

SAMPLE

EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY
LEVEL D: WISDOM TALES 1

Instructor's Guide

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EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY LEVEL D **SAMPLE**

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Welcome to *Exploring the World through Story!*

Exploring the World through Story introduces children to the wonder of words and the diversity of human cultures through the study of world literature. Over the course of the elementary grades—3–5 or ages 7–11—children study **wisdom tales** from the world’s spiritual traditions, both ancient and modern, with a focus on cultural literacy and literary analysis.

At the elementary levels, EWS has three main educational goals. First, students become familiar with the **most important stories from each spiritual or cultural tradition**. Learning in this area is supported by reading, discussing, and writing about the stories and by memory work. Second, comprehension questions and a clear approach to structure help students **learn the basics of literary analysis**. Finally, students **practice composition skills** with narrations and other writing activities.

Although the elementary levels build on the foundation laid in the primary levels, the program is structured to allow students to begin at any point.

About Level D

Each of the elementary levels of EWS covers stories from one major Asian tradition, one ancient belief system (“mythology”), and one Abrahamic faith.¹ In *Exploring the World through Story: Level D*, third graders read wisdom tales from the **Hindu, ancient Egyptian, and Jewish traditions**. The stories have been chosen for their cultural or historical importance and for their literary influence. (EWS is a secular curriculum. As such, it makes no claims for or against the validity of any religious belief.)

Exploring the World through Story: Level D is just one component of a complete English Language Arts program for third grade. Your child will also need dedicated [grammar](#) and [writing](#) curricula, and you may also want to continue with phonics-based [reading instruction](#), handwriting practice, and spelling as needed. Students should read independently for at least 30 minutes a day from a wide range of fiction —children’s classics, contemporary middle-grade novels, and historical novels—and poetry as well as biographies and other nonfiction works. I also encourage parents to allow students the freedom to choose their own books for recreational reading.

¹ “Mythology may, in a real sense, be defined as other people’s religion.” —Joseph Campbell, *Thou Art That: Transforming Religious Metaphor* (New World Library, 2001).

About Wisdom Tales

Wisdom tales are teaching stories that affirm cultural values—often of a religious or moral nature—through the medium of imaginative narratives. The category of wisdom tales encompasses sacred stories from the whole range of the world’s spiritual traditions, ancient and modern. It includes scriptural narratives as well as stories sometimes designated as myths or pious legends. It also includes popular oral narratives (folktales) with a didactic or moral purpose. Students will encounter all of these types of stories in Levels D-F of this program.

Beyond the simple pleasure of reading interesting stories from around the world, there are three main benefits to the study of wisdom tales for today’s students. First, wisdom tales furnish a **repository of images and cultural reference points** that serve as sources for other art forms, including other types of literature. To read world classics with understanding, students must first become familiar with these foundational narratives. In addition, wisdom tales make an **ideal introduction to the basics of literary analysis** because, by design, they function on both a literal and a symbolic level. Wisdom tales invite the listener or reader to look beyond the surface of the narrative and ask “What does it mean?” Finally, because wisdom tales articulate and transmit cultural norms, they offer **insight into each culture’s distinctive values**. Students gain cross-cultural understanding and appreciation through engagement with world wisdom tales. By becoming familiar with these stories, children will be well-prepared not only to continue their studies of world literature but also to engage with a diverse world that is increasingly connected across national, cultural, and religious lines.

About the Lesson Plans

This curriculum provides plans for two lessons for each of the 36 weeks in the standard US school year. Longer stories have been broken up into segments to keep lessons to a manageable length and to facilitate narration.

Please note that, at this level, EWS is not self-teaching; you will need to work closely with your child to assure that they are understanding the texts and getting the most out of the writing activities. Although there is relatively little preparation required of the parent to teach EWS, it is still important to **read through each lesson plan carefully** before teaching it to make sure you have all necessary materials on hand and understand how to implement the writing activities. A **Teaching Prep checklist** is provided below for your convenience.

EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY LEVEL D **SAMPLE**

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The lesson plans follow a standard format that makes it easy for parents and children to get into a rhythm with their literature studies. Each plan is divided into two parts: Reading and Writing Activities.

The **Reading** section begins with a short introduction to the text or a pointer to background information that appears in the book itself. Read through this section before teaching the lesson, and highlight any information you want to share with your child.

