

World Faiths Today Series

Exploring
Hinduism



Teachers' Handbook

World Faiths Today Series

Exploring Hinduism

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In the World Faiths Today Series, Rees and Sara learn about the major world faiths in their own country. The seven stories in the series are:

- Exploring Islam
- Exploring Judaism
- Exploring the Parish Church
- Exploring the Orthodox Church
- Exploring Hinduism
- Exploring Buddhism
- Exploring Sikhism



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Exploring Hinduism

The story

Rees and Sara have two Hindu school friends called Rajeev and Meena who introduce them to key beliefs and practices in Hinduism. The children explore a mandir and learn about God in Hinduism and how their friends worship God. They celebrate the festival of Diwali and learn about the story behind the festival. Rees and Sara are introduced to special books in Hinduism through the Bhagavad Gita and the great myths, and they learn about how these affect the lives of Hindus. They investigate Hindu attitudes to the environment and caring for others through a story about tree huggers in India. They learn about Hindu attitudes towards food, including vegetarianism, and why cows are sacred in Hinduism.

The basics

Hinduism is made up of a vast number of different traditions with various beliefs and practices. In the story book a popular example of Hinduism is presented which practises devotion (bhakti) to personal forms of God represented by different gods and goddesses.

Hinduism has its origins in India and is the oldest of the great Indian religious traditions. Some of the earliest roots of Hinduism are over 4,000 years old. Unlike many other religions, Hinduism does not have a founder, although there are many significant characters and teachers in its history. Today, the largest Hindu population is found in India where over 80% of the population is thought to be Hindu; other large populations exist in Fiji, Mauritius, Nepal, the Caribbean, and Guyana. Smaller populations and communities are now established in many countries throughout the world. Often, Hindus use the term Sanatana Dharma (Eternal Law) to describe their religious tradition.

The Hindu tradition represented in the story book believes in:

- God: Supreme Reality, and represented in many different forms;
- Dharma (law, duty, teaching or truth): the basis for belief and practice. In Hinduism, everything has specific duties and responsibilities (Dharma) which need to be fulfilled in order to create balance and harmony;
- rebirth: all unenlightened beings are tied to and suffer in a continuous cycle of rebirth;
- karma: all actions (karma) produce negative or positive consequences which affect a person's life and rebirths in negative or positive ways. In Hinduism, fulfilling or failing to fulfil one's Dharma (duties) produces either positive or negative karma;
- atman (soul): every living thing possesses a soul which passes from one body to the next during rebirth;
- Moksha: liberation from the cycle of suffering and rebirth, when the atman (soul) enjoys a perfect relationship with God.

The Hindu tradition represented in the story book practises:

- devotion to various gods and goddesses, often performed before a shrine;
- fulfilling one's Dharma (duties) in daily life;
- ahimsa (non-violence) towards living things.

Chapter 1 Visiting a mandir

Understanding God in Hinduism

In the story Rajeev and Meena explain to Rees and Sara how Hindus understand God. Although Rajeev and Meena believe in a Supreme Reality which is God, they believe that God takes many different forms. Some of these forms are illustrated in the statues of gods and goddesses in the mandir's shrine room. Each god or goddess has its own special characteristics, qualities, and myths associated with it.

Other Hindus might understand God in a slightly different way. For example, some Hindus believe that the Supreme Reality should be worshipped directly and do not include the various gods and goddesses in their worship. Some Hindus may give the name Brahman to the Supreme Reality. Other Hindus believe that the god or goddess they worship is the Supreme Reality and will focus devotion on that god or goddess (popular gods with large numbers of devotees include Shiva and Vishnu, and a popular goddess is Kali, for example).

However, like Rajeev and Meena, many Hindus worship a number of different gods and goddesses at different times, depending on the circumstances and their needs. Families often have favourite gods and goddesses who are passed down the generations and are included on their family shrines at home. Also, Hindus will pray to a specific god or goddess for particular needs (for example, Ganesh is believed to remove obstacles) and during a particular festival (for example, Lakshmi during the festival of Diwali). The deities featured in the story are Shiva, Ganesh, Durga, and Lakshmi.

Shiva

Shiva is portrayed in a number of ways in Hinduism. In the story and worksheet Shiva is presented as the Lord of the Dance. For the worksheet, it is important that pupils are allowed to think about possible symbolism and meaning first before being given 'right' answers (it is worth remembering that often there is more than one 'right' answer). The thinking process and an appreciation of the purpose of Hindu iconography are the main skills to develop.

Interesting features in the iconography of Shiva include:

- the third eye: this is a symbol for his inner, spiritual knowledge;
- long, unkempt hair: Shiva is seen as a great yogi and as such he has the matted hair of a yogi. Sometimes Shiva is depicted with the sacred

- river Ganges flowing through his hair;
- fire: symbol of his power to destroy;
- wild animal skin: many meanings have been suggested, for example, it may symbolise Shiva's spiritual attributes or it may be related to a myth about Shiva killing a wild animal;
- evil dwarf: the dwarf represents ignorance. Shiva is crushing the dwarf which symbolises his ability to crush and remove ignorance;
- hand pointing to foot: this is a common mudra (hand symbol) which shows that Shiva sustains those who devote themselves to him, worshipping at his feet;
- raised hand: another common mudra which means 'do not fear'; Shiva protects his devotees;
- four arms: Hindu gods and goddesses usually need a lot of arms to carry various objects and to perform mudras which symbolise their actions in the world;
- cobra: snakes are greatly feared and respected in Hinduism. They are deadly, symbolising destruction but also have healing properties, symbolising preservation;
- drum: the drum is part of the dance. The rhythm of the drum is linked to the creation of the universe. Shiva is seen as creator in this depiction;
- crescent moon: the moon can be associated with time and so symbolises that Shiva has control over time.

Shiva is often pictured with a bull and his consort Parvati, who is a beautiful, benign goddess.

Ganesh

Ganesh is the son of Shiva and Parvati. Many myths exist which explain why he has an elephant's head. One myth is that Shiva had been away for many years meditating and returned home to find a boy he did not recognise guarding Parvati, so he cut off the boy's head. On learning that Ganesh was really his son, he gave Ganesh the first head he could find – the head of an elephant. Ganesh is the god of obstacles and wisdom; he removes obstacles which are both physical and spiritual. Many Hindus pray to Ganesh when they begin a new project, get married, or take exams. Ganesh is a very popular god, portrayed with:

- one broken tusk;
- a big belly;
- three weapons – an axe, lasso, and hook;
- a rat.

Durga

Durga is a beautiful, fearsome goddess, who is associated with battle. She is depicted with many arms so that she can hold all her weapons (for example, a spear, sword, club, and bow). In the picture she is shown with the 'do not fear' mudra (hand symbol) and accompanied by a lion. Durga can also carry a thunderbolt, symbolising that she cuts through ignorance.

Lakshmi

Information about Lakshmi has been placed in the teachers' notes for the second chapter because of her importance during the festival of Diwali.

Puja service

In the story, devotion is shown to the deities in the puja service where they are presented with traditional offerings. In response, the deities give the devotees their blessings through the blessed fire and food.

Activities

Create an image of a god

Create your own image of a god or goddess. What qualities do you want it to have? What sort of activities would it do? In what ways would it help the world and people? Draw a picture of your god or goddess, thinking carefully about how you are going to show its character and activities. Pass your picture to the person sitting next to you. How well does that person understand your god or goddess?

