

## Anklet for a Princess: A Cinderella Tale from India

written by Meredith Brucker, Lila Mehta  
illustrated by Youshan Tang

### About the Book

**Genre:** Fiction

**Format:** Paperback, 32 pages

**ISBN:** 9781885008466

**Reading Level:** Grade 4–8

**Interest Level:** Grades K–4

**Guided Reading Level:** R

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:**  
2.5/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** AD550L

\*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

**Themes:** Folktales and Fairy Tales, Cinderella Adaptation, Poverty, Courage, Friendship, Self Esteem and Confidence, India, Kindness and Caring, Optimism and Hope, Overcoming Obstacles, Responsibility, Sharing and Giving, Asian/Asian American Interest

**Resources on the web:** [leeandlow.com/books/anklet-for-a-princess](http://leeandlow.com/books/anklet-for-a-princess)

### SYNOPSIS

Cinduri has a lot of work to do. Every day she walks to the lake to fetch drinking water, milks the cow, cleans the house, prepares the meals, cleans the animal pens, and sells vegetables. Her stepmother and stepsister, however, don't do any of the work. They just order Cinduri about and give her a bowl of rice and a few leftovers to eat.

The lake, however, is full of magic. When Godfather Snake hears of Cinduri's troubles, he vows to make her life easier. And when the Prince comes to visit the village during the annual Navaratri Festival, Godfather Snake makes it possible for her to go, dressed in the most beautiful gold-threaded sari and sparkling diamond anklets. It is there that she wins the heart of the Prince.

Adapted from the East Indian story "Nagami" (Jewel of the Snake), this version of the tale is rich with the traditions and culture of India while also conveying the universal values of the Cinderella story. Beautiful watercolor depictions of Indian life and styles accompany this introduction to Indian folklore.

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

## BACKGROUND

### Ancient Indian Symbols and Beliefs (From the Author's Note):

Though this version of Cinderella set in India is very similar to the European fairy tale, it is believed that the story is at least 1,000 years old and has been preserved in oral traditions all these years.

Ancient Indian societies believed that the underwater world was a mysterious and threatening place ruled by snakes and dragons. If given offerings, these creature would reward their benefactors with incredible fortune and good luck. Occasionally, the creature would simply take pity on an unhappy being and befriend that person.

The snake itself was a symbol of strength and might. Because its venom was used for medicinal purposes and saved lives, it was also synonymous with wealth, prosperity, and royalty. Because the snake was so revered in parts of India, many East Indian and Middle Eastern dances contain movements of a snake that reflect its importance to the culture.

### Cinderella stories

Cinderella stories have a rich history across many cultures. The earliest known Cinderella story is the Greek story Rodophis, recorded between 7 BC and 23 CE. There's also a very early version from China, Ye Xian, from about 860 CE. The first written version appears to be from Italy in 1634. This story, Cenerentola by Giambattista Basile, included familiar details like an evil step mother and sisters and a nobleman looking for the owner of a lost shoe. The Disney story of Cinderella was adapted from the French author Charles Perrault's version. This version included magical details like the pumpkin, fairy godmother and glass slipper. The German Grimm Brothers also wrote a darker version of the story in Grimm's Fairy Tales, published in 1812. For more information see <https://abilenetx.gov/1013/History-of-Cinderella>.

There are hundreds of versions of Cinderella from all over the world that share common elements, but also vary in cultural details. Most versions share the themes of changing luck or fate, and kindness, love, and other virtues triumphing over evil and greed.

### Navaratri

In this story, the characters attend an event hosted by the Crown Prince on the final evening of this important Hindu festival. Navaratri is a nine-night festival honoring the feminine Divine. Often, different days or sets of days include specific celebrations for honoring various female forms of the Divine, or feminine energy in general. Observers might fast, meditate, reflect, dance, and perform rituals. Gratitude is often a key part of Navaratri celebrations. For more information, see this fact sheet from the Hindu American Foundation: <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/9-things-to-know-about-navaratri>.

