



RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS

Aru Shah

AND THE END OF TIME

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Literature, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade level–specific Common Core State Standards.

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION



ABOUT THE BOOK

Best-selling author Rick Riordan introduces this adventure by Roshani Chokshi about twelve-year-old Aru Shah, who has a tendency to stretch the truth in order to fit in at her private middle school. While her classmates are jetting off to exotic vacations, she'll be spending her autumn break in the Museum of Ancient Indian Art and Culture that her mom curates. Is it any wonder Aru makes up stories about being royalty, traveling to Paris, and having a chauffeur?

One day, three schoolmates show up at Aru's doorstep to catch her in a lie. They don't believe her claim that the museum's Lamp of Bharata is cursed, and they dare Aru to prove it. *Just a quick light*, Aru thinks. Then she'll *never ever* fib again.

But lighting the lamp has dire consequences. She unwittingly frees the Sleeper, an ancient demon who is intent on awakening the God of Destruction. Her classmates and mother are frozen in time, and it's up to Aru to save them.

The only way to stop the demon is to find the reincarnations of the legendary Pandava brothers and journey through the Kingdom of Death. But how is one girl in Spider-Man pajamas supposed to do all *that*?

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

As a pre-reading activity, have students complete an anticipation guide structured in the following manner:

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING	STATEMENTS
		It's acceptable to keep secrets from family members if it protects them.
		There are consequences for every action an individual takes.
		No matter the situation, you should always trust your friends.
		Family is only defined as the people to whom you are related.
		Feeling guilt or remorse for one's actions can be life changing.

Instruct students to complete the guide by placing a "+" sign in the box next to the statements with which they agree, and a "0" next to those with which they disagree. They must commit to agreement or disagreement—there are no conditional responses. Students should be assured that there are no correct or incorrect positions.

Once students have had the opportunity to complete the guide, read each statement aloud and have students who agree show it by standing or raising their hands. Each student should be permitted to provide their rationale for agreeing if they wish.

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

As the pantheon of Hindu mythology and lore may not be as familiar to students as Greek, Roman, Norse, or Egyptian mythology, consider building background information using the following activity.

FOR STUDENTS: To build a foundation for understanding *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, work independently or with a small group to create a “Who’s Who in Hindu Mythology” exhibit. Using the Internet and library resources, create a “biography” of the mythological figures that includes the following:

- Physical description.
- Relationship to other important Hindu characters.
- Explanation of any significant connections to other mythological figures.
- Any other important information (such as special abilities or powers).

You or your team should prepare a digital exhibit with a poster or slide show designed to inform others about the Hindu mythological figures as a means of creating background knowledge for reading of *Aru Shah and the End of Time*.

WHILE READING

Exploring through Discussion and Writing

The following questions may be utilized throughout the study of *Aru Shah and the End of Time* as targeted questions for class discussion and reflection, or alternatively, they can be used as reflective writing prompts.

- 1 As the novel opens, Aru tells readers, “The problem with growing up around highly dangerous things is that after a while you just get used to them.” Do you agree? How does this statement set the stage for the adventures to come?
- 2 In what ways does growing up in the Museum of Ancient Indian Art and Culture make Aru’s childhood unique? If you had an opportunity to be raised in a favorite museum or attraction, which one would it be? What do you see as the benefits to such an opportunity? Are there any drawbacks?
- 3 While discussing the *diya* and inquiring with her mother about why it can’t be lit, Dr. Shah tells Aru, “Sometimes light illuminates things that are better left in the dark.” In what ways is Aru’s mother correct? Can you think of any circumstances that might be an exception?
- 4 Consider the chapter titles; what do you think they add to the story? Which chapter titles did you like best and why?
- 5 While reflecting upon her life lived and spent in the museum, Aru talks about waiting for “magic.” Given what transpires upon her lighting the *diya*, do you believe Aru regrets wishing for something extraordinary?
- 6 What can be gleaned about Aru’s need to impress her classmates? Have you ever felt tempted to behave similarly? In your opinion, is telling tales always wrong?
- 7 Aru hears a booming voice ask, “WHO HAS DARED TO WAKE THE SLEEPER FROM HIS SLUMBER?” Upon actually meeting Aru, Boo states, “Only one of the five Pandava brothers could light the lamp.” Why is his reaction to learning that Aru is a teenage girl so seemingly negative?
- 8 Upon meeting Mini, Aru thinks to herself that meeting her was “better than a middle school dance,” but she still feels cheated. Why is that? In what ways does this change for her as time goes on? Consider Mini’s reaction to meeting Aru—is it similar? How do their initial impressions evolve over time?
- 9 Mini tells Aru, “My mother always says that knowledge is power,” to which Aru retorts, “And my mother says that ignorance is bliss.” Consider both of these statements. Which do you agree with most? Can you make a case for the other? Are there any ways in which these statements reflect the how these Pandavas approach their quest?
- 10 Aru’s mother speaks Gujarati, one of the official languages of the country of India. How many official languages does India have? Does this change your sense of how diverse India is?

