

The Story of Rama and Sita

A story from India

Recommended Key Stage: KS1 and 2

Synopsis: A king finds a baby in a field. He names her Sita and raises her as his own. When it is time for her to marry, the king decides that only the person who can lift and string Shiva's magical bow will be able to marry Sita. Thousands of kings and princes try to lift the bow in vain. Finally, a prince named Rama lifts and strings the bow with ease and the two are married. One day, Sita is kidnapped by Ravana, a demon. A great battle ensues; Rama and the animals of the forest join forces to fight the demons and free Sita. Eventually, Rama uses his magical bow to defeat the demons. Rama and Sita are reunited and are finally able to return home.

Part 1: Share the Story

Watch the video **Stories from the Woodshed: Rama and Sita**.

Part 2: Discuss the story

Use the questions below to begin a discussion about the story

KS1 questions	KS2 questions
- Who is your favourite character in the story? Why? - What other tests could the King have used to find Sita a husband? Do you think his test was a good one? Why/why not? - Which emotions do different characters feel in this story? - Who are the good and bad characters in this story? - Describe Ravana. - Which animals help Rama to rescue Sita?	- Who is your favourite character in the story? Why? - Which adjectives could you use to describe Rama? Which adjectives could you use to describe Sita? - Which emotions do different characters feel in this story? - What are the themes/main ideas in this story? - Which qualities do different characters in this story demonstrate? - Which skills would Rama and Sita need to survive in the forests? - What do Rama and Sita teach us about how to behave? - This is a very dramatic story. Which moments are dramatic? - Many stories tell the tale of good heroes triumphing over evil villains. - Rama might traditionally be seen as the hero in this story because he rescues Sita. But could we also see Sita as a hero? Why? Which qualities does she show? - Heroes often make mistakes. What mistakes do Rama and Sita make in this story?

Part 3: Play the Story

KS1 activities	KS2 activities
Story Walk The students stand in different spaces in the room. One half of the students have become Rama in their own story worlds. The other half of the students have become Sita in their own story worlds. Read out the text in Resource A line by line. As you read, the students mime their interpretation of the actions of their given character	
Soundscape - Recap the settings in story: - The forest - The fields that the King walked through - The island and sea - The sky - The battlefield - As a class, choose one of the settings. - Discuss what sounds you may hear in the setting. - Students work in groups representing one of these sounds. They discuss how to make the sound: using voice, clapping, stomping, natural materials, objects in the classroom or musical instruments. - When they have practised their sound, groups stand in different areas of the room. - The teacher, or a student, is the King and will conduct the soundscape. When the King points to a group, they must make their sound. - The King uses different signs to change the soundscape: such as stop, go, get louder, get softer, get quicker, slow down.	Hot seating - Choose a character from the story. One volunteer comes to sit in the hotseat as this character. They could be Rama, Sita, Sita's father the King, Rama's father the King, Ravana the demon, or Agastya the wise sage. The rest of the class ask questions. They could use these sentence starters to frame their questions: - Why did you....? - How did you feel when.....? - What were you thinking when you.....? - If you could do all this again, what would you do differently? - What other options did you have when you.....? - How do you feel about.... (x character)? Why? Scenery - Arrange students into groups of 4 or 5. Remind them of one of the settings in the story, such as the forest, the fields that the King walked through, the island, the battlefield. - Give students 2 minutes to create a freeze-frame, with soundscape, of the setting you describe. Repeat with a number of different settings.

Learning Resources

Animal Attack!

- Students stand in their own space around the room. The battle to rescue Sita is about to begin!
- When you give the following commands, the students should do the following actions or calls:
 - 'Monkey warrior Hanuman' – jump into the air and throw Rama's ring to Sita.
 - 'Bears build a bridge!' – students become bears and start heaving great rocks into the sea to create a bridge.
 - 'Raging Ravana!' – students become Ravana thrashing around with his ten heads and twenty arms.
 - 'Magical Arrow' – Rama shoots the winning arrow to pierce Ravana's heart.
 - 'Charge the Island' – students run in slow-motion towards the island to rescue Sita.
 - 'Victory' – students do a victory dance.

