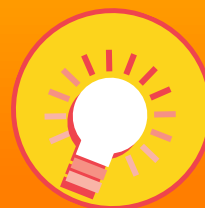


Comprehension Workbook 8

A day in the life

(of a Hindu priest)



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

A day in the life

(of a Hindu priest)



Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

Hindu faith

Matches the requirements of the Literacy Strategy and designed to integrate with the study of world religions. (This material is independent of any specific text book and can be used alongside any publisher's books including our Hindu Faith, Mandir, Hindu art and writing and Hindu holy days books.)

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A day in the life...

Traditionally, priests have come from the Brahmin class, and their role is passed down through the family. Here is one such description.

For many people, being a priest runs in the family. That is true of my family. My father and grandfather were both priests. I began my training as a Hindu priest when I was a boy and my father taught me how to conduct some of the worship services and say prayers.

After university, I trained under a priest in a local temple, where I learned about the worship services in more detail and learned to read sanskrit. I then found a job in a local temple. I am not the only priest in the temple, I work in a team with two other priests, so that we can conduct all the many worship rituals and services that go on throughout the day.

My day begins at 6.30 am. I wake up and spend around 30 minutes in prayer. I live in the temple building with my wife and daughter. After I get dressed and have breakfast, I open up the temple. I then spend some time preparing my weekly lecture, called a pravacan. This is a talk about different parts of Hindu worship and belief.

At different times throughout the day, I conduct puja, or worship services. I ring a bell to wake up the gods and then bathe the statues of the gods and goddess while saying prayers. I make offerings to the gods and goddesses and then perform aarti. Each service lasts from half an hour to an hour, and during this time worshippers come in for part or all of the service. At the end of the service, worshippers share the offerings as a blessing from the gods.

Also throughout the day people arrive with offerings of food, such as fruit, ghee, yogurt, milk and honey for the gods. I make sure these are put away, so we always have enough offerings.

Another big part of my job is to conduct services outside the temple. In some places this is done by a separate priest. Some of the services that we perform outside the temple include conducting marriage ceremonies, conducting housewarming ceremonies, when someone moves to a new home, funerals and baby naming ceremonies. Each of these involves special prayers. During festivals, such as Diwali, we also have separate worship services and events. It is part of my job to help organise these events and say prayers.

My job also involves Guru Ashir Vachan, which means guru guidance. This part of my job includes visiting sick worshippers and saying prayers to the gods so they will get well. There are also special prayers that are used when people are in the hospital and before operations. I also teach classes in Hindu religion, Sanskrit language and prayers for children and adults. In the evening, I lead a prayer service that includes singing special songs called kirtans.

As a priest, I am expected to live a certain way. For example, to follow a vegetarian diet and not drink alcohol. It used to be unusual to have women priests, but today they are more common.



Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write a sentence in which you found the word 'lecture'.

b From that sentence, write what you think 'lecture' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'lecture'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'lecture'.

e Think of something you might give a 'lecture' about.



Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

Key word	Synonym (similar word)
Example: sick	ill

3

Summarising

(the gist of the story)

To summarise means to rewrite the story in a shorter version using as many of our key words from Task 2 as needed.

1 Write a heading for your summary.

2 Now write the main idea in one sentence.
e.g. "This story tells us..."

3 Now add some detail to the main idea by writing more sentences after it.

**Finally,
can you rewrite your
summary to make it better?**

- 1. Look out for errors such as using the same word too often – use alternatives.**
- 2. Make sure you have summarised the author's purpose in your OWN words.**
- 3. Make sure your summary is in a logical order.**
- 4. Is your summary informative AND interesting to others?**

**There is
nothing wrong
with rewriting; even
the best authors
rewrite their
work.**



Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

At the end of the service, worshippers share the offerings as a blessing from the gods.

I ring a bell to wake up the gods and then bathe the statues of the gods and goddesses while saying prayers.

I make sure these are put away, so we always have enough offerings.

I then found a job in a local temple.

I began my training as a Hindu priest when I was a boy and my father taught me how to conduct some of the worship services and say prayers.

In the evening, I lead a prayer service that includes singing special songs called kirtans

After I get dressed and have breakfast, I open up the temple.



Get to the facts

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the facts of the story.



Write a sentence to answer each of these questions:

- (a) How many priests work in this temple?
- (b) Where do the priest and his family live?
- (c) What does Guru Ashir Vachan mean?
- (d) What kinds of classes does the priest teach?
- (e) What are some types of offerings people leave at the temple?



