

Bank Street College of Education

Educate

Graduate Student Independent Studies

Summer 6-27-2007

A retelling of an ancient Indian epic: The Ramayana

Supriya Himatsingka

Bank Street College of Education

Follow this and additional works at: <https://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies>



Part of the [Educational Methods Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), and the [Liberal Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Himatsingka, S. (2007). A retelling of an ancient Indian epic: The Ramayana. *New York : Bank Street College of Education*. <https://educate.bankstreet.edu/independent-studies/336>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Educate. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Independent Studies by an authorized administrator of Educate. For more information, please contact kfreda@bankstreet.edu.

A retelling of an ancient Indian epic:

The Ramayana

by

Supriya Himatsingka

Mentor: Nina Jaffe

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Master of Science in Education

Bank Street College of Education

ABSTRACT

The goal of this thesis is to address the dearth of sub-continental Indian literature in mainstream North American materials for children. The work includes a retelling of sections of *The Ramayana*, with historical and cultural background, as well as current research on the significance of learning through stories. Transcription and discussion of responses from 4th grade students in a New York City public school are also included.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE	1
A. History and Influences of <i>The Ramayana</i>	
B. Synopsis of <i>The Legend of Rama</i>	
II. LEARNING THROUGH STORIES	6
III. THE LEGEND OF RAMA: Retelling and excerpts of selected chapters	11
IV. CHILDREN'S RESPONSES	24
A. Verbal responses	
B. Written responses	
C. Educational implications	
V. CONCLUSION	35
VI. REFERENCES	37
VII. APPENDICES	40
A. Annotated bibliography	
B. Written responses	
C. Selected visuals	

I. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

I. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The Legend of Rama is a retelling of an ancient Indian epic called *The Ramayana*. According to the *New Merriam Webster Dictionary* (1989.) an epic can be defined as “a lengthy narrative poem in elevated language celebrating the adventures and achievements of a legendary or traditional hero.” This story is about a young prince who is portrayed as the ideal son, brother and husband, whose actions always follow the path of truth and virtue. He is tragically exiled from his kingdom for fourteen years, and loses his throne due to his stepmother’s jealousy. During this exile in the jungle, the demon-king Ravana kidnaps his wife Sita. Rama’s efforts to regain her illustrate the ultimate victory of goodness over greed, jealousy and violence.

A. History and Influences of *The Ramayana*

Valmiki’s *Ramayana* is the oldest surviving version of Rama’s tale (its exact date of authorship is uncertain, but scholars estimate between the 4th - 2nd centuries B.C.E.) Written in Sanskrit, the entire story is divided into 24,000 verses in seven books or chapters. Rama’s triumph over Ravana in restoring duty and harmony to the world exemplifies a core value in Hinduism known as *dharma*.

Children growing up in India are exposed to *The Ramayana* even before encountering printed versions. It starts with family members like grandparents and parents and is also part of most elementary grade curriculum. As a child in Mumbai

and Calcutta I remember the story being told to me in bits and pieces with each episode standing as an individual tale. My sister and I heard these stories at various times of the day: while we ate our lunch or dinner, in the car, or at bedtime. For each repetition, the basic sequence of events stayed the same -- but the details changed depending on who was relating it. As the great Indian poet Tulsidas wrote, "Rama is born in countless ways, and there are millions of *Ramayanas*...." (Lutgendorf, 2007.) As we got older, more details were introduced. By the end of elementary school we knew *The Ramayana* almost in its entirety. To this day, I am still learning more intricate details about the events and characters in this unique story. Each event has a reason for happening and all the characters have their own sub-plots leading to other tales and permutations. To be able to understand and remember the complete story with all its nuances is no small task. In India itself, there remain only a small number of individuals who can be considered experts on the Ramayana.

The story of Rama has spread far beyond India and into south Asian countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka; and southeast Asian countries like Cambodia, Indonesia, Java, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. In each of these locales, the story has been subject to treatments in a range of performance media: dance, drama, shadow puppet, masked dance, street shows and film. In addition, scenes from the Ramayana adorn temples that have been built in Java, Cambodia, Thailand and Nepal. It has been translated into many languages including Arabic and Uzbek; and has been variously adapted according to cultural, regional and historical context. "Few works

of literature produced in any place at any time have been as popular, influential, imitated and successful as the great and ancient Sanskrit poem, the Ramayana.” (Mahulikar,2007)

In spite of the many Ramayanas, some common motifs remain in all of them:

- Rama and Sita in exile.
- Golden deer that distracts Rama.
- Circle of protection drawn by Lakshmana for Sita.
- Ravana kidnapping Sita in his disguise.
- A monkey helping Rama to find Sita.
- A bridge built across the ocean from India to Lanka.
- The monkey setting Lanka on fire with his burning tail.
- Rama and Sita returning home (as cited in Mahulikar.)

For centuries, the Ramayana has been passed on through the age-old tradition of storytelling. It has held audiences of all ages captive, whether it takes the form of a 2000 year-old Sanskrit epic or a story heard in childhood. Since the Ramayana embodies universal narrative themes, children of all backgrounds can understand the sequence of events and dilemmas, while absorbing terms and names in another language. For younger ages, episodes can take the form of a make-believe story filled with super heroes, magic powers, evil demons and talking animals. It can also be a narrative that encodes many social and cultural values of Hindu civilization including: a stable social order, value of extended families and most important, the duty or *dharma* that members of a society owe to each other in order to maintain harmony and compassion.

At any age, the listener of the *Ramayana*, is exposed to different cultural perspectives through fantasy, emotion and unforgettable characters. Though each version of the story may differ in its details -- the message has endured and can still be linked with contemporary topics. The following section presents a synopsis of this famous epic.

B. Synopsis of *The Legend of Rama*

The story of the *Ramayana* begins in the city of Ayodhya in the northeast region of India. It then moves into the forests near Ayodhya and finally ends in the country of Lanka (Sri Lanka which is an island located off the southern tip of India). The main characters are Rama (prince of Ayodhya), Sita (his wife), Lakshmana (his brother), Hanuman (wise monkey) and Ravana (demon king of Lanka).

Rama is the crown prince of Ayodhya -- his father's pride and heir. On the morning he is to be crowned, his stepmother asks the king to grant her two boons. The first is to send Rama away for fourteen years; the second is to crown her own son king. And so on the day of his coronation, Rama is exiled.

His brother Lakshmana, and his wife Sita, accompany Rama into the forest. The first ten years go by uneventfully and peacefully, but one day a demoness sees Rama and wants to marry him. Lakshmana cuts off her nose. The demoness is the sister of Ravana, the demon king. She demands that he fight the two brothers that disrespected her. She also points out that Sita is a beautiful creature who should be Ravana's wife. Once Ravana sees Sita, he is so awed by her beauty that he kidnaps her. Though Ravana is very powerful, he does not realize that Rama is not an ordinary human.

Rama and Lakshmana set out to find Sita. On their journey they befriend the monkey king Sugreeva and his minister Hanuman. Hanuman, who also has many powers, finds Sita. The brothers cross the ocean to Lanka where Ravana lives, and with the help of Hanuman's army of monkeys and bears they defeat the demon army and rescue Sita. By this time, the fourteen years of exile are over, and Rama, Lakshmana and Sita return to Ayodhya. Rama is finally crowned king and there is much joy and celebration.

II. LEARNING THROUGH STORIES

II. LEARNING THROUGH STORIES

“Folk stories and fairy tales are a way of looking at life, and they carry important messages to the conscious, pre-conscious and the unconscious mind.” (Yolen 1982, p.52.)

For most of us, especially parents or caregivers, stories are used to fill time between activities, or accompany other activities like driving long distances, or cooking; we may not attach much importance to the effects these stories have on a young, imaginative mind. Kieran Egan, an educational psychologist talks about how imagination is often overlooked as a tool for learning in dominant learning theories that shape school curriculums. Most of these theories focus on a stage system in which cognitive development proceeds from the concrete to abstract, from known to unknown, from active manipulation to symbolic concepts. In his book *Teaching as Storytelling*, (1986) questions these stage theories by asking: Is this is the only way that children learn? Can children learn through alternative experiences? Are there things that children are not able to learn through this hierarchy? Another very important thought that always guides our teaching as educators is that all children do not learn the same way. So, in response to Egan, I can already say that not all children will react the same way to every method. Therefore alternative ways of teaching and learning must be experienced in order for young minds to absorb and retain information. Stories, both folk and fairy tales allow children to engage in learning by using their imagination and their feelings to assimilate information; imagination fosters children’s ability to create meaningful inner dialogue.