Snapshots

- Divide students into groups of 4 or 5. Give groups 10 seconds to create a freeze-frame of a moment from the story, as if it were captured in a snapshot. Count down from ten, ask them to freeze and look in turn at each group's tableau. Examples could include:
 - Rama and Sita are banished into the forest.
 - Rama fighting the demon, Ravana.
 - Ravana carrying Sita off in his flying chariot.
 - Hanuman the Monkey in a tree, catching the ring thrown by Rama.

Tell Me More

- Divide the class into pairs, with a storyteller and listener in each pair.
 - The storyteller begins telling the story from any point – for example, the moment at which Rama asked monkey warrior Hanuman to throw his ring to Sita.
 - The listener chooses something they hear that they would like to know more about and stops the story, for example: Stop! Tell me more about the ring.
 - The storyteller does so – for example: The ring was blue sapphire set with silver leaves
 - The storyteller continues the story. As the storyteller arrives at something else the listener would like more detail on, the listener interrupts again 'Stop! Tell me more about...'
- Continue for a few minutes and then swap roles.

Slow Mo Drama

In groups of 4 or 5, ask students to choreograph a slow-motion rescue and battle scene as Rama and the forest animals save Sita from Ravana.

Part 4: Story Stimulus

KS1 Activities	KS2 Activities
Witness Account - Independently, students draw their monster and - Recap the main events of the story. - In groups, choose a favourite scene and retell the story from an obscure point of view. For example: - A bird flying through the air who sees the moment Ravana cuts off the bird's wings - A leaf on a tree seeing the moment Rama throws Hanuman the ring.	A New Story - Students use Resource B to create a re-telling of the story from the point at which the animals and Rama see the island where Ravana has taken Sita. - Students should re-tell the story using different animals who help Rama in various ways; these methods of help should be linked to their animal characteristics – for example, a butterfly could fly across the water to take the ring to Sita) - Rama should defeat Ravana using the alternative gift given by Agastya
Diorama - In this story, there are many different settings. Settings help to make us feel a certain way about something happening in the story; some are frightening, and some are welcoming. At first, the forest setting is a frightening one for Rama and Sita, but it becomes a happy place for them; the creatures of the forest help Rama to save Sita from Ravana. - Can you think of any other frightening or happy settings in books, films, videogames, comics or other stories you know? - Which stories do you know that also have forest settings? - Create a diorama of the forest and animals that feature in this story. A diorama is a mini scene in a box using craft materials.	
Interviews Act out the missing scene where we learn what happens to Sita while she is imprisoned on the island. Sita should talk to an interviewer and discuss: - How do you feel? - What are your surroundings like? - What and where are you eating? - What tasks are you made to do? - Are you aware of the battle? - What can you see and hear? - What do you think about and hope for? - What happened when you received the ring? How did you feel?	

Part 5: Taking it Further

Stories about animals helping humans:

How Coyote Stole Fire (North America)

Stories about people in love overcoming difficulties:

Clean Water, Dirty Water (Caribbean)

Marwe and Chura (Africa)

Stories about contests:

The Emperor and the Seed (Asia)

The Greatest Gift of All (Europe/Asia)

The Wawel Dragon (Europe)

Stories about fighting evil:

Baba Yaga's Daughter (Europe/Asia)

The Dragon Pearl (Asia)

Wider Curriculum Links

Religious Education – this is a story told during the Hindu festival of Diwali (celebrating the return of Rama and Sita). This story is central to Hinduism and part of the epic Ramayana.

