

Asceticism

🔦 C1+ Level

🔦 Duration: 1 h

🔦 Age: adults

🔦 Individual lesson

🔦 Main focus

The student can scan quickly through long and complex texts, locating relevant details.

Can speculate or hypothesise, comparing and evaluating alternative arguments.

1

Warm-up

Exercise 1: Discuss the following questions:

Do you know what asceticism is?

What does it mean - "to practice an ascetic lifestyle"?

Which things or activities can people who lead an ascetic lifestyle give up?

Note:

Asceticism /ə'setɪsɪzəm/

2

Reading

Exercise 2: Skim the text. You have 30 seconds. After skimming, mention at least 3 points covered in the text.

In a world where consumerism and materialism reign supreme, the concept of asceticism may

1 seem outdated and irrelevant. However, there are still individuals who choose to renounce material possessions in order to achieve spiritual enlightenment.

Ascetics are individuals who lead a life of self-denial and self-discipline, often embracing celibacy

2 and living as hermits. They seek to transcend the physical realm and connect with the divine through their practice of austerity.

While some may view asceticism as extreme or unnecessary, for those who practice it, it is a way

3 to achieve self-transcendence and find meaning beyond the superficialities of modern life. It is a way to strip away the distractions and focus on what truly matters.

There are different forms of asceticism, ranging from the extreme practices of fasting and self-

4 flagellation to more moderate forms such as meditation and voluntary simplicity. Each individual must find the form that works best for them in their pursuit of spiritual growth.

5 In today's society, where success is often equated with wealth and possessions, it can be difficult to understand why someone would choose to live a life of asceticism. However, for those who have experienced the profound sense of peace and connection that comes with this lifestyle, it is a choice that brings immense fulfillment and purpose.

6 Asceticism is not just a religious practice, but also a philosophical one. It is a rejection of the notion that happiness and fulfillment can be found solely in material possessions and external achievements. Instead, it is a recognition that true happiness comes from within, and that by letting go of attachment to material things, one can find a deeper sense of contentment and inner peace.

7 In a world where the pursuit of material wealth often leads to stress, anxiety, and dissatisfaction, asceticism offers an alternative path to fulfillment and happiness. While it may not be for everyone, it is a reminder that there are other ways to live and find meaning in life beyond the superficialities of modern society.

3

Vocabulary

Exercise 3: In the text above, find words and phrases that match the following definitions:

- a. the world of tangible objects and experiences, as opposed to abstract concepts or ideas
(paragraph 2)
- b. to give up or reject something, especially a belief or claim **(paragraph 1)**
- c. relating to a god or gods; sacred or holy **(paragraph 2)**
- d. the act of punishing oneself, often through physical means, as a form of religious devotion or guilt **(paragraph 4)**
- e. a person who lives alone and apart from society, often for religious or spiritual reasons
(paragraph 2)
- f. the state of abstaining from sexual activity, usually for religious reasons **(paragraph 2)**
- g. reach a state of understanding and knowledge that goes beyond ordinary perception
(paragraph 1)
- h. the act of going beyond one's own limits or boundaries, often in a spiritual or philosophical sense **(paragraph 3)**
- i. to be considered equal to or similar in meaning or value to something else **(paragraph 5)**
- j. shallow or trivial aspects of something, such as appearance or surface-level characteristics
(paragraph 7)
- k. a state of happiness and satisfaction with what one has **(paragraph 6)**

Speaking

Exercise 4: Discuss the following questions:

