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Stories of the Gods in Simple English

Twelve well-known stories, retold for learners, with new words, four questions and an answer key.



16 PAGES · ANSWERS INCLUDED

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How to use this book

For the grown-up and the reader

Twelve well-known stories, retold in simple English, with new words and four questions each.

How to use it

1. **Read the three words first.** Say each one and its meaning.
2. **Read the story aloud.** Then read it again alone, with a finger under the words.
3. **Answer the four questions.** Write a full sentence on the lines.
4. **Check with the key** on the last two pages, and talk about the story together.

Good to know

- These stories are told in many versions in different parts of India, in families, temples and books. Each here is written from one widely known version. If you know another version, that is fine, and a nice thing to talk about.
- The book is for reading practice in English. It does not teach religion, and it does not say what anyone should believe.

Inside

Ganesha and the Race Around the World 3

Little Hanuman and the Sun 4

Krishna and the Rain Hill 5

Krishna and His Friend Sudama 6

Rama Comes Home 7

The Little Squirrel and the Bridge 8

Hanuman Brings the Herb 9

Shiva and the River Ganga 10

Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning 11

Lakshmi and the Lamps of Diwali 12

Navratri and Goddess Durga 13

Prahlada and the Festival of Holi 14

What this book is

It is reading practice for home, tuition and class, in English only. The stories are short and gentle, and nothing in them is frightening. No age, level or exam is claimed, and older beginners can use the book too. Where a story stands for a value, such as kindness, friendship or respect, you can talk about it together.

Ganesha and the Race Around the World

Story 1 of 12

One day, Ganesha and his brother Kartikeya had a race. The winner would get a golden mango. Whoever went around the whole world three times first would win. Kartikeya jumped on his peacock and flew away. Ganesha stayed still and thought for a moment. Then he walked slowly around his parents, Shiva and Parvati, three times. “You are my whole world,” he said. His parents smiled and gave him the mango.

WORDS TO KNOW

race a game to see who is fastest

whole all of something

moment a very short time

1. What was the prize?

2. How did Kartikeya travel?

3. Why did Ganesha walk around his parents?

4. What does “whole” mean in the passage?

Little Hanuman and the Sun

Story 2 of 12

When Hanuman was a small child, he woke early one morning. He saw the red Sun rising in the sky. “What a big, sweet fruit!” he thought, and he was hungry. He jumped high into the air to catch it. He jumped higher and higher. The gods were worried, and Indra, the king of the gods, stopped him gently. Hanuman was safe. The gods gave him gifts of strength and courage, and people say that is why he is so strong.

WORDS TO KNOW

rising going up

courage not being afraid when something is hard

gently in a soft, kind way

1. What did Hanuman think the Sun was?

2. Who stopped him?

3. Why were the gods worried?

4. What does “courage” mean in the passage?

Krishna and the Rain Hill

Story 3 of 12

In the village of Vrindavan, people prayed to Indra every year for rain. One year, young Krishna said, “The hill, the grass and the cows give us so much. Let us thank them too.” Indra was angry and sent heavy rain for seven days. The villagers were afraid. Krishna lifted the great hill, Govardhan, on his little finger. All the people and cows stood safely under it. At last the rain stopped, and everyone went home happy.

WORDS TO KNOW

villagers people who live in a village

heavy a lot, or very strong

lifted picked up and held high

1. How long did the heavy rain last?

2. What did Krishna lift?

3. Why did Krishna say to thank the hill and the cows?

4. What does “heavy” mean in the passage?

Krishna and His Friend Sudama

Story 4 of 12

Sudama was a poor man, but he had once been Krishna's school friend. One day he walked to Krishna's palace with a small bundle of flattened rice. He felt shy, because it was such a small gift. But Krishna ran to meet him, welcomed him warmly and washed his tired feet. Krishna ate the rice happily. Sudama did not ask for anything. When he went back home, he found that his house was beautiful and his family was well.

WORDS TO KNOW

bundle a small package tied up

warmly in a very kind and friendly way

palace a big house for a king or queen

1. What did Sudama bring?

2. What did Krishna do when he saw him?

3. Why did Sudama feel shy?

4. What does "warmly" mean in the passage?

Rama Comes Home

Story 5 of 12

Rama, his wife Sita and his brother Lakshmana had lived in the forest for fourteen years. At last, they were coming home to the city of Ayodhya. It was a very dark night with no Moon. The people of Ayodhya wanted to welcome them. They lit rows of small clay lamps along every road and on every roof. The whole city glowed. Many people remember this story at Diwali, the festival of lights.

WORDS TO KNOW

forest a place with many trees

welcome to greet someone happily

glowed shone with a soft light

1. How long did Rama live in the forest?

2. What did the people light?

3. Why did the people light lamps?

4. What does “glowed” mean in the passage?

The Little Squirrel and the Bridge

Story 6 of 12

Rama and his friends needed to cross the sea. The monkeys were building a bridge, and they carried big stones. A small squirrel saw them and wanted to help. It rolled in the sand, ran onto the bridge and shook the sand between the stones. Some monkeys laughed at the tiny helper. But Rama saw the squirrel and stroked its back gently. People say that is why a squirrel has three light stripes. Every small helper matters.

WORDS TO KNOW

bridge something you cross to get over water

tiny very, very small

stripes long lines of colour

1. What were the monkeys building?

2. What did the squirrel do?

3. Why did Rama stroke the squirrel?

4. What does “tiny” mean in the passage?

Hanuman Brings the Herb

Story 7 of 12

In the great battle, Lakshmana was badly hurt. A healer said, “Only a special herb from a far mountain can save him, and it must come before sunrise.” Hanuman at once flew across the land to the mountain. There were so many plants, and he could not tell which was the right herb. So he lifted the whole mountain and carried it back. The healer found the herb, and Lakshmana was well again.

