

Rama and Ravana Reading Guide

1. What events have occurred prior to Ravana's leaving the assembly hall?
2. What internal conflict does Ravana feel as he considers Rama's accomplishments?
3. Ravana takes a ritual bath and then dons his battle uniform. What other characters in literature or film remind you of Ravana?
4. Throughout the Ramayana, the gods aid Rama with magical devices and gifts. What do the gods decide to give Rama?
5. What is Rama's initial response to the gift of the chariot?
6. What do Rama's words to his charioteer reveal about his character?
7. Why does Ravana insist that only he should confront Rama?

8. What ominous signs precede the battle? How might these omens foreshadow the conclusion?

9. Why does Ravana destroy Ravana's armies?

10. Why would Rama want to save Ravana?

11. Ravana is the embodiment of evil and is shown to be extremely powerful. Artists traditionally portray him with twenty arms and ten heads. What advantage does each combatant have?

12. Why are the gods "terror-stricken" as they watch the battle?

13. Since both Ravana and Rama are making use of super-natural weapons rather than relying on their own strength, what does the success of their efforts now depend on?

14. Rama uses a weapon whose name means "wisdom" or "perception," while Ravana uses weapons that create darkness and destruction. What does their choice of weapons suggest about their characters?

15. Rama refuses to end the conflict when Ravana is in a faint. What do Rama's actions reveal about him?

16. Ravana is vulnerable only in one place, his heart. What other epic characters can you think of who are vulnerable in only one place or to only one thing?

17. What does Ravana's failure to strengthen his heart, while developing other parts of his body, imply about his values.

18. What do the changes in Ravana after his death tell you about him?

19. Why is Rama concerned when he sees the scar on Ravana's back?

20. A fictional hero's attitude toward an enemy after death is an important clue to a culture's values. In the Iliad, we learn about the values of ancient Greek culture through the atrocities done to Patroclus's and Hector's corpses. In what way does Ram's behavior after killing Ravana differ from that of Achilles?