

Ramayana Group Questions

Directions: Your group will choose one of the following topics. You will discuss the topic together and then decide on a way to present your opinions on this topic to the class. Your presentation should be 2-4 minutes and must include a visual component. Your iPads can be great resources for this. Think about apps that might help you to portray your thoughts in a way that is engaging and memorable for the class. During your presentations, each group member must participate and you should all be prepared to answer questions when you finish. The rubric for the assignment is at the bottom of this handout. Have fun!

1. The concept of dharma was fundamental to ancient Indian culture. Define dharma and explain how *Ramayana* illustrates this idea. Include specific examples of how various characters fulfill (or do not fulfill) their dharma. Do you think the *Ramayana* served an instructional function in ancient Indian society?

2. Ancient Indian society was a patriarchal one characterized by unusual amounts of male superiority. Test this generalization in reference to the *Ramayana*. What are the characteristics of Sita and the role she plays in the epic? Is she submissive, childlike and characterized mainly by her beauty and fidelity?

3. Rama is the quintessential hero of India. Define his characteristics. Was he first and foremost a military hero? What were his other virtues and accomplishments? Was he a perfect man? Did he learn something in the course of his adventures?

4. Compare and contrast Rama as a hero with the other heroes we have studied in this course. What is most distinctive about Rama? Is he particularly admirable in your eyes today? Explain.

5. How are the gods portrayed in the *Ramayana*? How would you describe the relationship between gods and humans? How does this compare to the relationship between gods and humans in the Greek tragedies we studied?

Rubric

Visual Presentation (15 points)

- Clear and focused
- Displays necessary information without being overly wordy
- Presenters share the visual presentation, but do not read from it

Verbal Presentation (15 points)

- All group members participate equally
- Clear evidence of preparation
- Answers class questions thoroughly