Comprehension Workbook 9

Stories of Ganesha

Find out about the meaning of stories and articles

understand • key words • summarise • sequencing • AF2–3 • AF4–5 • AF6–7 • discuss • create

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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.)

Contents

Unit 9: Stories of Ganesha

Stories of Ganesha

Ganesha is one of the most popular Hindu gods, and many stories are told about his birth and his life. Ganesha is celebrated during a festival called Ganesh Chaturthi. Here are two stories about Ganesh Chaturthi.

Ganesha and the Moon
One of Ganesha's favourite sweets is called a ladoo. One day, Ganesha received a huge amount of ladoos as offerings and stuffed himself. To help him digest the huge meal of sweets, Ganesha decided to go for a ride on his mouse. It was a beautiful night, and the moon shone brightly. Suddenly, a snake appeared out of nowhere and frightened the mouse. The mouse stumbled and Ganesha fell off. As he hit the ground, his huge stomach burst open and the ladoos all fell out. Ganesha stuffed the ladoos back inside his stomach and, grabbing the snake, he tied it around his belly to hold the ladoos in.

The moon, who had seen all of this, began to laugh loudly. Ganesha did not like being laughed at, so he cursed the moon, saying that anyone who looks at the moon will have bad luck. This made the moon feel very sorry and he begged Ganesha for forgiveness. Once a curse is given, it cannot be taken back, but Ganesha decided to soften the curse by saying that the moon would wax and wane every month and only people who look at the moon during the festival of Ganesh Chaturthi will have bad luck.

The Syamantaka Jewel
Anyone who looks at the moon during Ganesh Chaturthi can get rid of the bad luck by telling the story of a jewel called the syamantaka jewel.

A nobleman named Satrajit owned a beautiful jewel called syamantaka, that had once belonged to the sun god. He loved this jewel and would not give it away, even when the god Krishna asked for it. One day Satrajit's brother Prasena went out hunting and he took the jewel with him for luck. While hunting, Prasena was killed by a lion, who took the jewel. Jambavan, the king of the bears, killed the lion and gave the jewel to his son to play with. When Prasena did not return, Satrajit wrongly accused Krishna of killing Prasena and taking the jewel.

To prove Satrajit wrong, Krishna went out in search of the jewel and found it in Jambavan's cave. Jambavan thought Krishna was an intruder and attacked him. The two fought for 28 days, until Jambavan finally recognised Krishna. To apologise for fighting him, Jambavan gave Krishna the jewel. Krishna returned it Satrajit, who then felt bad for accusing Krishna of theft. To make up to Krishna, he offered Krishna the jewel, and his daughter Satyabhama in marriage. Krishna agreed to marry Satyabhama but did not accept the jewel.

Understanding words

1

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 'intruder'.

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

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

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

e Draw a simple picture of an 'intruder' in a house.

Try this for other words, too.

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: found	discovered

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

One day Satrajit's brother Prasena went out hunting and he took the jewel with him for luck.

One day, Ganesha received a huge amount of ladoos as offerings and stuffed himself.

When Prasena did not return, Satrajit wrongly accused Krishna of killing Prasena and taking the jewel.

