

# Rikki-Tikki-Tavi by Rudyard Kipling

*This is a passage from Rudyard Kipling's 1894 short story about a brave young mongoose named Rikki-Tikki-Tavi. He lives in an English household in India, where he protects the family from a dangerous pair of cobras: Nag and Nagaina. Rikki has already helped kill another snake, Karait, who almost killed the English boy Teddy. Now he has learned of the cobras plot to kill the family and prepares to battle the evil Nag.*

**A**ngry as he was, Rikki-tikki was very frightened as he saw the size of the big cobra. Nag coiled himself up, raised his head, and looked into the bathroom in the dark, and Rikki could see his eyes glitter.

"Now, if I kill him here, Nagaina will know; and if I fight him on the open floor, the odds are in his favor. What am I to do?" said Rikki-tikki-tavi.

Nag waved to and fro, and then Rikki-tikki heard him drinking from the biggest water-jar that was used to fill the bath.

"That is good," said the snake. "Now, when Karait was killed, the big man had a stick. He may have that stick still, but when he comes in to bathe in the morning he will not have a stick. I shall wait here till he comes. Nagaina—do you hear me?—I shall wait here in the cool till daytime."

There was no answer from outside, so Rikki-tikki knew Nagaina had gone away. Nag coiled himself down, coil by coil, round the bulge at the bottom of the water jar, and Rikki-tikki stayed still as death. After an hour he began to move, muscle by muscle, toward the jar. Nag was asleep, and Rikki-tikki looked at his big back, wondering which would be the best place for a good hold. "If I don't break his back at the first jump," said Rikki, "he can still fight. And if he fights—O Rikki!" He looked at the thickness of the neck below the hood, but that was too much for him; and a bite near the tail would only make Nag savage.



"It must be the head" he said at last; "the head above the hood. And, when I am once there, I must not let go."

Then he jumped. The head was lying a little clear of the water jar, under the curve of it; and, as his teeth met, Rikki braced

his back against the bulge of the red earthenware to hold down the head. This gave him just one second's purchase, and he made the most of it. Then he was battered to and fro as a rat is shaken by a dog—to and fro on the floor, up and down, and around in great circles, but his

eyes were red and he held on as the body cart-whipped over the floor, upsetting the tin dipper and the soap dish and the flesh brush, and banged against the tin side of the bath. As he held he closed his jaws tighter and tighter, for he made sure he would be banged to death, and, for the honor of his family, he preferred to be found with his teeth locked. He was dizzy, aching, and felt shaken to pieces when something went off like a thunderclap just behind him. A hot wind knocked him senseless and red fire singed his fur. The big man had been wakened by the noise, and had fired both barrels of a shotgun into Nag just behind the hood.

Rikki-tikki held on with his eyes shut, for now he was quite sure he was dead. But the head did not move, and the big man picked him up and said, "It's the mongoose again, Alice. The little chap has saved our lives now."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

## Do You Remember?

### I. Fill in the Blank

Write the correct answer in the blank.

1. Rikki-Tikki waited until Nag was \_\_\_\_\_ before he attacked.
2. The story takes place in the country of \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Rikki couldn't attack on the open floor because it would give \_\_\_\_\_ an advantage.
4. The man fires a \_\_\_\_\_ at Nag.

### II. Multiple Choice

Circle the correct answer to each question.

1. In what room was Nag waiting for the man?
  - A. the hall
  - B. the bathroom
  - C. the bedroom
  - D. the kitchen
2. Nag was one cobra; what was the name of the other cobra?
  - A. Karait
  - B. Teddy
  - C. Nagaina
  - D. Nagberta
3. What type of animal is Rikki?
  - A. a mongoose
  - B. a tiger cub
  - C. a cat
  - D. a dog
4. Who won the battle with Nag?
  - A. Nagaina
  - B. Nag
  - C. Teddy
  - D. Rikki
5. Nag wants to attack the man when the man doesn't have what?
  - A. a mongoose
  - B. the stick or gun
  - C. a knife
  - D. a garden hoe
6. Where does Rikki bite Nag?
  - A. below the hood
  - B. near the tail
  - C. across the back
  - D. on the head above the hood

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

## Understanding the Words

### I. Homonyms

Homonyms are words that are spelled and pronounced the same, but have different meanings. Below are a list on homonyms from the passage from “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi.” Circle the correct meaning of the word as it is used in the passage.