The stories are meant to be **read aloud to your child**. While some of the texts are written at a level accessible to advancing readers, children’s decoding, comprehension, and fluency skills vary widely. If your child is able to read the texts independently with ease and understanding, ask them to read aloud to you, or switch off reading to each other.

As part of the Reading section, I have provided lists of **names and vocabulary words** that may be unfamiliar to your child. The vocabulary lists are made up of “Tier Two” words: “words that are of high utility for mature language users and are found across a wide variety of domains.”² The vocabulary lists in EWS are meant as a ready reference so you don’t have to interrupt your reading to look up new words. Rather than listing formal dictionary definitions, I offer what Isabel Beck and her colleagues refer to as “student-friendly explanations” that build on the child’s existing vocabulary and knowledge base. If you like, you can use the lists as a resource for further vocabulary instruction.³

The second part of the lesson, **Writing Activities**, includes a variety of tasks, including oral and written narration; comprehension questions that call for oral and/or written responses; copywork and dictation; and more.

This section concludes with **memory work**, and you’ll find an **implementation guide** in Appendix C (pp. 223-225).

About the Writing Activities

The oral narration, copywork, and dictation activities in EWS align with the skills taught in [Writing with Ease: Strong Fundamentals](#) by Susan Wise Bauer. EWS’s writing activities also integrate techniques from [The Writing Revolution](#) by Judith C. Hochman

² Isabel L Beck, et al., *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, 2nd ed. (Guilford Press, 2013), p. 9.

³ For instructional ideas, see Beck et al., pp. 183-193.

and Natalie Wexler as well as ideas from the [Core Knowledge Language Arts](#) curriculum.

The focus of this year’s writing work is **sentence-level composition**. To help reinforce what your student is learning in their writing curriculum, lessons include a variety of exercise types: completing sentence stems; adding appositives and dependent clauses; combining sentences; and more. This level also begins modeling paragraph formation, a skill that will take center stage in Levels E and F.

The **Student Worksheet pack** contains all the pages necessary to complete the writing activities, including blank copywork and dictation sheets. **Print the student worksheets single-sided and store them in a three-ring binder** rather than having them spiral-bound. This will prevent the need to flip back and forth when the student is referring to graphic organizers during the writing process.

Scheduling Options

EWS-D consists of 72 lessons, or two per week for a 36-week school year. You can either teach each complete lesson in a single day or split the material up to teach each lesson over two days.

Option A: 2x/week
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two lessons per week plus daily memory work review• 60-90 minutes per lesson• Complete reading, writing, copywork/dictation, and memory work for each lesson in one day

Option B: 4x/week
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Four lessons per week plus daily memory work review• 30-45 minutes per lesson• Days 1 and 3: Complete reading, copywork/dictation, and introduce new memory work• Days 2 and 4: Complete writing activity and review memory work

Lesson Prep Checklist

- Read through the lesson plan carefully.
- Highlight information from the Teaching Notes to share with your child.
- Preview the writing activity.
- Print out the student worksheets.

Lesson Presentation Checklist

- Introduce the reading.
- Review the previous lesson's narration if indicated.
- Read the day's passage aloud.
- Introduce new vocabulary as needed during the reading.
- Introduce and supervise the writing activity.
- Introduce and supervise copywork/dictation.
- Review old memory work.
- Introduce new memory work.

Required Materials for EWS: Level D

☐ *Classic Tales from India* - Vatsala Sperling and Harish Johari
[Paperback](#) | [Kindle](#)

Dr. Sperling retells the best-known stories of several major Hindu deities as well as the two great Sanskrit epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, in a clear and engaging style. The illustrations were created with a traditional process used in Hindu devotional art. The book includes many helpful features, including character lists, pronunciation guides, background information about the stories, and interpretive notes addressed to parents and teachers.

☐ *Treasury of Egyptian Mythology* - Donna Jo Napoli
[Hardcover](#) | [Kindle](#) | [Audible](#)

Professor Napoli weaves together tales of the Egyptian gods, including both prominent and lesser-known figures from ancient Egyptian religion. The book includes informational chapters on the Nile and funeral rites, plus maps, character guides, a timeline, and an extensive bibliography.