WORDS TO KNOW

healer a person who helps sick people get well

herb a plant used as medicine

sunrise when the Sun comes up

1. What did the healer need?

2. How did Hanuman bring it?

3. Why did Hanuman carry the whole mountain?

4. What does “herb” mean in the passage?

Shiva and the River Ganga

Story 8 of 12

Long ago, the river Ganga flowed in the sky. People on Earth needed her water, so she agreed to come down. But Ganga was very strong. If she fell straight down, the Earth could not hold her. So Shiva stood on a mountain and caught her in his long hair. Ganga flowed gently through it, and then came down to the land in small, calm streams. Today, many people think of the Ganga as a very special river.

WORDS TO KNOW

flowed moved along like water

stream a small, narrow river

calm quiet and gentle

1. Where did Ganga flow at first?

2. Who caught Ganga?

3. Why did Shiva catch her?

4. What does “calm” mean in the passage?

Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning

Story 9 of 12

Saraswati is the goddess of learning, music and the arts. She is often shown sitting on a white lotus, holding a veena and a book. Her clothes are white. In many homes and schools, people put books and pens near her picture during a festival. They ask her to help them learn well. This story reminds us that learning is something to respect. We learn best when we are curious, patient and kind to one another.

WORDS TO KNOW

goddess a female god

curious wanting to know and learn

patient able to wait without getting upset

1. What is Saraswati the goddess of?

2. What is she often shown holding?

3. Why do people put books near her picture?

4. What does “curious” mean in the passage?

Lakshmi and the Lamps of Diwali

Story 10 of 12

Lakshmi is the goddess of good fortune. At Diwali, families get ready to welcome her. First, they clean the house from top to bottom. They draw bright patterns called rangoli at the door. In the evening, they light many small lamps and place them in windows and on steps. The house looks warm and beautiful. People believe the light shows that everyone is welcome. They share sweets and good wishes with their neighbours.

WORDS TO KNOW

fortune good luck

pattern a design that repeats

neighbours people who live near you

1. What do families do first?

2. What is rangoli?

3. Why do families light many lamps?

4. What does “fortune” mean in the passage?

Navratri and Goddess Durga

Story 11 of 12

Navratri means “nine nights”. During these nights, many people honour the goddess Durga. In an old story, a powerful demon troubled the world and no one could stop him. The goddess Durga, who is brave and strong, stood against him and won. For many people, the story stands for the victory of good over bad. In different places, people sing, dance in groups, say prayers and wear bright clothes. They celebrate together.

WORDS TO KNOW

honour to show great respect

powerful very strong

victory winning

1. What does Navratri mean?

2. Which goddess do people honour at Navratri?

3. What does the story stand for?

4. What does “honour” mean in the passage?

Prahlada and the Festival of Holi

Story 12 of 12

A boy named Prahlada loved God with all his heart. His father, a proud king, did not like this and told him to stop. But Prahlada stayed true to what he believed, even when it was hard. The old stories say he stayed safe. Many families remember his story at Holi. On the night before, people light a bonfire. The next morning, everyone plays with bright colours, laughs together and shares sweets.

WORDS TO KNOW

proud thinking you are better than others

bonfire a big fire made outside

true keeping your promise or belief

1. Who was Prahlada?

2. What do people light the night before Holi?

3. Why did Prahlada's father want him to stop?

4. What does "proud" mean in the passage?

Answers

Stories 1 to 6

1. Ganesha and the Race Around the World

1. A golden mango.
2. He flew on his peacock.
3. Because they were his whole world, and he thought they mattered more than anything.
4. All of something, every part of it.

2. Little Hanuman and the Sun

1. A big, sweet fruit.
2. Indra, the king of the gods.
3. Hanuman was jumping very high towards the Sun, so he might be in danger.
4. Not being afraid when something is hard.

3. Krishna and the Rain Hill

1. Seven days.
2. The hill called Govardhan.
3. Because they gave the people so much, such as grass and milk.
4. A lot, very strong.

4. Krishna and His Friend Sudama

1. A small bundle of flattened rice.
2. He ran to meet him and welcomed him.
3. His gift was very small.
4. In a very kind and friendly way.

5. Rama Comes Home

1. Fourteen years.
2. Small clay lamps.
3. To welcome Rama home on a dark night.
4. Shone with a soft light.

6. The Little Squirrel and the Bridge

1. A bridge across the sea.
2. It rolled in the sand and shook the sand between the stones.
3. Because it had helped, even though it was so small.
4. Very, very small.

Answers

Stories 7 to 12

7. Hanuman Brings the Herb

1. A special herb from a far mountain.
2. He lifted the whole mountain and carried it back.
3. He could not tell which plant was the right herb.
4. A plant used as medicine.

8. Shiva and the River Ganga

1. In the sky.
2. Shiva caught her in his hair.
3. She was so strong that the Earth could not hold her if she fell straight down.
4. Quiet and gentle.

9. Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning

1. Learning, music and the arts.
2. A veena and a book.
3. They ask her to help them learn well.
4. Wanting to know and learn.

10. Lakshmi and the Lamps of Diwali

1. They clean the house.
2. Bright patterns drawn at the door.
3. To make the house warm and beautiful and to welcome everyone.
4. Good luck.

11. Navratri and Goddess Durga

1. Nine nights.
2. Durga.
3. The victory of good over bad.
4. To show great respect.

12. Prahlada and the Festival of Holi

1. A boy who loved God.
2. A bonfire.
3. His father, a proud king, did not like Prahlada's love for God.
4. Thinking you are better than others.