

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Diwali—The Hindu Festival of Lights

### The Story of Rama and Sita

Long ago in a kingdom called Ayodhya there lived a king called Dashratha, who had four sons by three different wives—Rama (who was the eldest), Lakshman and Satrugna (who were twins), and Bharat (the youngest).

It was a time for rejoicing in Ayodhya. Rama had married a beautiful princess called Sita, and now, King Dashratha planned to hand over the throne to Rama, his eldest son.



But the mother of Dashratha's youngest son, Bharat, was jealous; she wanted the throne for her own son. The king had once promised to grant her a wish, and now she saw her chance. She told the king that she wanted Rama to be sent away for fourteen years and her own son, Bharat, to be placed on the throne instead.

What was the king to do? He had made a promise, so reluctantly he banished Rama to the forest, with his new wife Sita, and his brother Lakshman.



For some while they lived a simple, peaceful life in the forest. But one day, everything changed. Ravana, the demon king with twenty arms and ten terrible heads, spotted Sita and was so entranced by her that he decided that she should belong to him.

Using his magic, Ravana created a beautiful golden deer as a trap. When Sita saw the deer, she begged Rama to catch it for her. So, placing Sita within a magic circle to protect her from danger, Rama went chasing after the deer.

As soon as Sita was alone, Ravana put the rest of his evil plan into action. He turned himself into an old beggar and tricked Sita into stepping out of the magic circle by begging her for help. Ravana then grabbed her and swept her into his chariot. The chariot was pulled by winged demons who quickly lifted it high into the sky and carried it towards Ravana's island kingdom of Lanka.

Despite her fear, Sita thought quickly, and she dropped her jewelry, piece by piece, over the side of the chariot to leave a trail on the ground below.

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Back in the forest, Rama soon realized that he'd been tricked. Frantically, he ran back to where he'd left Sita, but it was too late.



Sita was gone, but Rama soon spotted the trail of jewelry and anxiously followed it. But when the trail suddenly ended, Rama sunk to the ground in despair. As he sat there, sadly wondering what to do now, he saw an enormous, white monkey coming towards him. It was Hanuman, the monkey king himself.

Hanuman took Rama to the monkey city, where he called together his monkey army and their friends, the great bears, and he sent them off to help search for Sita.

Hanuman was not only king of the monkeys; he was also a god and possessed special powers. For one thing, he could fly. So, naturally, it was he who found Sita, imprisoned on Ravana's island.

Knowing that Ravana would not let Sita go without a fight, Hanuman prepared his army for battle. But Sita was on an island surrounded by water; in order to rescue her, Hanuman would somehow have to get his army across the sea.

Hanuman had his monkeys build a bridge out of the rocks, grass, and sand that lay on the edge of the shore. Rama, Lakshman, and the animal army then poured across the bridge and the fighting began. The battle was long and terrible. But at last, Rama spotted the demon-king on the field and went after him.

Rama was a great warrior, but he had met his match in the evil Ravana. Each time he swung his sword and managed to cut off one of Ravana's terrible heads, another head would straight away grow back in its place.

Finally, Rama pulled out the bow that he carried on his back, and with it a single arrow. It had been a gift from the gods, and as Rama took aim, he chanted a prayer that the arrow would meet its target. It shot out of the bow with a blinding flash and the demon-king fell to the ground, dead.

The whole world rejoiced. Not only was the evil Ravana defeated, but Rama's 14 years of exile was over, and Rama and Sita could return home. To celebrate, the people of Ayodhya lit small lamps and placed them in the

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windows of their houses to guide Rama and Sita safely home. There were so many flickering lights that they seemed to out-number the stars in the sky.

Now, every year in the autumn, people light lamps in their homes and set off fireworks outside. They remember the story of Rama and Sita, and they tell each other that light triumphs over dark, and that good triumphs over evil.

1. The king had intended to make Rama king. What made him change his mind and banish him instead?
2. Do you think the king did the right thing? What would you have done had you been king? Explain.
3. Why did Sita leave the safety of the magic circle that Rama the drawn to protect her from harm? Would you have done the same? Explain.
4. What is the theme (message) of the story?