

The Ramayana in Indonesia

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Lesson Objectives

1. Students will learn the story of the Ramayana.
2. Students will understand how it came to be part of Indonesian culture.
3. Students will understand how it is portrayed throughout Indonesian culture.
4. Students will use visual art, puppet, or a skit to portray parts of the story.

Lesson Plan:

1. Use the Google Slide, [Ramayana in Indonesia](#), to help students understand the background to the epic. There are speaker notes with each slide which will help you explain the image on the slide. Below you will find some extra background info to help you better understand the story.
2. Using the handout, [The Plot of the Ramayana Full Story](#), assign each part of the story to a different group.
3. Students then decide whether to use puppets, a skit, or a painting to illustrate/retell their section of the story.
4. Allow each group to present their part of the story in the correct order.

Teacher Background Info

The Ramayana is one of the largest ancient epics in world literature. It consists of nearly 24,000 verses (mostly set in the Shloka meter), divided into seven Kandas and about 500 sargas (chapters). In Hindu tradition, it is considered to be the adi-kavya (first poem). It depicts the duties of relationships, portraying ideal characters like the ideal father, the ideal servant, the ideal brother, the ideal husband and the ideal king. Ramayana was an important influence on later Sanskrit poetry and Hindu life and culture. Like Mahabharata, Ramayana is not just a story: it presents the teachings of ancient Hindu sages in narrative allegory, interspersing philosophical and ethical elements. The characters Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman, and Ravana are all fundamental to the cultural consciousness of the South Asian nations of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the South-East Asian countries of Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

There are many versions of Ramayana in Indian languages, besides Buddhist, Sikh, and Jain adaptations. There are also Cambodian, Indonesian, Filipino, Thai, Lao, Burmese, and Malaysian versions of the tale.

There are several Indonesian adaptations of Ramayana, including the Javanese Kakawin Ramayana[16][17] and Balinese Ramakavaca.[18] The first half of Kakawin Ramayana is similar to the original Sanskrit version, while the latter half is very different. One of the recognizable modifications is the inclusion of the indigenous Javanese guardian demigod, Semar, and his sons, Gareng, Petruk, and Bagong who make up the numerically significant four Punokawan or "clown servants". Kakawin Ramayana is believed to have been written in Central Java circa 870 AD during the reign of Mpu Sindok in the Medang Kingdom.[19] The Javanese Kakawin Ramayana is not based on Valmiki's epic, which was then the most famous version of Rama's story, but based on Ravanavadhya or the "Ravana massacre", which is the sixth or seventh century poem by Indian poet Bhattikavya.[20]

Kakawin Ramayana was further developed on the neighboring island of Bali becoming the Balinese Ramakavaca. The bas-reliefs of Ramayana and Krishnayana scenes are carved on balustrades of the 9th century Prambanan temple in Yogyakarta,[21] as well as in the 14th century Penataran temple in East Java.[22] In Indonesia, the Ramayana is a deeply ingrained aspect of the culture, especially among Javanese, Balinese and Sundanese people, and has become the source of moral and spiritual guidance as well as aesthetic expression and entertainment, for example in wayang and traditional dances.[23] The Balinese kecak dance for example, retells the story of the Ramayana, with dancers playing the roles of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Jatayu, Hanuman, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Indrajit surrounded by a troupe of over 50 bare-chested men who serve as the chorus chanting "cak". The performance also includes a fire show to describe the burning of Lanka by Hanuman.[24] In Yogyakarta, the Wayang Wong Javanese dance also retells the Ramayana. One example of a dance production of the Ramayana in Java is the Ramayana Ballet performed on the Trimurti Prambanan open air stage, with the three main prasad spires of the Prambanan Hindu temple as a backdrop.[25]

Source: Wikipedia, Accessed 7/23/19, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramayana#cite_ref-18

Additional Summary Version

King Janak holds a competition to see who will marry his daughter, the princess Sita. The contestants are asked to wield a heavy bow. While others cannot even lift it, Rama manages to break the bow in two. As the winner, he gets to marry the princess. He's also supposed to take the throne, but his evil mother-in-law wants her son Bharata to rule. As a result, Rama is exiled to the forest for 14 years. Sita joins him, as does his brother Lakshmana.

When the evil King Ravana hears of Sita's beauty, he decides he must have her. He orders one of his followers to morph into a golden deer to attract the princess. When she sees the deer, she sends Rama off to hunt it. Rama chases down the deer and shoots it, but it changes into a mighty beast which he must battle. Sita hears the calls of Rama, and sends Lakshmana off to find him. While he's gone, he draws a magic circle around her to protect her – as long as she stays in the circle, she is safe. Realizing he cannot kidnap her in the circle, Ravana hatches a clever plot. He changes into an old beggar, and as soon as she steps out of the circle to help the poor old man, Sita is abducted.

On the way back to his kingdom, Ravana runs into the bird Jatayu. They engage in battle and Ravana leaves the bird severely wounded. Eventually Rama and Lakshmana find the bird, who informs them Sita has been kidnapped by Ravana.

A white monkey named Hanuman is sent by his uncle Sugriva to kill Vali, a man who has taken his beloved wife. With Rama's help, Sugriva is able to kill Vali. As a token of his appreciation, he sends Hanuman to search for Sinta. When he finds her in Ravana's kingdom, Hanuman assures her that Rama will come to her rescue. Unfortunately for Hanuman, he is kidnapped and set to be burned alive. With his tail on fire, the monkey hops from house to house and sets fire to the kingdom. He returns to tell Rama of his wife's whereabouts.

Rama and his ape troops construct a bridge to reach the kingdom where Sita is being held. They cross the bridge to attack, and a huge battle breaks out. It's a brutal war, which eventually ends with Ravana being shot down by Rama's arrow.

He is reunited with his wife, but he does not believe she is pure and refuses to accept her. To prove her purity, Sita steps into the fire to burn herself. She is saved by the God of Fire, and this proof satisfies Rama who accepts her. And they all live happily ever after...

Source: <https://blogs.transparent.com/indonesian/indonesian-ramayana/>