The way feelings affect learning is often removed from everyday curriculum, and yet psychology affirms: thought and emotion to go hand in hand. Adults and children experience the world both cognitively and affectively, so this is a more balanced and natural approach to children's learning. A story allows the listener or reader to become emotionally involved with the joys and troubles of the different characters, thus making it a more powerful and meaningful experience. "To present knowledge cut off from human emotions and intentions is to reduce its affective meaning. This affective meaning, also, seems especially important in providing *access* to knowledge and engaging us in knowledge." (p. 30). Bruner (1986) suggests that the three components of behavior -- emotions, cognition and action are not pure forms that should be looked at independent of each other, but rather, as parts of a unified whole, the complete person.

From Bettelheim's psychoanalytic perspective, folk and fairy tales are the most enriching and satisfying kinds of stories for both children and adults. While it is true that these tales teach very little about modern society we live in, Bettelheim states, "... more can be learned from them about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension." (1989, p. 5). The appeal of folktales does not refer only to the very young. As Piaget has shown, the child's thinking remains animistic till the age of puberty. By the age of 8/9 to 11/12, the child may not believe that everything is alive, but may still attribute consciousness to animals, people and insects. This is kind of animism is commonly found in folktales -- where animals speak and humans transform. It is this animism that allows the child to believe in magic and find the fairy tale convincing. The

characteristic of the tale "... embodies an accurate representation of the child's conception of the world." (Favat 1977. p. 38). In this way, the young mind can make meaning of life, instead of trying to understand the world through an adult perspective. Through traditional tales, children are exposed to questions of good and bad, right and wrong, kindness and cruelty. They are offered examples of life challenges such as sibling rivalry, growing up and overcoming obstacles. Folktales do not provide protection by suggesting that the world is perfect place where all is good and true, but in fact exposes one to humanity's struggle and achievements. In this way the child is allowed to take on multiple perspectives and understand the events through a less egocentric lense. Folktales may help the child to externalize what is going on in their minds --providing a powerful projective tool for coping with their own environment and inner fears.

For the young child (4-8) acceptance of magical elements is what Egan calls: mythic understanding. As children mature, they require stories to have a rational component. According to Egan, this integration of mythic and reality-based thinking is the main feature of romantic understanding. This kind of understanding has a sense of drama, but it contains a strong element of reality, a sense that the events have actually taken place, and the reader or listener is like a witness to these great incidents. In *The educated mind: How cognitive tools shape our understanding* Egan (1997) states: "The preservation of great events, of the memory of the outstanding, has been central to romantic history writing..." (p. 84). The second characteristic that defines romantic understanding is: "... its ready association with transcendent human qualities, or human qualities exercised to transcendent degree..." (p. 88) -- where the hero lives like us in the

everyday world, but somehow manages to overpower the daily constraints of it. The third characteristic is a “focus on individuals, and the emotions that stimulate them to act...” (p. 93.) Characters are viewed through their thoughts, emotions and intentions.

Eight to fifteen year olds are living in a world where they are learning autonomy and trying to discover their limitations and that of the world around them. Epic narratives enable them to relate to the hero and gain a sense of security from realizing that they too may be able to transcend and cope. It allows them to make a gradual transition into adult reality and make it in a slightly less intimidating way. In addition, it allows for learning about important events and different cultures through the emotions and thoughts of the characters in the story. The emphasis on magical transcendence and powerful emotions within a realistic perspective makes a tale engaging and interesting for any age, making the Romantic a distinctive kind of understanding that is timeless.

To sum up, stories allow the reader or listener to get lost in another world, and in that way understand their own world in a more natural, effortless way. They deal with emotions, drama and reality, all in one piece and therefore engross the complete mind, young or old. The sequence of events allows the child to organize material in an efficient manner, while “humanizing” the characters allows the child to understand different perspectives. In addition, different cultures and times can be understood within a story setting. It is a wonder that even though stories whether folktale or epic-- can achieve all this -- we still consider them as merely an activity to pass time!

**III. *THE LEGEND OF RAMA*: RETELLING AND
EXCERPTS OF SELECTED CHAPTERS**

III. *THE LEGEND OF RAMA: Retelling and Excerpts of Selected Chapters.*

The following retelling is based on the epic story I heard when growing up in India. The two main storytellers of this story for me were my mother and grandmother. In Mumbai where I grew up, my mother would relate this story, and during the summer when we visited my grandparents in Calcutta, my grandmother would relate her version of the same story. I heard this story in both English from my mother and Hindi from my grandmother.

The italicized words in the retelling are the original words taken from the story. This retelling is a highly condensed version, in order to offer the young reader the full scope of the story beginning at Rama's birth till his triumphant homecoming.

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

Retold by Supriya Himatsingka

© All rights reserved.

PART 1 – RAMA’S BIRTH

Long ago, in the faraway land of India, there was a city called Ayodhya. It stood on the banks of the Sarayu River. The people who lived there were happy and peace-loving. The city was filled with magnificent gardens, lakes and buildings. King Dasharatha was the kind ruler of this land. He was wealthy and wise, and looked after his people like they were his own family.

In spite of this, all was not well. The king and his three wives were not happy because they did not have any children. There was no heir to the throne of Ayodhya. The king consulted with his minister, and with the approval of his royal priest, a sacrifice was planned. The priest said to the king, “You have decided on a path that follows the rules of *dharma* (duty) and therefore you will have four mighty sons. I will perform a ceremony that will please the gods.” King Dasharatha was very happy and immediately went into the inner rooms of the palace to tell his wives Sumitra, Keikayi, and Kaushalya of the good news.

Exactly at this same exact time, the gods in the heavens were getting very frustrated with Ravana, the ruler of the *rakshasas* (demons). Ravana was no ordinary demon, because many years ago he had been granted a great boon from Lord Brahma, the creator of the universe. Brahma had been very pleased with his dedication and had granted him his wish that no living creature could kill him. Unchallenged, Ravana was now using his powers to create devastation all over the world.

Lord Vishnu, the protector of the universe was determined to do something to end Ravana’s arrogance. He realized that Ravana had been too proud to ask for protection against man, so he decided to divide himself into four parts and become King Dasharatha’s sons. This would be his chance to kill Ravana in a human form.

The day of the sacrifice had finally arrived and everything was made ready for the sacrificial fire. Hundreds of holy men began chanting prayers that would last for many days and nights. As the fire burned, the tall golden figure of Lord Vishnu rose from the flames. His skin was tinged with red and his hair glowed in the light. He offered a small silver bowl filled with *payasa* (sweet milk and rice) to Dasharatha, and said in a sweet voice, “the gods are pleased with you, give this sacred milk to your wives and they will bear you sons.” Kaushalya, being the first wife, was offered half of it. Sumitra, the second queen, got a quarter. Keikayi, the third, got one eighth of the sweet milk, and Sumitra got the remainder again.

Soon, four sons were born in the palace. The eldest was Ram, born to Queen Kaushalya. The second was Bharat, Queen Keikayi’s son. Queen Sumitra, who had been offered the sweet milk twice, gave birth to Lakshmana and Shatrugana. Rama was born with all the positive qualities of Lord Vishnu. Bharat was the picture of bravery and good values, and Lakshmana and Shatrugana were heroic and skilled with weapons.

The four brothers grew up to be strong boys and as soon as they were old enough they were sent to study with the great sage Vashishta. In those days students lived with

their teacher till their education was complete. They princes spent their days training in the art of archery, and studying sacred texts and other books that had to be understood in order to become good rulers. When their teacher felt that their education was finally complete they prepared to return to their kingdom. There was a great celebration because the four princes were returning home after a long separation.

PART 2 – RAMA’S FIRST ADVENTURE

One day, the great sage Vishvamitra came to see the king. Dasharatha had a lot of respect for him and was very pleased that he had come to pay him a visit. He rushed out to welcome him, because he also knew that the holy man had a very bad temper. King Dasharatha touched the great sage’s feet and said, “I feel truly blessed that you have come to visit me. Tell me what I can do to please you.”

Vishvamitra was pleased by the king’s words, “I shall certainly tell you what you can do for me, and then you must do it to prove your honesty. I am trying to perform a ceremony, but there are two *rakshasas* (demons) who continue to obstruct me and I am unable to curse them when I am meditating. Give me your eldest son Rama. He will be able to defeat these demons with his divine energy and my help.”

These words filled the king with so much fear that he sat down, trembling on his throne. When he recovered, the king pleaded, “But Rama is fifteen years old, he is only a child. You can have my whole army, and I will personally go with you to protect you till my last breath, but please do not ask for my son, Rama.”

Vishvamitra understood the king’s pain, but he had no choice. He went on to explain to the king, “Do not fear for I know that he is the only human capable of killing these *Rakshasas*. It is because he is an *avatar* (incarnation) of Lord Vishnu himself.”

