“The Buddha” on PBS

http://video.pbs.org/video/1461557530
Siddhartha’s early life

- He was raised in a way that would direct him towards political and military power but shielded him from understanding the basic facts of how ordinary people live.
- He came to understand that even though he lived such a rich and indulgent life, no one could shelter him from the basic facts of life.
The Four Passing Sights:

- Siddhartha encountered four “sights” that fundamentally ruptured his contentment with the life his father had constructed for him:
  - Sight 1: the old man – this represented the fact that not only do beings grow old but that all things change.
  - Sight 2: the sick person – Siddhartha realizes that all persons - no matter how rich they are or how careful they live -will become sick – this is the beginning of his doctrine of universal suffering.
  - Sight 3: the corpse – Siddhartha realizes that we will all die – that all life is unavoidably impermanent and finite.
  - Sight 4: the ascetic – When Siddhartha meets the forest dwelling sage, he is told that there may be things far more important to pursue than material wealth and comfort – this begins his interest in spiritual pursuits and suggests that one can find peace and contentment in light of this suffering.
Siddhartha’s awakening:

- After six years, Siddhartha gave up on the life of a renunciate and decided to try to find a solution on his own. After restoring his health, he finally determines to sit and grapple with the problem of universal suffering from a different approach.

- The more mythological accounts of his awakening have him engaged in a fierce battle with the Demon Lord Mara who challenges his authority to question the status quo. Buddha’s response is captured in “the earth touching gesture” to indicate that his authority comes from the world itself – that reality is sufficient authority.

- The content of his awakening is captured in The “Four Noble Truths.”
The Four Noble Truths:

1. Life is Duhkha (Universal Suffering)

“...the truth of duhkha, found in every aspect of conditioned existence; birth, death, grief, lamentation, pain, distress and despair; conjunction with the hated, separation from the dear; and not getting what one wants.” (Robinson & Johnson, The Buddhist Religion, 4th ed.)
The Four Noble Truths:

2. The cause of duhkha is trishna/tanha (Thirst or desire)
   - This is not a rejection of all desires – for one must have a desire to be rid of suffering – to become enlightened in order to go forward – it is the concept of unhealthy desires – of attachment to things one does not need or cannot have.

   There are three levels of suffering identified:
   - Ordinary suffering – pain, sickness, sorrow, etc.
   - Fear of change & loss – of impermanence
   - Attachment of the ego to itself – fear of death & of finitude of one’s existence
The Four Noble Truths:

3. To eliminate *Duhkha* one must eliminate *Tanha*

“*On the arising of the ego, so arises suffering; on the cessation of the ego, so ceases suffering.*”

“I am the architect of my own suffering”
The Four Noble Truths:

4. The way to eliminate tanha is to follow the Noble Eightfold Path (The Middle Way)
   - Right Understanding
   - Right Resolve
   - Right Speech
   - Right Behavior
   - Right Livelihood
   - Right Effort
   - Right Mindfulness
   - Right Concentration
Anatta (Anatman)

- Rejects the idea of Atman (the Hindu concept of the “soul” or in-dwelling self)
- Maintains that we are only an ever-changing, impermanent collection of processes called “dharmas”
  
  Namas Dharmas – mental processes
  
  Rupas Dharmas – bodily processes
- Implies that selfishness is based on ignorance of one’s true being
Anicca (Anitya)

- Impermanence.
- The term expresses the Buddhist notion that all of conditioned existence, without exception, is in a constant state of flux.
- The Pali word anicca literally means "inconstant". Where the word 'Nicca' refers to the concept of continuity and permanence, 'Anicca' refers to its exact opposite; the absence of permanence and continuity.
“The Middle Way”

“The Blessed One began by condemning each of two extremes, saying sensual indulgence is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and useless, whereas self-torture is painful as well as ignoble and useless. The Tathagata, by avoiding these extremes, had discovered the Middle Way the produces vision and knowledge and leads to peace, higher knowledge, Awakening, and nirvana.” (The First Sermon S.LVI.11)

The Middle Way Painting - Bill Oleary [Link](http://fineartamerica.com/featured/the-middle-way-bill-oleary.html)
The Razor’s Edge

Fair goes the dancing when the sitar's tuned;
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high,
The string o'erstretched breaks, and the music flies;
The string o'erslack is dumb, and music dies.

(Sir Edwin Arnold's, “Light of Asia”)
Pratitya Samutpada / Interdependent Arising

From the *Samyutta Nikaya*, 2.28:

1. When this is, that is;
2. this arising, that arises;
3. when this is not, that is not;
4. this ceasing, that ceases.
Implications of Interdependent Arising:

1. It rejects the idea of single cause – single effect explanations – “nothing can be the effect of any one cause.” (p.60)

2. It postulates that all things are caused by all things – that everything is “mutually creating” in a dynamic web of causality. (p.60)

The idea of a one-way temporal causality - that past events produce future events – is also rejected. Time and space are just constructs – e.g. one’s anticipation of future events can cause one’s present actions and one often “re-writes” the past in light of present understanding.

It also rejects the idea of separate things bound by space/time. Conceptual descriptions, though useful, cannot mirror a reality of impermanent and interwoven processes.
“Its best known formulation is the twelve causal links, which has been called the karmic chain reaction. In the traditional image of the Wheel of Life, it depicts the life, death and rebirth of sentient beings, but it can also be understood as the life cycle of appearances, actions, thoughts or any phenomenon whatever. Essentially it analyzes the process of an illusion crystallizing out of emptiness and being taken for reality.

