

Vesak

Welcome to your RE Topic: Buddhism

Learning Intention: To describe and understand links between stories and religious beliefs

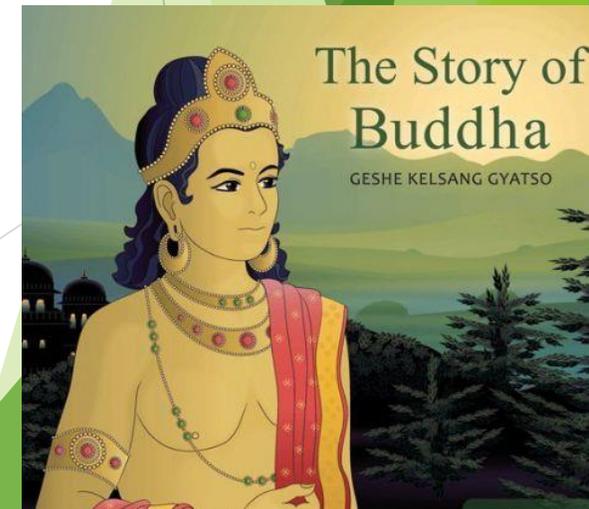
Input

- ▶ *Vesak* (say "VEE-sak") is the most important day in the Buddhist calendar. It's a holiday that celebrates the birth of Buddha — the person who began the religion known as Buddhism.
- ▶ It's celebrated on the day of the full moon in May.



The Birth of Buddah

- ▶ Twenty-five hundred years ago, nestled in a fertile valley along the border between India and Nepal, a child was born who was to become the Buddha.
- ▶ Siddhārtha Gautama (Sidaaha) was born in the kingdom of Kapilvastu in Nepal. It is now known as Lumbini. At that time, a clan called the Shakya's ruled Kapilvastu. His father was a king named Suddodana Tharu, and his mother was Maya Devi. The stories say that before his birth, his mother, the queen of a small Indian kingdom, had a dream.
- ▶ A beautiful white elephant offered the queen a lotus flower, and then, entered the side of her body. When sages (spiritual advisors) were asked to interpret the dream, they predicted the queen would give birth to a son destined to become either a great ruler or a holy man.
- ▶ Within ten months, as a tree lowered a branch to support her, a baby boy was born, emerging from her side. Seven days later, the Queen died.
- ▶ The tales say he was the son of a king, raised in a palace with every imaginable luxury. He was called Siddhartha Gautama, a prince among a clan of warriors.
- ▶ Siddhārtha lived in luxury; his father kept trouble and hard work far from him. A seer predicted that if Siddhārth stayed inside his palace his whole life, then he would become a great king. However, if he left the palace, then he would become a great religious leader. The king did not want his son to become a religious leader. He kept Siddhartha in the palace for his whole childhood.



When Buddha was born

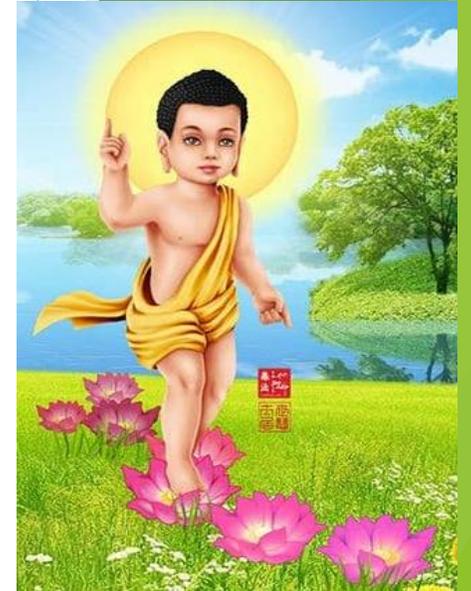
- ▶ Twenty-five hundred years ago, nestled in a fertile valley along the border between India and Nepal, a child was born who was to become the Buddha.
- ▶ Siddhārtha Gautama (Sidaaha) was born in the kingdom of Kapilvastu in Nepal. It is now known as Lumbini. At that time, a clan called the Shakya's ruled Kapilvastu. His father was a king named Suddodana Tharu, and his mother was Maya Devi. The stories say that before his birth, his mother, the queen of a small Indian kingdom, had a dream.
- ▶ A beautiful white elephant offered the queen a lotus flower, and then, entered the side of her body. When sages (spiritual advisors) were asked to interpret the dream, they predicted the queen would give birth to a son destined to become either a great ruler or a holy man.
- ▶ Within ten months, as a tree lowered a branch to support her, a baby boy was born, emerging from her side. Seven days later, the Queen died.
- ▶ The tales say he was the son of a king, raised in a palace with every imaginable luxury. He was called Siddhartha Gautama, a prince among a clan of warriors.
- ▶ Siddhārtha lived in luxury; his father kept trouble and hard work far from him. A seer predicted that if Siddhārth stayed inside his palace his whole life, then he would become a great king. However, if he left the palace, then he would become a great religious leader. The king did not want his son to become a religious leader. He kept Siddhartha in the palace for his whole childhood.

Questions to answer in your book

1. Which parts of the story show Buddhists that Prince Siddhartha was special?
2. Why do you think Buddhists celebrate this story?
3. Do you think Prince Siddhartha became a great king or a wise teacher?
4. Why do you think that?'

A special ritual on Vesak

- ▶ The **Bathing the Buddha** ceremony is a popular Vesak tradition in Japan. An image of a baby Buddha pointing to the sky and the earth is ladled with sweet tea or scented water three times.
- ▶ During this **ritual**, people pour water over a statue of **Buddha**. It's a way to show respect to **Buddha** for his teachings and it's also a **celebration** of new beginnings.
- ▶ This ceremony reminds Buddhists that it is easy to wash away dirt on the outside of their bodies but not as easy to cleanse their minds of greedy and angry thoughts.



Plenary

- ▶ What was special about the day you were born?
- ▶ Ask your parent or sibling what they remember about the day that you were born!
- ▶ Perhaps you have already heard this story before and can remember details about it that make you happy or excited!