Picturing God

Divide the class into groups of five. Give each group a large sheet of paper. In turn, take one member out of each group, and give them 20 seconds to study the picture of Shiva on the 'Learning about God' worksheet. Send them back to their groups where they are given 30 seconds to draw and/or label what they can remember. Pupils cannot draw or write anything unless it is their turn, although ideas may be offered at any time.

Do the task on the 'Learning about God' worksheet, which explores the symbolism behind the image.

Visiting a Hindu place of worship

Visit a Hindu place of worship and identify the places mentioned in the story. How does it differ from the places in the book and how is it the same?

Mix and match

Cut out the nine boxes on the 'Write a story' worksheet, and then cut each box into three sections: the heading; the information; and the picture. Mix up all the sections and place them in an envelope. Divide pupils into pairs or groups

and give each pair or group an envelope. Pupils need to match heading, information, and picture correctly.

Do the task on the 'Write a story' worksheet (the story can easily be adapted to another genre such as a diary entry or newspaper article, if needed).

Make a shrine display

Using a table placed against a wall, construct a Hindu shrine display. Include on the display:

- incense holder and incense;
- five-wick arti lamp (this can be made by filling a heat proof small container with ghee and placing 5 string wicks in it. Ghee can be bought or made following the recipe in the activities for chapter 4);
- offerings of flowers, fruit, nuts, and rice;
- bell for alerting the deities that puja is to begin;
- pot of water and spoon which is used to give water to the devotees after it has been offered to the deities;
- gods and goddesses (try to include statues and pictures which can be pinned on the wall behind the shrine. Decide carefully which gods and goddesses to include and also add some pictures of living and dead famous Hindu teachers like Mohandas Gandhi. Respected teachers and reformers are often considered to be avatars or manifestations of God working in the world);
- Hindu symbols like OM (sacred symbol for God) and the swastika (symbol for good fortune).

Chapter 2 Celebrating Diwali

Most religious festivals have at least one foundation story which explains their origins and the reasons for the celebrations. For many adherents of a religion, celebrating a festival is one of the most important contexts for learning about their religion's beliefs and practices.

In the festival of Diwali, the foundation story is one of the great Hindu myths from the sacred text, the Ramayana. Rajeev and Meena's grandmother retells the story for Rees and Sara. Many different versions of the story exist. Rama is presented as the perfect man and Sita, the perfect woman. Both have traditionally acted as powerful role models depicting valued qualities such as loyalty, fulfilment of duty, devotion, honour, valour, perseverance, justice, and piety.

Diwali is a five-day festival which is celebrated by Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs. The way in which the festival is celebrated varies from region to region. In addition to the activities mentioned in the story, Hindus might also have an early morning bath, wear clean or new clothes, and conduct pujas for various gods including Lakshmi.

Rangoli patterns

In the story, Rajeev does not appear particularly bothered that the beautiful rangoli pattern he created with Meena could be destroyed in the rain. It is made with perishable materials deliberately to illustrate the impermanence of all things (apart

from the atman or soul). If the impermanence of the rangoli pattern is understood and accepted, you cannot be attached to it. Non-attachment to physical and non-physical things is an important teaching in Hinduism (as well as in Buddhism and Sikhism). Also, the process of creating the pattern is an important spiritual exercise.

There is also an environmental aspect to rangoli patterns. If they are made from edible products, they provide food for other living creatures.

Lakshmi

Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and good fortune. Hindus clean and paint their houses in the hope that she will visit during Diwali and bless them with wealth and good fortune for the coming year. A special puja is made to Lakshmi during this festival. Lakshmi is the consort of the god Vishnu. Rama and Sita are believed to be avatars (incarnations) of Lakshmi and Vishnu, respectively.

Lakshmi is often depicted standing on a lotus flower in water which refers to the myth about her origins. As the gods were churning the ocean to gain the nectar of immortality, Lakshmi emerged out of the ocean. The lotus flower is a symbol of spiritual purity and power; like the pure soul, it is unsullied by its muddy origins because the flower bud does not open until it is above the water. The coins flowing from her outstretched hand symbolise her gifts of good fortune to her devotees.

Activities

Art for the moment

Most artists create art which they hope will last a long time. Also, galleries and museums make a big effort to preserve artists' work so that people can see and appreciate it for many years. Look at some pictures of older art by famous artists (perhaps artists that pupils have been studying at school, like van Gogh or Picasso). The paintings are being preserved in different galleries around the world. Explore how these galleries preserve them, for example, ensuring that temperature, light, and humidity levels are right and that they are transported appropriately when moved. Also, when they do start to decay, galleries use the right materials and techniques to repair them.

Some artists, though, deliberately create art which only lasts for a short time, for example, snow and sand sculptors. Show some pictures of snow and sand sculptures. Amazing examples can be accessed on the internet by searching for words like 'snow art', 'sand art', or 'snow art competitions'. Also, there are artists who explore impermanent art as well as more enduring art, such as Dieter Roth who created the Chocolate Lion and a chocolate self-portrait. For these artists being able to experience the erosion and change in their art is an essential part of their 'art'.

- What is the point of this type of art? Can we learn anything from it?
- Create your own piece of impermanent art. It could be made of sand and water, or any other material which displays its impermanence relatively quickly. Put it to one side and check it over a period of time, noting how it changes and is gradually destroyed.
- Link this work to Hindu rangoli pictures, offering a Hindu understanding (see teachers' notes). Complete the worksheet 'Make a tri-tetraflexagon of rangoli patterns' or 'Draw rangoli patterns'.

What do I value?

Do the 'Write character profiles' worksheet which explores the qualities/values held by the characters in the story of Rama and Sita.

Make a list of the qualities/values identified in the activity, and place it so that it can be easily read by all pupils. On a sheet of paper, ask pupils to draw (or provide) a large circle, with a smaller circle within it, and a smaller circle within that. Working individually, pupils need to select and place the

qualities/values in order of importance to them in the circles. They should choose ONE most important quality/value and place it in the smallest circle at the centre. Then, moving outwards in order of importance, place ONE quality/value in each of the other two circles. Encourage them to use their own words.

In pairs, pupils can discuss their choices with their partner. If they wish to 'rethink' and change any ideas as a result of their discussion, they are allowed to do so.

Festivals across religious traditions

Work on a calendar or book of festivals from all religions. This would need to be a loose-leaf folder, or pages joined together with treasury tags so that pages can be added as needed in chronological order.

Talk about the importance of organising material well so that people can find quickly the information they need. With the pupils, decide on a useful structure for the book, for example, section headings could include stories, how the festival is celebrated today, recipes, and so on.

Linking story and practice

Make links between the events in the story of Rama and Sita and how Diwali is celebrated today. This can be approached in different ways, for example, write relevant parts of the story of Rama and Sita on small cards and do the same with relevant parts of the celebrations today. Ask pupils to match up the story cards with the celebration cards. Suggested content for the cards:

story

villagers lighting path
home for Rama and
Sita

Sita (avatar of goddess
Lakshmi)

Rama (avatar of god
Vishnu)

the battle with the
evil Ravana

villagers celebrate return
of Rama and Sita

celebration

lighting divas

cleaning and
painting house
puja for Lakshmi
rangoli design by
door

puja for Vishnu

fireworks, fire
crackers

eating special
food with family
and friends

Chapter 3 Some special books

In this chapter Rees and Sara are introduced to Hindu sacred texts through the Bhagavad Gita and classical Indian dance which retells some of the great Hindu myths. They learn the importance of duty for many Hindus and some more ways in which Rajeev and Meena show their love and devotion to God.