☐ *Treasury of Bible Stories* - Donna Jo Napoli
[Hardcover](#) | [Kindle](#)

Professor Napoli retells the most influential stories from the Hebrew scriptures in lyrical prose. Her text, written in consultation with professor of Biblical Hebrew Helen Plotkin, covers all of the stories that the Core Knowledge Foundation lists as the most important for elementary-school students to know as part of cultural literacy. Like her Egyptian mythology book, Napoli's story Bible includes interpretive notes and a section at the end of the volume with maps, a timeline, and a list of characters. Christina Balit's stunning art accurately reflects the ethnic diversity of the ancient Eastern Mediterranean, which some popular story Bibles unfortunately do not.

Additional Materials

- Print-out of student worksheets, three-hole punched
- 1” three-ring binder to store worksheets
- Pencils, pens, erasers
- Highlighter
- A small white board, markers, and eraser (optional: for presenting copywork models or doing grammar analysis)
- A supply of [lined index cards](#)
- An [index card file box](#)
- [Tabbed index card dividers numbered 1-31](#), to fit the file

LESSON D-1

“How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head” (Part 1)

Classic Tales from India, pp. 15-23

Reading

Teaching Notes

Our first book for this year, *Classic Tales from India*, brings together some of the most important figures and stories from **ancient Sanskrit literature**. These tales come from the sacred writings of **Hinduism**.

Hinduism has two basic classes of sacred literature, *shruti* and *smriti*. *Shruti* texts, which include the Vedas and Upanishads, are believed to be divinely revealed, while *smriti* texts are those based on human memory that may have named authors or compilers. The *shruti* texts deal with an older generation of divine beings that share much in common with the gods of the ancient Greek and Norse pantheons. The stories in *Classic Tales of India* derive from the *smriti* canon, which includes both the Puranas—compilations of myths, legends, and history—and the two great Sanskrit epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.⁴

Our first story, from the *Shiva Purana*, recounts how Shiva’s son Ganesh⁵ got his elephant head. Our authors provide some information about Ganesh on page 16, and you may wish to read this to your child by way of introduction to the character. You may also want to look ahead to the “Note to Parents and Teachers” on page 42, which discusses some of the themes and cultural values expressed in the story. (Each story in this book ends with a similar note.)

The story also introduces several other key figures from this tradition. Central among them are **Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva**, who together make up the Hindu *trimurti* (lit. “three forms”). These are the three gods, or aspects of the divine, in charge of the creation, preservation, and destruction of the world, respectively. We also meet several manifestations of **Shakti**, the divine feminine or mother goddess, as well as other characters who reappear in later stories, such as the storm god Indra and the sage Narada.

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Smriti>

⁵ Many Sanskrit names end in -a, which is pronounced as /ah/ or /aah/. Speakers of some modern Indian languages, such as Hindi, may drop the final /ah/ sound when saying these names. Consequently, you will hear people say either Ganesh or Ganesha. Here I have followed our author’s choice in using *Ganesh*.

In addition to reading the notes on page 16 to your child, try to **connect the story to their existing knowledge**.

- Have they studied India before? If so, what do they remember about it?
- Do they already know stories from the Hindu tradition? Students who have completed EWS-C may remember “The Tiger, the Brahman, and the Jackal.”

If this is your child’s first exposure to Indian literature and culture, **show them where India is located on a world map or globe**, and help them look up the country in a geography reference book or children’s history encyclopedia.⁶ You can also download the free Core Knowledge History and Geography [student reader on Ancient India](#).

This story, like some of the others in this book, does include depictions of violence and armed conflict. These are facts of literature as of life, and the stories treat them as necessary evils. If you have a sensitive child, it may help to remind them that these stories are meant to teach deeper messages about justice, self-sacrifice, and balance. No actual elephants were harmed in the making of this story!

► Now introduce the story itself to your child as follows:

Today we’re going to start reading a story from India called “How Ganesh Got His Elephant Head.”

Next, **read the passage aloud**. It’s best if you can sit right next to the child so they can see the pictures and follow along with the story. Refer to the pronunciation guide and vocabulary list below as necessary. Today’s passage ends at the section break two-thirds of the way down page 23.

⁶ I recommend [Countries of the World: Our World in Pictures](#) and [First History Encyclopedia](#), both by Dorling Kindersley (DK), as basic references for this age group.