Before the great sage lost his temper, the king’s royal sage, Vashishta quickly explained to him that nothing would happen to Rama under Vishvamitra’s protection, because in addition to being a holy man, he was also a powerful warrior who had been blessed by the gods. He also suggested that Lakshmana accompany them for further protection. The king could not object anymore, and the two princes made preparations for their journey.

As the sun was rising, Rama, Lakshmana and Sage Vashishta set out toward the river Sarayu. Rama and Lakshmana carried their gleaming swords at their waist, with their bow and quiver full of arrows strapped onto their backs. When they reached the river they could feel a gentle breeze and Sage Vishvamitra told them to rest and drink some water from the river. “Fill your hands with some water and I will teach you a chant that will prevent you from getting hungry or tired for days. When you fight the demons you will be full of energy and ready for battle.” As the boys listened to the great sage chanting they kept their eyes closed and heads bowed. Slowly they realized that their hunger had vanished and they felt full of energy and strength. Now they set out again and

walked for several hours till they had to stop for the night. The royal princess who were used to soft mattresses and silver beds, spent a peaceful night on the floor by the river. The next morning, after walking swiftly along the river, they reached the spot where the Sarayu joined with the holy river Ganga. This is where the three travelers crossed the river to enter the forest of Dandaka.

The forest was deep and dense, but there was a strange stillness that surrounded it. Deeper into the forest, sounds of animals could be heard but they sounded like screaming and moaning. The trees had grey leaves, and all the flowers and plants were wilted. "This is the forest of Dandaka", Vishvamitra explained, "It used to be a beautiful forest, where all the creatures lived happily. Then one day the demoness Tadaka and her brother Mareecha came to live here, and ever since that day they have caused nothing but destruction and fear. It is Tadaka that disturbs my ceremony. She has the strength of a thousand elephants and only you, Rama can kill her."

Hearing this, Rama took his bow and pulled the string. It made a loud twang, and the whole forest echoed with the sound. Tadaka, heard the sound, awoke from her sleep, and started to walk towards the sound. As she came closer, the earth began to shake, and Rama and Lakshmana could see that she was as tall as a hill, and her arms and legs were the size of tree trunks. Seeing the two tiny humans she let out a giant laugh and came running towards them. A terrible battle followed. Tadaka knew magic, but even that did not equal the fighting skills of the two brave brothers. Finally, Rama strung his bow and let loose an arrow that went straight through her heart. With an ear-piercing scream Tadaka fell to the ground and died at once. Immediately, as if by magic, the forest was bathed in light and color as the trees became alive and the birds started singing happily.

The great sage rejoiced, "Now I can finish my ceremony with complete concentration! Bless you my sons! I am very pleased with you, and will teach you some chants that will give you great powers and weapons. Learn them carefully because they will help you fight the battles I see in your future." He was a very learned man and could see what the future had in store for these two young men. The boys thanked the sage and memorized the chants. They did not realize how great a gift Sage Vishvamitra had just given them.

PART 3 – RAMA WEDS SITA

Upon completing his ceremony peacefully, Sage Vishvamitra led the boys towards the city of Mithila. King Janaka, the famous ruler of this city had invited the sage to witness the *swayamavar* (marriage ceremony) of his beautiful daughter Sita. As the three travelers reached the city, they could see many magnificent chariots entering the gates. Four horses pulled some of these chariots, while some were even grander and needed to be pulled by eight horses. They all belonged to princes and kings that had come from far and wide to win Sita's hand in marriage. They were all covered in diamonds and pearls, and were wearing long robes of silk.

In the center of the main hall, on a stage, there lay a huge bow that once belonged to the Lord Shiva. King Janaka came up to the bow and announced to his guests, "this is the bow of Lord Shiva, given to my ancestors by the lord himself. No one has been able to lift it, leave alone string it. I have taken a vow that whichever man can lift this bow, will marry my daughter." One by one, each suitor came forward to lift the bow. The bow was so massive and unyielding that even the great champion Ravana could not move it. The bow remained exactly as it had been before the ceremony.

Upon seeing this, King Janaka hung his head down and announced sadly, "I am ashamed to see that not one of you valiant princess has been able to lift this bow. If I had known that there is no man powerful enough to lift and string Shiva's bow, I would have never taken this vow. Now my daughter Sita will have to remain unmarried." All the warriors in the great hall also hung their heads and could look into the king's eyes.

Hearing this, Lakshmana became angry instead of ashamed. He knew that his brother could easily do it, and was insulted that anyone should talk like that in Rama's presence. The all-knowing Sage Vishvamitra could sense this rage within Lakshmana, and turning to Rama, he nodded. Understanding his teacher's wishes, Rama bowed in front of the sage for his blessings, and then walked towards the stage. Rama bowed to the bow to show his respect to the mighty Lord Shiva. He bent over the bow, and then easily, as if it were a toy, he picked it up. Resting one end of the bow on his toe, he then bent it and strung it as easily as he had just lifted it up. The next moment, there was a deafening clap of thunder, and the bow broke into two pieces. Everyone present was awestruck and speechless. The gods in the heavens, who had also been watching, applauded Rama.

King Janaka announced the wedding of his daughter Sita, to the prince of Ayodhya. Sita, who was watching this ceremony, walked up to Rama, and placed a garland of fresh flowers around his neck, symbolizing that she had accepted him as her husband.

A message was sent to King Dasharatha, who immediately came to Mithila with his three queens. Accompanying him were chariots filled with gold and jewels, and fine horses as gifts for King Janaka. The marriage was celebrated with great pomp and splendor. There were dancers and musicians, elephants and men, all dressed in the finest

of robes and jewels. This procession then made its way to Ayodhya where the people were overjoyed to see their crown prince bring home his bride.

PART 4 – THE BANISHMENT

Rama and Sita were happily married. Twelve years flew by and king Dasharatha decided that it was time to crown Rama as the King of Ayodhya. He was certain that his eldest son would make a great king, and even be a better ruler than himself. At this time Rama's brothers Bharat and Shatrugana were visiting their maternal uncle in a nearby kingdom. Dasharatha called a meeting of all his ministers and they all agreed that Rama was ready to be crowned King. The coronation ceremony was announced with great joy, and people started to pour in from all the neighboring cities and villages to see this glorious event... Following her maidservant's wicked counsel, Keikayi put on a dirty *sari* (robe), threw her jewelry on the floor next to her, and untidily loosened her long hair. She then lay down on the floor of her chambers and called for the king. When the king arrived, he was horrified to see the state of his young, beautiful wife. He asked her several times what was wrong, but she just stayed there silent as a statue. Worried and desperate to find out what he could do he said, "I swear in the name of Rama that I will do whatever you desire. Please tell me what I can do to make you feel better."

Hearing this Keikayi sat up. Now she knew that her demands would be fulfilled because Dasharatha was known for keeping his word even if it cost him his life. She began, "My king, do you remember many years ago when you were wounded in battle, and I drove you out of the battlefield in your chariot at night? I then took out the arrows from your body and nursed you back to health. You had promised me two boons that I could ask for at any time." Dasharatha replied, "Of course I remember. I won the battle after that. Ask for your boons, you shall have them now."

Smiling with a glint in her eye, Keikayi spoke, "I am sure you will be true to your words, like your ancestors before you. My first wish is that my son Bharat be crowned king, and the second is, that Rama be exiled into the Dandaka forest for fourteen years."

Dasharatha recoiled from her as if he had been hit. He was hardly able to breathe and fell to the ground losing consciousness. When he revived after a few minutes, he clung to his wife's feet and begged Keikayi, "Please give me back Rama, I will give you anything else you desire, but I will surely die if you take my son away from me." She did not change her mind, and Dasharatha was utterly helpless. He stayed up all night, gathering all his courage to tell his son the horrible news.

The day of the coronation dawned, and Rama was summoned to the king and queen Keikayi. Upon entering the chamber he was shocked to see his father who looked so tired and grief stricken. Upon asking Keikayi what had happened to his father, she simply replied, "Your brother Bharat is to be crowned king and you are to go into the forest for fourteen years." Without any questions or hesitation, with a smile on his face,

he bowed before them for their blessings. He made preparations to leave for the jungle because the duty of an ideal son was to follow the wishes of his parents.

Before leaving, Rama took his mother Kaushalya's blessings, and she blessed him with tears in her eyes. Lakshmana and Sita insisted on going with him into the jungle, and nothing he said to them would make them change their minds. Finally, all three of them went to take leave from Dasharatha, and touched his feet as he lay in his bed. He had no life left in his eyes and his face showed the deep shock and anguish he felt.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita came out of the palace dressed as common hermits that live in the forest. They mounted the chariot that would take them to the edge of their kingdom. All the men women and children in Ayodhya, who had come to watch the coronation of Rama, were in mourning. They followed the chariot till the borders of Ayodhya, and then slowly walked back home with heavy hearts.