- 11 Aru and Mini learn that while their parents are gods, those parents are far from perfect. Consider your favorite Pandava and consider how her knowledge of her godly parent changes throughout the course of the novel. In what ways is this realization similar or different to what non-magical kids learn about their own parents?
- 12 What was your impression of the Seasons upon Aru and Mini's experience with them at the Court of the Seasons? Had you ever considered seasons in such a way?
- 13 Mini tells Aru, "My mom used to tell me that Death is like a parking lot. You stay there for just a bit and then go somewhere else." How does the idea of being reincarnated help make Aru feel a bit better?
- 14 In what ways does their time at the Palace of Illusions change Aru and Mini? Do you think a place that once was your home holds power? Why or why not?
- 15 Boo often seems frustrated at his role as guardian and teacher of the Pandavas; do you believe he has the right to feel this way? In what ways does he change throughout the course of the book?
- 16 *Aru Shah and the End of Time* features a number of characters that exhibit a variety of strengths. Who most impresses you with their strength? Explain your choice.
- 17 While surrounded by wilderness, having escaped from the Sleeper, Aru hopes that the gods will offer some assistance until Boo states, "I told you, they will not meddle in human affairs." Why do you believe the gods generally choose not to help their own children? Do you believe them right not to do so? Explain your position.
- 18 What does Shukra hope to gain by capturing Aru's and Mini's memories? Would you be willing to give up yours to save yourself?
- 19 In many ways, *Aru Shah and the End of Time* is a story about family. Explain the significance of family to each of the major characters.
- 20 Throughout *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, Aru and Mini consider the role karma plays in their lives. What makes this idea so important?
- 21 Aru's mother states, "I believe that our destinies aren't chains around our necks, but wings that give us flight." Do you agree with her assessment?
- 22 How does learning the identity of the Sleeper impact Aru's decision making? Do you think you'd have a similar struggle? Why or why not?
- 23 The Sleeper tells Aru, "Mercy makes fools of us." What does he mean by this statement? Why does he blame Aru and her mother for who he is and the state of his future?
- 24 After learning that her "home" dad hadn't left them at all—he had just been locked away in a lamp by her mom—Aru thinks, "This is so messed up." Do you agree with Aru's reaction? Can you make a case for her mother's actions?
- 25 Consider the ending of *Aru Shah and the End of Time* and predict what's to come in the next *ROM* novel.

Correlates to Common Core Standard Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details R.L.6.2.; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L.6.1., 6.2., 6.3. Key Ideas and Details R.L.7.2.; Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration S.L.7.1., 7.2., 7.3.