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Explain that you will be reading a Cinderella story set in India long ago. Have you heard the story of Cinderella before? What happens? (Have students share experiences with the tale to start a discussion of how different versions are both similar and different.)
- What do you think you know about India? What details might you expect from a version of Cinderella set in India?
- What do you know about themes of kindness and love vs. evil and greed from reading other stories? How might these themes relate to a Cinderella story

You may want to chart student responses questions so that you can refer back to them during or after reading. You could also have students journal their responses to these questions or pose the final question as a KWL discussion and chart so that you can refer back to it throughout and after the reading of the book to further their thinking on the topic(s).

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

**Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Anklet for a Princess: A Cinderella Story From India*. Ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What makes them think that?

**Book Walk:** Display the book and analyze the cover. What do students notice in the illustration? Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, author's note, and illustrations. Talk about the meaning of the phrase "adapted by" and how it relates to fairy tale retellings.

**Read Author's and Illustrator's Biographies:** Read the author's and illustrator's biographies in the book or at the end of this guide. What do you think the process is like to write a book for young readers? Why do you think these creators made this book for young readers?

If appropriate, encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the reading when they: learn new information, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or see new words.

Have students write feeling(s) in their notebook during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it. Have students complete one journal entry per each reading session.

## Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- What happens in this version of the Cinderella story?
- How does the setting of ancient India impact the details of this version?
- (If applicable): How the themes in this book compare to other Cinderella stories?

Encourage students to consider why the author would want to share this story with young people.

## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

"Drinking water," "milk the cows," yogurt, countryside, India, epidemic, cholera, village, stepmother, "to spare," jewel, carriage, chores, handouts, serpent, East Indian, almond rice, lentils, flatbread, curries, sweet milk, bowed, peacocks, parrots, slave, God-daughter, Godfather, prayers, silk, pomegranate, "third eye," fortune tellers, drummers, messenger, Crown Prince, Navaratri Festival, harvest, pavilion, "family trunks," toe rings, veils, chain, aarti lamp, finery, straw, animal pens, cloth, anklets, goddess Durga, noble, messengers, maidens, bride, sewing, mending, weed, bodice, churned (butter), sari, Prime Minister, full moon, witness, servants, marquee, conch shell, garland, jasmine flowers, countryside, beggars

### Academic

balanced, fetch, prepare, ripping, surface, necessary, disease, shimmering, startled, hissed, politely, maintain, furious, produced, tantalizing, aromas, thankful, jealous, adopting, ordered, complained, snapped, stifle, terrified, intently, commanded, reflection, protested, stammered, sputter, rage, attend, glimpse, permission, responded, harsh, embarrass, filthy, huddled, miserably, draped, slim, glared, duties, obeyed, purest, magnificent, clutched, flowing, motions, honor, perform, ceremony, gasped, gentle, vowed, powerful, proclaimed, sneer, considered, ragged, hopeless, cradled, miraculous, shrill, twirling, enormous, stately, occasion, fragrant, cherish, bless, wander, respect

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Who is in this story?
2. What happened to Cinduri's parents? How did her life change when they died? What details does the text share to help readers imagine her life?
3. What happens when Cinduri visits the lake? What do she and the snake talk about?
4. How does Cinduri react to the snake's food gifts? What does the snake tell Cinduri before she leaves?
5. What does Cinduri's stepmother notice about her? How does she react?
6. How does Lata react when she sees Cinduri talking to the snake?
7. Why does the snake tell Cinduri to look at her own reflection? What does he tell her and how does she respond?
8. When Lata tells her mother about the snake, how does she react?
9. What news does Cinduri hear? How does each character react to the news of the festival?
10. What happens when Cinduri tells the snake about her wish to go to the festival?
11. What happens when Cinduri goes to the festival?
12. What happens the morning after the festival? How does the stepmother react? How does Cinduri react? What happens?
13. What happens when Cinduri goes to the pavilion?
14. What is Cinduri's wedding like?
15. What plans do Cinduri and the Prince make about their life together?
16. What happens to Cinduri's stepmother and stepsister?
17. How does the story end?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. How would you describe her as a character based on her words and actions in the opening

