The Buddha’s life and its significance:

*Add details to explain these bullet points.*

*Use simple pictures, if this helps.*  
• the birth of the Siddhartha Gotama and his life of luxury

• the Four Sights: 1 old age; 2 illness; 3 death; 4 a holy man (Jataka 075).

• the Buddha’s ascetic (monk-like) life

• the Buddha’s Enlightenment.

Additional Notes on Buddha’s life:

The **effects** of the four sights were to cause him to realise that life is full of dukkha (suffering) and to make him seek a better way; enlightenment.

He **became an ascetic** (like a monk) because he wanted to pursue this goal of freedom from suffering and enlightenment.

He **stopped being an ascetic** because he saw that inflicting suffering on himself did not work after all that time and chose a ‘Middle Way’ between self-denial and luxury. ‘If the string is too tight it breaks, but if it is too slack it doesn’t play a note,’ (on a stringed instrument).

At his **enlightenment he realised three things:**

1. Knowledge of all his previous lives;
2. Understanding of the cycle of birth, life, death, rebirth + we have no continuing soul (‘anatta’);
3. Why suffering happens and how to overcome it.

These are called the *Three Watches of the Night* because he realised them at night time.

There are different versions and **interpretations of the Four Sights**. Variations include: i) Siddhartha saw the sights all on one trip rather than **separate trips**; ii) his **father gave permission** for him to go on the trip rather than Siddhartha being disobedient; iii) he never really saw the Four Sights; they are **just a metaphor** to show different kinds of suffering.

Possible exam questions Highlighted ones are directly from the textbook.

1. Explain two ways in which the stories of the birth of Buddha show is special identity. (4 marks)
2. Explain two ways in which the prophecy made at the birth of Buddha influenced his upbringing. (4 marks)
3. Explain two ways in which the Four Sights influenced Buddha’s life. (4 marks)
4. Explain two ways in which the fourth sight of a holy man influenced Buddha. (4 marks)
5. Explain two ways in which learning about the Four Sights influences Buddhists today. (4 marks)
6. Explain two reasons why Buddha became an ascetic. (4 marks)
7. Explain two different ways in which Buddha was tempted during his enlightenment. (4 marks)
8. Explain two reasons why there are many different stories surrounding the birth of Buddha. In your answer you must refer to scripture. (5 marks)
9. Explain two different ways in which Buddha tried to solve the problem of suffering. In your answer you must refer to scripture. (5 marks)
10. Explain two reasons why Buddha gave up his ascetic life. In your answer you must refer to scripture. (5 marks)
11. Explain two ways in which Buddha eventually tried to avoid extremes in life. In your answer you must refer to scripture. (5 marks)
12. Explain two of the three realisations that he made on the night of his Enlightenment. In your answer you must refer to scripture. (5 marks)
13. ‘Stories of the Buddha’s birth have no relevance for Buddhists today.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)
14. ‘Stories about the Buddha’s early life have no meaning for modern Buddhists.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)
15. ‘Variations in the story of the Four Sights prove that it’s not true.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)
16. ‘Ascetics ignoring the needs of the body is foolish.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)
17. ‘It is always best to avoid extremes in life.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)
18. ‘Resisting temptation is not important.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)
19. ‘Being enlightened is no different from going to heaven.’ Do you agree? (12 marks)