama's 2010 White House *iftar*, where he talks about Jefferson and the first iftar at the White House: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/08/13/remarks-president-iftar-dinner>.
b. Watch President George W. Bush's remark at the 2005 White House *iftar*, where he insists, "we cannot carry the message of freedom and the baggage of bigotry at the same time": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VaNKz2rDF04>.
c. Hear more about the history of *iftar* dinners at the White House: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/podcasts/retropod/thomas-jeffersons-iftar-dinner-and-the-long-history-of-ramadan-at-the-white-house/>.
d. Read more about President Jefferson's relationship with Sidi Soliman Mellimelli here: <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/tunisian-envoy>.
3. a. Watch a clip from a documentary on Heschel, and hear how religious leaders from diverse traditions, as well as Heschel's daughter, understand his legacy and commitment to social activism from *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/january-18-2008/abraham-joshua-heschel/1789/>.
c. Read about Pauli Murray here: <http://paulimurrayproject.org/> and learn more about her life and watch a video of her here: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/Afro-Anglican_history/exhibit/leadership/murray.php.
d. Hear more about the relationship with Thich Nhat Hanh and Dr. King here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO-eUm_C-jE.
e. Click through an online exhibit of A. Philip Randolph's life and legacy here: <http://www.apri.org/randolph.html>.
f. Hear IFYC's Founder and President Eboo Patel reflect on Heschel and King on the IFYC blog: <http://www.ifyc.org/content/egypts-uprising-echoed-martin-luther-kings-activism>.
4. a. Listen to a speech from President Carter at a Habitat work site: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OChLBUBX5QM>.
5. a. Read more of Hafiz' poetry in *The Subject Tonight Is Love* (translated by Daniel Ladinsky).

6. a. Read the lyrics and listen to “Have I Done Any Good,” one of the hymns that inspired Esther Peterson: http://www.lds.org/ldsorg/v/index.jsp?hideNav=1&sourceId=63608ceb1ec20110VgnVCM100000176f620a___&vgnnextoid=a9832ce2b446c010VgnVCM1000004d82620aRCRD.
b. Explore this infographic from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life to learn more about Mormon life and values in America: <http://www.pewforum.org/Christian/Mormon/mormons-in-america-infographic.aspx>.
c. Read more about Esther Peterson’s legacy and work in Cokie Roberts’ *We Are Our Mothers’ Daughters*. http://www.amazon.com/We-Are-Our-Mothers-Daughters/dp/B004JZWKLY/ref=tmm_pap_title_0.
7. a. Learn more about Humanism from the American Humanist Association: <https://americanhumanist.org>.
b. Read the most current articulation of the Humanist Manifesto: http://www.americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III.
d. Watch Greg Epstein, Secular Humanist Chaplain at Harvard University, talk about why he’s involved with interfaith cooperation: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-DJunsujBes>.
8. a. Read the full text of *Nostra Aetate* on the Vatican’s website: http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.
b. Learn more about the history and impact of *Nostra Aetate* in an issue of *American Magazine* celebrating the document’s 40th anniversary: http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=4431.
c. On the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation’s website, read further about *Nostra Aetate* and Pope John XXIII’s personal commitment to religious respect: <http://www.raoulwallenberg.net/interfaith/nostra-aetate-commemoration/>.
9. a. Read about Gandhi’s appreciation of the Bible in William Emilsen’s article “Gandhi, Scripture and the Bible”: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1030570X0101400106>.
b. Learn about how Gandhi inspired Martin Luther King Jr.’s commitment to non-violence in the King Encyclopedia from Stanford University: http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/about_king/encyclopedia/gandhi.htm.
c. Read more about Gandhi’s respect for diverse religions in a book by Arun Gandhi, Mahatma Gandhi’s grandson: *Legacy of Love*. <http://www.amazon.com/Legacy-Love-Education-Path-Nonviolence/dp/097252004X>.
10. a. See how 13 different religious traditions articulate their version of the golden rule: <https://www.scarboromissions.ca/golden-rule>.