PART 5 – THE KIDNAPPING OF SITA

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita crossed the Ganga, and set out on their journey in the forest. They never found themselves alone, because all the sages that lived in the forest had heard of what had happened in Ayodhya. The holy men welcomed the three travelers to stay with them for as long as they wished, and their wives took care of Sita like their own child. In this way, many years went by, and the holy men taught them how to meditate to achieve strength and power.

Time passed slowly, but happily, and the royal life seemed like a distant memory. Sita could hardly remember all the jewelry she was once used to wearing, the soft beds she slept on, and the fancy feasts that the palace cooks would prepare for them. They were now stronger and wiser than when they had set out for their exile. The jungle was home to them now, and ten years had passed by.

One day, Rama, Lakshmana and Sita arrived in a beautiful part of the forest called Panchvati. A river flowed by them, and the air smelled of flowers. "This is where we shall spend the remainder of our time in the forest," said Rama. Lakshmana and Sita agreed, and Lakshmana said, "I will build our house with my own hands." He gathered wood, bamboo and mud, and Rama and Sita watched in wonder at Lakshmana made a wonderful hut right in front of their eyes.

Life in Panchvati was peaceful, but just like everything that had happened in their lives, this was not to last for long. There was a demoness called Soorpanakha that often came to this part of the forest. She saw Rama, and fell in love with him. Changing herself into an irresistible woman, she glided up to Rama, "I am Princess Soorpanakha, the sister of Ravana, the king of Lanka. You are the handsomest human I have ever seen, and I wish to marry you." Rama was surprised, but he smiled and told her, "I cannot marry you, fair maiden because I have a wife already." Now Soorpanakha, who was trying to behave gently, lost her temper, and transforming back to her ugly self lunged towards

Sita shouting, "I will kill her so we can then be married!" Quick as lightning, Lakshmana who had seen the whole thing cut off the demoness's nose with one swift stroke of his sword. Howling with pain, she ran away shrieking, "I will tell my brother, and he will make you pay for this insult!"

Soorpanakha reached Lanka, and ran into her brother's courtroom holding her bleeding nose. She told Ravana all that had happened and also added, "Sita is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, brother, and only you, great Ravana, king of the demons deserves her as a wife." Hearing this Ravana was angry and also very curious. His ten heads were shaking in every direction, and his twenty eyes flashed with rage and greed. At once, he called for his chariots and set out to see his uncle Mareecha, who was a master of disguise. He told Mareecha of his plan to kidnap Sita. "You will need to turn into a beautiful golden deer. Once Sita sees you, she will ask Rama to catch you for her, and then, with him gone, I will take her away." Mareecha had to follow his king, even though he knew Rama was a noble man, and Soorpanakha must have lied to Ravana.

As Ravana, had predicted, once Sita saw the deer, she was amazed. "Rama, that is the most beautiful creature I have ever seen, I would love to have it as a pet." Rama agreed, and turned to follow it into the woods. Lakshmana was immediately suspicious, and told Rama, "that animal does not look real, I am sure it is a trick. Please do not follow it brother." Sita looked up at the brothers, silent, trying not to look disappointed. Rama saw her expression and explained to his brother, "Do not worry, if it is a demon I will kill it, if not I will bring it for Sita." Saying this, he followed the deer deep into the forest because Mareecha had to give Ravana enough time to kidnap Sita. Rama followed the deer, and finally the animal lay down and did not move. Thinking that the animal wanted to die, Rama pointed his arrow at the deer. It still did not move. Rama sent an arrow through its heart. At once, the deer cried out in a voice just like Rama's, "Lakshmana... Sita...!" Hearing this Rama knew it was a trick, and started to run back home.

When Sita heard Rama's voice she told Lakshmana to go help his brother. Lakshmana, who knew what a great warrior his brother was, stood there confused. "I cannot go. My brother has left me here to protect you." Listening to this Sita got furious, "you are refusing to help you brother. You do not love him them. Go now!" Against his better judgment he said to her, "Ok, I will go, but I will draw you a magic line, and as long as you stay within it you will be safe. Anyone else who enters it will be turned to ashes." With the tip of his arrow he drew a semi-circle from one end of the front of the hut to the other. He then ran into the woods.

Ravana, who had been hiding in the bushes all this time, now knew what he had to do. He turned into an old holy man and walked towards the hut with an empty bowl in his hand. Seeing Sita he asked in a soft, gentle voice, "King lady, I have been traveling for many days now, and am very hungry." Sita, who was always happy to feed holy men, came out of the hut with a plate full of fruit. Ravana knew that he had to get Sita to step out of the magic circle so he asked her to place it in his hands instead of the floor outside the hut. Sita hesitated, but felt guilty to treat at old man like that. As soon as she stepped

out of the line Ravana grabbed her arm and pulled her towards his chariot. He had turned back into himself, and Sita cowered with fear when she saw his ten fierce heads laughing at her. She could not do anything against Ravana's strength, and tried to shout for help, but it was as if her voice had also frozen with fear. As the chariot flew up into the air, Sita tried to jump off, but Ravana pulled her back effortlessly. As the last resort, she took off one of her bangles and let it drop to the ground.

There was an old vulture named Jatayu, sleeping on a tree and he recognized Sita's voice. He also lived in the same forest and loved and respected Rama. Jatayu was the king of all vultures and was an enormous bird with a very sharp beak. He flew up to the chariot and fought hard to free Sita. He managed to injure Ravana in many places, but Ravana was too powerful for the old bird. With one swift stroke he cut off one of his wings and the bird fell to his death. The dying bird lay on the ground and tried to use all his strength to stay alive till Rama and Lakshmana found him. He would be the first clue in leading them to the king of the demons.

PART 6 – RAMA MEETS HANUMAN

Lakshmana found Rama in the forest, and seeing him unharmed realized that he had made a mistake by leaving Sita. They ran back to their hut, and saw spilled fruit all over the front of the house. They knew something was wrong and immediately started calling Sita's name. She could not be found anywhere. As they looked further into the jungle they found the bangle she had dropped. Rama recognized it immediately and fell to the ground on his knees, his heart full of sadness. He felt like his world had come to an end and did not know where to start looking for his wife. ...

PART 7 – HANUMAN GOES TO LANKA

To begin the search for Sita, Sugreeva, king of the monkeys, divided his army into four parts. They were sent to look in the North, South, East and West. A month later the armies from the North, East and West returned with no clues to lead them to Sita.

Hanuman and his group had traveled to the southern most tip of India and were standing on the seashore wondering where to look next. A large vulture sitting on the tree was about to swoop down and eat them, when he heard them talking about Jatayu, the king of all vultures. Hearing this tears came to his eyes because he was, in fact Jatayu's brother. He wanted to help them and looked across the ocean with his sharp eyes. He reported, "I can see Sita sitting in the middle of a garden in Lanka, and she is guarded by many fierce looking demonesses."

The monkeys immediately knew that Hanuman was the only one that had the strength and power to cross the massive ocean that lay between them and Lanka. The oldest monkey in the group reminded Hanuman of one of his childhood stories. "Do you

remember when you were very little and thought that the sun was a fruit? You leaped up and grabbed it. When the gods tried to stop you, you fell and broke your jaw. Your father got very angry, and being the god of wind, he started blowing strong winds all over the world. Only when the gods granted you special powers did he stop. The power you have is that you will never die unless you want to. Nothing can kill you against your own wishes." Hanuman nodded and agreed to fly to Lanka.

Standing at the edge of the ocean, Hanuman drew a deep breath and started to grow. He grew as tall as a mountain, and then leapt up into the sky as all the monkeys below him applauded. On his way to Lanka he had to fight many demons that were guarding the city. He beat them easily and reached the city of Lanka before nightfall. From the sky he could see that the city was rich and there was wealth everywhere he looked. The palaces were covered with gold and the men and women wore silk clothes with lots of jewelry. Hanuman made himself small again and decided to wait for nightfall before he started to look for Sita.

After a few hours of looking, he found Sita sitting under a tree in the garden in Ravana's palace. Demonesses surrounded her. They were trying to convince her to marry Ravana. Sita looked like she had been crying. Hanuman jumped onto the tree above her, and caught her attention. He explained to her, "Dear lady, I have been sent here by lord Rama, and he has asked you not to lose hope. He is preparing to come here with an army, defeat Ravana for the disrespect he has shown you, and take you home." Hanuman then gave Sita Rama's ring that he had sent for her. Recognizing the ring, she was overjoyed, and tears came to her eyes. She was now certain that she would see her beloved husband again. She gave Hanuman some jewelry she was wearing to take back to Rama and blessed him for helping her husband.