PSHE – Bravery, family, working together in times of difficulty

"The characteristics of healthy family life, commitment to each other, including in times of difficulty, protection and care for children and other family members, the importance of spending time together and sharing each other's lives"

Learning Resources

Resource A: Story Walk Prompts Rama and Sita

- You are Rama. You are walking up the steps into the palace. You are about to try and lift Shiva's great bow to win Sita's hand in marriage.
- Look around you at all the riches you can see. The King is angry with you for being late. You are nervous, sweating and shaking!
- Bend down to lift the bow. You think it's going to be heavy. You are surprised that you can lift it easily!
- String the arrow. As you fire the arrow, the bow snaps in half in your hands and thunder echoes around the sky. Where did it come from? Look around you. You are confused and frightened.
- But the King promises you his daughter's hand in marriage because you have lifted Shiva's great bow. You are very happy and bow to thank the King.
- Show your new wife Sita the sights of your kingdom from the castle balcony – point out the castles and the rivers, the mountains and the forests. You are happy to share it all with her. Don't forget to smile at her to show how much you love her!
- Oh no! Your father has just told you that your stepmother wants to send you away to the forests for 14 years. You are very shocked!
- You and Sita are very brave. Hold Sita's hand as you walk slowly and nervously into the forest. Look back at your father and stepbrother and wave. Take a deep breath and wipe away that tear. You will miss them.
- The forest is big and frightening, make sure you are looking after Sita. Duck under that branch. Now crawl through that thorn bush - careful not to prick yourself on the thorns! Ow! That one pricked your right hand! What's that noise behind you? Turn round and have a look. Quick! Hide behind that tree!
- Look up there at the beautiful birds in the trees. Wow! Can you see them? Point them out to Sita.
- Here's Agastya, the wise man. Smile and shake his hand. Take the bow and arrow he offers you. They will protect you in the future.
- Sita has asked you to follow a golden deer to make sure it is safe. Creep after it slowly. Shhh! Be as quiet as possible. Make sure you tiptoe behind it.
- Oh no! Sita has been swept up and whisked into the sky! Where has Sita gone? You can't find her anywhere. Search for her in every corner. Climb a tree to look for her. Can you see her? You are starting to panic. Quick! Where could she be? Search faster!
- You've found Sita but the terrifying Ravana is guarding her. You are fighting the demon, trying to chop off his twenty arms with your sword. He is so big and so quick. You have to use all your strength. Careful of his arms. You will need to keep jumping to avoid them. He is trying to grab your ankles!
- Take out the special bow that Agastya gave you. String an arrow and aim it at Ravana's heart! Oh no! Ravana keeps moving, you'll have to move your bow and arrow to find his heart. Are you ready? Fire!
- Close your eyes. You are too scared to see whether the arrow hit Ravana's heart. Open your eyes very slowly, just a tiny bit. Phew! Thank goodness for that! You have killed him! Congratulations! Throw your arms in the air with excitement and do a victory dance!
- At last, here is Sita running towards you. Give her a really big hug! Show us how happy you are!

Learning Resources

Resource B: Story Plan Rama and Sita

Story structure	My ideas	Modelled example
Rama and the animals see the island where Ravana has taken Sita.		Rama and the animals arrive breathless on the windswept shore. Raging seas attack the cliffs below them.
Rama asks an animal to jump/fly/ climb up to report back on the situation on the island.		Rama chooses a hawk to circle above them to spy on the island because hawks have excellent eyesight. The hawk reports back on what he sees.
Rama asks an animal to take his ring to Sita.		Rama asks a small spider to spin a thread high across the raging seas from cliff to cliff, and to take his ring to Sita wrapped in silver thread to protect it.
Rama asks an animal to find a way for them to cross to the island.		Rama asks the herd of elephants to stand in the sea in a long line, trunk to tail, between the mainland and the island. He instructs each elephant to hold the tail of the elephant in front with their trunk, to create a strong bridge. The other animals climb across their backs to reach the island.
One of the animals fights Ravana using its main characteristic.		The snakes fight Ravana using their twisting bodies to try and confuse Ravana's many heads and arms, tying them into knots.
Rama kills Ravana using a gift from Agastya.		Rama kills Ravana using a magical flute given to him by Agastya. He plays the flute to lull Ravana to sleep and then is able to kill him easily
Rama and Sita rejoice when reunited.		Rama and Sita hold a huge feast for all the animals to thank them for their help.