

Prambanan

On land | Indonesia | about 850 CE | Grades 3-5

Name _____

Date _____

Prambanan's walls tell the whole Ramayana, an epic adventure of a prince, a kidnapped princess and a monkey army.

Read the story

Around 850 CE, kings of the Mataram Kingdom built Prambanan, the largest Hindu temple compound in Indonesia. It honors the Trimurti, the three great gods: Brahma the creator, Vishnu the protector and Shiva the destroyer. The tallest tower is for Shiva.

Around the main temples were once 240 smaller shrines in neat rows. The walls are carved with scenes from the Ramayana, telling how Prince Rama rescued his wife Sita from a demon king, with help from the monkey hero Hanuman.

A local legend says Prambanan was built in one night by a prince trying to win the hand of Princess Roro Jonggrang. She tricked him, and he turned her into a statue, which people say is the statue of Durga inside.

How it ended

Around the 900s, the kingdom's center moved to East Java, possibly after a volcanic eruption, and Prambanan was left behind. Earthquakes toppled its towers. A 2006 earthquake damaged it again, and repairs continued afterward.

Key words

- Ramayana: an ancient Hindu epic about Prince Rama
- Trimurti: the three main Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva
- restoration: repairing something to look like it once did

Wow facts

- The tallest tower is about 47 meters high.
- There were once 240 smaller temples around the main ones.
- The Ramayana ballet is still performed in front of the temple at night.

Talk about it

1. Why do you think artists carved a whole story on the walls?
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2. How could people of different religions build great temples side by side?

Try this

Draw a map of Prambanan as it looked at its busiest. Label three things people did there.

Quick quiz

Circle the best answer.

1. Which god is honored by the tallest tower?
 - A. Shiva
 - B. Zeus
 - C. Ra
 - D. Thor
2. What story is carved on the walls?
 - A. The Ramayana
 - B. The Odyssey
 - C. Cinderella
 - D. Beowulf
3. What nearby temple was built around the same time?
 - A. Borobudur
 - B. Angkor Wat
 - C. Taj Mahal
 - D. Parthenon

Go further

Open ruinscape.live/prambanan/ for photos, the Then and Now picture where there is one, and links to museum collections and research. On the globe, Lyra Kael can fly the class there and answer questions.

Answer key (for teachers)

1. A. The main tower is dedicated to Shiva.
2. A. The reliefs tell the Ramayana.
3. A. Borobudur is a Buddhist temple nearby from the same era.