Bhagavad Gita

There are many sacred texts in Hinduism and these texts are all part of the Vedas, which means 'knowledge', and they are written in Sanskrit. Hinduism is a broad and flexible religious tradition, accepting many different beliefs and practices within it. However, acceptance or rejection of the Vedas determines whether or not a person or group is Hindu. This fact illustrates how central the Vedas are in Hinduism.

In the story, a Vedic text called the Bhagavad Gita is Rajeev and Meena's sacred book. Bhagavad Gita means 'Song of God'. The Bhagavad Gita has been chosen because it is popular with many Hindus from all traditions. It also presents clearly some major beliefs held by Hindus, such as the importance of doing one's duty (Dharma). Performing one's duties in relation to the world and other people is more important than personal concerns, and these duties should take priority.

Like other religious sacred texts, it is easy to access free readings of the Bhagavad Gita on-line in Sanskrit and in English.

Duty and the Caste System

A central concept in Hinduism is Dharma, which can mean law, duty, teaching or truth; Dharma underpins all life. Everything which exists (people, animals, plants, and the natural world) has its own laws and duties to follow. Fulfilling the laws and duties produces positive karmic consequences, while failing to fulfil the laws and duties produces negative karmic consequences. The Hindu world should be an ordered place, and this order is based on everything in the world fulfilling its Dharma. In chapter 4, Dharma is explored in relation to the environment and human beings.

In the story, Krishna tries to persuade Arjuna to go to battle because it is the Dharma (duty) of a warrior to fight. In order to understand this argument properly, it has to be placed within traditional Hindu

beliefs about the structure of Indian society. In the Vedas, four main social groupings called Varnas (Castes) are identified, which relate to the types of work people perform:

- Brahmin (priests and teachers);
- Kshatriya (warriors and rulers);
- Vaishya (artisans, farmers, and traders);
- Shudra (labourers).

According to the Vedas, the Varnas can be traced back to the creation of the world and were not a human invention. One of the Hindu creation myths tells of the sacrifice of the Great Man, Purusha, who created the world from his body. Brahmins came from his mouth, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishyas from his thighs, and Shudras from his feet. The Vedas also describe the duties (Dharmas) that each Varna should perform. Arjuna belonged to the Kshatriya Varna, and this means that he was expected to fight and display all the skills of a good warrior.

Traditionally, social interaction between the different Castes is regulated, for example, it is common to marry someone from your own Caste and eat with members of your own Caste. A person is born into a Caste and remains in that Caste until rebirth into a new body. Each Caste is further sub-divided into different jatis, which relate more specifically to the type of work a person does. For example, there are jatis of potters, bakers, gardeners, and barbers. There are several thousand jatis in India today, and each jati in each Indian village is regulated by its own council of elders.

A social group outside the Caste system exists called the Dalits ('oppressed'), who are also known as 'the Untouchables'. Traditionally, Dalits perform jobs that Caste Hindus are reluctant to do because they are believed to make people ritually impure, for example, working with dead animals. The injustices committed against Dalits have been well-recorded alongside the work of prominent Hindu reformers such as Dr Ambedkar and Mohandas Gandhi, who raised the profile of Dalits and helped to effect legal reforms in India which banned discrimination on the basis of Caste. In India equality laws can be difficult to enforce, especially in rural communities which tend to be more conservative and traditional than cosmopolitan urban communities.

Hindu dance

Rees and Sara are introduced to other sacred texts in Hinduism through the medium of dance. The Vedas contain many great myths about the gods and goddesses which are re-enacted or expressed through dance. There are a number of classical styles of dance in India. The style of dance depicted

in the story is called Bharatnatyam and originates in South India. A lot of its techniques come from a text called the Natya Shastra which is believed to be over two thousand years old. The Natya Shastra includes directions on music, stage design, and makeup as well as dance.

Activities

Special lessons

The Bhagavad Gita is a very special book for many Hindus because it contains some important lessons about how people should behave and their relationship with God. One important lesson is that everyone has duties and they must try to perform them. They should perform these duties because it is right to perform them, and not for any rewards. They should offer what they do as a gift to God. Explain, simply, the background to the story, placing Arjuna as a warrior in the Caste System.

Ask pupils to write out lists of duties for some or all of the following people:

- teacher;
- doctor;
- policeman/woman;
- parents.

Ask pupils to identify their own duties. Is it easy for them to do these duties? In the story, Arjuna found it hard to do his duty as a warrior until he understood Krishna's lessons.

What kind of book?

There are many different kinds of books which have been written for different purposes. Place pupils in groups and give each group a wide selection of books taken from the school or class library (include different genres and subjects such as story books, history books, reference books like the encyclopaedia/dictionary, science books, art books, poetry books, text books, Bible, Bhagavad Gita, and so on). Ask each group to sort the books physically into different piles in a way which makes sense to them. They need to be able to explain to the teacher or class how the books have been sorted. Note: There is no right answer to the task because it is possible to sort books in different ways (genre, subject, paperback/hardback, years

of publication, reading age, for example). Pupils need to be given time to think for themselves and debate a logical way of categorising the books in front of them.

This task can be extended by asking the groups to identify the purposes of each group of books. Why were they written? What are they trying to do?

Link this to the story. Different books have different purposes. For many Hindus the Bhagavad Gita is a special book because it teaches important lessons about how to live and how to have a good relationship with God. Pupils can then do the 'Write about books' worksheet.

Showing devotion to God

Discuss with pupils the different ways that Hindus show love and devotion to God. Some of these ways have been illustrated in the story:

- puja;
- singing;
- prayer;
- correct behaviour (list examples from the story);
- dance.

Some devotion takes place before a shrine (either in a temple or at home) but a lot of devotion is shown in Hindus' everyday lives. For a Hindu (as in other religions), devotion to God is a way of life and not just something that you do in a specific religious place.

Dance is one popular way of showing love and devotion to God. It uses the whole of the body and focuses the mind on God. Do the 'Create a dance' activity on the worksheet. It is important that pupils are encouraged to use the whole of their bodies creatively to express the story.

Chapter 4 Caring for others and the world

In the story, two reasons are given to explain why Hindus respect all life forms. These are:

- every living creature has an atman (soul) which deserves acknowledgement and respect;
- the world is governed by rules (duties or Dharmas) which provide order and harmony if they are kept. Not respecting life breaks one of these rules.

Rees and Sara learn that it can be serious when people break the rules of nature because they can cause a great deal of harm. This is illustrated by a true story about the Chipko Movement ('tree huggers') in India.

Rebirth

Hindus believe that everything is subject to change, decay, and death apart from the atman (soul) which resides in every living being. This makes the atman very special and sacred. The atman, though, is tied to a cycle of rebirth, and it enters a new body with each rebirth. The type of rebirth experienced is determined by one's past actions (karma) both positively and negatively. The ultimate ideal is the release of the atman from this cycle of rebirth permanently so that it can experience an eternal relationship with the Supreme Reality or God. This is called Moksha.

