

Ramayana Shadow play Script

This script was written and performed by Donna Kasproicz' 6th grade class at Corte Madera Middle School, Portola Valley, California.

Shadow plays can be performed in classrooms, using everyday materials and a variety of light-sources. For ideas and a step-by-step instruction guide, see the [Education Program](#) page at ShadowLight Productions' website.

1. Gather round my children, and I, the great sage Valmiki, will tell you a tale. It is a tale of bravery, courage and adventure; an epic filled with intriguing characters and bloody battles. It is a story of goodness, balance, and righteousness. It is the story of Rama. It starts in Ayodhya, the jewel among cities. Within this city nobody was hungry, nobody was poor, every woman was faithful to her husband, everybody knew their role in society, everybody was learned in the Vedas, and everybody was happy. And so, at this point, the heroic adventures of Rama truly begin.
2. However, one person in Ayodhya was not happy. It was the king, Dasaratha, and he lamented his lack of sons to carry on the royal line. He presented his problem to the royal sages, and one had an idea. "We must, King Dasaratha, perform a horse sacrifice as prescribed in the Vedas, and if it pleases the gods, they may grant you sons." The king was pleased with this idea, and ordered the preparation to begin at once.
3. At the same time, the gods were discussing Ravana, the vile, disgusting demon king with 10 heads and 20 arms. Ravana was terrorizing the sages and ascetics by having his minions disrupt the sacrifices, and destroy the peace and quiet the holy men needed to have in order to meditate. The gods could not kill Ravana because a long time ago, Brahma had granted him a boon. This boon protected Ravana from all gods, demons, celestial beings, and the like. However, because Ravana believed that no monkey or human could kill him, he did not ask for protection from the beings of the human or animal world. So to remove this thorn from the gods' sides, Vishnu, the protector of the universe, decided to be reborn as a human.

4. Back on earth, Dasaratha was performing his horse sacrifice. He was chopping up a perfect white horse with three knives, and with the greatest care, threw the pieces into the fire. As he put the last piece in the fire, a celestial being in white robes appeared. The being, in a mellow and throaty voice, spoke these words, "King Dasaratha, the gods are pleased with your fine sacrifice. In order to honor your wishes here is some sacred porridge." The divine creature handed Dasaratha a bowl with a thick, white substance inside. Then, when the king had returned his attention to the god-like being, it uttered these instructions, "You must give this divine drink to your wives, and then, they in turn, will produce sons." The king was overjoyed at this news and hurried to give the porridge to his wives.
5. The great king divided the porridge among his three major wives, and to them four sons were born. Rama was the eldest and was born to Kausalya; Bharata was born to Kaikeyi; and Lakshmana and Satrugna were born to Sumitra. They all excelled in the art of war, were taught politics and history, and were well learned in the Vedas. When Rama was barely a teenager, the great sage Visvamitra visited the court and made a demand of the king. "King Dasaratha, I intend to take your eldest son, Rama, to the forest in order to kill the demons that are harassing us." Rama was the king's favorite son, and the king tried to bargain with the holy man, but it was to no avail. Because Rama and Lakshmana could not bear to be separated, they both immediately left for the forest.
6. Once inside the forest, Visvamitra took them to Tataka, the terrible demoness. She was hideous in form, and enormous. Around her neck was a human skull. She threw enormous rocks at them while hovering above them and changing shapes. "We must not kill her," instructed Rama, "for she is a woman, and it would not be right to slay a woman." But Tataka would not give up, and so Lakshmana pierced her heart with a single arrow, and the gods praised them.
7. When the threesome had returned to the sage's ashram, Visvamitra spoke in his deep, unwavering voice, "You have done well, sons of Dasaratha. As a reward for your valor I present you with these weapons." And he gave Rama and Lakshmana supernatural weapons, with amazing powers, and all a beautiful gold color. There was a quiver with an unlimited amount of arrows, arrows that could destroy entire armies, and bows that were so extremely powerful; one couldn't begin to contemplate their power and strength.
8. Now that they had these weapons with an infinite amount of power, Visvamitra enlightened Rama and his brother on their next task. "You must stand vigilant, guarding a sacrifice from demons for six days and seven nights." So the brothers