As he hit the ground, his huge stomach burst open and the ladoos all fell
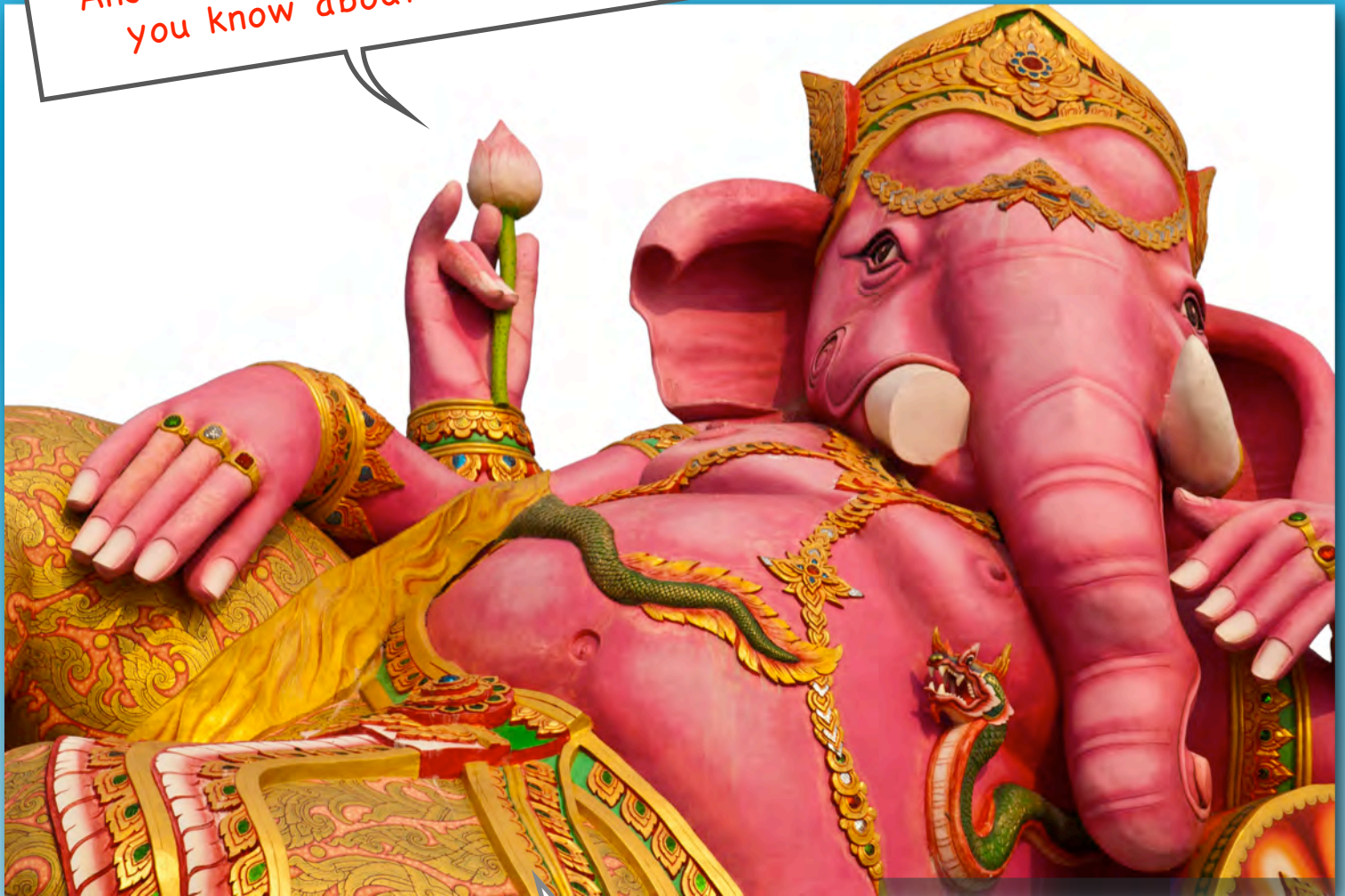
To apologise for fighting him, Jambavan gave Krishna the jewel.

This made the moon feel very sorry and he begged Ganesha for forgiveness.

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) What kind of sweet did Ganesha eat too much of?
(b) What animal scared Ganesha's mouse?
(c) What animal did Ganesha tie around his waist?
(d) Who did Krishna fight?
(e) What animal killed Prasena?