Hindus hold different views about the precise nature of the atman. Some Hindus believe that the atman is the same as the Supreme Reality (the idea that God is present within everything). Other Hindus believe that the atman and the Supreme Reality are different from one another, although they share the same basic qualities, such as permanence, which set them apart from everything else.

Many of these concepts (rebirth, karma, and

impermanence) are shared with Buddhism, although Buddhists do not accept the Hindu belief in the atman or understanding of God.

The Chipko Movement

In the Himalayas in Northern India deforestation caused by commercial interests has had a major environmental impact. Local village life is often seriously affected because villages rely on the forests to provide:

- fuel;
- building materials;
- food;
- medicine;
- and fodder.

As a result, women in the villages affected have had to travel further for fodder and fuel, and the villages are less self-subsistent and more reliant on importing products from outside the villages.

The exact origins of the Chipko Movement are unknown, although the trade-mark tree hugging tactic to prevent the logging of trees first emerged in the early 1970s. It is interesting to note that the Movement consists mainly of women and children, who have become environmental activists to protect their communities and livelihoods. They practise satyagraha (peaceful protest), which was also the method of protest adopted by Mohandas Gandhi who worked on behalf of the Dalits ('Untouchables'). Satyagraha supports the Indian principle of ahimsa (non-violence). As a result of the actions of the Chipko Movement, it is estimated that over 100,000 trees may have been saved, and now more respect is given to local communities by the timber companies concerned.

Activities

Peaceful protests

A number of Hindus believe that if people do 'violent' things to you, it is best to protest and fight back in a non-violent, peaceful way. This kind of peaceful protest is called satyagraha. The story about the Chipko Movement shows satyagraha in practice. Another Hindu called Mohandas Gandhi also protested against injustice towards the Dalits or 'Untouchables' through using peaceful means (satyagraha), and with pressure from other reformers, he succeeded in implementing laws in India to improve the lives of Dalits.

Explore with pupils how they deal with things that they think are unfair, for example, with hurtful behaviour in the playground or bullying. What are the different ways they could deal with these situations practically? (For school-related issues, you need to listen to the pupils but make sure that they are aware of the relevant policies set up to deal with relevant issues.)

Our local environment

Look closely at one small part of your environment to find all the living things in it. You can mark the area with a hoop or with string. Choose an area which is likely to have some life in it (grassy or wooded area, for example). Draw a plan of the area which includes the living things in it, both plants, insects, etc. Selecting the living things in your marked area, complete the 'Make a collage' worksheet.

There are many living things in our environment which often go unnoticed unless we look very carefully. As the story explains, many Hindus believe that it is wrong to deliberately harm life in the natural world for two reasons:

- all life is special because it has an atman (soul) within it which is holy;
- breaking the rules and destroying things has an effect on more than the thing you destroy.

You can also explore other Indian religions which believe in ahimsa (non-violence) such as Buddhism and Jainism. Jainism is particularly interesting because its monks and nuns take this belief extremely seriously. They watch carefully where they tread and gently brush the ground before they walk to avoid killing any small creatures. They also wear material tied over their mouths and sieve water in order to avoid swallowing living things. Lay Jains are not so strict and support monks and nuns with food.

Cause and effect

In the story, Rees and Sara learn that Hindus believe that everything has rules to follow which give each living thing a specific role to play in the world. These are the rules of nature. Do the worksheet 'Write rules for the world', which asks pupils to identify rules for people generally and rules for another living creature.

Animals and other things in the natural world do not consciously choose to follow rules, but human beings do have more of a choice. This means that when human beings break rules they can potentially have a great effect on themselves and the world around them. This is illustrated by the events which created the Chipko Movement in the story. This can be explored further by looking at other environmental problems created by human beings.

Chapter 5 Food

For human beings food does more than simply feed the body and keep a person alive. In both the religious and secular world food is used creatively for many purposes. Some examples of this include using food for:

- strengthening social bonds within the family or community through sharing food together;
- marking special times such as festivals and rites of passage;
- communicating through symbols, beliefs, ideas, and feelings.

In addition, as Rees and Sara discover in the story, we are able to experience food from around the world and appreciate its rich cultural diversity.

Indian food

Today, Hindu communities exist in many countries in the world, far beyond the borders of India. However, for many Hindus in Britain part of their cultural heritage includes Indian cuisine, which is especially prominent at times of celebration such as festivals or weddings. Much of Indian cuisine is traditionally vegetarian, although it can contain meat if it has culinary influences from the few Indian states where meat-eating is popular or where it has been tailored to appeal to the Western palate.

The sacred cow

Most Hindus believe that the cow is a sacred animal. Cows and bulls are respected because historically they have provided Hindus in India with the basic resources they need to live, for example:

- dairy products to eat;
- dung for fuel and fertilisers;
- strength to pull carts and plough fields;
- ghee candles for light.

In India, cows are often seen wandering freely, and it is illegal in most Indian states to kill healthy cows or to harm cows. Any mistreatment of cows or bulls is a very sensitive issue in India, and Hindu animal rights activists are regularly in the news drawing attention to breaches in the law. Also, the sacredness of cows is linked to Krishna's strong association with them. How far the tradition of the sacred cow extends back into Hindu history is debated among Indian academics.

Krishna

Krishna is an avatar (incarnation) of the god Vishnu, and in the story he is pictured with one of his gopi (cow herder) devotees, Radha. Earlier in the story, Rajeev and Meena practised devotion to the gods and goddesses in the puja service and also through the medium of dance. Here, we continue to explore devotion by learning about the relationship between Krishna and Radha which exemplifies the ideal relationship between God and a devotee. The devotee offers God unconditional love and devotion and God loves the devotee.

Krishna can be depicted in many forms, for example, as a loveable and mischievous child, the wise charioteer in the Bhagavad Gita (chapter 3), or the adored cow-herder boy, playing a flute.

Activities

Hindus on the world map

In the story, Rees and Sara learn that Hinduism originally came from India, although today Hindus can be found in many countries of the world including Britain. Display a map of the world and mark the countries where there is a large population of Hindus (for example, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malaysia, USA, South Africa, Myanmar, Fiji, Mauritius, Nepal, the Caribbean, and Guyana).

Also display a map of Britain and mark some places which have fairly large Hindu communities – usually in the Midlands and South East of England (for example, London, Birmingham, Leicester, Preston). Two of the largest Hindu temples in Europe are found in Britain (Swaminarayan Temple in Neasdon, London and Bhaktivedanta Manor, near Watford). In Wales most Hindu communities exist in South Wales (for example, Swansea, Cardiff, and Newport) although Wrexham also has a Hindu community. Display some pictures of some of the larger Hindu temples from the internet.

Spices

Ask pupils to keep a three-day diary of the food they eat (see the 'Reflect on your food' worksheet). Where do these foods and dishes come from? Why do they enjoy them?

There are many different and exciting flavours and recipes to try from around the world. In the story, Rees and Sara's friends are vegetarian Hindus and Rees and Sara discover that many things can be done with vegetables to make them tasty and interesting.

Gather together a selection of spices and ingredients often used in Indian cooking. Examples of possible ingredients include: turmeric, coriander seeds, cumin, black pepper, mustard seeds, cardamom pods, fennel seeds, garlic, ginger, and chillies. Present these foods to pupils labelled only with a number and give them a list of the food names. Allow pupils to smell each item and try to match it up with the list. They should know a few and be able to guess some others.