watched over the sacrifice the sages were performing, and guarded it. But there were no demons. Then, suddenly on the sixth day, which was the most important part of the ritual, hundreds of demons swooped down, flinging dead flesh and spitting blood. Lakshmana and Rama took aim, and whoosh, let their arrows fly. Every arrow found its mark and before long, every single demon had been utterly destroyed.

9. With the grisly task finished, the brothers and the sage left the forest to go to the city of Mithila. The king of the city was in possession of a mighty bow, the Bow of Shiva, which was left in the city many eons ago. The king also had a daughter named Sita. Sita was born of mother earth and has all the qualities of a perfect woman and wife. She was fair, beautiful, kind, loving, and had a heart of gold. In order to win Sita's hand in marriage, a prince or king had to lift the great bow of Shiva and string it, but nobody could do it. After witnessing everybody's failure, Lakshmana convinced Rama to try his luck. As Rama approached the bow, a light seemed to shimmer from him. He grasped the great bow with one hand, easily lifted it up, and strung it. But when he tried to draw the bow, it broke with a sound like a thunderclap. In fact, the sound was so loud that all but the strongest men were knocked senseless by it. And to Rama's boundless delight, Sita stepped forward and put a garland of lotuses around his neck, which we all know means that she accepted his marriage proposal.
10. They returned to Ayodhya, and got married. King Dasaratha realized that he was growing old and decided to give up the reign to his favorite and oldest son, Rama. The people of the city rejoiced when they heard the news, for they all loved Rama, too. But the maidservant to Kaikeyi, Manthara, convinced Kaikeyi that she would be better off if her son, Bharata, was king. So Kaikeyi approached Dasaratha and said these hateful words, "My husband, remember when I saved your life in the battlefield so many years ago? And do you remember that you granted me two boons at that time. The time has come for you to fulfill your promise! I want Rama exiled for 14 years and forced to live like an ascetic, and Bharata to be made king!" Dasaratha replied in anguish to her venomous words, "Oh woman, have you no heart? Please ask anything but that." But she would not give in and the king was forced to honor his promise. When Rama heard the news, he wished to honor his father's wishes, so he departed to the forest immediately, accompanied by his ever faithful brother, Lakshmana, and his wife, Sita.
11. Bharata was in his uncle's court when the news of his kingship and Rama's exile reached him. When he returned to Ayodhya he found out that his father, King Dasaratha, had died of a broken heart. He refused to profit from his mother's evil

scheming, and departed immediately to the forest with a huge army, and an iron resolve to restore his brother to the throne.

12. When Lakshmana heard the thundering of a thousand hooves, a million footmen, and saw the flag of Ayodhya, he tried to convince Rama that Bharata was here to kill them, and that they needed to destroy the army. But Rama calmed him down, and decided to talk to Bharata. As Rama and Bharata met, they hugged each other and Bharata made his plea. "My dear brother, won't you come back to Ayodhya to rule? The people need you." But Rama intended to honor his father's boons and told Bharata that he needed to stay in the forest. So Bharata took Rama's sandals, put them on the throne, and vowed not to go into Ayodhya until Rama returned. Bharata then ruled in Rama's name in a small town outside of Ayodhya.
13. And so Rama and his faithful family members walked through the beautiful forest called Dandaka. They found a pleasant spot that had lots of game by a stream. They built a hut and lived happily for ten peaceful, happy years.
14. One day Supernaka, the terrible demoness, was traveling through the forest when she saw Rama. She looked at his handsome body and thought, "I would like to have that man for my husband." So she changed herself into a beautiful lady and tried to seduce Rama. But Rama could see through her guise, and so he brought her to Lakshmana. Lakshmana was so furious at the idea of his brother marrying a demoness that with three swift arrows he promptly cut off Supernaka's ears and nose.
15. This terrible demon woman, so terrible to behold, ran to her brother Ravana, the King of Lanka. When he had heard her plight he grew outraged, and sent an army of 14000 rakshasas to destroy Rama. Furthermore, Supernaka told Ravana of Sita's exquisite beauty and at once the king of the demons desired her to be his wife.
16. Meanwhile, the army of demons had approached the place where Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were living. Rama and Lakshmana were ready for the onslaught, bows in hand. The demons attacked! The air was filled with whistling arrows and terrible cries. (Pause while fighting is going on) But finally Rama had slaughtered every rakshasa that Ravana had sent.