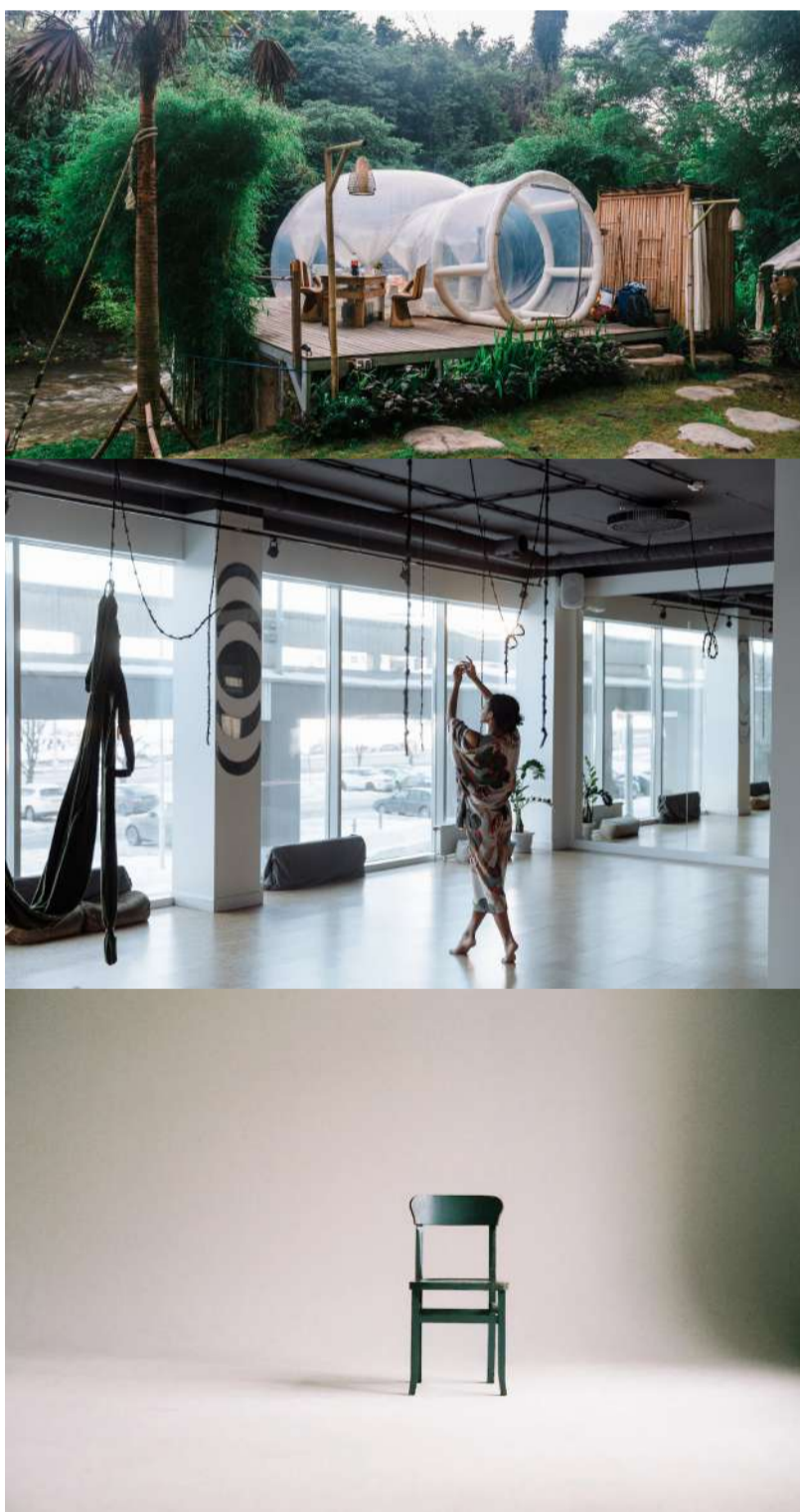
Would you be ready to renounce any of your material possessions?

How can embracing celibacy help someone achieve spiritual enlightenment?

Do you think living as hermits is a viable option in today's society? Why? Why not?

What are some potential benefits and drawbacks of pursuing a life of asceticism in today's society?

Exercise 5: Fill in this advert with suitable collocations from Exercise 3.



FIND DEEPER MEANING

PRACTICE ASCETICISM

Welcome to our modern trend of asceticism!
Are you searching for a deeper meaning in life?

Our retreat centre offers the perfect opportunity to achieve ____ (1) and connect ____ (2). Through practicing ____ (3), you can transcend ____ (4) and achieve ____ (5). Our program focuses on going beyond the ____ (6) of modern life to find a ____ (7) within yourself. Our detailed approach to asceticism will help you achieve your personal goals. We invite you to join us and experience the life-changing benefits of asceticism.

Don't wait any longer, book your spot now and start your journey towards a more fulfilling life!

Exercise 6: Would you participate in this program? Why? Why not?

What would you change in this advert to make it more appealing?



Correct answers and teaching tips

Exercise 1.

Created in the “Discussion questions” tool

Exercise 3.

Created in the “Word-definition matching” tool

- a. the physical realm
- b. to renounce
- c. divine
- d. self-flagellation
- e. a hermit
- f. celibacy
- g. to achieve spiritual enlightenment
- h. self-transcendence
- i. to be equated with
- j. superficialities
- k. a sense of contentment

Exercise 4.

Created in the “Discussion questions” tool

Exercise 5.

Created in the “Reading bits” + “Fill in the gap” tools

1. spiritual enlightenment
2. with the divine
3. asceticism
4. the physical realm
5. self-transcendence
6. superficialities
7. sense of contentment

Teacher tip

As homework, you can offer your students to find a contemporary example of an individual or a community who practice asceticism. This will help them develop the ability to scan quickly through several sources and identify the relevance and usefulness of particular sections for the task at hand.