Whys and wherefores

Answer these questions to see how much you know about the meanings in the story and how it was written.

1 Why do you think the priest lives at the temple?

2 What are some types of services the priests perform outside the temple?

3 What are some activities in the temple that are a part of the priests' normal day?

4 What do you think is the largest part of the priests' job - what takes the most time?



Opinions matter

Answer these questions to give your views and to develop the story.

1 Why do you think priests need to be vegetarians and avoid drinking alcohol?

2 Do you think the priests family also helps out in the temple?

3 Does the priest have much time to himself?

4 Why do you think most temples have more than one priest?

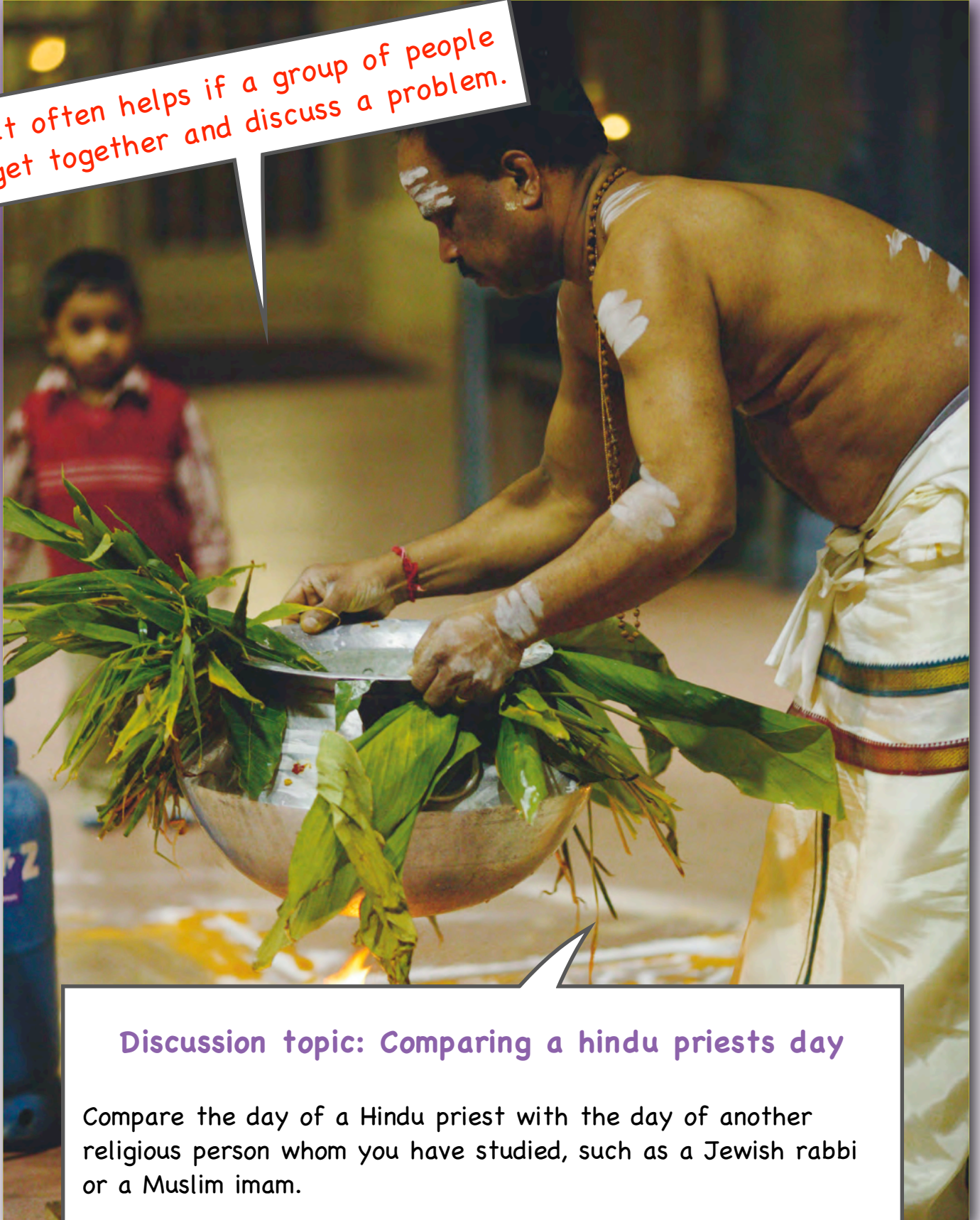
5 What other activities do you think a Hindu priest might do?