Use some of the ingredients to make a very simple Indian vegetarian dish such as a potato curry. Whatever you choose, also prepare the potato or

main vegetable used by simply boiling it and allow the pupils to compare the tastes.

As well as flavouring food, many of these spices and ingredients are believed by some nutritionists to provide health-giving benefits. For example, ginger and fennel could be good for the digestion, garlic could support the immune system, and most recently some scientists believe that turmeric may slow down the development of Alzheimer's disease. Pupils can look at their diet from the 'Reflect on your food' worksheet and identify what may be healthy about it and what may be unhealthy about it.

Link this back to the story, and reflect on the reasons given in chapter 5 for Rajeev and Meena's diet. There are many reasons why we eat certain types of food, and it is important to remember that, for some people, there are also religious reasons behind their choice of food.

Make your own ghee

It is easy to see why cows have been traditionally revered in Hinduism, looking at the list of gifts they provide for Hindus in India (see teachers' notes). One of these gifts is ghee which was a commonly-used source of light, and remains important in Hindu worship at home and in the temple today. For example, the five-wicked arti lamp is fuelled by ghee and so is the diva lamp lit during the festival of Diwali. Also, the statues of Hindu gods and goddesses on the shrines at home and in the temple will be regularly washed with ghee as part of Hindu devotion. Making your own ghee gives you a better idea of what it is.

Ghee is unsalted butter which has had the water and solid milk particles removed from it. Melt a block of unsalted butter in a pan and bring to the boil. Reduce heat. When foam appears on the top continue boiling until the foam disappears. The ghee is ready when a second foam appears and the butter is a golden colour. Pour through a fine strainer into a jar. You should be able to see the milk solids which have accumulated at the bottom of the pan. Discard these.

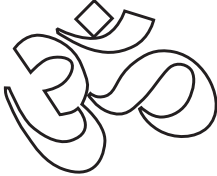
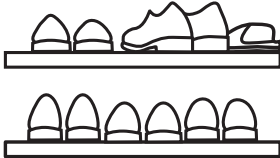
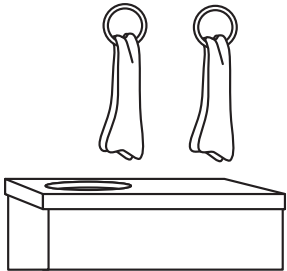



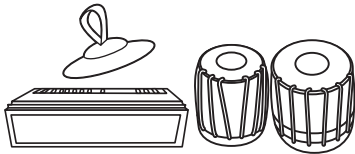
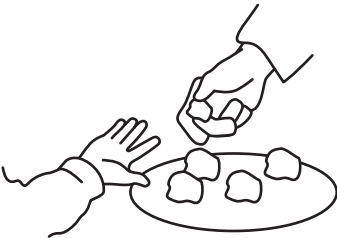

Use the ghee to make your own lamps using heat-proof containers and inserting string wicks. Ask pupils to complete the 'Write a poem' worksheet.

Keywords

ahimsa	non-violence	mandir	Hindu temple or place of worship
atman	eternal soul residing in every living being	Moksha	ultimate aim for Hindus which is release from the cycle of suffering and rebirth
avatar	a god or a goddess taking physical form (incarnation)	mudra	hand symbol present in Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh iconography
Bharatnatyam	a style of classical Indian dance	Natya Shastra	an ancient Indian handbook of dance and drama
bhakti	devotion (to God)	Parvati	Hindu goddess who is consort to the god Shiva and mother of the god Ganesh
Bhagavad Gita	a popular sacred book for many Hindus which is part of the Vedas	puja	symbolic offerings made to deities before the shrine
Brahman	the name some Hindus use for the Supreme Reality	Purusha	the Great Man in one Hindu creation myth from whom the world was created
Chipko Movement	the environmental movement protecting trees in India	Radha	Krishna's consort
Dalit	a social group outside the Caste System	Ramayana	a Hindu sacred text which relates the famous story of Rama and Sita retold at Diwali
Dharma	law, duty, teaching, truth	rebirth	Hindus believe in an eternal cycle of rebirth for everything which exists; the ideal is liberation from this cycle
Diwali	the popular Hindu festival of light, celebrating the victory of good over evil	satyagraha	peaceful protest
Durga	Hindu goddess associated with battle	Shiva	one of the main Hindu gods
Ganesh	Hindu god who removes physical and spiritual obstacles; son of Parvati and Shiva	Supreme Reality	God in an ultimate and abstract sense
gopi	cow herder	Vedas	Hindu sacred texts
incarnation	the embodiment of God in a physical form	Vishnu	one of the main Hindu gods: he has ten avatars (incarnations); two of them, Rama and Krishna, are depicted in the story book
Kali	Hindu goddess associated with death and cremation grounds		
karma	action: there is positive action (karma) and negative action (karma)		
Krishna	a popular avatar of the god Vishnu		
Lakshmi	Hindu goddess associated with wealth and prosperity; popular during the festival of Diwali		

Write a story

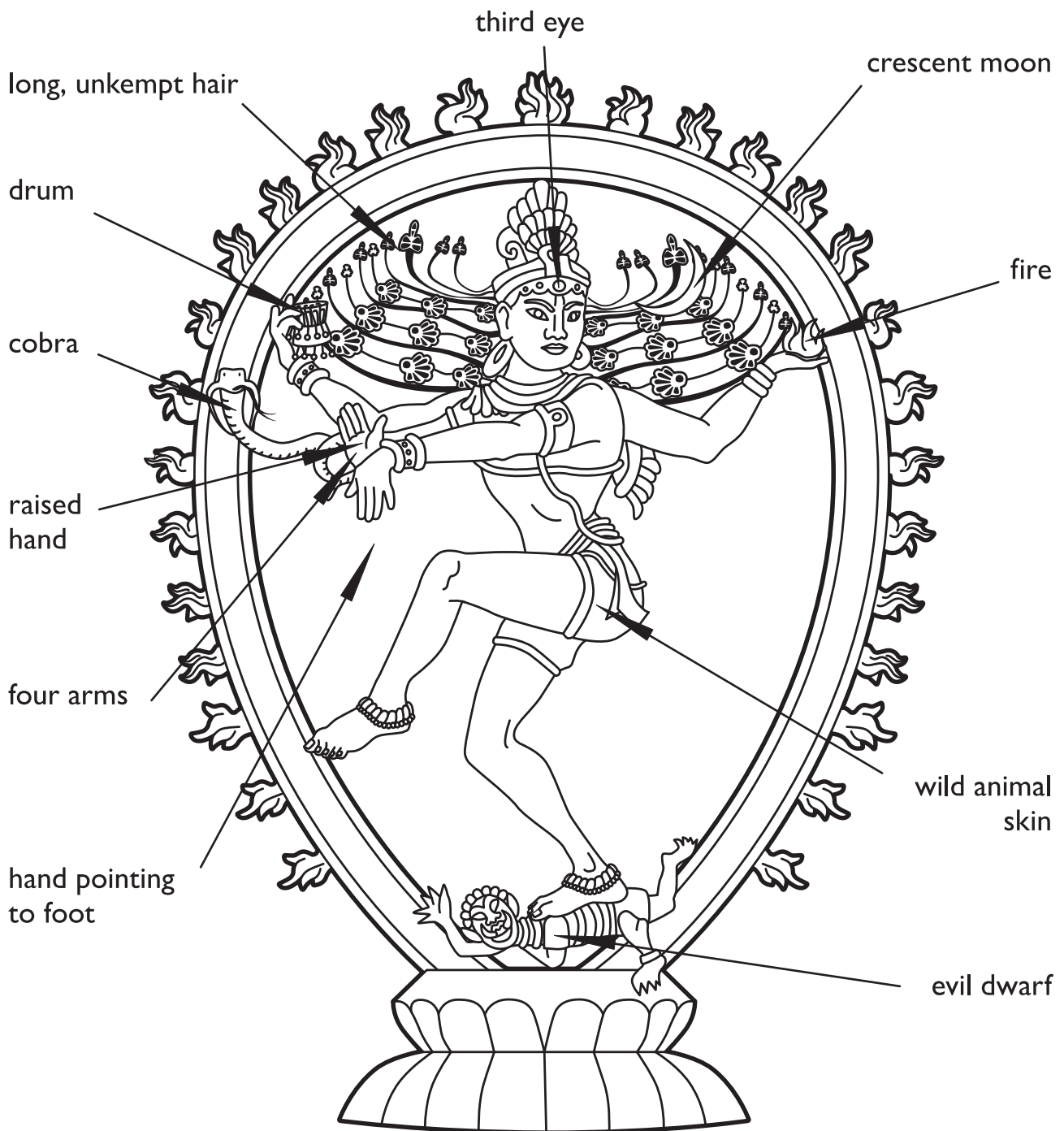
Imagine you have visited a Hindu mandir with a friend who worships there. Write a story about it, giving details of all the places you visited and the things you saw. The pictures and descriptions below will help you.