17. True to his wish, and following his desires instead of his brain, as all rakshasas will do, Ravana set out with his Uncle Marica to capture Sita. He had Marica change himself into a golden deer. As Ravana expected, the deer caught Sita's fancy and she asked Rama to capture it. Rama willingly obliged his wife, but not until giving firm instructions to Lakshmana to guard Sita. As Rama got closer to the deer, he saw that it was a demon, and right before Rama killed it, the deer uttered these words in Rama's voice, "Sita, help me!" When Lakshmana and Sita heard these words, Sita convinced Lakshmana to go help Rama. But first he drew a circle around the hut that would protect Sita and told her to stay within it. When Lakshmana was gone, Ravana turned himself into the likeness of an ascetic and begged from Sita. Because an ascetic cannot come into a woman's home Sita came out of the circle and Ravana quickly turned himself back into a demon, and carried her off.
18. Meanwhile in the forest Lakshmana found Rama and they discovered and that someone had tried to lure them away from Sita. When they found that Sita had been abducted Rama was filled with sorrow and tried seeking advice of where Sita had disappeared. Finally he met some monkeys that Sita had seen and dropped her jewelry to. When the monkeys agreed to help them, their king, Sugriva, sent search parties in every direction.
19. Hanuman, a mighty monkey that can do the impossible, went with one of the search groups. When they came to the ocean they were told that Sita was on an island 300 miles away. After this Hanuman, forever loyal to Rama, made the jump to Lanka. In Lanka he found Sita and offered to take Sita to Rama, but Sita refused to let anyone but Rama touch her. Sita also gave a ring to Hanuman to give to Rama. As Hanuman was trying to escape he was caught by the rakshasas who decided to set his tail on fire. With his tail ablaze Hanuman leaped from house to house setting all of Lanka on fire except the grove where Sita was. After this he went back to report to Rama.
20. When Hanuman returned to Rama he told him of the good news and gave him the ring. After receiving this news Rama set out with his monkey army to attack Lanka. When they came to the mighty ocean the monkey army built a great bridge to Lanka. When they reached Lanka, both sides were ready for war.
21. The armies collided, monkeys and bears against the demons and hideous creatures. There were cries of pain, shouts, screams and the bloodcurdling laugh of the demons. The air was thick with arrows, and the ground was soaked with blood. In the midst of this terrible carnage, Rama searched for Ravana.

22. As Rama and Ravana met, a light seemed to be shining on Rama, while the clouds darkened about Ravana's head. Ravana charged, but Rama neatly parried and thrust back with his sword. They fought, long and hard, for many hours, until Rama, using his divine bow, pierced Ravana's heart. The monkeys, at the same time, defeated the rakshasa army. Rama and his troops gave Ravana a proper burial, for as Rama so wisely put it, "Hostility ends at death."

23. Sita's purity was in doubt by the people, because she had been in the house of another man. To prove her purity she walked into a burning pyre. Her loyalty to Rama was revealed, as she survived unscathed. Lakshmana and Sita returned to Ayodhya where Rama was crowned king and he ruled in peace for many thousands of years.