Talking it through

It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.

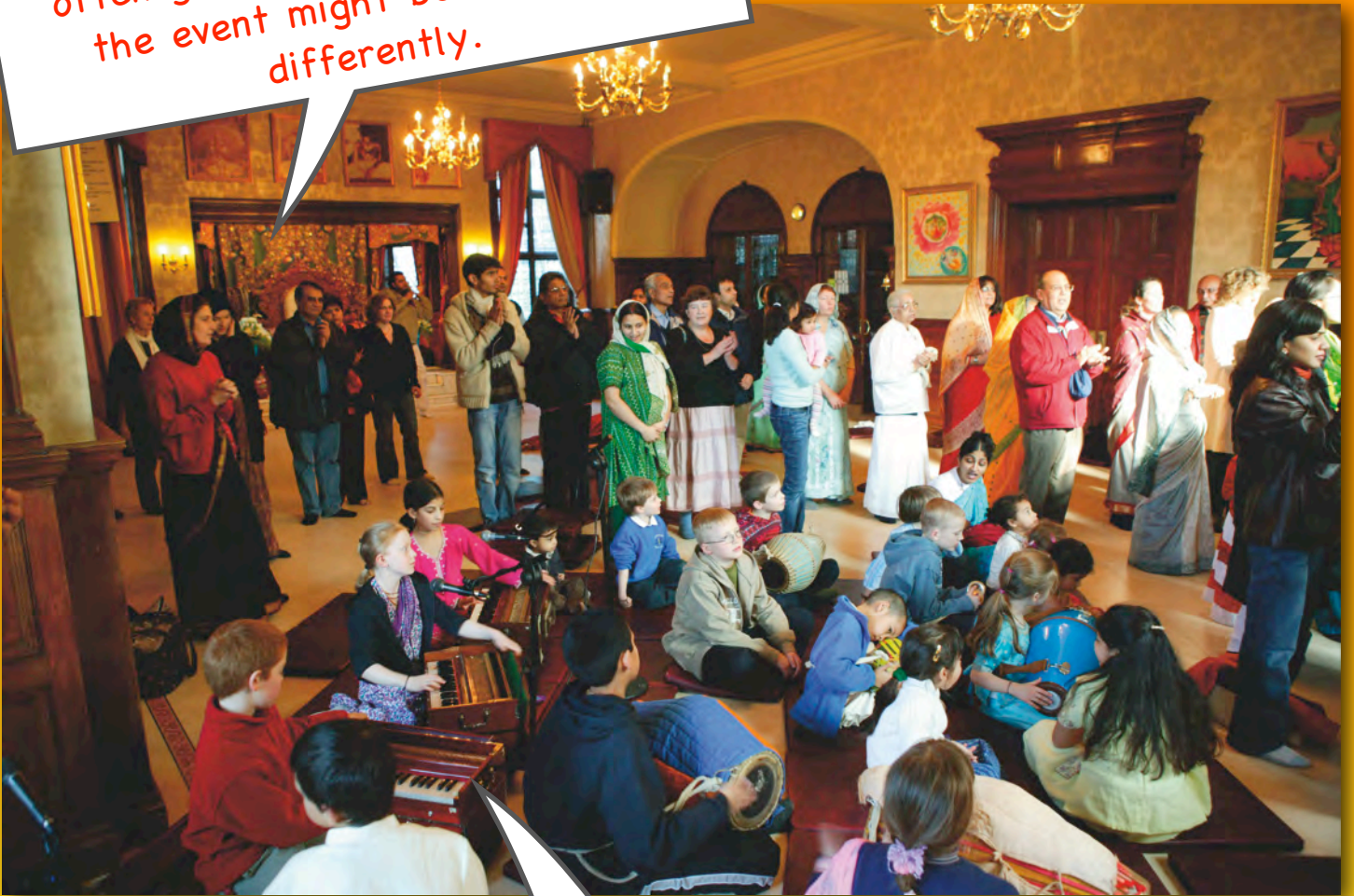


Discussion topic: Comparing a hindu priests day

Compare the day of a Hindu priest with the day of another religious person whom you have studied, such as a Jewish rabbi or a Muslim imam.

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.



A day in the life

Imagine that you are a Hindu priest. Write about your day. What types of activities do you do? How many times a day do you lead worship services? What size temple do you work in? Include as many details about your day as you can.

A day in the life of a hindu priest

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