The twelve links are: (1) ignorance or unawareness, which imagines self and the world to have intrinsic existence; (2) conditioning, the karmic forces that ripen in the ground of ignorance from seeds sown in previous lives and form the conditioning factors of the next life; (3) consciousness, arising from conditioning, which carries the sense of self and operates through the mind and senses; (4) name and form, the totality of an individual’s mental and physical constituents; (5) the six senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and mental faculty; (6) contact, the meeting of the senses with their objects; (7) feeling, the positive or negative sensations aroused by contact; (8) thirst, the desire to possess or avoid these sensations; (9) grasping, the physical, verbal or mental action that follows thirst; (10) existence or becoming, the coming into existence that results from grasping; (11) birth, manifesting in one of the six realms; (12) decay and death, the process of aging and passing away that inevitably follows birth.”

“In this sense, the twelve components of interdependent origination present a picture of samsara with its causes and its effects. There would be no point in painting this picture of samsara if we did not intend to use it to change our situation, to get out of the round of birth and death. Recognizing the circularity of samsara, the circularity of interdependent origination, is the beginning of liberation. How is this so? As long as afflictions and actions are present, rebirth and suffering will occur. When we see that ignorance, craving, clinging, and actions repeatedly lead to rebirth and suffering, we will recognize the need to break this vicious circle.

Let us take a practical example. Suppose you are looking for the home of an acquaintance you have never visited before. Suppose you have been driving about for half an hour and have failed to find the home of your friend, and suppose suddenly you recognize a landmark and it dawns on you that you passed it half an hour ago. At that moment it will also dawn on you that you have been going around in circles, and you will stop and look at your road map, or inquire the way from a passerby so as to stop going around in circles and reach your destination.

This is why the Buddha said that he who sees interdependent origination sees the Dharma, and he who sees the Dharma sees the Buddha.”

The Tree of Enlightenment: An Introduction to the Major Traditions of Buddhism, by Peter Della Santina.
Kamma/Karma

- Means “action” or “doing”
- Refers to the law of moral causation
- Does not imply fate
- Sometimes also referred to as “work not done.”

“Every action we perform leaves an imprint, or potential, on our very subtle mind, and each karmic potential eventually gives rise to its own effect. Our mind is like a field, and performing actions is like sowing seeds in that field. Positive or virtuous actions sow the seeds of future happiness, and negative or non-virtuous actions sow the seeds of future suffering. This definite relationship between actions and their effects – virtue causing happiness and non-virtue causing suffering – is know as the ‘law of karma’. An understanding of the law of karma is the basis of Buddhist morality.”

(http://www.aboutbuddhism.org/buddhism-beliefs.php/)
Kamma/Karma

• “...kamma is part of a broader conception of how the universe as a whole operates and the role of morality within that operation.”

• “It is ‘intention/volition’ that I call kamma; having willed or formed the intention, one performs acts by body, speech and mind.”
  - Anguttara Nikaya, III as translated by Gethin.

• “Kamma includes actions of thought, word or deed that originate from the exercise of intention, volition or conscious choice.”

• “Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions; they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is actions that define beings as inferior and superior.”
  - Majjhima Nikaya
Kamma/Karma

- Four kinds of kamma:
- “There are, O monks, these four kinds of kamma.... There is dark kamma with dark results; there is bright kamma with bright results; there is kamma that is dark and bright with dark and bright results; there is kamma that is neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright results which leads to the destruction of kamma.”
- “According to the Buddhist tradition, “dark” and “bright” kamma are related to “bad” or unwholesome actions and “good” or wholesome actions. (The fourth) refers to the kind of action that is done with neither good nro bad intentions or volitions. It is commonly thought that this fourth kind of kamma is the type of action done by an enlightened being like the Buddha.”
Samsara & the Rebirth of Kamma

- Literally “wandering on/about”

- Refers to the cycle of birth, life, death and rebirth

- Also refers to the conditioned world of this life, its kamma and its concomitant duhkha

- “Buddhism, which does not assume the existence of a permanent soul, accepts a semipermanent personality core that goes through the process of samsara.”

  (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/520716/samsara)
Mindfulness

- “There is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path and realize nirvana. This way is the fourfold establishment of mindfulness.”
  - Majjhima Nikaya, Translated by Thich Nhat Hanh and Annabel Laity

- Fourfold establishment of mindfulness: (p.61)
  - Observation of the body
  - Observation of the feelings
  - Observation of the mind
  - Observation of the objects of mind
Mindfulness

“To practice meditation is to look deeply in order to see into the essence of things. With insight and understanding we can realize liberation, peace, and joy. Our anger, anxiety, and fear are the ropes that bind us to suffering. If we want to be liberated from them, we need to observe their nature, which is ignorance, the lack of clear understanding.”

“The Pali word sati (Sanskrit: smrti) means “to stop,” and “to maintain awareness of the object.” The Pali word vipassana (Sanskrit: vipashyana) means “to go deeply into that object to observe it.” While we are fully aware of and observing deeply an object, the boundary between the subject who observes and the object being observed gradually dissolves, and the subject and object become one.”

Mindfulness & Pratitya Samutpada

- Quantum continuity: The modern physicists vision of the universe – an example of the interconnectedness of all things.
  - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfUCqp66DDM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfUCqp66DDM)

- A mindful meditation on a tree and its interdependence on all things based on scientific “Systems Theory” (Start at 1:21 & end at 1:26)
Nirvana/Nibhana

- Means to “blow out” or to “extinguish” the ego
- Sometimes referred to as “the state of no wind” (nir=no, vana=wind)
- Occurs with a fundamental and profound recognition of the illusory nature of one’s belief that one is separate from others and from the conditions of one’s existence.
- One relinquishes the idea of an enduring, unchanging, identifiable self
- Involves the idea of “direct seeing” - seeing things as they truly are.
- Because one has conquered the cause of suffering – the ego – one has ceased to suffer.
- This then, is the cessation of samsara & the rebirth of Kamma/Karma