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children's book author

CLASSROOM GUIDE:

From the Mango Tree and Other Folktales from Nepal

By Kavita Ram Shrestha and Sarah Lamstein

About the Book:

Journey to Nepal and learn about the unique geography, religion, art, history, and people. Fascinating facts introduce the reader to a world that is only beginning to change with the introduction of Western influence. Fifteen traditional folktales are retold which also reveal much about this fascinating country and its ancient traditions.

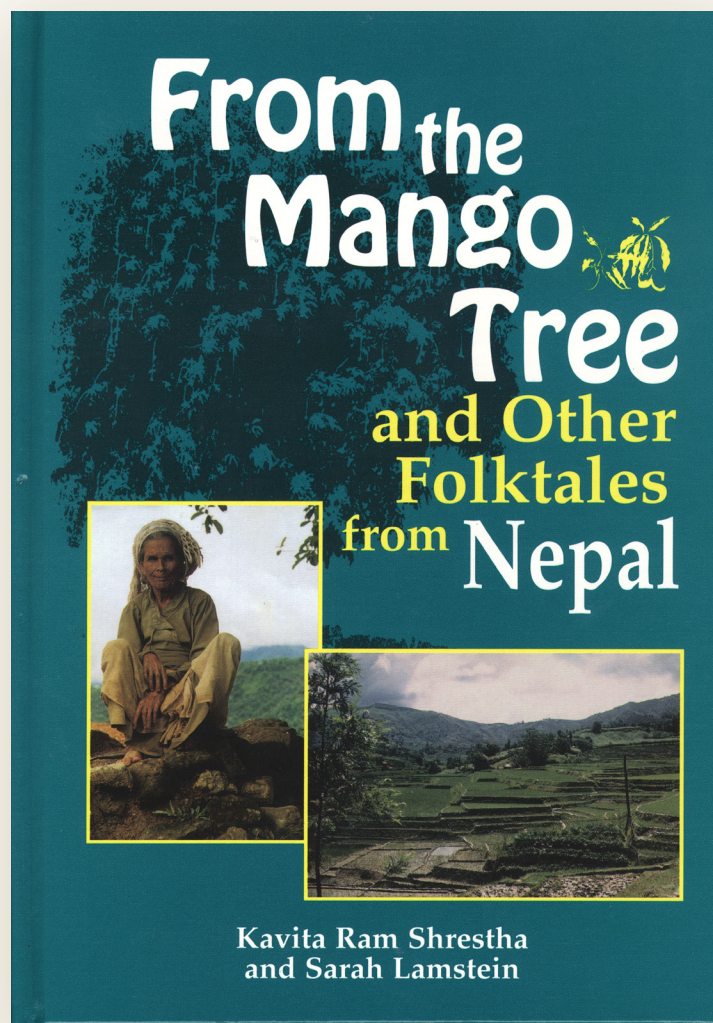
About the Guide:

This guide includes discussion questions and projects appropriate for book clubs, literature circles, and classroom discussions. It is intended to provoke thought and insight into the tales' themes, including hope and redemption through virtuous behavior, such as kindness, honesty, and bravery.

About the Authors:

Kavita Ram Shrestha has written many books for both children and adults. He is also an honored filmmaker, bringing to light the democracy movement in Nepal. He was born in the village of Okhaldhunga, at the foot of Mt. Everest in eastern Nepal. He received his B.A. from Tribhuvan University in Nepal and is working on his doctoral degree in medical sociology in India. He lives in Kathmandu with his wife and three children.

Sarah Lamstein received her B.A. and M.A. in English literature from the University of Michigan and her M.L.S. from Simmons College. She received an M.F.A. in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Vermont College. She was the school librarian at Milton Academy and the Roxbury Latin School, as well as library consultant at the Mather School in Boston. She lives with her husband in Newton, MA and is the mother of three grown children.



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An Introduction to Nepal:

Divide students into groups of no more than two or three and assign them equal parts of the introductory pages about Nepal. Give students an appropriate amount of time to read and take notes on the material then have them report at least three important facts that they learned from their section to the class.

Using their notes from all the presentations, students must write a ten question quiz based on the material. The following day have students trade and complete quizzes for a homework grade.

Fill out the following chart (and use as a study guide) as you read "From the Mango Tree" by Kavita Ram Shrestha and Sarah Lamstein

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The Wish-Fulfiller Shell

1. How did Kaude earn the shell? Do you think he deserved it?
2. Who stole it? Why? In the end, was the thief rewarded for the theft or punished? How?
3. How did the animals cooperate to retrieve the shell? How did the story end?

Lake Phewa

1. Why is it the custom to welcome travelers in Nepal? What is the ancient saying about it? Do you think people would follow this custom in your own neighborhood? Why or why not?
2. What did the old woman offer the traveler? Why? What does this show about her character?
3. What did the stranger predict would happen? Was he correct? What can still be seen in this area today? What lesson did people learn?