Vocabulary

Ganesh /gah-NAYSH/ - god who removes obstacles
Shiva /SHEE-vuh/ - god of destruction or transformation
Parvati /PAR-vuh-tee/- mother goddess, wife of Shiva
Nandi /NAHN-dee/ - Shiva's vehicle or mount, a bull
Shivaganas /shee-vuh-GAH-nuhs/ - Shiva's rough band of followers
Narada /NAH-ruh-duh/ - a sage
Brahma /BRAH-muh/ - god of creation
Vishnu /VISH-noo/ - god of preservation

passionately: with strong feelings

clad: dressed

matted: tangled

unruly: not following rules

protested: complained about

barging in: walking in suddenly

sandalwood paste: a perfume made from the sandalwood tree

sturdy: strongly built

slender: thin

ruffians: tough bullies

cohorts: groups, bands

mortified: deeply ashamed, embarrassed

sage: wise person

netherworlds: underworld

battalion: group of soldiers

invincible: unbeatable

not to mince words: to speak bluntly, to be honest to the point of being rude

turmoil: confused situation, mess

consult: check in with, discuss with

Writing Activities

► Student Worksheets: pp. 1-3

Guided Written Narration

In previous levels of EWS, students practiced oral narration, a fundamental pre-writing skill that helps students learn to formulate ideas, order information, and compose complete sentences. In EWS-D, you will help your child transition to written narration by using graphic organizers and prompts.

Graphic organizers help students understand the basic structure of stories and summarize plots. For your reference, here is how the sections of the Story Summary graphic organizer correspond to the basic parts of a story:

Somebody	Character (usually the main character)
Wanted	Goal, orientation
But	Conflict, complication
So	Plot, action, episodes
Then	Conclusion, resolution , outcome

The student worksheets for today's lesson include a blank Story Summary graphic organizer. Give this sheet to your child and ask them to fill in the blanks⁷ in response to the following prompts:

Instructor: Now that you've heard this part of the story, we're going to summarize part of it together. At the beginning of the story, we met two *characters*. (Characters are the people who do things in the story.) Who were they?

Student: Shiva and Parvati.

Instructor: Right. Shiva is the god of destruction, and Parvati is his wife and a mother goddess.

⁷ Most 3rd graders have developed the writing stamina to complete these worksheets themselves. If your child has a disability or other condition that impacts their ability to write by hand, scribe their oral responses for them.

Now let's think about the *plot*, or what happened in the story. Usually a story starts with some kind of problem that makes one of the characters take action to change things. In other words, the character has a *goal*, something they want or need. In our passage, what did Parvati want? What did Shiva do that annoyed her?

Student: She wanted privacy when she was bathing, but Shiva kept barging in on her.

[Direct student's attention to the graphic organizer. Have them fill in the first three boxes as follows:]

Somebody	Parvati
Wanted	privacy when she was bathing
But	Shiva kept barging in.
So	
Then	

Instructor: So Parvati's goal was to have privacy when she was bathing. What did Parvati do to achieve that goal?

Student: She made a boy to guard the door for her.

[Have the child write this information in the "So" box of the graphic organizer:]

Somebody	Parvati
Wanted	privacy when she was bathing
But	Shiva kept barging in.
So	she made a boy to guard the door for her.
Then	

Instructor: Then what happened when Shiva came home?

Student: He tried to come in, but the boy wouldn't let him.

[Direct your child to add this information to the graphic organizer:]

Somebody	Parvati
Wanted	privacy when she was bathing
But	Shiva kept barging in.
So	she made a boy to guard the door for her.
Then	Shiva tried to come in, but the boy wouldn't let him.

Instructor: Now we can write a narration, or plot summary, using these notes. [Give your child to the My Narration sheet and direct them to write a summary based on the graphic organizer. The completed summary should look like this:]

Parvati wanted privacy when she was bathing, but Shiva kept barging in. So she made a boy to guard the door for her. Then Shiva tried to come in, but the boy wouldn't let him.

Once the child has completed their written narration, conclude this part of the lesson by narrating the last part of the story.

