

Assignment: Sacred Space and Sacred Texts — Exploring Their Relationship

Overview:

Religious spaces are often designed to reflect and embody key sacred texts — not just visually, but through rituals, movement, and community practices. In this assignment, you will choose a sacred space from *Immersive Religion* and pair it with a related sacred text. You will explore how the ideas, themes, or stories from the text are expressed in the structure, activities, or atmosphere of the space.

You will work with *both* primary sacred texts (like the Qur'an, Bible, or Vedas) *and* secondary sources (like hadith collections, mantras, or interpretive traditions).

Learning Objectives:

- Analyze the relationship between sacred text and sacred space.
 - Interpret how beliefs and practices are embodied in architecture, ritual, and community behavior.
 - Practice close reading of primary and secondary religious texts.
 - Reflect critically on how physical environments teach and reinforce religious ideas.
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Step 1: Select a Sacred Space

Choose one sacred space explored in *Immersive Religion*:

- **Mosque** (for Jumma Prayer)
- **Catholic Church** (for Catholic Mass)
- **Hindu Temple** (for Durga Puja)

Use the 360 videos, virtual tours, and interviews provided to explore the space carefully.



Step 2: Choose a Textual Pairing

Select one **primary text** and one **secondary text** from the list below associated with your chosen space.

Tradition	Primary Text (choose one)	Secondary Text (choose one)
Islam	Qur'an 62:9–11 (verses about Friday prayer)	Hadith: Sahih Bukhari Book 13 (On importance of Jummah)
	Qur'an 2:144 (about the qibla)	Hadith: Muslim Book 4, Hadith 1057 (On prayer ranks and rewards)
Catholic Christianity	Luke 22:14–20 (Institution of the Eucharist) Cf. Matthew 26:17–30	Catechism of the Catholic Church §1322–1344 (Teaching on the Eucharist)
	John 6:53–58 (Bread of Life discourse)	Writings of St. Augustine, <i>Sermon 272</i> (On Communion)
Hinduism	Devi Mahatmya, Chapter 3 (The Slaying of Mahisasura)	Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu (common Durga Puja mantra)
	Rig Veda 10.125 ("I am the Queen" hymn to the goddess)	Durga Saptashati commentary selections

Step 3: Write a 750–1000 Word Essay

Structure your essay around these three sections:

1. Description of the Space (200–300 words)

- Describe key features of the space (layout, symbols, rituals observed).
- How does the space shape the experience of worship?

2. Connection to Texts (400–500 words)

- Summarize the main ideas or messages from your chosen texts.
- Explain how these texts appear reflected (or not) in the space's design, decoration, use, or rituals.
- Be specific: Are certain passages echoed in imagery, architecture, prayers, or actions?

3. Reflection on Meaning (150–200 words)

- How does the relationship between text and space shape believers' experiences?
- What new insights did you gain about how religious traditions teach and reinforce ideas?
- What limitations did you experience studying this virtually rather than in person?

Formatting Requirements:

- 12-point font, Times New Roman or similar
 - Double-spaced
 - Include citations for any quotations or references (short citation style is fine, e.g., Qur'an 2:144 or Sahih Bukhari 13:5).
 - Word count at the end.
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Rubric (40 Points Total)

Category	Excellent (9–10 pts)	Good (7–8 pts)	Satisfactory (5–6 pts)	Needs Improvement (0–4 pts)
Use of Resources (10 pts)	Thoughtfully uses immersive media, primary and secondary texts.	Uses all resources but some connections are thin.	Uses some resources; missing depth.	Minimal use of required resources.
Description of Space (10 pts)	Clear, detailed description tied to religious function.	Mostly clear, some key details missing.	Basic description; little connection to ritual function.	Vague or confusing description.
Textual Connection and Analysis (10 pts)	Strong, specific links between text and space; insightful interpretation.	Good links; some analysis could be deeper.	Basic connections without deep analysis.	Weak or unclear connections; minimal analysis.
Reflection and Insight (10 pts)	Thoughtful, critical reflection on meaning and limitations.	Some critical reflection; could be expanded.	Limited reflection; mostly descriptive.	Little or no critical engagement.

Sample Student Outline: Sacred Space and Sacred Texts Essay

(Students can follow this structure directly to organize their papers.)

I. Introduction (Approx. 100–150 words)

- Name the sacred space and the texts you chose.
 - State your thesis: *How do the space and texts reflect and reinforce each other?*
 - Briefly mention the main ideas you will discuss.
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II. Description of the Sacred Space (Approx. 200–300 words)

- What is the layout, design, and atmosphere of the space?
 - What symbols, images, sounds, or activities are most important?
 - How does the space guide or shape worshippers' behavior?
(Use sensory details here — what would you see, hear, feel?)
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III. Analysis: Connecting Text and Space (Approx. 400–500 words)

- What are the main teachings or themes from your **primary text**?
- What key teachings or practices are emphasized in your **secondary text**?
- How are these ideas reflected in:
 - The structure or design of the building?
 - The rituals or movements that happen there?
 - The words or prayers used in worship?
- Give 2–3 specific examples of how the texts and the space relate.
(Quoting short parts of the text is good!)



IV. Reflection and Conclusion (Approx. 150–200 words)

- What did this study reveal about the relationship between religious ideas and physical spaces?
- What insight did you gain into this tradition by exploring both text and space together?
- How did studying the space virtually impact your experience — what was missing, and what was still powerful?