POST-READING ACTIVITIES

Extension Activities: Writing and Researching

- 1 In *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, the only way to stop the Sleeper is to find the reincarnations of the five legendary Pandava brothers, protagonists of the Hindu epic poem the *Mahabharata*. Using library resources, databases, and the Internet, learn more about the epic poem the *Mahabharata* and the role each of the five brothers plays in the story. Use a digital presentation tool of choice to share what is learned.
- 2 The *Ramayana*, written by the sage of learning, Valmiki, is the other celebrated ancient Indian poem well known throughout the world. Using a variety of research tools, dig deeply to discover more about this epic story. Afterward, gather with classmates to critically discuss what you discovered, being sure to focus on what you learned, what you found most interesting, what surprised you, etc.
- 3 In the novel *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, the Museum of Ancient Indian Art and Culture is the setting for the climactic sequence, but currently, no such museum exists in Atlanta; rather, one of the largest collections of ancient Indian and Hindu art is held in the collection at New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art. Research the collection at the Met to discover the following:
 - When was the Indian and Hindu collection established?
 - What types of pieces are housed there?
 - In your opinion, what did you find most interesting about the collection holdings?
 - What were your particular favorite pieces?Select a favorite piece and become an “expert” on this particular artifact, being able to share specific information about it with others and explain why you personally find it interesting.
- 4 While dealing with Shukra while crossing the Bridge of Forgetting, Aru considers the idea of karma, the idea that “what goes around comes around.” Consider this concept—do you agree with it? Why or why not? Research this concept to discover more, and draft a journal entry reflecting on whether your ideas have changed based upon further thought and investigation.
- 5 Many of the fearsome and fascinating mythical creatures that color Hindu mythology appear in *Aru Shah and the End of Time*. Using library and Internet resources, select a specific creature that intrigued you while reading and conduct additional research to share with peers.
- 6 In *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, readers witness Aru and Mini mature and grow throughout the course of the novel, and even Boo changes due to his relationship with the duo. Based on your observations, which character do you believe demonstrates the greatest growth? Compose a short persuasive essay explaining your position. While considering your selected character's experiences, use textual evidence from the novel to provide specific examples to support your case.
- 7 As Aru and Mini return to the palace, they discover that it has been hurt by their absence. Have you ever moved or left a favorite place behind? While that transition might have been difficult for you, have you ever imagined that the place you left might have missed you back? Write a letter to yourself detailing those memories from the point of view of your left-behind place (this could be a previous home or school, or just a location your younger self loved to frequent).
- 8 Though the stories of the major players in *Aru Shah and the End of Time* have been passed down to us from Hindu mythology, if these characters lived in our time, they would likely use the same social media that is popular in our world today. Working in a small group, select a Pandava of your choice and create a faux Instagram account or Facebook page for that character, being sure to complete all the pertinent information, like education, relationships, groups to follow, pages to like, as well as 2–3 status updates with #hashtags.

Key Ideas and Details R.L.6.2.; *Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration* S.L.6.1., 6.2., 6.3. *Key Ideas and Details and Common Core Standard Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge* W.6.4 and *Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge* W.7.4.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roshani Chokshi (www.roshanichokshi.com) is the author of the instant *New York Times* best-selling novel *The Star-Touched Queen* and its companion, *A Crown of Wishes*. She studied fairy tales in college, and she has a pet luck dragon that looks suspiciously like a Great Pyrenees dog. *Aru Shah and the End of Time*, her middle grade debut, was inspired by the stories her grandmother told her, as well as Roshani's all-consuming love for *Sailor Moon*. She lives in Georgia and says *y'all*, but she doesn't really have a Southern accent. Her Twitter handle is @roshani_chokshi.



Photo credit: Aman Sharma

Q & A WITH ROSHANI CHOKSHI

- Q:** *Aru Shah and the End of Time* is the first installment of Rick Riordan Presents. What has your experience been like getting to work with a mythology expert and reader favorite like Rick Riordan?
- A:** It's been awesome! But also . . . terrifying! When I first got his notes back on *Aru*, I wanted to dieeeeeee. Rick left, I kid you not, like a thousand comments. As it turned out, many of them were "lol," which was great. And the rest of them were exactly the kind of guidance you expect from a teacher, one that lets you find your *own* path through the thicket.
- Q:** You've shared in other interviews that *Aru Shah and the End of Time* is a story of sisterhood; can you explain that vision and why you find that particularly important?
- A:** I'm very close to my siblings, my brother and sister, and I wanted to celebrate sibling relationships as well as female friendships. I've kept my best friends since childhood, and I always used to write stories where we were the protagonists of bizarre adventures to fairyland. With *Aru*, I wanted young girls to see that they are just as deserving of magic.
- Q:** For readers discovering Aru and Mini, can you share a bit about how these characters are similar to you?
- A:** Oh boy. Well, Aru is a lot like me in middle school. I was a notorious liar, with an active imagination and no outlet for that. Mini is every bit of my anxious/neurotic self, ha-ha. But I think the most important trait that both girls have from me is desperately wanting a sense of connection. I was very lucky to find that with my friends and family, and I wanted them to find that, too.
- Q:** What's been the most exciting part of being able to bring *Aru Shah and the End of Time* to young people? Have there been any unique challenges to this endeavor? What are you most looking forward to as you further develop the Pandava world for readers?
- A:** The most exciting part is hearing their reactions! I don't think my inbox has ever been so full of girls (and boys!—I don't believe in girl books vs. boy books) telling me how much they relate to Aru and Mini. For me, the challenge has been balancing how I retell certain myths, which have a lot of nuances and inconsistencies depending on the region of India in which they're told. I'm most looking forward to introducing readers to more of the characters and the larger story underpinning the series.