Instructor: There's a little bit more in our story today. Here's what a narration or plot summary of the last part would sound like:

Shiva sent his followers, Nandi and the Shivaganas, to investigate, but the boy defeated them. The sage Narada saw what was happening and became very worried. He went to tell Brahma and Vishnu about it. They decided to talk to Shiva.

Copywork

In the primary levels of EWS, we used copywork to help children practice handwriting and mechanics, or the conventions of written language. This year we will use copywork and dictation to familiarize students with **varied sentence structures and new vocabulary**. Over time, narration, copywork, and dictation build the skills students need for independent writing about literature.⁸

⁸ For a more detailed discussion of the role of copywork and dictation in writing instruction, see Susan Wise Bauer, *Writing with Ease: Strong Fundamentals* (Well-Trained Mind Press, 2015), pp. 3-10.

The copywork sentences can also be used for grammar analysis, if you are using a grammar curriculum that teaches this skill. See Appendix B on page 222 for some grammar analysis ideas.

The process for using copywork in Level D is as follows:

1. Write the copywork sentence on a white board or a piece of lined paper in the handwriting style your child is learning.
2. Highlight capital letters, punctuation, and challenging spelling words.
3. Read the sentence aloud, and ask your child to repeat it back to you.
4. Direct your child to copy the sentence carefully.
5. Check the finished copywork to see that it is complete and correct.

A summary of how to implement copywork and dictation appears in Appendix A on page 221. You may wish to **bookmark or print this page** and keep it handy as a reference.

Shiva, the Hindu god of destruction, was married to the beautiful mother goddess Parvati.

Memory Work

Before beginning memory work, **read through the implementation guide** in Appendix C (pp. 223-225). A complete list of the year's memory work appears in Appendix D (pp. 226-230).

Most of this year's memory work will be information about the characters and cultures we'll be studying, but for the first few weeks, we'll establish a foundation for literary analysis by learning some key vocabulary words.

Q: What are *characters* in literature?

A: *Characters in literature are the people, animals, or other beings that do things in the story.*

LESSON D-27

“Ra” (Part 1)

Treasury of Egyptian Mythology, pp. 10-17

Reading

Teaching Notes

Today we begin our study of stories about the ancient Egyptian gods. In addition to providing knowledge about this important ancient civilization, these tales offer some important background for understanding parts of the Hebrew scriptures, which we will study next. The figure of Aset, or Isis, plays a key role in Apuleius’s *The Golden Ass*, the only Roman novel that survives in its entirety and an early entry in the picaresque genre. The Egyptians also wrote some of the oldest short stories we know; students will read these in a later level of EWS.

By third grade, many students will have acquired some basic knowledge of ancient Egypt from their history studies. Core Knowledge’s [Ancient Egypt reader](#) provides a solid review and can also serve as an introduction for newcomers. In addition, our text includes three sections with background information: The Great Nile (pp. 95-99), studied in Week 19; Funeral Rites (pp. 157-161), read in Week 22; and a more extensive section at the end of the book with a map, a timeline, a list of the various gods, and a postscript about the sources of the stories (pp. 170-185). Be sure that your child can **locate Egypt on a modern world map** as well.

Napoli’s text uses the Egyptian names for the gods, not the more familiar Greek versions. A table showing the correspondences between the two appears on page 9 of our text, and the title page for each story lists the Greek name under the Egyptian one. The memory work in this section will include both names when the Greek one is better known than the Egyptian one (e.g., Isis vs. Aset).

Today’s reading introduces the sun god **Ra** (associated with the Greek Helios) and a primal creation story. Napoli’s style is more poetic than that of our previous authors. Reading slowly and expressively will help students follow the narrative. (An [audio version](#) of the text is also available.) The passage runs from the top of page 12 to the middle of page 17 (“...as he waited and waited some more”). Be sure to read the text box on page 13 as well.