PART 8 – THE GREAT WAR

Rama was overjoyed to hear that Sita was alive, and could not wait to rescue her from the demons. Together with Sugreeva and Lakshmana, they decided to leave immediately. The massive army of monkeys and bears were happy to hear that no harm had come to Sita, and they walked rapidly towards the ocean. . .

Ravana was enraged to see an army led by Rama at his gates. He was also surprised that they were able to cross the ocean in such a short time. . . Now he was certain that Rama was not an ordinary man. So he called for his son Indrajit to end the battle. Indrajit was a great warrior and also possessed magical powers. Lakshmana asked Rama's permission to fight him. It was a battle of equals and they fought for hours with no result. Finally, Indrajit used his magical powers and fatally wounded Lakshmana. Lakshmana fell to the ground losing consciousness. Rama ran to him immediately and seeing his brother dying, cursed himself for letting his younger brother face such dangers.

Luckily, an old bear in the army knew exactly what to do. He summoned Hanuman and told him to fly at his best speed to the Himalayan mountains and look for a

rare herb that can bring the dead back to life. Hanuman flew to the mountains, but on landing there could not tell which one the rare herb was. Remembering that he had to hurry, he decided to uproot the mountain and carry it back to Lanka. Seeing Hanuman return and carrying the whole mountain on one arm, was a sight not to be believed.

The herbs were easily found, crushed, and placed under Lakshmana's nose. In a few minutes, Lakshmana awoke as if out of a deep sleep. The army cheered and Rama and Lakshmana both turned to Hanuman, "What would we have done without a friend like you. You have helped us numerous times, and now even saved our lives." Hanuman bowed his head, "It was nothing. I was only doing my duty." Lakshmana now insisted on fighting Indrajit again, and after another fierce battle, was able to kill him by using a sacred chant he had learned from the great sage in the forest.

Now that both of Ravana's best warriors were dead he realized that he had underestimated the strength and power of the monkey and bear army. Ravana was not a coward, and he set out into the battlefield to fight the battle himself. On the battlefield he saw his warriors being killed one by one and this enraged him till he could not think clearly anymore. He rushed towards Rama with his ten heads all talking at the same time, "I have come to finally kill you. You are no match for me. You are just a mere mortal, and I am the king of the demons. Let me find out what Sita finds so special about a common man like you!" Rama calmly replied, "This is a battle of good against evil, and the good will always triumph. Also, I have to make you pay for the disrespect you showed my wife." They engaged in a long and formidable battle. Both of them had special powers given to them by the gods, and this made them equals. They attacked each other countless times and the contest went on for many days.

Finally, Rama using all his power and concentration sent out a special arrow given to him by the gods themselves. Reciting an exceptional chant, he let the arrow fly right into Ravana's chest. The mighty Demon crashed to the ground and let out a huge moan. The great demon king was dead.

PART 9 – THE HOMECOMING

The fourteen years of exile were over and Rama, Lakshmana and Sita returned to Ayodhya. Their brothers, and the three queens welcomed them back with open arms. Special prayer ceremonies were performed for their happiness and protection.

Bharat, who had refused to sit on the throne, was overjoyed to give his brother his crown. Rama was crowned king and the people in Ayodhya celebrated the safe return of their king and queen. The city was lit with clay lamps and they were kept burning for many days and nights to signify a bright future. To this day, the festival of lights, Diwali is celebrated in India to signify the day Rama came home.

IV. CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

IV. CHILDREN'S RESPONSES

I had the opportunity to share this retelling in a 4th grade classroom of 28 students whose ages were between 9 and 10 years. This took place in a public school on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. After coordinating a schedule with the classroom teacher, we planned on four sessions over three week. At each session, I related two chapters. The students asked questions during the reading. We also discussed the chapter and it's events. At the beginning of each new reading, the students were asked to retell what had happened in the story so far, and ask any questions or confusions the story may have created in their minds. Each session was recorded to provide me with precise details of when each child spoke, and the exact words that they used to express themselves.

Before starting the reading, I displayed an outline of the map of the world and showed the class the position of India in relation to North America. Next, I used the map of India to demonstrate and mark the places where the main events of the story were set. I reviewed the map of India during the reading, as the settings changed with the chapters.

Through this read aloud, I wanted to give children who had not heard this story a complete sense of it. Their questions and comments provided information relating to their level of comprehension, the extent they could relate to the story, their reactions to names they may have never heard before, and exposure to customs and culture of India.

A. Verbal Responses

Following are the students' comments and reactions during the retelling. They have been arranged in order of chapters. Each bullet point represents a separate response.

Note: Through the transcribed text, my own or teacher's questions are italicized.

Part 1: Rama's Birth

- "Didn't the lord say that he would split himself into four parts for the four sons?"
- "How did the king actually get three wives?"
- "Did all the sons stay in the town where the king was or did they separate?"
- "Can God go inside people?"

Part 2: Rama's First Adventure

- "What does it mean that they did not know how great this gift was?"
- "Didn't the lord want to kill the demons?"

Part 3: Rama Weds Sita

- "I forgot how the boy got strong."
- "How come he broke the bow?"
- "How did he break it, and everyone couldn't?"
- "What exactly was the ceremony?"
- "In the story, why couldn't the other brother lift the bow?"
- "I like the mix with the Gods and the humans."
- "I think it was good, but I think it was hard for me to visualize the monster, like I did not know if it was human or not."

Part 4: The Banishment

- “Yeah, but I don’t get why is that bad” (Manthara telling Keikayi that it is bad that Rama is to be king)
- “But why is it important for her (Keikayi’s) son to be king?”
- “Well, it shows that she (Keikayi) is not a good mother because if you adopt a child even if you did not give birth to them they are still your child, and you love them just as much, and also it shows that she probably didn’t really care for the king, she probably just cared for the king because he had money, because if she really loved him then she would not do that to him, ‘cause she knew that Rama was his favorite son, and he would still be his son even when he was crowned king.”
- “I think that the real son should be king and that she (Keikayi) should take care of her own son.”
- “I think that keikayi is selfish because first she was happy, but when the maid said what would happen to herself, so then she wanted her own son instead of Rama (to be king).”
- “I think that the other brother will not want to be king and he will want to look for his brother and make him king.”
- “I think the maid tricked the queen so that the maid would have more power.”
- *T (me): “What do you think is going on in the king’s mind? It was all up to him, he could have said “no”, or he could have said “yes”.”*
S (student): “Well, remember he said, “Whatever it will be”, he never disobeys his wishes and he always follows his wishes, so he had no choice.”
- S: “I think like that’s just like too big of a sacrifice. Just because he always keeps his word does not mean
- “I don’t get why she wanted Rama to go into the forest when she already wished that her son become king.”
- “Maybe the queen thought that Rama would do something to Bharata to not make him king, to try to convince him not to be king.”
- *T: “Do you think things like this happened only in India, many years ago or do you think it happens in other places too?”*
S: “Yah”
T: “Yes to what- only in India or everywhere?”
S: “Everywhere.”

Part 5: The Kidnapping of Sita.

- “I’m confused. Why can’t he marry two people because the king married more?”
- “Why did she get mad that he got another wife?”
- “I think it’s a little weird that she said that ‘I will kill her so I can marry him’.”
- T: “Do you think she told a little lie there? She said something to Ravana that made him curious.”
S: “She said Sita was the most beautiful woman in the world.”
- T: “Why did she drop her bangle to the floor?”
S: “Probably to give a clue of where she was.”
- “When the demoness told her brother the lie, she is probably trying to flatter him to make him fight.”
- “Is the bird alive?”
- “Something tells me that the maid is going to kill the queen and then the king is going to say that ‘you took very good care of her so you should be my next wife’.”
- “I don’t get who the deer was.”
- “Why did Sita want Lakshmana to go into the forest after Rama?”
- T: “What was Lakshmana thinking? He knew his brother really well.”
S: “He knew that he was a really powerful warrior so he wouldn’t die. He knew that Rama was stronger than himself and he’d be able to last, but Sita won’t.”
- “The uncle that got shot by the arrow- did he die or does he have some kind of power that did not make him die?”
- T: “Dasharatha did something he did not want to. Lakshmana did something he did not want to. What do you think of that?”
S: “I notice that every time they want to do something, but they had to do something else, girls are forcing them to do it... so they are probably really loyal to their wives.”
- “It didn’t seem like Ravana knew (that Lakshmana was there). Maybe Sita took his mind off that Rama’s brother was there.”
- “Is Rama part demon?”

- “Wasn’t it a demon who offered the milk in the beginning?”
- “It said in the beginning that he (Ravana) couldn’t die.”