The Princess of the Vermillion Path

1. Why was the king rewarded? What was he blessed with? Do you think he deserved this honor?
2. What does the king in the south offer his son? Why will he need it?
3. What tasks does the princess set before her suitors? Why? How is her own wisdom tested in the end?

The Farmer and the Jackal

1. What was the farmer's problem? Why?
2. What did the jackal end up doing for the farmer? Who do you think was more indebted to the other? Why?
3. In the end, how did both fare? What is the lesson?

Two Brothers

1. Why does the younger brother run away?
2. Who joins the younger brother at the inn? What does the younger brother learn?
3. How is the younger brother rewarded? What happens to the eldest brother? Why?

The River Kamala

1. Why is the Brahmin visiting the Ganges? What does the slave girl give as an offering? Why does the Brahmin end up in the same place after a day of walking?
2. What does the Goddess of the river tell the Brahmin? What does he do?
3. How does the River Kamala come into being?

From the Mango Tree

1. Why is the king so sad? What does he want? How is he told to fix it?
2. What happens to the babies? And again, what happens when they are children?
3. How will they recognize their mother? In the end, what happens to the other queens, to the mother of the children, and to the king? What is the lesson learned?

Death Invisible

1. What does the blacksmith beg Death not to do? What deal do they make?
2. How does the blacksmith outsmart Death when his son is sixteen?
3. What does Sumnima create? What does she learn? Do you think this is a warning against alcohol? Why? What is the result for Death and humans?

The Uttis Tree

1. What was the long-ago custom between the trees? Who acted as matchmaker? Why?
2. Why did the uttis think he had been deceived? How did he learn that he was not?
3. This story is known as a “pourquoi” (poor-kwah) tale. “Pourquoi” means “why” in French. These tales tell why certain aspects of nature came to be. What does this story explain in nature? Why do you think these types of stories come to be? Do humans need stories? Why?

Princess Naulakha

1. Why are the brothers’ wives jealous of Princess Naulakha?
2. What tasks do they make her complete? How is she able to accomplish them?
3. In the end, why do you think she spares her tormentors? What, do you think, is the reason for this story?

King Silly and Minister Sloppy

1. What are the strange laws in the village of Vijayapore? Who benefits from them? Who must be wary?
2. Why does the king need someone to blame for the thief’s injury? Do people always need someone to blame, even when it makes no sense? What does this say about humans?
3. In the end, how do the saints get what they predicted? How is this story quite different from most western folktales?

Tuhuri and the She-Goat

1. What is the magical skill of Tuhuri’s goat? How is Tuhuri betrayed? What happens to her goat?
2. What does the goat tell Tuhuri to do? What happens in that spot?
3. Do you think the ending is happy or not? Why? What do you think happened to the stepmother and her half-sisters?

The Cave of Halesi

1. Who did the demon worship? What did he ask for when offered a wish?
2. Why do you think he wanted this skill? What would he have gained by it?
3. In the end, what happened to the demon? What physical things does it explain in the area? (This is another “pourquoi” tale.)

The Three Rules

1. What are the three rules the king teaches his grandson? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
2. What does the grandson want to do when he becomes sixteen? Do you agree with him?
3. How does he test his grandfather’s rules in two places? What is the result in each kingdom?

Tuhuro and the Bread-Bearing Tree

1. How does Tuhuro come to have a bread-bearing tree?
2. Describe the old giantess. What does she try to do? Is she successful? Why not?
3. In the end, what happens to Tuhuro? Do you think he will ever be tricked again? Why or why not?

Discussion Questions after all stories are read:

1. What do these stories of Nepal reveal about the people who live there?
2. Why do you think stories are important to each culture? Can people live without story? What are ways that modern societies share stories?
3. Which story was your favorite from the collection? Why?
4. Did any of the stories remind you of ones from your own cultural heritage? Which ones? What elements remain the same regardless of culture?
5. What details in the stories were different from the Western tradition?

Projects:

LANGUAGE ARTS:

Create a reader's theater script for one of the stories. Try to remain as faithful to the story as possible, and add in notes for directions to the actors when needed.

MUSIC:

Choose your favorite story in the book. Now, pretend you are in charge of the music and sound effects for the movie version. What type of music will you choose? What sound effects will you need? How can you create them? For extra credit make a recording of the music and effects for your project. In a brief journal explain why you chose that particular scene.

HISTORY:

Using your notes from the cooperative reading of the introduction, choose one topic and research it further. Then, create a presentation to share with your class what you learned. Be sure to create a visual aide to go with your information. The project will be graded in three areas: content, visual aide, and quality of the presentation.

SCIENCE:

Research one of the following topics that was mentioned in the Introduction to Nepal section and create a pamphlet (or poster) about what you learned:

Subsistence Farming

Deforestation

Environmental Effects of Tourism

Native Animals

Geography of Nepal

Mt. Everest

Infant and Child Mortality