Introduction:

This context for learning explores the story of Ramayana to develop Higher Order Thinking and Communication Skills. This sequence of learning experiences aims to develop the following **Learning Intentions**:

- I can recall the main points of the story

- I can offer an analysis of different views about the truth of the story and consider what 'true' means in this context

- I can offer an increasingly deep analysis of different aspects of the story and their meanings for Hindus and relate the story to Hindu beliefs about the nature of God

- I can consider further and in deeper ways the role of concepts such as good and evil in the Ramayana

- I can consider how key features of the story relate to Hindu belief and practice as experienced by Hindus in Scotland

- I can offer my personal reflections on aspects of and themes from the story and consider the similarities and analyse the relationship between these and the views of others

- I can use more complex and more fully developed literacy skills to engage with the story

- I can offer developed and reasoned explanations about the cultural value of the Ramayana story as well as its religious and spiritual significance

Prior learning:

Learners will already be familiar with a range of stories and are likely to be able to explain that stories can have various levels of meaning. They are also likely to be able to explain that a variety of meanings can be taken from stories in different ways by different people. Learners will be aware of different genres of stories at this stage of learning, and be able to show that they understand this. Learners will also have reflected upon a range of stories in relation to their meaning for them – they will be able to explain how stories can help people make sense of things. Learners will now begin to interrelate religious and spiritual content of stories with their cultural implications, and explain the links between the story and contemporary celebrations more fully. Learners will now be able to clearly distinguish between metaphor/allegory/factual accuracy in relation to stories from World Religions.
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Skills:
- Exploring
- Reflecting
- Critical thinking
- Discussing
- Listening
- Explaining
- Clarifying
- Questioning
- Collaborating
- Evaluating
- Describing
- Presenting

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Possible relevant Experiences and Outcomes:

Religious and Moral Education:

- Having reflected upon sources from world religions, I can explain some key beliefs about deity, the human condition and the natural world, and how these beliefs lead to actions for followers of those religions. **RME 3-04a**
- Having considered the key beliefs of world religions, I can express reasoned views on these and discuss how putting these beliefs into practice might affect individuals and society. I can confidently support my own responses to these issues of belief. **RME 4-04a**
- Through investigating and reflecting upon the responses of world religions to issues of morality, I can discuss ways in which to create a more just, equal, compassionate and tolerant society. **RME 3-05a**
- Through exploring a range of issues of morality, I can consider the responses of world religions to these issues and relate these to my own developing values. **RME 4-05a**
- I am developing my understanding of Scotland's religious diversity as well as the place of religion in society. **RME 3-06b**
- I am developing respect for others and my understanding of their beliefs and values. **RME 0-07a / 1-07a / RME 2-07a / RME 3-07a / RME 4-07a**
- Through reflection and discussion, I can explain a range of beliefs which people hold and can participate in debates about 'ultimate questions'. **RME 3-09a**
- Having reflected upon and considered a range of beliefs, belief systems and moral viewpoints, I can express reasoned views on how putting these beliefs and values into action might lead to changes in society. **RME 4-09a**
- I am developing my understanding of the nature of belief and morality. **RME 3-09d**

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Learning experience: The Ramayana

Introduction:

Whether or not the Ramayana has been studied previously, this learning experience will allow learners to develop their understanding of stories from World Religions further. If the Ramayana has not been studied previously, then learning and teaching aspects common to previous levels in this series will apply in part, with deepening and more developed analysis of the story - its content, meaning and contemporary relevance. Progression in this case means that the complexity of tasks assigned to learners should be noticeably more developed than at early, first, or second levels of study. If the story has been examined previously, then learners can begin to engage in deeper ways with the content, context and meaning and relate the story more clearly to religion and culture. Learners should also now be relating the story to wider philosophical, religious and moral issues, as well as considering more fully its place within Hindu tradition. The implications and consequences of the Ramayana for Hindu belief and practice – and its variety within Hinduism should now be analysed in more depth by learners. Learners should be developing more complex, abstract and nuanced understandings of the place of stories in World Religions and moving away from descriptive accounts to more analytical approaches to their understanding.