Part 6: Rama Meets Hanuman

- “How can the monkey fly?”
- “Is this a little bit like what happened to Rama?” (Talking about Sugreeva losing his throne.)
- “I am not sure which one is actually good or bad.” (Between Sugreeva and Vaali).
- *T: “Do you think Rama did the right thing by killing Vaali hiding in the tree?”*
S: No, because maybe the brother (Sugreeva) had people who can help him.
- *T: Do you think he (Rama) needed to do that?*
S: I think he needed that because if he (Sugreeva) tried to talk to him (Vaali), he would probably just kill him.”
S: “I think he helped him because he wanted him to help him back.”
S: “But also I don’t think he did it because of that because Sugreeva already said he would help him. Also Rama wanted to be nice and do something in return, because it was his idea to do that. Sugreeva didn’t say, ‘If you do this, if you kill my brother I’ll do this for you.’”

Part 7: Hanuman Goes to Lanka

- “He (Hanuman) seems sort of mean in the second part, like when he started setting fire to Lanka. Because he didn’t really have to, and people lived there, people who could have not been that mean.”
- “I don’t exactly think he was mean, because they were the ones who allowed Ravana to be their king and they (people of Lanka) could have stopped it, I bet they could have. I think that he (Hanuman) seems very confident, he has a lot of courage. Because he has powers and he can’t die.”
- “Maybe something will happen in the story and maybe he (Hanuman) will want to die.”
- “He (Hanuman) did that on purpose?”
- “The people of Lanka could have stopped Ravana from being their king, but they were probably too scared of him. They would rather not die than not have a king.”

- T: "What do you think of all these supernatural powers and these divine powers that people can do which are not human-like?"*

S: "I kind of like them, I like to hear them because it makes them seem real. The story does not have too much of that stuff in it. Some stories have too much, but your story has actually has some other stuff, like about the king, you know, stuff that could actually happen."

S: "I think it makes the story more interesting. I think the powers make the story more interesting."
- T: What about the names? Some of these names are a little tricky? If you were reading this without me, how would you deal with that, even if I put the pronunciation in brackets in the book? Would you put it away because it was taking you too long to figure the names out?*

S: "I don't think so, because it's a really good book and I really don't care about the names 'cause once I read this book and I didn't know how to pronounce this name because I read it twice last year and I pronounced it a certain way. But when I asked my mom how to pronounce it when I finished the book; she said it was another way. Then I started pronouncing it the way she said, then I started pronouncing it another way, then I started pronouncing it the way that I had done before, the second time I read it, which was a few months ago. I pronounced the names in three different ways"

S: "Even if I didn't understand the names I would kind of think of the best way to pronounce them and it wouldn't change the story at all really."
- T: "What about the story being set in such a far away place that you don't know much about, like India?"*

S: "I don't think it really matters where it is so much because it doesn't really say so much about India to make it complicated, like if someone does not know so much about it."
- T: "Do you find anything in this story to be very specifically Indian?"*

S: "There are not really forests in New York so you can tell it is not in New York. It seems like it could be anywhere in the forest, it's not really in the middle of nowhere."

Part 8: The Great War

- "How was the bridge magical?"
- "Was the god of the ocean just the god of that ocean or was he the god of all like rivers and..."
- "I think he (Rama) learned how to pray to the gods in his, like, journeys."

- “You said that the monkey guy could never die, you said they are fighting, how come he couldn’t have just done it, then he’ll never die.”
- “Haven’t all the years (of exile) gone by?”
- “How can a bunch of bears and monkeys take over an island?”
- “How can bears and monkeys fight?”
- “Can’t he (Hanuman) just fly across the ocean, become a giant, and just take her (Sita), and run away?”
- “Why would a god give a devil powers?”
- “How do monkeys and bears, how are they even matched to demons?”
- “Since the arrow was given to Rama by the gods, I thought Ravana couldn’t be killed by god.”

Part 9: The Homecoming.

- “Is this a true story?”
- “What happened to Hanuman?”
- “Did Hanuman and the king of the monkey, did they like get, honored?”

At the end of this retelling, I showed the class a few visual representations -- black and white pictures that depicted scenes from *The Ramayana* (Appendix C.) I chose a picture for each chapter and asked the students to look at them and guess which part of the story they represented. The students were easily able to identify them and their quick, enthusiastic reactions proved to me how effortlessly they had retained the entire story.

B. Written responses

The children wrote responses on the day the retelling was completed. Each child received a worksheet with two questions they were required to answer. Characters' names were spelled out on the board as the students asked for them. This written work provided me with feedback from the children showing what part they most enjoyed in the story, as well as, what aspect of it they want more information about (see Appendix B.)

C. Educational Implications

The educational benefits that children gain from listening to stories have been confirmed (as discussed earlier) - but the question that often come to a teacher's mind is: "Where is the time?" While every educator would ideally like to expose their students to all kinds of learning, the typical school day does not allow time to read aloud stories to the class while meeting grade-level standards and mandated testing.

However, use of folktales and read-aloud may be tied to several state and national standards. Relevant examples from New York state standards in elementary English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies Several New York State standards are described in brief below (see www.accelerateu.org for full text.)

- *ELA Standard 2- Language for Literary Response and Expression*

Standard 2 involves listening and reading which includes "comprehending, interpreting and critiquing imaginative texts", "drawing on personal experiences and

knowledge to understand text”, and “recognizing the social, historical and cultural features of the text”. This also includes speaking and writing about the text.

- *ELA Standard 4- Language for social interaction*

Standard 4 involves listening and speaking which includes: “communication in formal and informal settings”, and “the ability to talk with people of different ages, genders, cultures”. This also included reading and writing.

The verbal responses recorded during the read aloud of *The Ramayana* demonstrate the students’ ability and willingness to understand, relate with and communicate their feelings about the events and characters in the text. Throughout the discussions the students were reminded and made aware of speaking when it was appropriate. They were even able to listen to their peers and teachers, and agree or disagree in a socially acceptable manner. The writing exercise gave the students an opportunity to record their responses in a reflective way.

- *Social Studies Standard 2- World history*

Standard 2 involves the study of “world cultures and civilizations including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions”, and “the ways different people view the same event or issue from a variety of perspectives.”

A folk epic like *The Ramayana* can be used as introduction into the culture and history of India. The story is able to subtly introduce a new world through imagination and fantasy, as well as introduce cultural values through characters that children can identify with.

While it may seem that read-aloud and storytelling are mostly used to wind down at the end of the school day or used as a transition activity, they can also become a very effective part of the curriculum. The feelings and emotions that become a part of story listening make it an unforgettable learning experience, which is being underestimated in this age of technology and accelerated literacy mandates.

V. CONCLUSION

V. CONCLUSION

Last year, I tried to find a children's book on *The Ramayana* to read to my eight year-old and could not find one. That was when I decided that I should write a retelling of it for children born and raised in America, especially for children of Indian origin. I did not want my children to be denied the pleasure of my favorite childhood story.

When first considering an independent master's project, I knew that I wanted to retell a story from my childhood. Two graduate courses: "Folklore in the Classroom" and "Storytelling for Children" (2004) provided background to pursue my own research on the importance and positive effects of stories and storytelling. In addition, I have had the opportunity to share my retelling with a group of fourth graders in New York City. Their responses further prove that the oral tradition is a critically important medium for education and learning – not only in early childhood but across grades and content areas.

As a literacy specialist, the personal pleasure I derived from retelling *The Ramayana* reinforced my belief in the importance of stories and storytelling with young, inquisitive minds that have no boundaries for where their imagination might lead them.

VI. REFERENCES

VI. REFERENCES

- Bettelheim, B. (1977). *The uses of enchantment*. New York: Random House.
- Blatt, G.T. (1993). *Once upon a folktale: Capturing the folklore process with children*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Egan, K. (1997). *The educated mind: How cognitive tools shape our understanding*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Egan, K. (1986). *Teaching as storytelling*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Favat, A.F. (1977). *Child and tale: The origins of interest*, National Council of Teachers of English.
- Jaffe, N. (2000) Bringing storytelling and folk narrative into classroom life. In Nager, N & Shapiro, E.K. *Revisiting a progressive pedagogy: The developmental-interaction approach*. New York: State University of New York Press. 161-178.
- Lukens, R.J. (2003). *A critical handbook of children's literature*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Lutgendorf, P. *The Oral Tradition and the many "Ramayanas"*. Retrieved on May 21, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/mynihan/programs/sac/Outreach/ramayana/oral.asp>
- Mahulikar, G. *Effect of the Ramayana on various cultures and civilizations*. Retrieved on May 21, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.ramayainstitute.org>
- Valmiki (2000). *The Ramayana*. India: Penguin Books.
- Yolen, J. (1983). *Writing books for children*. Boston: The Writer, Inc.