- scenes? How does she balance the challenges in her life with positivity?
2. How do the details in the text give you information about life long ago in this part of India? Give specific examples.
  3. What role does the snake play in the story? Read the authors' note. Based on the information shared, why do you think the authors decided to make this character a snake?
  4. How could you describe the stepmother as a character? What makes you think this?
  5. How could you describe Lata as a character? What makes you think this?
  6. What is it like for Cinduri to watch her stepmother and stepsister get ready for the ball? What makes it especially hard?
  7. Which part of this book did you enjoy imagining most? What specific words did the author use that helped you?
  8. What did you notice about the illustrator's choices? How did the illustrations help you understand and enjoy the story?
  9. Why do you think these authors wanted to share this story with young people?

### Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion. You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Why do you think these authors chose to adapt this Cinderella story in this way? What do you think the authors' message to the reader is?
2. Have students make a text-to-self connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to your own life? How is Cinduri similar or different to you and your role in your own family?
3. Have students make a text-to-text connection. Did you think of any other books while you read *Anklet for a Princess: A Cinderella Story From India*? Why did you make those connections?
4. Have students make a text-to-world connection. What kind of connections did you make from this book to what you have seen in the world or on the news? Why did *Anklet for a Princess: A Cinderella Story From India* make you think of that?
5. What is one big thought that you have after reading this book? Think about different character changes, the setting, and the relationships. What did you learn from reading *Anklet for a Princess: A Cinderella Story From India*?
6. Choose a page you enjoyed imagining. Make a list of things you imagined as you read this page and looked at the illustration.
7. How do the author and illustrator help readers understand Cinduri's feelings? List at least two ways the text or illustrations helped you and include a specific example for each one.

8. Think more about Godfather Snake and his role in the story. How much do you think the way things turned out for Cinduri was because of Godfather Snake's magic, and how much was because of who she is as a person and her actions? Explain why you think so.
9. Imagine that Cinduri's stepmother and stepsister wrote Cinduri an apology letter. What might they say?

### Multilingual Learner Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Learners and multilingual learners.

1. Assign ML students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about a place and/or time they'd choose to set a Cinderella story, and what some of the story details would be.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.
6. Have students act out various scenes from the story to support comprehension.
7. Additional resources to support multilingual students is: <https://www.multilinguallearning-toolkit.org/>.

### Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6)  
(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)  
(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)  
(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy

development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. What Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills does Cinduri exhibit over the course of the book? Some examples of SEL skills include problem-solving, grit and perseverance, self-regulation, and perspective taking. How does Cinduri demonstrate these skills?
2. Have students go on a Social and Emotional Learning scavenger hunt in the text, looking for evidence in the details from the book. Assign students to relevant Social and Emotional Learning themes, such as: empathy, problem-solving, perspective taking, perseverance, and recognizing and managing emotions.
3. Choose an emotion that interests you: happiness, sadness, fear, anxiety, frustration, hope, perseverance and so on. Illustrate or act out what that emotion looks like in *Anklet for a Princess: A Cinderella Story From India*.
4. To practice perspective taking, imagine what Cinduri may have wanted to say to her stepmother and stepsister when they treated her cruelly. What do you think stopped her from responding in anger? How do you think she stopped herself? Do you think she should have reacted differently to them at any point?
5. Do you think the author wants Cinduri to be a role model for young people or an example of caution? Why or why not? What advice might Cinduri give others who find themselves in challenging situations?

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

### English Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students practice retelling this story across their fingers, with the prompts "First, next, then, then, finally."**
- **Read versions of the Cinderella story from other cultures, such as *Domitila: A Cinderella Tale from the Mexican Tradition* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/domitila>), *Jouanah: A Hmong Cinderella* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/jouanah>), *Angkat: The Cambodian Cinderella* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/angkat>), and *Abadeha: The Philippine Cinderella* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/abadeha>). Compare and contrast**



the versions, including their settings, characters, cultural details, plot details, and themes.