Vocabulary

Ra /RAH/ - god of radiance (light) and the sun

Tefnut /TEF-noot/ - goddess of moisture

Shu /SHOO/ - god of wind, air

radiance: light

Nun: primal waters

cosmos: universe, all that exists

chaos: disorder

entity: being

perforce: necessarily, out of necessity

tolerated: put up with

temporarily: for a while

unutterably: not able to be described or spoken

tsunamis: tidal waves

enunciate: pronounce, speak out loud

molten: melted

firmament: sky, heavens

Benben: primal mound (a benben stone is also the top stone on a pyramid)

propelled: pushed forward

wallow: sunken area

triad: group of three

invincible: not able to be overcome or conquered

three dimensions: right and left, forward and backward, up and down

simultaneously: at the same time

yielded: given up, produced

bereft: sad because of a loss

wretchedness: deep distress, discomfort, or unhappiness

Writing Activities

► Student Worksheet: p. 52

Guided Oral Narration

In addition to making sure that your child has understood the flow of the narrative, you will be asking them to think about what some parts of the story mean, or what they **symbolize**.

Q: In today's story, what existed in the beginning?

A: Water.

Q: That water made a sound that was also its name. What was that sound?

A: Nun.

Q: Then another sound emerged; what was that?

A: A thumping.

Q: And what formed around the thumping?

A: A heart.

Q: What was inside the heart?

A: A thought.

Q: Who emerged from this thought?

A: The god Ra.

Q: How did Ra create *benben*, the first firmament?

A: He shouted the first word over and over.

Q: How did Ra create his children?

A: He spat.

Q: Which goddess did he create from the moisture within him?

A: Tefnut.

Q: And which god came from his breath itself?

A: Shu.

Q: What happened to Tefnut and Shu one night?

A: They wandered off and got lost.

Q: How did Ra feel and what did he do?

A: Ra was bereft, and he sent his eye out to search for them.

Q: What did Ra do so he could see again while his eye was out searching?

A: He made a new eye for himself.

Q: Now we're going to think about what the characters in this story might mean to the ancient people who originally told it. What do you know about the environment in Egypt? What kind of place is it?

A: Hot and dry, with a large river, the Nile.

Q: So why might an Egyptian creation story make radiance (light), the first god?

A: Because the sun was the most important (powerful) thing where they lived.

[You may need to prompt your child a bit to help them see this connection. For example, you can use an analogy: If someone grew up on a small island, what might they think was the most powerful thing? *The sea.* So what kind of god might they imagine to be the creator? *A sea god.*]

Q: What other natural forces are important in a desert climate? Think about Ra's children.

A: Moisture (water) and wind.

Q: If Ra is the god of radiance, or light, what do you think the eye of Ra might symbolize (stand for), then?

A: The physical sun itself.

[Again, you may have to prompt your child by asking questions like, "What would the ancient Egyptians have been able to see in their environment that was connected to radiance, or light?"]

Q: What would it mean to people living in a desert climate if water and wind "got lost"?

A: People can't live without water, and wind helps cool you down in the heat. It would be terrible if those two things weren't around.

Copywork

Ra shouted the first word, over and over, and those shouts rose in a molten mass.

Memory Work

Q: Who is Ra, and what is his Greek name?

A: Ra is the ancient Egyptian god of the sun, and his Greek name is Helios.

LESSON D-45

Genesis 1:1-2:4

“Creation”

Treasury of Bible Stories, pp. 10-15

Reading

Teaching Notes

Today we begin reading stories from the **Hebrew scriptures**. These texts cover a period from the Bronze Age through the reign of Cyrus the Great of Persia in the 6th century BCE, although many were written or compiled centuries after the events they portray.⁹ The twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible, or *Tanakh*,¹⁰ fall into a variety of literary genres and include sacred history, legal codes, genealogies, liturgical poetry, proverbs, pious legends, and more.

Students should understand that the Bible is not a single text but a **collection of books**—*biblia* is the Greek word for “books”—written by different authors over a period of a thousand years. Therefore, they show a variety of styles and perspectives (points of view). See Professor Napoli’s introduction on pages 6-8 for more information on her approach to retelling these stories and her understanding of them as literature.

More than half of the stories students will be reading this year are drawn from the books of **Genesis** and **Exodus**. These are the first two of the five books that make up the *Torah* or *Pentateuch*. This portion of the Hebrew Bible was traditionally attributed to the prophet Moses, but [scholars have determined](#) that it was pieced together from the writings of different anonymous authors. It recounts the origins of the Jewish people and their covenant with God. The remaining stories span the rest of the Hebrew scriptures.