New York State learning standards. Retrieved on March 13, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://accelerateu.org>

The picture book Ramayana: An illustrated version of Valmiki's story. Retrieved on June 20, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.maxwell.syr.edu>

VII. APPENDICES

VI. APPENDICES

A. Annotated bibliography: Recommended titles from or about India.

Atkins, A. (2000) *Aani and the tree huggers*. Illustrator: Venantius J. Pinto. New York: Lee & Low Books.

A true story about an Indian girl who, along with other women in her village, wrap their arms around the trees to save them from being cut down by land developers.

Demi. (2001) *Gandhi*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

A courageous thinker, Gandhi struggles for the freedom and independence of India from the British. Beautiful illustrations and appropriate for ages 9-12.

Demi. (2005) *Mother Teresa*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

A biography of Mother Teresa who spent most of her life serving "the poorest of the poor" in Calcutta, India.

Demi. (1997) *One grain of rice: A mathematical folktale*. New York: Scholastic Press.

A clever Indian village girl doubles her reward of one grain of rice day by day to outwit a selfish Raja (king).

Gilmore, R. & Priestley, A. (2003) *Lights for Gita*. Gardiner, MA: Tilbury House.

Recently moved from India, Gita is looking forward to celebrating her favorite holiday, Diwali, the festival of lights, but things are not the same in her new home .

Jatinder, V. (2002) *The story of Divaali*. Illustrator: Nilesh Mistry. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books

A retelling of the ancient Indian epic, *The Ramayana*. It includes facts about Diwali, which is celebrated when the hero, Rama returns home after 14 years of exile.

Krishnaswami, U & Akib, (2003) *J. Monsoon*. Illustrator: Jamel Akib. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux

One of the main seasons in India, the book describes the way the first monsoon rain feels after a long hot summer. Descriptive language coupled with rich illustrations.

Shepard, A. (1992) *Savitri*. Illustrator: Vera Rosenberry. Illinois: Albert Whitman.

This tale is taken from one of two ancient Indian epics, *The Mahabharata*, and tells of how Savitri outwits the god of death to save her husband. Ages 7-12.

Other Recommended Titles

Heine, T. (2006) *Elephant dance: A journey to India*. Illustrator: Sheila Moxley. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books.

Heydlauff, L. (2005) *Going to school in India*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge

Mehta, L. (1987) *Anklet for a princess*. Illustrator: You-Shan Tang. Walnut Creek, CA: Shen's Books.

Mehta, L. (1987) *The enchanted anklet*. Illustrator: Neela Chhaniara. Toronto: Lilmur Publishing.

Pandya, M. (2003) *Here comes Holi, The festival of colors!* Wellesley, MA: MeeRa Publications.

Somaiah, R. (2006) *Indian children's favorite stories*. Illustrator: B. Ranjan Somaiah. North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing.

B. Written Responses

Following are a selection of written responses that the students provided at the end of the retelling.

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

What I most remember in the story is when Ravana and Rama were fighting and when the monkey guy with powers was caring the mountain. I think that part was really funny.

Now my first question is how did the king of the demons have 10 heads and a lot of hands?

My second question is how come the gods gave the demon gods powers.

Lenny Morley

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

The part that I remember most in the story is when King Dasharatha gives his wives payasa, because after that Rama is born, and gets his power, and that's where his whole journey begins.

I would like to know who the ~~son~~ was that refused to be king. Why didn't he just want to be king.

I loved the story because of the gods, the demons, the magical stuff, and Rama's bravery for saving his wife. It really builds up an interesting and fascinating story. I think that it was a great story.

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

What I remember most about the story is the magical stunts and magical creatures. I like them because not every story has something like that. Also it is a legend from India and I have never heard one before. It is very interesting to learn about the hindi words and their history. It is amazing because it is so different from other legends. I also love the royalty part about. Because now, the story has some royalty and action.

I think Ms. Himatsingka used a lot of detail. There really isn't anything she could say more about. Ms. Himatsingka is a G·R·E·A·T writer!!



THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

1. The part I remember most is when Rama lifts the bowl (or pot) and marries Sita I remember it most because it was ^{so} cool that Rama could lift ^{it} when no one else could.

2. I really don't understand how a monkey could lift a mountain up and make himself really really big so that the mountain was the size of a cake? I also want to know how stones could be against water with people and animals walking on it and the bridge doesn't break? Why did Ravana have so many body parts like 16 bodys?

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

I remember the part when Rama chased the golden deer, because every other part of the story was sort of not really colorful and that was the only part when you picture the whole shape and color of the animal or person.

There was nothing else that I would really like to know because the story was well explained and I had no questions.

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

The part that I remember the most was when Sita married Rama because Rama picks up the boat and then Sita's parents say that they are going to get married. It's kind of easy to remember that Sita and Rama are married.

If Rama weren't married to Sita, then there would be no war.

I like your story but I would like some more details about Ravana and Sita. Ravana because I don't know why he became so evil. If he were smart then why did he become evil?

And Sita because was she ever evil or was she always nice or is she nice and some times mean?

Thank you

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

What I think that was most important
is when he killed the demon Ravana.
Because he got his wife back and killed
him.

I just wanted to ask what
is the ocean gods name?

THE LEGEND OF RAMA

What do you remember the most in this story? Why?

What else would you like to know?

I remember when Hanuman flew over the ocean. I remember it because I think that Hanuman is cool!

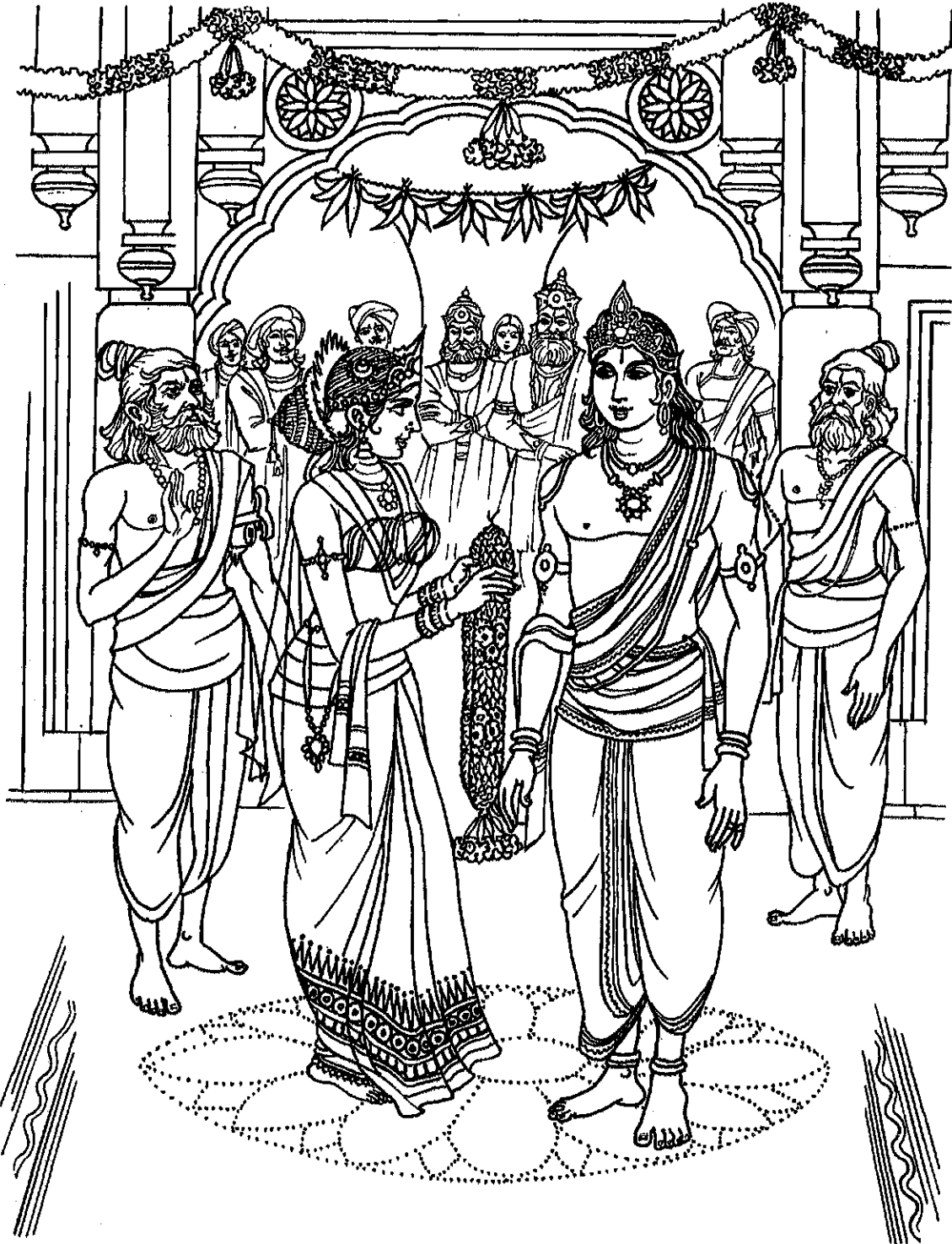
I would like to know more about ~~my~~ Rama's childhood. Like, what age did that happen?