- **Read other stories set in India, including stories set in ancient India, such as *Seven Golden Rings: A Tale of Music and Math*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seven-golden-rings>) **and Indian stories set in more modern times.** Make connections between details in the text and also notice the diversity of cultural details.
- **Use passages from the book to study using precise language to describe characters' talking and actions.** Incorporate conversations about or review of relevant academic vocabulary words. For example, notice all the precise synonyms for "said" included in the text or all the interesting adverbs.
- **Use excerpts from the book to study examples of the narrative writing strategy "show don't tell" to bring actions and events in the story to life.** You could ask pairs of students to each review a page of the text, highlight examples of "show don't tell," and write a more simplistic "tell" version on a sticky note. For instance, "[Lata] made terrible faces, trying to twist her foot through the anklet, but it was no use" shows "The anklet didn't fit Lata."
- **Have students choose a setting and details and write their own Cinderella stories.** Ask them to pay special attention to how their versions will reflect some of the common themes present in Cinderella tales.

### Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Craft and Structure, Strands 4–6, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9, Range of Reading of Text Complexity, Strand 10)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 6, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)

- **Have students locate India on a map.** Have them notice key geographical features, such as its peninsula shape, the bodies of water it touches, the Himalaya mountain range, and major deserts. Locate "East India."
- **Have students use Google Earth to explore India's geography.** As they zoom in, talk about what could look similar to the time and place of the story, and what looks different in present day India.
- **Revisit the author's note that details the significance of the snake in ancient Indian culture.** Invite students to research other animal symbols in various cultures and share their findings with the class.
- **Read and learn more about the Hindu festival Navaratri.** Look at examples of how Hindu people around the world celebrate this festival today. The information provided by the Hindu American Foundation is a helpful starting place for English speakers. (See <https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/9-things-to-know-about-navaratri>.) Refer back to the text to discuss how some of the key themes of Navaratri celebrations relate to the story.

### Art and Music

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **Discuss the illustrator's use of colors, detail, and foreground vs. background.** Refer back to the author's note about ancient Indian beliefs that the underwater was ruled by snakes and dragons. Invite students to create watercolor paintings of an imaginary underwater world inspired by the book artwork.
- **Revisit the section in which Cinduri uses snake movements to inspire her dancing.** Try out some of the movements she describes. Brainstorm together how other animal movements could be interpreted through dance.

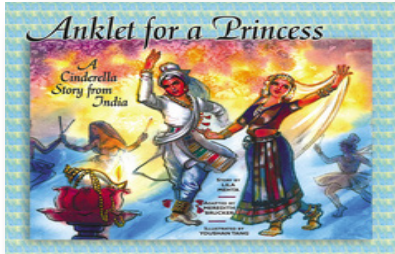
### School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7-9, Range of Writing, Strand 10)

(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

- **As a class, compose a short blurb for families that describes the version(s) of the Cinderella story you've enjoyed at school.** Have students ask adults at home about Cinderella versions or other favorite fairy tales they enjoyed as children. Share and compare responses at school.



## Ordering Information

**General Order Information:**

[leeandlow.com/contact/ordering](https://leeandlow.com/contact/ordering)

**Secure Online Ordering:**

[leeandlow.com/books/anklet-for-a-princess](https://leeandlow.com/books/anklet-for-a-princess)

**By Phone:** 212-779-4400 ext. 25

**By Fax:** 212-683-1894

**By Mail:**

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,  
New York, NY 10016

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Meredith Brucker** is a graduate of Stanford University who makes her home in Southern California. She worked for many years as a writer and story editor in the TV industry—for CBS, MGM, and KTLA—and is currently employed raising public awareness of childhood cancer. A popular writing teacher, she is the author of many articles and book reviews for magazines and newspapers, and nine published novels.

**Lila Mehta** was born in Rajkot, India, and graduated as a nurse and midwife in London, England. In 1965, she arrived in Canada where she graduated from the University of Toronto. She lives in Toronto with her husband and son, and teaches for the Scarborough Board of Education in Scarborough, Ontario.

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Youshan Tang** grew up in Shanghai, China, and graduated from the Central Academy of Fine Arts and Peking University with degrees in Chinese art and literature. Since 1980, Tang has made his home in San Francisco where the cultural diversity inspires his work. He is also the illustrator of *Abadeha: The Philippine Cinderella*.

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