Whys and wherefores

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

1. When is the story of Krishna and the jewel told during Ganesh Chaturthi?

2. Why does the moon wax and wane every month?

3. In the first story, why did Ganesha curse the moon?

4. In the second story, why did Satrajit offer Krishna the jewel in the end?

Opinions matter

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

1 In the second story, does the jewel bring good luck or bad luck?

2 In the second story, do you think Krishna forgave Satrajit for wrongly accusing him of theft?

3 Why do you think the story of the syamantaka jewel gets rid of bad luck?

4 Is Ganesha greedy?

5 In the first story, what was the snakes' punishment?

Talking it through

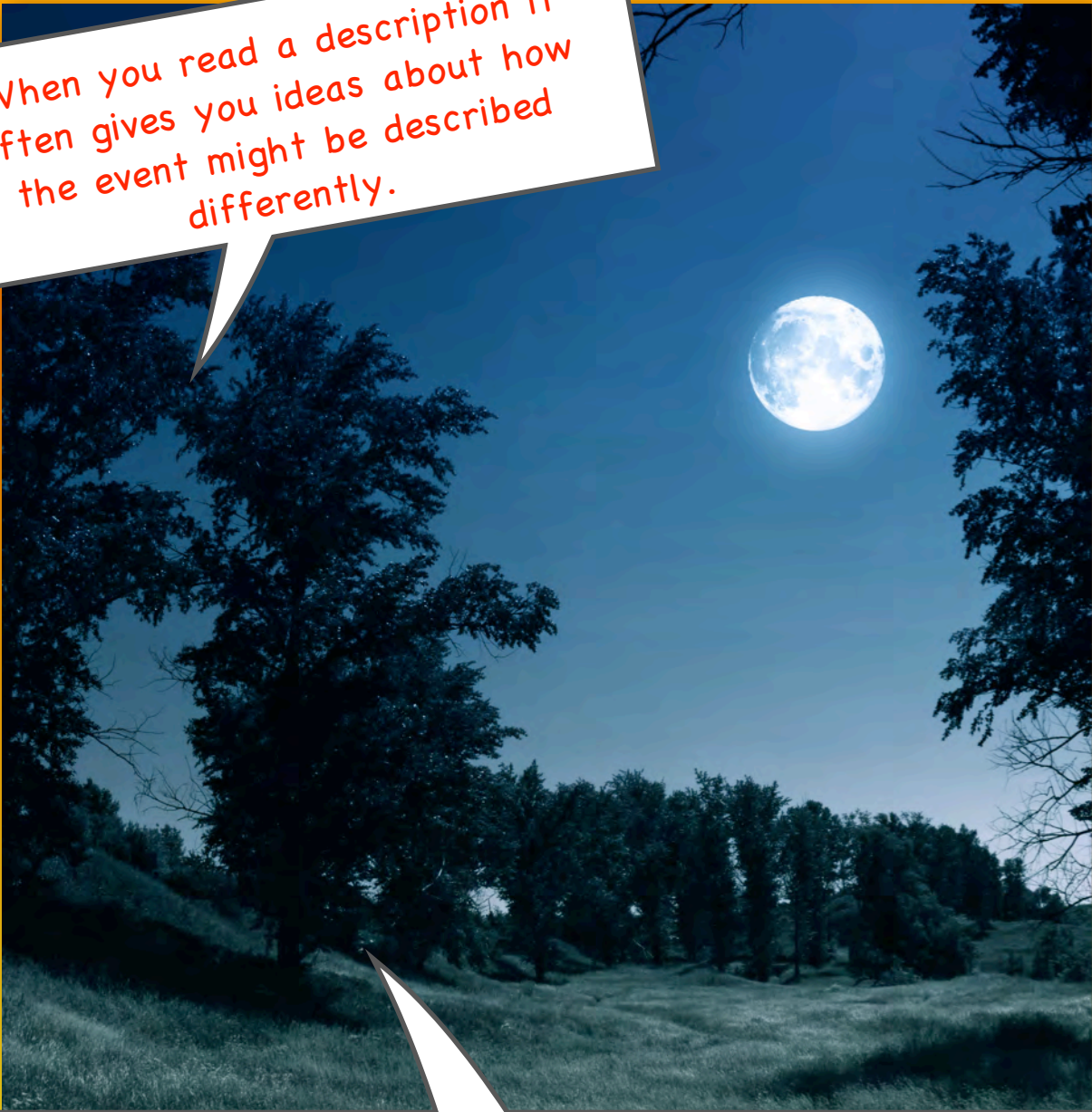It often helps if a group of people get together and discuss a problem.

Discussion topic: Behaviour

Discuss the way the two gods behave in these stories. Do they seem more like gods or more like ordinary people, or like a mixture of the two?

Make a story...

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

Ganesha Chaturthi

Imagine that it is the festival of Ganesh Chaturthi. You are out for a walk in the evening. Without thinking, you look up at the night sky and see the moon...

(Now write a story about what happens next. How do you get rid of the bad luck from looking a the moon during Ganesh Chaturthi?)

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