C. Selected Visuals

Following are examples of the pictures I showed the students after the retelling. Each student was then given a copy of all the visuals as a tool to remember the story through pictures.



Chapter 1 – King Dasharatha offering his wives the Payasa.



Chapter 3 – Rama weds Sita.



Chapter 5 – Jatayu tries to prevent Ravana from kidnapping Sita.



Chapter 8 – Hanuman carries mountain with herbs to save Lakshmana's life.



Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents of Class 4-321:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Class 4-321 / Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Leonard Moxley

Parent's name
(Please print)

ELIZA PRENDZOVA

Parent's signature:

Eliza

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents of Class 4-321:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Class 4-321 / Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

William Bradley - Villarini

Parent's name
(Please print)

Elizabeth Bradley

Parent's signature:

Elizabeth Bradley

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents of Class 4-321:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Class 4-321 / Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name: Sammy Slavin

Parent's name
(Please print) Wendy Slavin

Parent's signature: Wendy Slavin

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

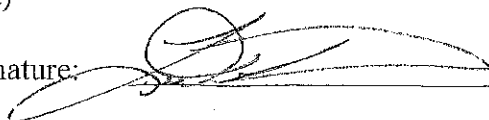
Child's name:

Rachel Dimenstein

Parent's name
(Please print)

LES DIMENSTEIN

Parent's signature:



Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Mathew Stempel

Parent's name
(Please print)

Ann Parry

Parent's signature:

Ann Parry

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Roman Szul

Parent's name
(Please print)

ANNA SZUL

Parent's signature:

Anna Szul

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Latie Marshall

Parent's name
(Please print)

James Marshall

Parent's signature:

[Signature]

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Keri Hoque

Parent's name
(Please print)

Cara Hoque

Parent's signature:

Cara Hoque

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.


Child's name:

Taylor Bachelis

Parent's name
(Please print)

LAW YIN BACHELIS

Parent's signature:



4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Ben Olsen

Parent's name
(Please print)

Ken of Mariela Olsen

Parent's signature:

Ken of Mariela Olsen

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

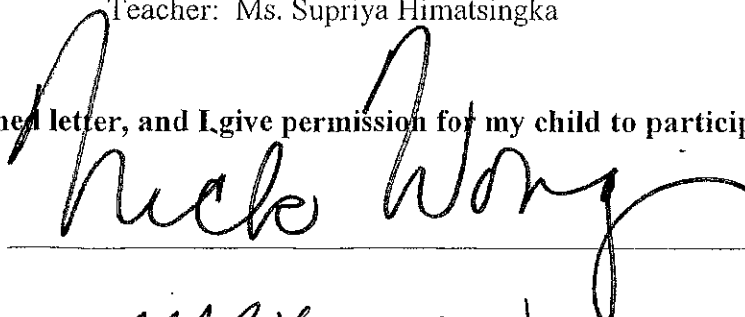
Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

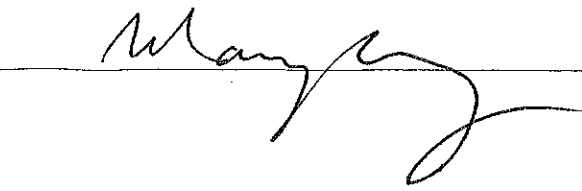
Child's name:



Parent's name
(Please print)

MARY Wong

Parent's signature:



Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Dette Raskopf

Parent's name
(Please print)

Kristen Raskopf

Parent's signature:

Kristen Raskopf

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007

Permission Slip / Waiver

Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Carlo Keep

Parent's name
(Please print)

COURTNEY KEEP

Parent's signature:

Courtney Keep

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Parent's name
(Please print)

Parent's signature:

Jessie Altman - Gzard
Abby Altman
Abby Altman

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007

Permission Slip / Waiver

Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Annah Paige

Parent's name
(Please print)

Lori Paige

Parent's signature:

Lori Paige

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Annabelle Mournet

Parent's name
(Please print)

Charles Mournet

Parent's signature:

Charles Mournet

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

John Connor

Parent's name
(Please print)

Mary Connor

Parent's signature:

Mary Connor

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Gelyi Putin

Parent's name
(Please print)

Maria Nordone

Parent's signature:

Maria Nordone

Supriya Hitmatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Juliet Fresh

Parent's name
(Please print)

Janya Bell

Parent's signature:

Janya Bell

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007

Permission Slip / Waiver

Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name: _____

Parent's name
(Please print) _____

Parent's signature: _____

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Amanda Rozencwaig

Parent's name
(Please print)

Karen Rozencwaig

Parent's signature:

Karen Rozencwaig

Supriya Himatsingka
P.S. 6
45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Monifa Mayo

Parent's name
(Please print)

Andrew Mayo

Parent's signature:

Andrew J Mayo

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. 6

45 East 81 Street
New York, NY 10028

4/11/07

Dear Parents:

My name is Supriya Himatsingka and I am the kindergarten reading specialist at P.S.6. I am currently working on my thesis to complete a graduate degree at The Bank Street College of Education. As part of this thesis, I have written a children's book for ages 9-12, and would like your child to be part of a small group that will participate in listening to this story. The story is a retelling of an Indian epic called *The Ramayana*.

As a participant in this study, your child will be asked to listen to the story as I read it aloud to the group, and then discuss it, as well as provide a short written response. This will provide me with feedback on how this particular age group reacts to the story. Their responses will be included in my thesis and will be placed within the Bank Street library where it can be circulated. Please note that your child's name will be changed to protect his/her privacy. If I do not hear from you, I will assume that permission is not given.

If you have any questions or concerns I can be contacted through Ms. Schwartzburg. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Supriya Himatsingka

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Adam Oyunge

Parent's name
(Please print)

MARIE MARANCA

Parent's signature:

M. Maranca

April 11, 2007

Dear Ms Schwartzburg,

This is to give permission
for Sean to participate
in Supriya's project -

He will be happy to
respond to her reading!

My Best,

dudy Reinicke

Sean 4-321

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Angela Juarez

Parent's name
(Please print)

Juliana Juarez

Parent's signature:

Juliana Juarez

P.S. Study Group: Spring, 2007
Permission Slip / Waiver
Teacher: Ms. Supriya Himatsingka

I have read the attached letter, and I give permission for my child to participate in your thesis study.

Child's name:

Weather Melad

Parent's name
(Please print)

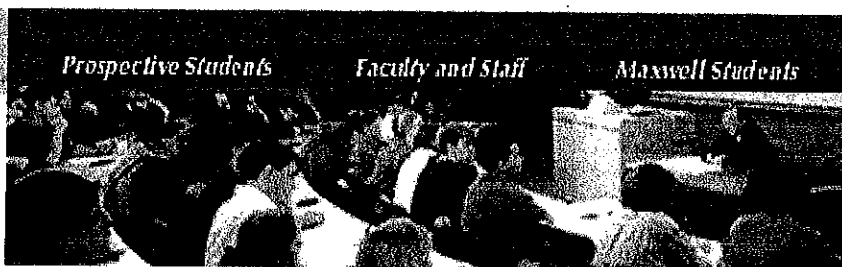
OLIVIA MELAD

Parent's signature:

Olivia Melad



Advancing Citizenship, Scholarship, and Leadership Around the World



Prospective Students

Faculty and Staff

Maxwell Students

The School and Its Faculty

Social Science Departments

Professional Programs

Institutes and Centers

Admission and Finances

Career and Alumni Services

Giving Opportunities

News and Events

[Home](#) >> [E-mail Us](#)

E-Mail Us

Interested in a Particular Program?

If you need information about specific degree programs at Maxwell, please e-mail the contact person for each program directly. Your query will be answered quickly and precisely. You can find email addresses for the individual degree programs here:

- **Department/Program Contacts** (on the "How To Apply" page)

Basic information about the degree programs is available here:

- **Social Science Programs** (Anthropology, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, Social Science, Sociology)
- **Professional Programs** (International Relations, Public Administration, Executive Education)

You will also find routes to each department's self-maintained website.

Have a Question About Maxwell?

Please use the space below for your comments, questions, or general concerns for the Maxwell School. Your message will be forwarded the appropriate individual or department within the school.

I would like to use a few illustrations from The Picturebook Ramayana for my Master's Thesis. Two copies of the thesis will be housed in the Bank Street College library in New York City. Thank you, Supriya Himatsingka.

*Name

*E-mail

Phone