Possible learning opportunities/tasks:

- Context: Learners will be challenged to explain the various understandings they have so far of belief about God/gods across religions they have studied so far. If they have studied Hinduism previously, then they will be able to offer an explanation of Hindu beliefs about God/gods. If not, then some basic investigative work into beliefs about God/gods within Hinduism is a good starting point for learning.
- Learners can explore more fully the nature of story and its function within society and within religions. Learners should be able to categorise and define the main features of a range of genres of writing and, once they have explore d the basic features of the Ramayana, consider the genre of story this is. This could be done in the form of a display board in class where genres of writing are allocated to stories from world religions and the genre of writing applicable to the Ramayana is identified and compared with other stories from World Religions
- If learners have not studied the Ramayana previously, then they can now explore the main features of the story and the different ways in which the story is conveyed e.g. re-telling, art work, comics, films etc. Different presentations of the story can be sourced here (http:/www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/kids/make-and-colour/pdfs/ramayana-story-shadow-puppets-nml.pdf), here (http://www.bl.uk/learning/cult/inside/ramayanastories/ramayana.html) and here (http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/pdfs/assemblies/rama_and_sita.pdf). Learners can select their own way of retelling the story in creative ways. Once they have retold the story, learners can be challenged to produce as many questions as they can about the story which will assist them in exploring the content, meaning and significance of the story.
- At this level, learners should be able to engage in a 'meta-analysis' of the story which can be carried out through straightforward group discussion/collaborative learning or a simple debate format. This would be based on the following questions: Is this a true story? How would we investigate the truth of the story? What does 'true' mean in this case? How important is it for Hindus to believe that this is a true story?
- Learners can then engage in further analysis of the story: The key features/events of the story should be displayed in class or given to groups of learners as interactive slides. For each slide/ representation of the story, learners should annotate the slide/representation with their views in response to the following questions: What does this part of the story communicate about beliefs about good and evil?; What does this part of the story communicate about Hindu beliefs about God?; What religious, moral and philosophical questions does this part of the story raise?; How might a Hindu understand this part of the story compared to someone who is not Hindu?

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Possible learning opportunities/tasks (cont.):

- Once this has been completed, learners could engage in discussion and debate about their suggested annotations to parts of the story.
- At this level of study, learners should be able to consider and reflect upon more complex aspects of the story and how it points to other features of Hindu belief and of moral and philosophical thinking more widely. Learners could engage in a 'hot seat' activity where, for their class, they should defend one of the following suggested challenges to the story (or others produced by learners):
  - Rama should have ignored his father's promise and seized the throne;
  - Queen Kaikeyi should have been punished for her insolence and her and her son banished instead of Rama;
  - Ravana may have been bad, but it is possible to forgive bad people; Rama was wrong to test Sita's purity.
- Learners should also now be able to use the story to consider more fully the nature of belief and morality. A graffiti wall can be created in class where learners add their own responses to the following statements. Alternatively, these could be printed on cards and randomly dealt to learners in class who should then offer their own views on the statement:
  - The Ramayana shows that there are two simple principles in the world: Good and Evil...
  - What the Ramayana teaches Hindus about God is...
  - The Ramayana shows that what is good and what is evil is never simple...
  - The Ramayana offers answers to important' ultimate questions' such as...
  - The Ramayana helps us to understand the nature of morality because...
  - Learning about the Ramayana could help someone by...
  - The Ramayana has spiritual significance for a Hindu because...

Possible Assessment / Evidence:

- Learners' discussions and any output related to their understanding of the nature of God/gods in Hinduism and in relation to other world religions
- Learners' understanding of different genres of writing and how the Ramayana fits into this understanding of different genres
- Leaners' re-telling of the Ramayana story
- Discussions, writing and other work produced in relation to the 'meta-analysis' of the story'
- Learners' demonstrations of their understanding the religious and philosophical issues arising from the story
- Learners' participation in the 'hot seat' activity
- Graffiti wall/card comment activities output

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