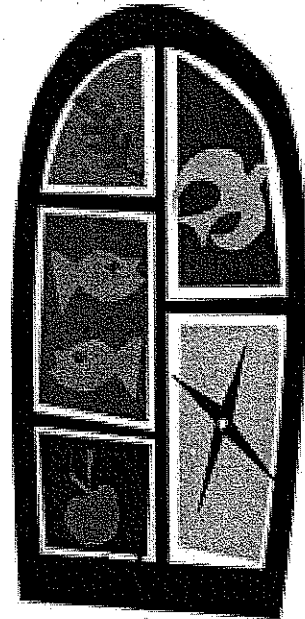


CHRISTIANITY

Christianity centres on the belief in the life, the miracles, the death and the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, a teacher and healer who lived in first-century Palestine. The Gospels describe Jesus's three-year ministry, during which his twelve disciples and followers declared him to be the Messiah.

Christianity's prominent role in shaping Western civilization is reflected in Library of Congress (LC) subject headings, which denote a strong Christian orientation. While adherence to the Christian faith has declined in parts of the Western world, it has increased in developing countries and remains the world's largest religion: up to one-third of the global population identifies as Christian.

The three main branches of Christianity are Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism, which are represented by over 30,000 denominations. Christians hold diverse interpretations and views, but share an essential set of central convictions, including the belief that Jesus is the son of God and the Messiah, and that the Bible is a sacred text.



Many, but not all, Christian denominations frame their worship around a liturgical calendar, commemorating events in the lives of Jesus and the saints, and upholding periods of fasting. Holy days and seasons such as Christmas and Easter are celebrated worldwide by both non-practising Christians and non-Christians.

ADVENT marks the beginning of the church year, and encompasses four to five weeks leading to Christmas Eve (from Nov 20 in the Western church and Nov 15 in Eastern Orthodox churches).

CHRISTMAS, or "Christ's Mass," celebrates the birth of Jesus (Dec. 25).

EPIPHANY celebrates the revelation of God in human form to mankind (Jan. 6).

SHROVE TUESDAY, also known as **MARDI GRAS**, is the day before the beginning of Lent, traditionally marked by eating up the last of the rich foods in the house.

LENT is a 40-day period of fasting and repentance in preparation for Easter, starting on **ASH WEDNESDAY**.

EASTER celebrates the central event in the Christian calendar, the resurrection three days after Jesus' death by crucifixion.



ESSENTIAL NON-FICTION

BOWDEN, John, Ed. (2005). *Encyclopedia of Christianity*. Oxford University Press.
ISBN 0-19-522393-4. Grades 10 and up.

A keystone for any YA Christian collection, this volume is divided into accessible, well-written, and substantial themes such as “Arts,” “Death,” “Diversity,” “Ethics,” and “Prayer,” which offer extended essays written by distinguished contributors on Christianity’s central characters, as well as subjects such as “Women in Christianity,” “Love,” and “Gay and Lesbian Theology.” Appealing features include illustrations and call-out boxes featuring statistics, lists, and intriguing byways. A timeline, bibliography and glossary add to its value as a core reference text.

WILSON, Mike, Ed. (2005). *Christianity* (Opposing Viewpoints Series). Greenhaven Press.
ISBN 0-73-772565-6. Grades 8 and up.

Library Media Connection has labeled this series as the “set that middle school librarians have been looking for.” In *Christianity*, chapter headings broaching broad questions such as “What is the Role of Christianity in the World?” include clearly contrasting answers in essay format, including “Christians Should be Politically Active” and “Christianity is Not Meant to Resolve Political Disputes.” Each essay is accompanied by a series of questions focusing on vocabulary and reading comprehension, and the book is presented in a colourful and engaging fashion, including fact-boxes, charts, cartoons, and photographs.

LUTZ, Norma Jean. (2001). *The History of the Black Church* (African-American Achievers Series).
Chelsea House. ISBN 0-7910-5822-0. Grades 8 to 10.

According to Lutz, “Black Church” is a collective title for the multitude of Christian churches and denominations created by African Americans, and she provides a comprehensive overview of the role played by Christianity in the lives of African Americans. Readers are led through the early periods of slavery into the 1990s and the resurgence in popularity of the Black Church among young, middle-class African Americans. Lutz illustrates the integral roles that music and the struggles for civil rights have played in the development of African American Christianity. With a timeline, list for further reading, as well as historical and contemporary photographs, this title is a valuable addition to more general titles on Christianity.

BEAUJON, Andrew. (2006). *Body Piercing Saved My Life: Inside the Phenomenon of Christian Rock*.
Da Capo. ISBN 0-306-81457-9. Grades 10 and up.

Named for a popular Christian rock t-shirt depicting Christ’s wounds, Beaujon’s book examines the booming youth culture of Christian rock, tracing the movement from its roots in country, gospel and the blues through its evolution into the current scene at the fringes of the indie music industry. As well as interviews with Christian rock “lifers” and “rebels,” this title offers a fascinating glimpse into evangelical Christian culture—from thriving skateboarding ministries and Christian tattoo parlors to extreme teen bibles—and what it represents about American life.