Just as we have read stories from the ancient Indian and Egyptian traditions for their cultural and literary importance, so too will we approach biblical narratives from a literary perspective. In this context, we are concerned with the characters in the Bible—including the one often designated simply as

⁹ For more details and to help you understand the relationship of the biblical narratives to secular history, see “[A Short Introduction to the Bible and the History of Ancient Israel](#)” by Andrew Tobolowsky, assistant professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary.

¹⁰ The word *Tanakh* is an abbreviation derived from the Hebrew names of its three sections: **Torah** (“Teaching, Law”), **Nevi'im** (“Prophets”), and **Ketuvim** (“Writings”).

“God” or “the Lord”—as literary figures only. The teaching notes will provide some pointers to information about the historicity of certain biblical figures and stories as well as their appearance in later literature.

As before, try to **connect these readings to your child’s existing knowledge.**

- **Have they heard any stories from the Hebrew scriptures before?**
- **What do they know about contemporary Judaism?**
- **Do they know which other faiths draw on these scriptural traditions (Christianity, Islam)?**

Show your child the map on pages 192-193 and compare it to a modern world map. What **modern nations** exist today in the area shown on the detail map on page 192? (*Israel, Palestinian Territories, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon.*)

Today’s reading is Napoli’s retelling of the Hebrew **creation story** from the first chapter of Genesis. Her note in the box on page 15 explains how the story links time to physical nature.

Vocabulary

vast: huge, boundless, spread out

potential: possibility

inevitable: unavoidable, bound to happen

crystalline: like crystals

clarity: clearness

innumerable: countless

fecundity: fertility, fruitfulness

utterly: completely, totally

paltry: poor, inferior

dominion: power and authority

crucial: vital, very important

sustain: support, uphold

docile: teachable, mild and gentle

decorum: proper behavior

toils: works, activities

perpetual: eternal, going on forever

Writing Activities

► Student Worksheet: p. 97

Guided Oral Narration

After guiding your child through the narrative with the following comprehension questions, you will discuss with them the similarities and differences between this creation story and the Egyptian one you read in Lessons D-27 and D-28.

Q: In our story, what three things existed in the beginning?

A: Darkness, God, and the waters.

Q: What started then and where did it come from?

A: A wind.

Q: What did God say to start the process of creation?

A: "Let there be light."

Q: What did God create next?

A: The heavens.

Q: What did God create after that?

A: Land and plants.

Continue to question your child about the order of events in the text. Here are the remaining acts of creation. Refer back to the text as necessary to help your child remember them.

Day Four: Sun and Moon

Day Five: Fish in the waters, birds in the sky

Day Six: Land animals and human beings

Next, ask your child to think of **three things that are similar** in this story and the Egyptian creation story, and **three things that are different**. Here are some possible answers:

Similarities	Differences
Creation is started by only one deity (god).	Ra creates other deities, while God does not. Ra emerges from Nun; God is shown existing at the same time as the waters.
Both stories start with water.	-
Both gods create through words, by speaking or shouting.	The primal waters of Nun make a sound; the first sound in Genesis comes from God.
Both gods create land.	The land Ra creates comes out of the primal waters; the Earth itself is the body of the god Geb. The land God makes emerges from waters below heaven and does not involve another deity.
Both gods create animals that can reproduce.	Ra creates snakes; God creates many different kinds of animals in the sky, in water, and on land.
Both gods create human beings.	Humans emerge from Ra's tears, while God creates humans deliberately, in God's own image.
Both stories relate time to creation.	Ra undergoes a daily cycle as the Sun; God creates the seven-day week.

Copywork

God gave them a charge: to take care of the earth, to be the masters of all, to make what God had created work.

Memory Work

Q: What is the Tanakh?

A: The Tanakh is the name for the Hebrew scriptures or Bible.

EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY LEVEL D **SAMPLE**

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SAMPLE

EXPLORING THE WORLD THROUGH STORY
LEVEL D: WISDOM TALES 1

Student Worksheets

ANDREW CAMPBELL

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Brahma disguised himself as a teacher. He thought this disguise would persuade the boy because _____

_____.

The plan failed; the boy remained obedient only to his mother.

Next, Shiva suggested that they call on Indra's army to defeat the boy. This plan also failed because _____

_____.

Now the gods were really worried. Vishnu attacked the boy with his chakra, but _____

_____.

Finally, Shiva had had enough. _____

_____.

END OF SAMPLE

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