<p>OM</p> <p>You may see the sacred symbol for God, written in Sanskrit, outside or inside the mandir.</p> 	<p>shoe rack</p> <p>As a sign of respect, shoes are left on a rack near the entrance to the mandir. This keeps the mandir clean as a place to worship God.</p> 	<p>washing area</p> <p>Clean hands before worship are a sign of respect.</p> 
<p>shrines</p> <p>There are many different shrines in a mandir, each with different statues of gods and goddesses. These represent God, the Supreme Reality.</p> 	<p>offerings</p> <p>When people pray at a shrine they may leave offerings of money, rice, fruit or flowers.</p> 	<p>arti lamp</p> <p>During a puja ceremony, fire is offered to God. The fire is then offered to all the people present.</p> 
<p>bhajans</p> <p>Songs of worship (bhajans) are sung during the arti ceremony, accompanied by tablas (drums), hand cymbals and harmoniums.</p> 	<p>prashad</p> <p>People eat the food that has been offered to God, as a sign that they accept God's love and blessing.</p> 	<p>meeting rooms</p> <p>The mandir is a meeting place for entertainment and a place to help people in need. It may have rooms for meeting and teaching.</p> 

Learning about God

Statues and pictures of gods and goddesses remind Hindus of God's character and God's actions in the world. For example, a god or a goddess may look kind, powerful, or fierce. A god or a goddess is always carrying, wearing, and doing something which shows Hindus some of the things that God does in the world.

This is a picture of the god Shiva as Lord of the Dance. What do you think this picture teaches Hindus about God's character and God's actions in the world?



Make a diva

During Diwali, Hindus light divas and fill their homes with light. Years ago the divas were small lamps made of clay and filled with ghee with one or more cotton wicks to burn brightly. Nowadays candles are often used.

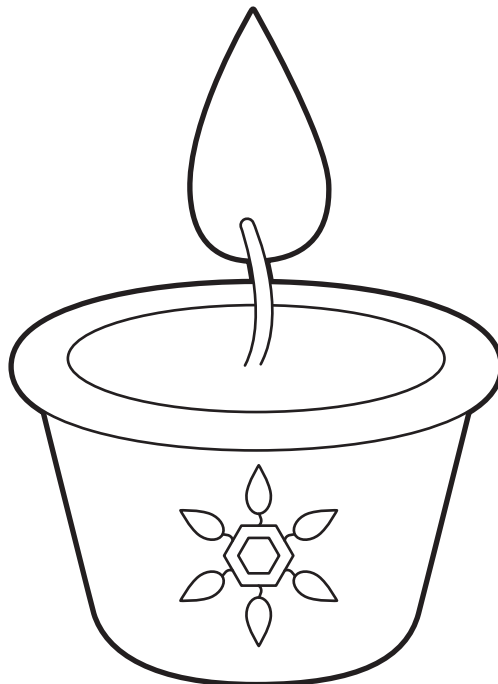
You will need

modelling clay
nightlight candles

clay tools
PVA glue

What to do

1. Roll a ball of clay to make it pliable.
2. Shape the clay into a dish that will hold a nightlight. (Test it to be sure the nightlight fits.) Make sure the clay is not too thin in any spot or it will crumble as it dries.
3. Decorate the clay with a simple rangoli pattern.
4. Leave the diva until it is completely dry.
5. Paint the diva with PVA glue to protect it and to give it a glossy sheen.
6. Put the nightlight inside the diva and plan where and when you will light it in remembrance of the Diwali story. (Ask an adult to light the diva for you.)



Make a tri-tetraflexagon of rangoli patterns

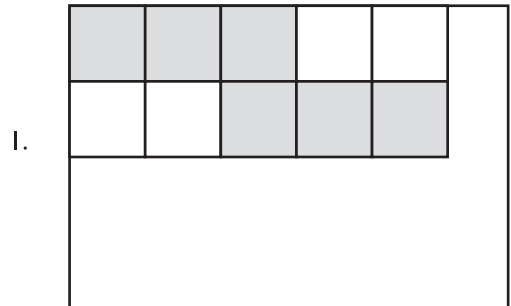
Rangoli patterns are made for Diwali. Often they are made on the ground using flour, rice grains or coloured chalk. It is a sign of welcome to visitors during Diwali.

Make a tri-tetraflexagon with three different rangoli patterns to display.

You will need

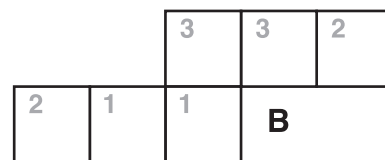
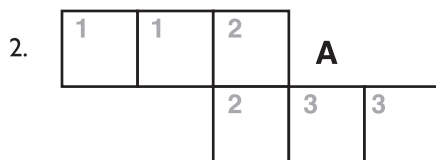
paper or card
pencils
transparent tape

ruler
scissors

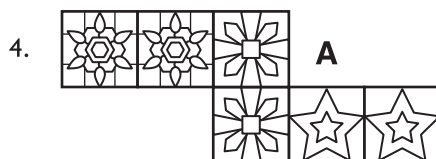


What to do

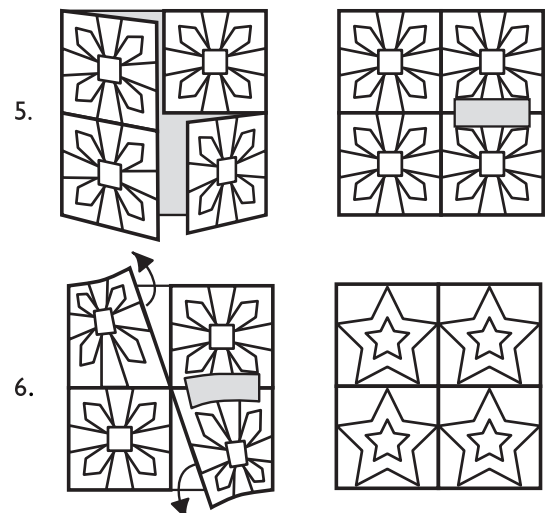
1. Rule a piece of A4 paper or card into two rows of 5 cm squares.
2. Cut out the squares as shown. Very lightly number them front and back. (You will need to be able to rub out these numbers when you draw your pattern.)