WHO'S WHO IN ARU SHAH AND THE END OF TIME

(Shared by Roshani Chokshi)

Hiyo! I'd like to preface this glossary by saying that this is by no means exhaustive or attentive to the nuances of mythology. India is GINORMOUS, and these myths and legends vary from state to state.

What you read here is merely a slice of what *I* understand from the stories *I* was told and the research *I* conducted. The wonderful thing about mythology is that its arms are wide enough to embrace many traditions from many regions. My hope is that this glossary gives you context for Aru and Mini's world, and perhaps nudges you to do some research of your own. ☺

Aspara (AHP-sah-rah) Apsaras are beautiful, heavenly dancers who entertain in the Court of the Heavens. They're often the wives of heavenly musicians. In Hindu myths, apsaras are usually sent on errands by Lord Indra to break the meditation of sages who are getting a little too powerful. It's pretty hard to keep meditating when a celestial nymph starts dancing in front of you. And if you scorn her affection (as Arjuna did in the Mahabharata), she might just curse you. Just sayin'.

Ashvins (Nasatya and Dasra) (OSH-vin, NUSS-uht-yuh, DUS-ruh) Twin horsemen gods who symbolize sunrise and sunset, and are considered the gods of medicine and healing. They're often depicted with the heads of horses. Thanks to the boon of Kunti (the mother of Arjuna, Yudhistira, Bhima, and Karna, who was blessed with the ability to call on any god to give her a son), the Ashvins became the fathers of Nakula and Sahadeva, the twin Pandavas, by King Pandu's second wife, Madri.

Astras (AHS-trahz) Supernatural weapons that are usually summoned into battle by a specific chant. There are all kinds of astras, like *Gada*, the mace of Lord Hanuman, which is like a giant hammer; or *Indraastra*, invoked by the god Indra, which brings a shower of arrows, much like Indra, the god of the weather, can summon "showers." Get it? Ha! Gods like irony. And violence.

Asura (AH-soo-rah) A sometimes good, sometimes bad race of semidivine beings. They're most popularly known from the story about the churning of the ocean. You see, once upon a time the gods were not immortal. In order to attain the drink of immortality (*amrita*), they had to churn the Ocean of Milk. But . . . it's an ocean. So the gods needed help. And who did they call? You guessed it, the asuras. The asuras were promised a cut of the immortality. But the gods, obviously, did not want to share. Lord Vishnu, the supreme god, transformed into Mohini, an enchantress. Once the asuras and devas (divine ones) had churned the ocean, Mohini sneakily gave *all* the amrita to the devas. As one can imagine, the asuras were *not* happy.

Bharata (BAH-rah-tah) The Sanskrit name for the Indian subcontinent, named after the legendary emperor Bharata, who was an ancestor of the Pandavas.

Bharatnatyam (BAH-raht-naht-yum) An ancient, classical dance form that originated in South India. Yours truly studied bharatnatyam for ten years. (You can ask my kneecaps about it. . . . They're still angry with me.) Bharatnatyam is its own kind of storytelling. Oftentimes the choreography of the dance draws on episodes from Hindu mythology. Bharatnatyam is frequently connected to Lord Shiva. One of Shiva's other names is Nataraja, which means "the Lord of Dance" and symbolizes dance as both a creative and destructive force.

Bollywood India's version of Hollywood. They produce tons of movies a year. You can always recognize a Bollywood movie, because somebody gets fake-slapped at least once, and every time a musical number starts, the setting changes *drastically*. (How did they start off dancing in the streets of India and end up in Switzerland by the end of the song?) One of Bollywood's most enduring celebrities is Shah Rukh Khan. (Yours truly did *not* have the most giant crush on him and keep his picture in her locker. . . . You have *no* proof, go away.)

