

Return or Retain? Ganesh at the Museum

Lesson Plan

National Curriculum links & curriculum fit	RE: SACRE syllabus L2.8: What does it mean to be Hindu in Britain today? KS3 History: Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901
How to use	Third activity in the Telling Our Stories pack. It could easily fit within a scheme of work on Hinduism.
Aims	To understand the story of how Ganesh got his head. To explore the ethics of museum acquisitions.
Duration	1 hour
Materials required	Ganesh video summary document (Resource 3b). Ganesh Powerpoint (Resource 3c). Take a Stand handout (Resource 3d) + positions marked on the walls. Picture of Ganesh to colour in (Resource 3e). Ganesh video (12 mins) www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcOBoAzxQK8&t=18s
Differentiation	Stage 2 has two options below: one for KS2, one for KS3
Background reading & references for teachers	Ganesh video (12 mins) www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcOBoAzxQK8&t=18s A good page on Ganesh from Canada: www.cbc.ca/kidscbc2/the-feed/eight-things-you-may-not-know-about-ganesh A good page on totem poles: www.indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/totem_poles/ How to make your own simple totem pole: www.youtube.com/watch?v=P35Wlo2IGd4 A video of raising a totem pole in Alaska in 2010: www.vimeo.com/11303883

Stage 1 - KS2 and KS3: Video (20 mins)

Prediction: show a photo of Ganesh and ask some questions, such as:

- What do you see?
- What do you think this is?
- Where does it come from?
- Who does it belong to?
- Do we think it is religious? If so, from which religion?

Watch the video together (12 mins) and discuss the questions again, ensuring that students have grasped the main points.

The video features three local Hindus: Sandhya Dave, who worked on this project; Ravi Nathwani, who was the Hindu chaplain at the university and came to Devon from Uganda in the 1970s; and Ravi's daughter Anita, born in Exeter and now working at the V&A Museum in London.

Explain that there is now a new explanation panel at the RAMM, which includes a link to the video they've just watched. This is a very tangible outcome from the project on which this resource pack is based.

Stage 2 - KS2: The Ganesh story (30 mins)

- Recap the physical aspects of the statue:
- 4 arms to carry many things.
- Big ears to keep listening, keep ears open.
- Small eyes to be a keen observer
- Big belly to digest the good and the bad
- Serpent: life sometimes throws unpleasant things at us; we must learn to absorb and work with these things.
- Recap the main elements of the story together.
- Divide the students into groups of four and ask them to act out the story. One should play Parvati, one play Shiva, one play the boy Ganesh, and one play the narrator. It's OK to add elements, it's OK to add dialogue and it's definitely OK to have fun!
- Watch each other's performances, applaud and praise each group.
- There are many more stories of Ganesh to be found on the internet.
- As an alternative / extension, students can colour in a picture of Ganesh. There are many on the internet, we've included one in the resource pack **(Resource 3e)**

Stage 2 (KS3): Take a Stand (30 mins)

- Before the lesson, mark out 5 possible positions on the wall of the room (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).
- Using the Ganesh PPT (**Resource 3c**), look at the description of Ilchinik (the Totem pole) on the slide together.
- Put students in mixed ability pairs and give them the handout with the 6 statements to read and discuss. Ask them to tick a box for each statement depending on how far they agree with it.
- When they're all ready, get them to stand up. Read out statement 1 and ask the students to literally 'take a stand' which represents their view.
- As a group, discuss why people are standing where they are. What lies behind their responses? In what ways does a museum in a small city in Devon relate to and represent other cultures and other parts of the world?
- Allow people to move after they hear other perspectives.
- Do the same with statement 2 and so on. You can vary the discussion process by allowing people to talk in small groups or pairs.
- There is no 'right' answer to these questions: the point is to consider the ethics of museum acquisitions, to realise that these ideas change with time, and to see how Exeter has responded to changes in museum thinking.

Extension / homework activities

For an extension or homework activity, there are some ideas on totem poles in the background reading section above.

If you do decide to make totem poles with the children, it's good to talk about them as a kind of visual 'family tree' with figures drawn from their own family history / traditions. Try to avoid an over-simplistic spiritualisation of the poles, or the replication of Native American iconography. This could become cultural appropriation, which is not appropriate.