

India Lesson 3

He Lost His Head

The Basics

Objective: To introduce participants to information about the god Ganesha/Ganesh.

Performance of Skill Expectations/Enduring Understandings: The participants will observe an Indian artifact and learn about the Hindu god Ganesha/Ganesh through a folktale.

Prerequisite Lessons: This lesson can be an introduction to Hinduism or a culminating session in a unit on Hinduism or India. See notes in the Development section of the lesson.

Estimated Materials Preparation Time: 10 minutes.

Duration: Teacher discretion.

Materials Provided in the Box: One Ganesha statue, Hinduism Information Sheet, Artifact Information Sheet, CD with the folktale “How Ganesha Got an Elephant Head” on it.

Materials Provided Online: The folktale “How Ganesha Got an Elephant Head.” This can be found at <https://web.extension.illinois.edu/artifact/videos/india>.

Materials to be Provided by the Teacher: A means for projecting the folktale video for all participants to see/hear.

Other Notes: None.

Concepts/Vocabulary

- Reincarnation: a person’s spirit returning to the earth after death inside the body of another being (human or otherwise).

Procedure

Preparation:

1. Review the information on Hinduism and Genesha before the day of the activity.
2. Have the artifact ready for discussion and the video ready for showing on the day of the activity.

Introduction:

1. Give the participants the information that this is an introductory lesson on the Hindu religion. The introduction will be looking at the statue of one of the Hindi gods and listening to a story about him. Both of these types of primary sources—artifacts and folktales—can tell us a lot about a culture.
2. With the statue, do a short “Here’s What I See” session that consists of only asking for and writing down observations. Do not give any information at this time. Ask the participants to see if they can come up with information given in the story that goes with their observations.

Development:

1. Watch the video either from the online or CD source.
2. Make a list with the participants of elements in the story that tell us about Hinduism. Examples:
 - There are multiple gods, both male and female.
 - The gods have strong emotions (loneliness, anger, disappointment, worry, etc.) and act like humans (get married, have children, etc.).
 - People and animals have souls.
 - Those following Hinduism believe in reincarnation.
 - That Ganesha is a Hindu god with an animal head.
 - That Ganesha is the god Hindus pray to when they begin a new endeavor or journey.
3. Add to the list information about Ganesha from the Artifact Information Sheet, such as what he is holding in his hands.

Closure: Ask the participants to share if they are Hindu or have Hindu friends, co-workers, or acquaintances and how this can help them to add to the list that has been started. Write down any new information gathered. Discuss the list and summarize your discussion.

NOTE: If this lesson is done as a culminating activity to a unit on Hinduism or Indian culture, you may wish to have the participants create a list of what they remember/know about Hinduism before they watch the video, then have them add to list things they had forgotten that were brought up in the story.

Reflection: Generate a short discussion with these questions:

- What surprised you about the story?
- If you could have the head of an animal, what animal would it be? Why?

Assessment: Are the participant’s observation and listening skills improving?