Brahmasura (BRAH-mah-soo-rah) Once upon a time there was an asura who prayed long and hard to the god Shiva (Lord of Destruction, as you might recall). Shiva, pleased with the asura's austerities, granted him a boon, and this dude, real casually, BTW, asked for this: "ANYONE WHOSE HEAD I TOUCH WITH MY HAND GETS BURNED TO ASHES." I imagine their convo went like this:

Shiva: Why, though? *Brahmasura:* ☺

Shiva: No, seriously, why? That's a horrible wish. *Brahmasura:* ☺

Shiva: I . . . ugh. Okay. Fine. You will regret this! *shakes fist* *Brahmasura:* ☺

Okay, so fast forward, and everyone hates Brahmasura and is scared of him, so Lord Vishnu has a solution. He changes form to Mohini, the beautiful enchantress. Brahmasura is like "OMG I love you," and Mohini's like "LOL, okay, let's dance first, and see if you can match me move for move," and Brahmasura is super excited and does the thing. Well, joke's on him, because when Mohini/Lord Vishnu puts her hand on her own head, Brahmasura imitates her. *BAM*. Turned into ashes. Let it be known to all ye mortals: don't underestimate what you might consider froufrou things, like dancing, because you might just end up a pile of ashes.

Chakora (CHUH-kor-uh) A mythical bird that is said to live off moonbeams. Imagine a really pretty chicken that shuns corn kernels in favor of moon dust, which, to be honest, sounds way yummier anyway.

Chitrigupta (CHIT-rih-GOOP-tuh) The god tasked with keeping records of each human's life. He's known for being very meticulous and is often credited with being the first person to start using letters. Before Chitrigupta arrived in the Underworld, the Dharma Raja (the god of the dead) kept getting overwhelmed with the number of people in his kingdom. Sometimes he'd get so confused, he'd send a good guy to hell and a bad dude to heaven. Whoops. That must've been awkward to explain. I wonder if they got freebies in the next life: *So sorry about that mix-up! Here! Enjoy a lifelong ten percent discount at any Pizza Hut of your choice.*

Danda (DAH-nduh) A giant punishing rod that is often considered the symbol of the Dharma Raja, the god of the dead.

Devas (DEH-vahz) The Sanskrit term for the race of gods.

Dharma (DAR-mah) Oof. This one is a doozy. The simplest way to explain *dharma* is that it means *duty*. (Sorry, I keep imagining the dog, Do, interjecting here with a barking laugh and shouting, *Doo-tee, doo-tee!*) But it's not duty as in *this is your job*, but as in *this is the cosmically right way to live*.

Dharma Raja (DAR-mah RAH-jah) The Lord of Death and Justice, and the father of the oldest Pandava brother, Yudhistira. His mount is a water buffalo.

Diya (DEE-yuh) An oil lamp used in parts of South Asia, usually made of brass and placed in temples. Clay diyas are colorfully painted and used during Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights.

Gandhari (GUN-dar-ree) The powerful queen of Hastinapura. When she married the sightless king, Dhritrashtra, she chose to wear a blindfold in order to share his blindness. Only *once* did she let her blindfold drop: to see Duryodhana, her eldest son (and an enemy of the Pandava brothers). Had he been naked at the time, her gaze would've made him invincible. But the dude was modest and left his underwear on, thereby remaining vulnerable. (Sounds a bit like the story of Achilles, doesn't it?)

Ganesh (guh-NESH) The elephant-headed god worshipped as the remover of obstacles and the god of luck and new beginnings. His *vahana* (divine vehicle) is a mouse. There are lots of explanations given for why Ganesh has the head of an elephant. The story my grandmother told me is that his mother, Parvati, made him out of clay while her husband, Shiva (Lord of Destruction), was away. As Parvati is getting their home ready for Shiva's return, she tells Ganesh not to let anyone through the door. (Guests can be a nuisance.) So Ganesh, being a good kid, says "Okay!" When Shiva strides up to the door, shouting, "Honeyyyy, I'm hooooome!" Ganesh and Shiva look at each other, frown, and at the same time say, "And just who do you think *you* are?" Keep in mind, this is the first time father and son are meeting. Angry that he's not being let into his own house, Shiva lops off Ganesh's head. Which I can only imagine was supremely awkward for the family. To avoid a big fight with Parvati, Shiva goes out and grabs an elephant's head, sticks it on his son's body, and *bam*, now it's fine.

Gunghroo (GOON-groo) Anklets made of small bells strung together, worn by Indian dancers.

Halahala (HAL-lah-HAL-lah) When the gods and the demons churned the Ocean of Milk to get the nectar of immortality, *lots* of other stuff came out of the ocean. Some things were really good! Like the seven-headed horse that Indra claimed as his vahana. One of the not so great things was halahala, the most vicious poison in the world. Shiva saved the lives of the gods and demons by drinking the poison when it spewed out of the ocean, which is why his throat is blue and why one of his names is Nilakantha, meaning *the one with the blue throat*.

