

Hinduism

About the topic

In this topic pupils will learn about their Hindu sisters and brothers, how they live as a family and how they worship

Where this topic fits in

This topic will be taught discretely but will follow two of the *CHURCH* topics: domestic ↔ family, and either local ↔ community or universal ↔ world

Key words

Puja, shrine, God, gods, goddesses, celebration, Divali, light, festival, Raksha Bandhan, good, evil

Learning outcomes

	Look	Learn	Understand & Respect
One	Importance of family	Through family that children learn stories and practices	Children at home
Two	(a) Prayer at home	Home is centre of Hindu family's religious life. A special corner holds the shrine	The home shrine
Two	(b) We all celebrate	Some of the Hindu stories e.g. Krishna, Rama and Shiva	Belief in one god, presented through different names and images
Three	(a) People we look up to	Hindu festivals Divali, Holi, birthdays of Rama and Krishna; light over darkness	There are special times for Hindu people
Three	(b) Places of worship	Hindu temple (Mandir) worship	How Hindu people worship
Four	(a) How messages are passed on	Hindu holy books, Sanskrit; Vedas; poems telling stories of Rama and Krishna. Children hear stories in the family	Sacred writings are important
Four	(b) Importance of symbols	Sacred symbols: 'Aum', lotus flower Dharma – the law or truth, pilgrimage	Sacred symbols are important

Key words: Puja, shrine

Learning intentions

Possible teaching activities

Look

Prayer at home

At home, where do you go when you want to talk to God on your own? Do you have a special picture or statue that helps you? Is there someone who helps you pray? Would you like to bring your special holy thing to show us? – next time.

Learn

Home is centre of Hindu family's religious life. A special corner holds the shrine

What would you see in the corner of a Hindu home?

(show picture) In this special corner you might see:

A cloth and a curtain, with flowers; a little dish of water, because the mother sprinkles the picture; red powder; an incense stick and a lamp.

Teacher could light an incense stick for the children to smell; play Indian music on tape...

Worship is called Puja, and most families have the things they use for it on a round metal tray.

In groups, children may draw or model objects for a Puja tray. Some of the things can be 'found' in the classroom and covered with silver foil to look like metal.

Objects on a Puja tray

A little bell, a tumbler (shaped like a drinking glass), a small spoon, a deva lamp (shaped like an egg cup but with a rim to take 5 little butter wicks), a holder for the incense stick & a little box for kum kum powder (for making the tika mark)

(show pictures of these)

Understand & Respect

The home shrine

Different people have different holy things to help them pray. We are careful to respect other people's holy things.

Key words: worship, Puja, shrine

<i>Learning intentions</i>	<i>Possible teaching activities</i>
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Look
Prayer at home

We show our own holy things that we have brought. These things help us to pray. Where do we keep them?

Learn
Home is centre of Hindu family's religious life. A special corner holds the shrine

Remember the special corner in a Hindu home, where there are things to help the family pray. This is called the shrine. Every day the family pray before the shrine. This is especially important in the morning. When the family have washed, they come before the shrine and sit on the floor. The mother of the family will ask a blessing on the family and its day. She will sprinkle some water on the pictures. She may ask a child to light the lamp with its five little wicks. Another will light the incense stick. The mother will touch the pictures with red powder and put a dot on the forehead of each person. Usually she will offer a little food too. The family will usually sing some songs or say some prayers from the Hindu holy books. When the family have breakfast, they will each have a taste of the holy food from Puja.
[Pictures are essential; a video is very useful]
Teacher provides a cardboard Puja tray for each group on which the children put the six objects they have collected or made. They could discuss what else would be needed for a shrine. (e.g. pretty pieces of cloth; more pictures; flowers, especially if made into garlands to hang over the pictures. This can be done with paper flowers.)

Understand & Respect
The home shrine

Different people have different holy things to help them pray. We are careful to respect other people's ways of praying and their holy objects.

Key words: God, gods, goddesses

<i>Learning intentions</i>	<i>Possible teaching activities</i>
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Look
Prayer at home: the shrine

Learn
A Hindu story

There are special reasons for what people wear – can you think of some? (e.g. school uniform, policeman, nurse)
Sometimes what people look like makes us ask questions, e.g. black eye, leg in plaster – how did you get it?

Hindus believe in one God. They believe we discover what he is like in all sorts of ways – especially through stories from long ago. When we see their pictures, we ask questions like, “why do some of the people have blue skin?” Hindu children ask these questions, especially about the pictures in their family shrines. They call the people in the pictures and stories gods and goddesses. The story of Krishna as a boy is one – pictures of him show him with blue skin, and playing a flute. In Hindu pictures the gods are always shown with blue skin so you know they are very special.

A favourite of Hindu children is the god Rama, who is shown as a young prince who fought tremendous battles against Ravana, the king of all demons, so that everyone on earth could live in peace and happiness. Once, Ravana even stole away Rama’s beautiful young wife, Princess Sita. In every battle, he used magic spells to hurt Rama but each time Rama drove him away, often with the help of friendly animals.

The story of the last battle is the most exciting. By this time, Ravana was in serious trouble. Many of his demon soldiers had been killed, so to strengthen his army he made them come to life again. Rama was not frightened by ghost soldiers. He stared at them with his strong, wise eyes and they just vanished.