3. Design three very simple rangoli patterns, each to fit into one of your 5cm squares. Choose patterns that touch on the edges of your squares.
4. Draw these patterns onto your shape, making sure that the designs go in the correct squares. (You will have two squares with pattern 1 on the front, and two squares with pattern 1 on the back, and so on.)



5. With side A facing you, fold the last right hand square over, to show pattern 2. Fold the top two left hand squares under to show pattern 2. Put a piece of tape where shown to hold the squares in place.
6. You can now see the four matching pattern 2 pictures on one side, and pattern 1 on the other side. To find pattern 3, fold or flex the square vertically, then open it up from your fold.



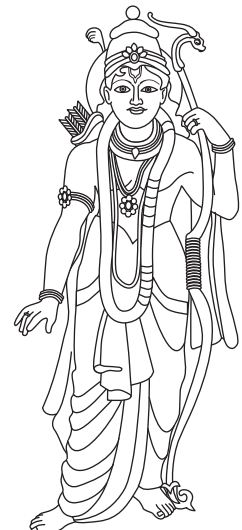
Write character profiles

1. Read the story of Rama and Sita. (You might like to read a longer version with details of all their adventures.)
2. Think of the people mentioned in the story:
 - the king
 - the king's wife
 - Rama
 - Sita
 - Bharata
 - Laksmana
 - Ravana
 - Hanuman
3. Choose two of these and write a character profile on them. Think about their actions and what this shows us of their character.

Person: _____



Person: _____



Create a dance

Hindus think about dancing as being a gift from God. It is more than entertainment. It teaches the stories of the gods and goddesses, but more importantly it is a way to worship God. Hindu dancing has many special rules and hand movements, and it takes years to learn. Sometimes the dancers wear special masks and costumes to show who they are in the story.

In a group, create your own dance to tell a story.

1. Select a story

First choose the story you would like to show.



2. Choose characters

List the characters you will need to tell the story. These may be people or animals or other important elements such as plants or the wind. Decide which person will dance each character.

3. Plan the story

Work out the 'storyline' of your dance. Divide it into separate scenes to make this easier.

4. Experiment with movements and music

Try different movements to find the best way of presenting the story. Listen to different music and find some that works well with your storyline. Do you need soft, flowing music or loud abrupt rhythms?

5. Make costumes

Costumes can be simple. You might only need a piece of fabric as a cape over your gym clothes, or a scarf wrapped around your head.

Our dance

Story: _____

Characters: _____

Storyline: _____

Write about books

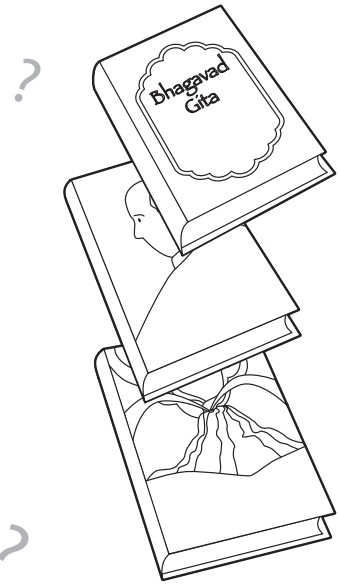
Rajeev and Meena took the Bhagavad Gita to class as their special book. It is special to them because it teaches them about worshipping God.

1. Choose a book

Name the book that was special to Rajeev and Meena.

2. Write about the book

Name the main characters and write briefly about the contents.



3. Write one thing that this book taught Rajeev and Meena.

4. Choose a book

Name one book that is special to you.



5. Write about the book

Name the main characters and write briefly about the contents.

6. Think of something you learnt from the book

Write one thing that this book taught you. (If your book is fiction, you might have learnt something from the way the characters acted.)

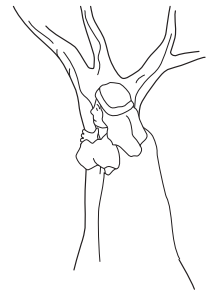
Draw a cartoon strip

Save the trees

Many trees grew wild in the Himalayan Mountains. The trees were important to the local people. They burnt the dead branches to cook their food and to keep themselves warm in the cold winters. They trapped and ate birds and animals that lived in the trees. They relied on plants growing in the forests for their food.

Over thirty years ago large companies went to the forests and began to cut down the trees. They sold the timber and grew richer and richer. They did not worry about the local people or about the damage to the environment.

In 1973 a group of local women planned to stop the timber companies. They travelled to where the trees were being cut down. Each woman chose a tree and hugged it. They refused to move. The contractors would have to cut down the women before they could cut down any more trees. The tree cutting was stopped. The forests were safe once more.



Draw a cartoon strip based on the story above.

Use the space below to plan the cartoon. Decide what you need to show in each box of the cartoon. Plan the pictures and the words. When you know how many boxes you will need, start work on a clean sheet of paper.

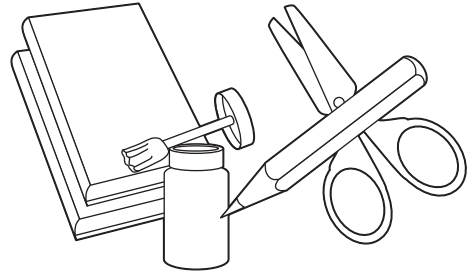
Make a collage

Hindus have great respect for the world. Many Hindus believe that it is wrong to harm or kill living creatures. Often in our world we kill insects without even thinking about it. Study an insect and celebrate the beauty of its creation. Learn to respect it.

You will need

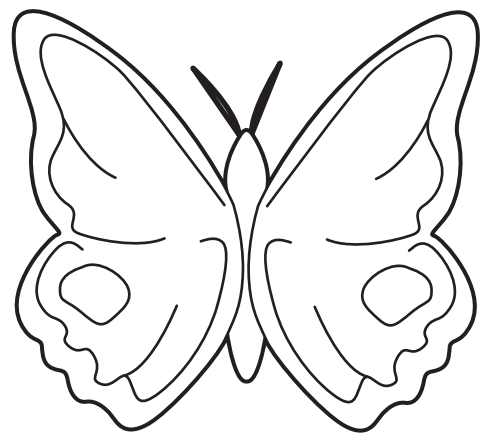
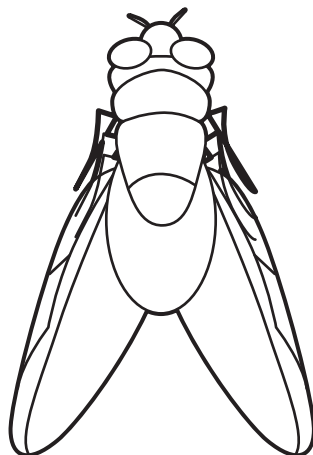
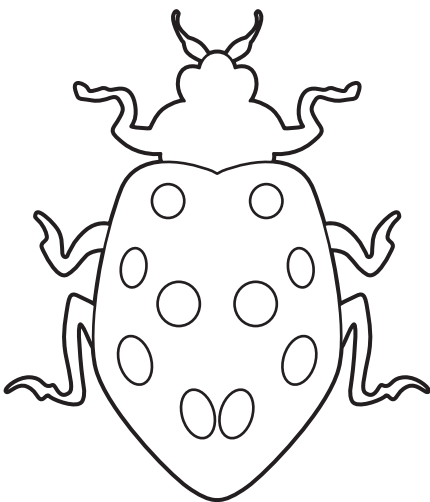
library books
large sheet of paper
coloured paper or fabrics
glue