Hanuman (HUH-noo-mahn) One of the main figures in the Indian epic the Ramayana, who was known for his devotion to the god-king Rama and Rama's wife, Sita. Hanuman is the son of Vayu, the god of the wind, and Anjana, an apsara. He had lots of mischievous exploits as a kid, including mistaking the sun for a mango and trying to eat it. There are still temples and shrines dedicated to Hanuman, and he's often worshipped by wrestlers because of his incredible strength. He's the half brother of Bhima, the second-oldest Pandava brother.

Indra (IN-druh) The king of heaven, and the god of thunder and lightning. He is the father of Arjuna, the third-oldest Pandava brother. His main weapon is Vajra, a lightning bolt. He has two vahanas: Airavata, the white elephant who spins clouds, and Uchchishravas, the seven-headed white horse. I've got a pretty good guess what his favorite color is. . . .

Jaani (JAH-nee) A term of endearment that means *life* or *sweetheart*.

Karma (KAR-mah) A philosophy that your actions affect what happens to you next. Imagine there's one last piece of chocolate cake at a bakery. You've just bought it for your mom, but some dude steals it while you're putting your change into your pocket. As he runs out the door cackling "*Mwababa, the chocolate is mine,*" he slips on a banana peel and the cake box soars out of his hand. It lands, *unharmmed*, on the floor by your feet. You would shake your head, say, "That's *karma*!" and take the cake. For a musical rendition of karma, listen to Justin Timberlake's "What Goes Around . . . Comes Around."

Kurekshetra (KOO-rook-SHET-rah) Kurekshetra is now known as a city in the state of Haryana, India. In the Hindu epic poem the Mahabharata, Kurekshetra is a region where the Mahabharata War was fought. It gets its name from King Kuru, the ancestor of both the Pandavas and their mortal enemies/cousins, the Kauravas.

Lakshmi (LUCK-shmee) The Hindu goddess of wealth and good fortune, and the consort (wife) of Vishnu, one of the three major Hindu deities. Her vahanas are an owl and an elephant, and she's often depicted in art as seated in an open lotus blossom.

Mahabharata (MAH-hah-BAR-ah-tah) One of two Sanskrit epic poems of ancient India (the other being the Ramayana). It is an important source of information about the development of Hinduism between 400 BCE and 200 CE and tells the story of the struggle between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas.

Mahabharata War The war fought between the Pandavas and the Kauravas over the throne of Hastinapura. Lots of ancient kingdoms were torn apart as they picked which side to support.

Makara (MA-kar-ah) A mythical creature that's usually depicted as half crocodile and half fish. Makara statues are often seen at temple entrances, because makaras are the guardians of thresholds. Ganga, the river goddess, uses a makara as her vahana.

Mayasura (MAI-ah-SOO-rah) The demon king and architect who built the Pandavas' Palace of Illusions.

Mehndi (MEN-dee) A form of temporary body art made from the powdered dry leaves of the henna plant. The designs are intricate and usually worn on the hands and feet during special occasions like Hindu weddings and festivals. It has a distinct smell when it dries, like licorice and chocolate. (*I love the smell!*)

Naga (nagini, pl.) (NAG-uh, NAH-gee-nee) A group of serpentine beings who are magical, and, depending on the region in India, considered divine. Among the most famous nagini is Vasuki, one of the king serpents who was used as a rope when the gods and asuras churned the Ocean of Milk to get the elixir of life. Another is Uloopi, a naga princess who fell in love with Arjuna, married him, and used a magical gem to save his life.

Pandava brothers (Arjuna, Yudhistira, Bhima, Nakula, and Sahadeva) (PAN-dah-vah, ar-JOO-nah, yoo-diss-TEE-ruh, BEE-muh, nuh-KOO-luh, saw-hah-DAY-vuh) Demigod warrior princes, and the heroes of the epic Mahabharata poem. Arjuna, Yudhistira, and Bhima were born to Queen Kunti, the first wife of King Pandu. Nakula and Sahadeva were born to Queen Madri, the second wife of King Pandu.

Pranama (PRAH-nuh-mah) A bow to touch the feet of a respected person, e.g., a teacher, grandparent, or other elder. It makes family reunions particularly treacherous, because your back ends up hurting from having to bend down so often.

Raksha (RUCK-shaw) Rakshas (sometimes called rakshasas) are mythological beings, like demigods, who are sometimes good and sometimes bad. They are powerful sorcerers, and can change shape to take on any form.

