

BELIEF AND POWER

Purpose

Analyze the words of an emperor to develop an understanding of the connection between empires and belief systems.

Process

1. Read the passage below from the Mauryan emperor Ashoka.

Ashoka honors all religions. It is important to control one's speech and not praise one religion over another. Peace is to be commended, so that all people may hear one another's principles and honor them. This is the desire of Ashoka, that all religions should be honored and all should teach that which is good in order for all to live in harmony with each other.

Adapted from Ashoka's Rock Edict XII, third century BCE

2. How do you think Ashoka used belief systems to help him govern his people?

3. What are two ways this policy might have benefited Ashoka's empire?