computer
pencil
scissors



What to do

1. Choose an insect to study. Learn all you can about it from library books or from the internet. Look at its shape and colouring. Find the beauty in it.
2. Draw a large outline shape of your chosen insect. Select fabric and paper to match its colouring. (If you cannot find the correct colours you could mix the colours and paint paper to match.)
3. Cut or tear the fabric or paper and glue it to the outline shape.
4. Display the picture, perhaps with a poem about its beauty or a description of its importance in our environment.



Write rules for the world

Hindus believe that God created the universe and everything in it. For them, everything has specific rules to follow so that the world works properly. Hindus believe that without these rules of nature, the world would be in chaos.

Read some rules for rivers and then write two sets of rules of your own. One set could be for people and one set could be for another living creature. Illustrate your rules.

Rules for rivers

- flow downhill
- combine with other water (for example, rain)
- provide water for drinking and watering crops
- end at the sea



Rules for people

Rules for

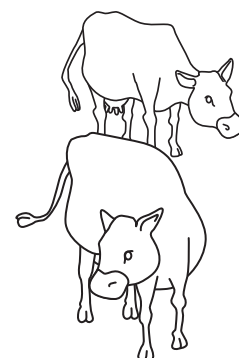
Discuss your rules with a friend

Write a poem

Cows are important and special to Hindus. They are important for worship, food, farming and transport. The milk from cows provides ghee for the arti lamps used on shrines, plus food. Bulls plough fields and pull carts.

Write a poem in praise of cows. Choose from these three suggestions or make up your own.

1. Pretend to be a cow or a bull and write a poem about your gifts to people.
2. Compose an acrostic. Write words such as 'COWS AND BULLS' down the page and select a word or a phrase to fit each letter of these words.
3. Think of words and phrases about cows and write them in a triangular shape. Use one word on the first line, two words on the second line, three words on the third line and so on.



My poem

Reflect on your food

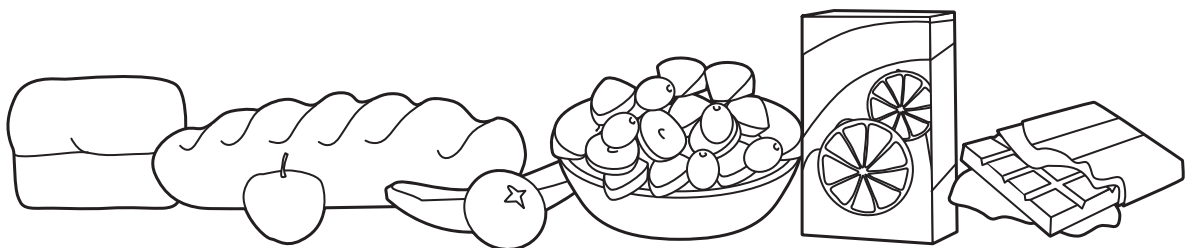
Many Hindus believe that the food we eat affects our bodies and minds. Some food makes us feel dull and sluggish and lacking in energy. Some food makes us feel over-excited and full of action and makes it hard for us to concentrate. Other food makes us feel happy and healthy and gives us a long life.

Keep a record of all the food you eat for three days. At the end of that time, discuss it with a friend. How healthy is your diet? Is it helping you in your daily life?

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3



My dictionary

You will meet many new words in *Exploring Hinduism*. Some of these will be English words and some will be Sanskrit words. Keep a record of them, along with their meanings.

mandir an Indian word for temple, a special place where Hindus go to worship God

OM the sacred symbol for God, the Supreme Reality, written in Sanskrit

puja giving gifts, or making offerings to an image of the gods and goddesses

Draw rangoli patterns

Rangoli patterns are an important part of Hindu celebrations of the new year. They are often drawn outside the house as a welcome to visitors and to the goddess Lakshmi who is believed to visit each house during Divali.

Research

Use the internet to find out about rangoli patterns. Conduct a search using keywords such as “rangoli pattern” and “picture”. Look at several designs to see how varied they can be.

Design

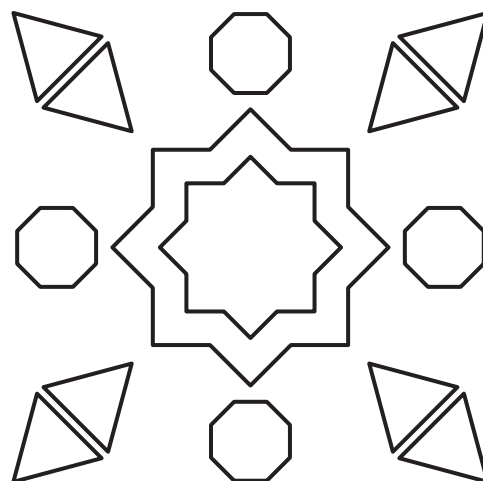
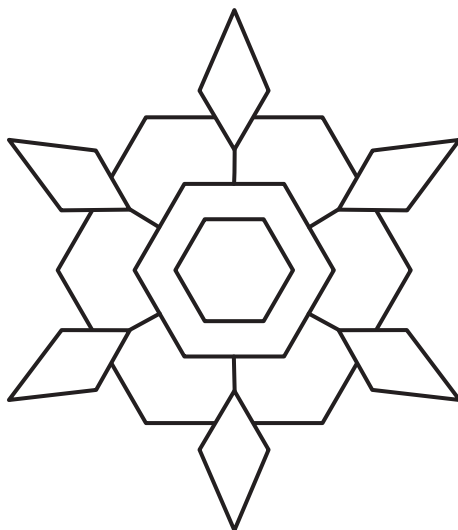
Draft some simple ideas for rangoli patterns, using only straight lines.

Draw

Use a CAD programme (Computer Assisted Design) on your computer to draw the rangoli pattern. You may find you need to change it from your draft design. Experiment, using the symmetry tool as you draw, in order to get a more complex design.

Make

Make your pattern on the ground outside with rice or flour, or draw it on a paved area with chalk.



World Faiths Today

teachers' handbook

The teachers' handbook is part of the *World Faiths Today Series*, which includes seven story books for 8- to 11-year-old learners. In the series, both learners and teachers are invited to join two children called Rees and Sara who are learning more about their friends from religious traditions:

- Anglican Church
- Buddhism
- Eastern Orthodox Church
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism

The teachers' handbook provides:

- In-depth background information about the seven religious traditions
- Classroom activities
- Photocopiable worksheets
- Keywords



Bear Lands Publishing