Next, Ravana filled the air with snakes that spat fiery poison. Rama called his friends the eagles who destroyed them. Ravana came closer, firing showers of poisoned arrows, but when they came near Rama the arrows fell away. Rama drew his sword and cut off one of Ravana’s ten heads but a new head grew in its place and the old one fell to the ground, swearing at Rama. When his arms were cut off they fell squirming to the ground and new ones grew.

At last, Rama remembered the holy power that belonged to the Creator of the world. He called on his power with a prayer. Then he aimed the holy power at Ravana’s heart. Nothing could protect the demon king from this: he was struck so hard that he fell down dead. The war was over.

Understand & Respect
Hindus believe that God is everywhere and in everything; but he shows himself in all sorts of different ways

- What does this story tell you about Rama?
- Act out the story
- Tell the story in cartoons

Rama is special for Hindus

Key words: celebration, Divali, light

<i>Learning intentions</i>	<i>Possible teaching activities</i>
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Look
We all celebrate

Talk about familiar celebrations, e.g. weddings and birthdays.

Learn
The Hindu festival of Divali:
light overcomes darkness

At different times of the year, Hindu people celebrate special days. These are holy festivals but they are also fun for everyone. A favourite one is called Divali. It is a festival of lights and it comes at a dark time of year.

For most Hindu people it is the day they celebrate the return of Rama, the great prince who killed the demon king Ravana, to his palace with his beautiful wife Princess Sita and their reign of peace and happiness:

Rama had won the last of many battles against Ravana, the monstrous demon king with ten heads. Sita, his wife, had been stolen away by Ravana and hidden away in the forest. Ravana tried to make Sita become his wife but she always refused. When Sita came back to Rama he asked a hard question: "How do I know that you didn't give in and marry Ravana when I was away from you?"

Sita said, "I will prove to you that I have always been your faithful wife. Bring wood and make a fire." Rama's friends and followers did not want to do this because they were afraid for Sita. However Rama ordered them to make a big fire and so they did. When it was blazing fiercely, Sita walked straight into the fire. The flames did not hurt her: she stood there, smiling, quite unharmed.

Then Rama took her by the hand and led her out of the fire. "I know you were true to me all the time," he said, "but I wasn't sure that everyone else knew. Now we have proved it."

They all set out on the long dark journey back through the forest to the royal palace. As they drew near Rama's brother Bharata came to meet them and showed Rama his shoes on the king's throne. Bharata had put them there to show he was only in charge of the Kingdom till Rama returned. So Rama was crowned king with Sita at his side and there was happiness and peace throughout the land.

- Act out the story
- Draw an event in the story

Understand & Respect
Special times for Hindu people

Hindu people celebrate holy days which often have a story behind them, like Divali. They are times for worship but also celebration and fun.

Key words: celebration, Divali, light

Learning intentions

Possible teaching activities

Look

We all celebrate

Ways of celebrating e.g. weddings, birthdays. How do we celebrate?

Learn

The Hindu festival of Divali:
light overcomes darkness

The Hindu festival of Divali is celebrated as a feast of light. People think of Rama and Sita coming home from the dark forest to a life of happiness. Therefore, Hindus light up their homes with lots of lights: lamps and candles, some of them specially made for the occasion. They think of it as lighting Rama on his way, and also of his victory over the evil demon Ravana. People give presents and send each other cards: these are often decorated with flowers, lights, doves (for peace), hands being shaken (for friendship). There are fireworks and parties. Everyone wears their best clothes and houses are tidy and decorated. People wish each other good luck, and some send each other pictures of the goddess Lakshmi.

[a video of a Divali celebration would help understanding]

- Make a Divali card for a friend
- Look at pictures of rangoli patterns for the hands, and on a paper pattern of a hand, create your own rangoli pattern

(The word 'rangoli' means colourful, cheerful – pictures can be found in books on Hinduism.)

Understand & Respect

A special Hindu festival

Many Hindu stories tell how good overcomes evil.
We respect the stories that celebrate this victory.

Key words: festival, Raksha Bandhan, good, evil

<i>Learning intentions</i>	<i>Possible teaching activities</i>
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Look
We all celebrate

When someone has been very ill and then gets better we all celebrate and are very happy. Think of a time when you have celebrated.

Learn
Festival of Raksha Bandhan:
good triumphs over evil

Many Hindu stories tell how good overcomes evil. Often they are stories of battles between a great hero and a bad demon, like the one of Rama and Ravana. Sometimes the hero is helped by someone who loves him and who wants to protect him. Hindu families celebrate the festival of Raksha Bandhan or Rakhi Purnima in summertime. They are remembering the story of King Indra who was fighting the demon Bali. He was nearly overcome, but his wife, Indrani, was given a thread to tie round her husband's wrist. This was very powerful and Indra defeated the bad demon without being hurt. In a Hindu family, on this festival, a sister will tie a bracelet made of twisted threads round her brother's right wrist. This shows that she loves him and, in turn, he promises to protect her and look after her. This is a serious action and both brother and sister will cover their heads while the Raksha or Rakhi bracelet is tied on. The brother will then give his sister a present. The bracelet is often beautifully made and decorated with a round button, the size of a watch. There will be sweets and specially delicious food.
[pictures help]

- Making Rakhi bracelets (coloured threads can be twisted or plaited)
- Making Indian sweets:
450g desiccated coconut
200g icing sugar (plus a bit extra for rolling the sweets in at the end)
400g condensed milk
colouring
 Mix everything together in a mixing bowl. Make into small (sweet sized) balls; coat in icing sugar, leave on a tray to set.

Understand & Respect
A special Hindu festival

Many Hindu stories tell how good overcomes evil.