



Chapter 3.

Myths and legends

Lesson 1.

Objectives:

- to identify what are myths and legends
- to read an ancient Hindu myth
- to re-tell and discuss about it
- to discuss and explore traditional myths

What is a myth?

- A myth is a traditional story that explains the beliefs of a people about the natural and human world. The main characters in myths are usually gods or supernatural heroes. The stories are set in the distant past. The people who told these stories believed that they were true. For example: How the world was created.



What is a legend?

- A legend is a traditional story about the past. The main characters are usually kings or heroes. Some examples of well-known legends include the tales of Odysseus from Ancient Greece and King Arthur from Old England.



An ancient Hindu myth



‘Rama and Sita’

New words:

- warrior- fighter or soldier
- wicked- to describe someone or something that is very bad, evil and deliberately harmful to people.
- to beg- If you beg someone to do something, you ask them very anxiously or eagerly to do it, beseech
- to declare- to announce, to state
- cottage- a small house in the country or at a resort, used for holiday purposes
- demon- an evil spirit

- fang- a long, sharp tooth
- to kidnap- to take a person away illegally by force, to abduct
- hide (n)- the strong, thick skin of an animal
- antler- a horn with parts like branches that grows on the head of a deer
- hoof- hooves-the hard part on the bottom of the feet of animals such as horses, sheep, and deer
- Sapphire- a precious stone, usually bright blue, that is often used in jewellery



- delighted- very pleased, happy, glad
- to split- to break up, divide
- to plead- to make an urgent, emotional statement or request for something, to beg
- to swoop- to make a sudden attack
- to sweep up- to pick someone up swiftly and smoothly
- chariot- a two-wheeled vehicle that was used in ancient times for racing and fighting and was pulled by a horse or horses



- to scatter- to throw something
- anklet- a chain or ring worn as jewellery around the ankle
- dread- to feel extremely worried or frightened
- frantically- in a way that is almost out of control because of extreme emotion , such as worry
- trail- a path
- shaggy- having or covered with long, rough, and untidy hair, or long, rough, and untidy
- despair- the feeling that there is no hope and that you can do nothing to improve a difficult or worrying situation

- mighty- very large and powerful
- overjoyed- extremely happy
- to bound away- to jump, to move quickly with large jumping movements
- to fetch- to go to another place to get something or someone and bring it, him, or her back
- squirrel- a small animal covered in fur with a long tail
- to contribute- to help, to give, provide
- to pour- to flow quickly and in large amounts



- to strike- struck- to hit or attack
- to chant- to repeat or sing a word or phrase continuously
- prayer- the act or ceremony of speaking to a god, to express thanks or to ask for help
- to pierce- to go in or through something, esp. with a pointed object, making a hole
- in a blinding flash- surprising and shocking
- to rejoice- to feel or show great happiness
- reign- the period of time when a king or queen rules a country

- to shower- to give, to throw
- garland- a circle made of flowers and leaves worn around the neck or head as a decoration
- triumph- a very great success, achievement, or victory
- will (n)- mental power, wish



Let's read!



Rama and Sita

This is a story about Prince Rama, the great warrior, who was married to the beautiful Sita. Rama and Sita were really gods in human form.

Prince Rama was meant to take over the throne from his father the king, but his wicked stepmother had tricked his father into sending him away into the forest. With him went his wife, Sita. Rama had begged Sita to stay safely in the palace while he was in the forest, but she declared it was a thousand times better to be in the forest with Rama than in the richest palace without him.

So Rama and Sita went to live in the forest together. They lived a simple, peaceful life in a small cottage.

But, before long, their peace was disturbed. One day, Sita was spotted by the demon king, Ravana. Of all the demons who lived in the forest, Ravana was the most terrible. He had twenty arms and ten heads, with eyes as red as coal fires and a mouthful of yellow fangs. When Ravana saw the beautiful Sita, he immediately came up with a plan to kidnap her and make her his wife.

One day, when Rama and Sita were walking in the forest, they saw the most beautiful deer you can imagine. Its golden hide was as bright as the sun, its silver antlers as bright as the moon, its hooves shone as black as night, and its eyes were as blue as sapphires.



So delighted was Sita when she saw the deer that she begged Rama to catch it for her. Rama was worried that this was some demon trick to try and split them up, but Sita pleaded with Rama, until he agreed to try and catch the deer for her.

As soon as Sita was alone, the demon Ravana swooped down and swept Sita up into his chariot pulled by winged monsters. Despite her terror Sita thought quickly and scattered her jewellery piece by piece – first her golden anklets, then her earrings, then her glittering scarf – as a trail for Rama to follow. Far below a white monkey looked up and, seeing the glittering jewellery, thought the stars were falling.

In the midst of the forest, Rama tracked down the beautiful deer. But when he caught hold of it, the deer changed into a terrible demon that broke away from Rama's grasp and flew into the sky. Realising that he had been tricked, Prince Rama ran back to the cottage as fast as he could, his heart filled with dread. Finding Sita gone, he searched frantically until he came upon the trail of jewellery that Sita had left.

Rama followed this golden trail until he met Hanuman, the white monkey, who had seen Sita's jewellery fall from the sky. Hanuman was a very special monkey because he was the monkey king. Hanuman took Rama to the monkey city that lay under the hills in a giant cave. All the monkeys of the city were called to the marble square in the centre of the city, and messages were sent out to monkeys all over the world. They came in their millions from the woods and caves, and with them came their friends the bears. Twenty-three million animals filled the city and covered the hills like a great shaggy sea. After they had heard what had happened, they spread out to search the world for Sita.