Rama (RAH-mah) The hero of the epic poem the Ramayana. He was the seventh incarnation of the god Vishnu.

Ramayana (RAH-mah-YAWN-uh) One of two great Sanskrit epic poems (the other being the Mahabharata), it describes how the god-king Rama, aided by his brother and the monkeyfaced demigod Hanuman, rescue Rama's wife, Sita, from the ten-headed demon king, Ravana.

Ritus (RIH-tooZ) Seasons. There are typically six seasons in the Indian calendar: Spring (Vasanta), Summer (Grishma), Monsoon (Varsha), Autumn (Sharada), Pre-winter (Hemanta), and Winter (Shishira).

Salwar kameez (SAL-vahr kah-MEEZ) A traditional Indian outfit, basically translating to *pants and shirt*. (A little disappointing, I know.) A salwar kameez can be fancy or basic, depending on the occasion. Usually, the fancier the garment, the itchier it is to wear.

Samsara (SAHM-sahr-uh) The cycle of death and rebirth.

Sanskrit (SAHN-skrit) An ancient language of India. Many Hindu scriptures and epic poems are written in Sanskrit.

Sari (SAH-ree) A garment worn by women in South Asia that is created by a length of silk intricately draped and tied around the body. Attempting to put one on unassisted usually results in tears. And they are very difficult to dance in.

Shakhuni (SHAW-koo-nee) One of the antagonists of the Mahabharata. Shakhuni was the king of Subala, and the brother of the blind queen, Gandhari. He is best known for orchestrating the infamous game of dice between the Pandavas and the Kauravas that led to the Pandavas' twelve-year exile and, ultimately, the epic war.

Sherwani (share-VAH-nee) A knee-length coat worn by men in South Asia.

Shiva (SHEE-vuh) One of the three main gods in the Hindu pantheon, often associated with destruction. He is also known as the Lord of Cosmic Dance. His consort is Parvati.

Soma (SO-muh) The drink of the gods.

Uchchaihshravas (OOCH-chai-SHRAH-vahs) A sevenheaded flying horse created during the churning of the milk ocean, the king of horses, a vahana of Indra. Forget dragons, I want one of these.

Urvashi (OOR-vah-shee) A famous apsara, considered the most beautiful of all the apsaras. Her name literally means *she who can control the hearts of others*. Girl also had a *temper*. In the Mahabharata, when Arjuna was chilling in heaven with his dad, Indra, Urvashi made it known that she thought he was pretty cute. But Arjuna wasn't having it. Instead, he respectfully called her *Mother*, because Urvashi had once been the wife of King Pururavas, an ancestor of the Pandavas. Scorned, Urvashi cursed him to lose his manhood for a year. (Rude!) In that year, Arjuna posed as a eunuch, took the name Brihannala, and taught song and dance to the princess of the kingdom of Virata.

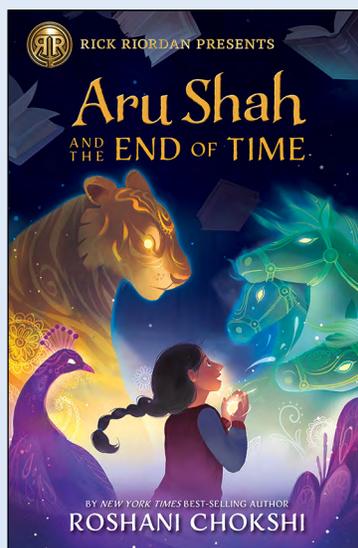
Valmiki (VAHL-mee-kee) The sage revered as the writer of the Ramayana. He earned the name Valmiki ("born of an anthill") after performing severe religious penances for several years. During that time, large anthills formed near him. Not sure why. Building a nest around a human dude does not seem like a sound housing decision. Maybe they thought he was a boulder. Must've been quite a shock when Valmiki finally opened his eyes and stood up. ("Boulder, how could you? Betrayal!")

Vayu (VAH-yoo) The god of the wind and the father of Bhima, the second-oldest Pandava brother. Vayu is also the father of Hanuman, the monkey-faced demigod. His mount is a gazelle.

If you made it to the end of this glossary, you deserve a high five. Sadly, I'm a little wary of those. (As Mini would say, "Germs! PLAGUE!") How about an elbow-bump instead? Ready? Three . . . two . . . one . . .

This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an assistant professor at Sam Houston State University.
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