It was the monkey Hanuman who came to the island where Sita was being held prisoner. The monkeys and bears with him stared in despair at the giant crashing waves that surrounded the island, but Hanuman, the son of the wind god, climbed to the highest hill, took a mighty breath and leapt into the clouds, and over the crashing waves. He landed on the island and quickly found Sita in a grove of trees near the palace. There she sat refusing to marry the evil Ravana.

Sita was overjoyed when she found out who Hanuman was and she gave him a pearl from her hair to take to Rama. Then, Hanuman bounded away to fetch Rama and the great army of monkeys and bears.

But still the giant ocean waves kept Rama and his army away from the island. And so the army began to build a bridge of rocks and grass and sand.

The squirrels came running out of the woods to help, every animal – large and small – contributed to the building, and soon the bridge stretched a hundred miles to the island, and the animals poured across their bridge.

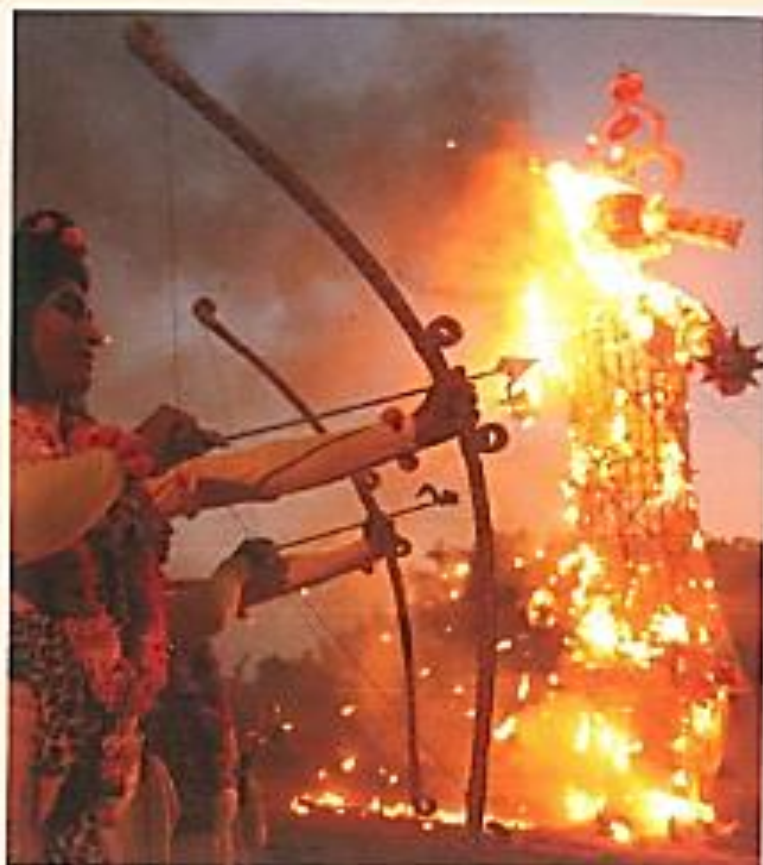
Long and terrible was the battle, as the animals fought the evil demons. Many great deeds were done, until at last Rama faced the demon Ravana on the battlefield. With his

arrows Rama struck again and again at the head of Ravana, but each time he chopped one off with his sword a new one grew.

Then Rama took up his special bow and arrow that had been made by the sky god. He chanted a special prayer and shot. The gods of wind and fire guided the arrow and it pierced Ravana's chest in a blinding flash. Ravana fell dead in an instant.

The entire world rejoiced. The reign of the demons was over and Rama and Sita returned to their own country to rule. In celebration, the gods showered flowers from the sky, and the people lined the streets with flags and garlands. In every home, an oil lamp was put in the window to welcome back Rama and Sita and their great army. They ruled happily for many years until it was time for them to leave their life on earth and return to heaven.

For Hindus, this story shows how good will always triumph over evil in the same way as a little oil lamp will destroy total darkness.



An effigy of Ravana is burnt at the Hindu festival of Diwali

1. Answer the questions.

- Who are the main characters in the story?
- Why did King banish Rama from the kingdom? Did Rama wish to go?
- Who followed Rama into exile?
- Who was Ravana?
- Who was Hanuman?
- How did Ravana trick Sita?
- How many heads did Ravana have?
- How did Rama find Sita?
- Who helped Rama to find Sita?
- How did Rama, Hanuman and the monkey army get across the ocean?
- How did Rama kill the Ravana?
- Why did people light the oil lamps?

2. Re-tell the story.

3. A team work for the story of Rama and Sita. Create a group poster.

Re-telling: What is the story of Rama and Sita?

In this story, Rama and his brother Lakshman must save Rama's wife Sita from a demon king. Following a trail of jewels that Sita has left for them, they meet Hanuman the Monkey King. He agrees to help them with his monkey army, and they trace her to an island. Working together, the monkeys (along with all the animals they can find) build a bridge to get them across the water. After a grand battle, Rama kills Ravana the demon king with a magical arrow, and the whole world celebrates. To help Rama and Sita find their way home, everyone lights lamps along the way so they can see their path.

Why do we teach this story at Diwali?

The story of Rama and Sita is associated with Diwali to celebrate the triumph of good over evil. Rama winning over Ravana shows good winning over a great evil and providing hope for the world. The reason we call Diwali the festival of lights is because of the lights used to guide Rama and Sita home after their 14-year exile. People light lights to celebrate the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. This story is tied to the Gods that are being worshipped and thanked over this religious festival.



Happy Diwali