1. “This gave him just one second’s purchase...”  
A. something bought      B. a strong grip or contact
2. “Then he was battered to and fro ...”  
A. beaten with heavy hits      B. coated food with flour mixture
3. “...a bite near the tail would only make Nag savage.”  
A. fierce      B. a primitive person
4. “The little chap has saved our lives now.”  
A. to rub the skin raw      B. a man or boy
5. “...upsetting the tin dipper...”  
A. turning over      B. making someone feel disturbed

### II. Meaning in Context

Below are quotations from “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi.” Use the context of the sentence or phrase to discover the meaning of the underlined word. Circle the letter of the correct meaning.

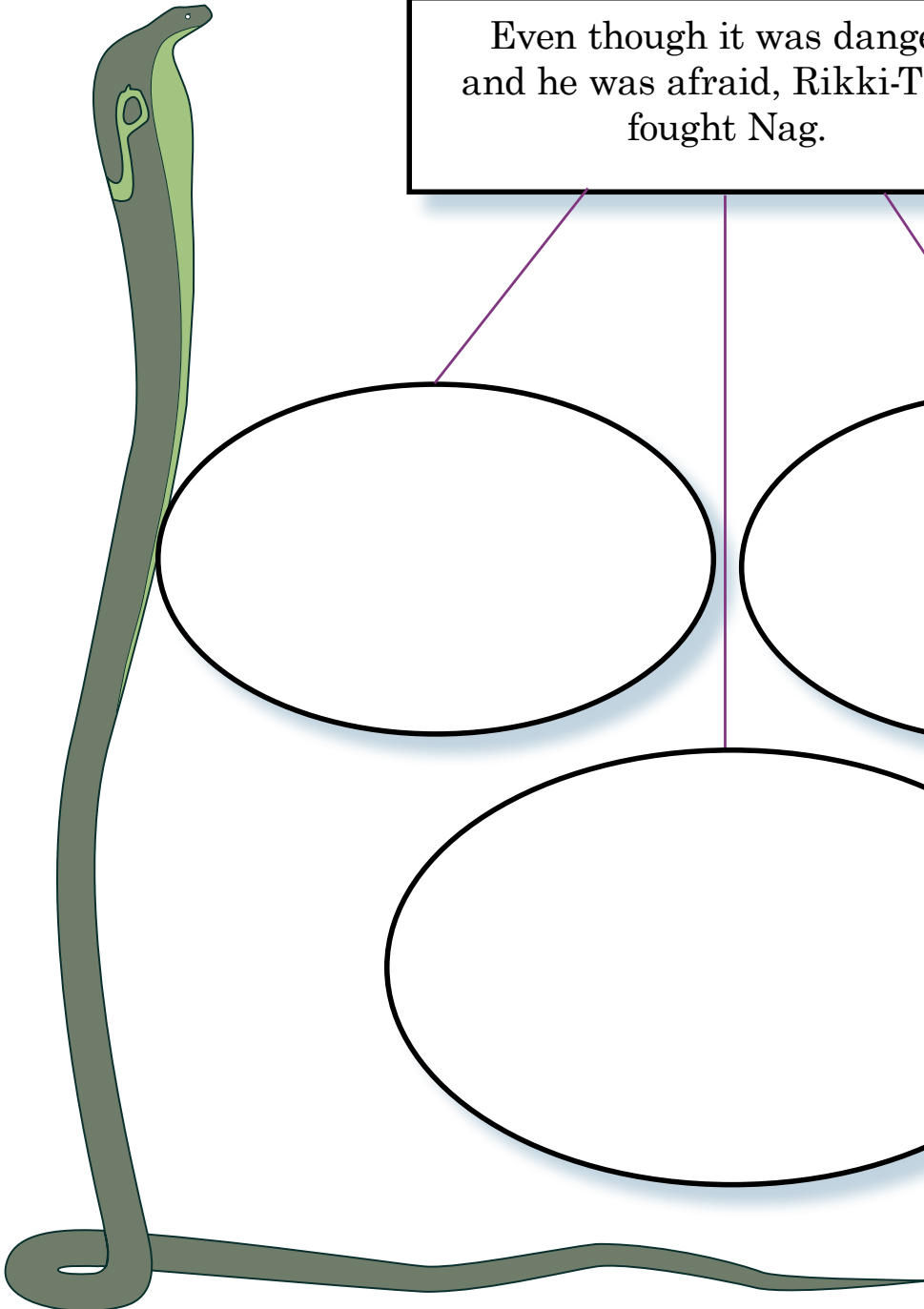
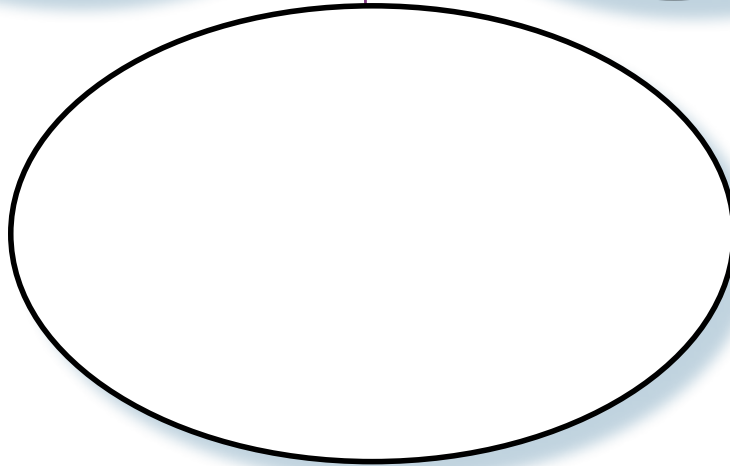
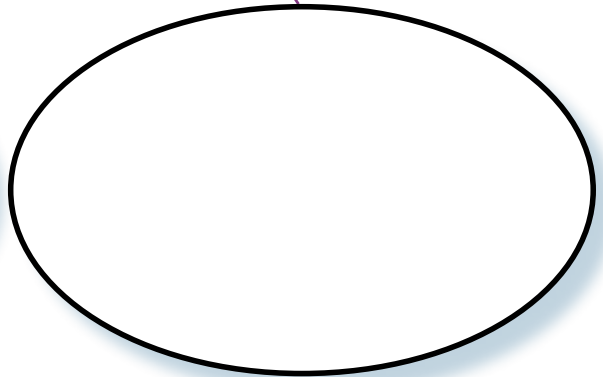
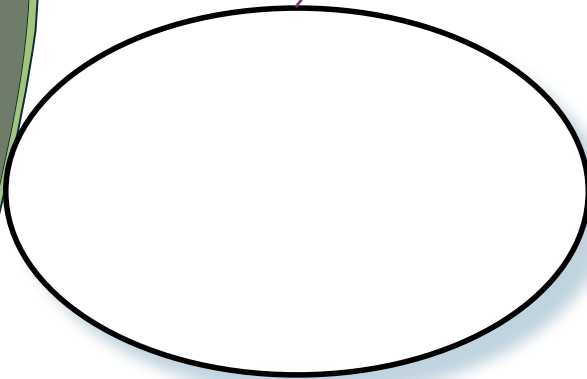
1. “A hot wind knocked him senseless...”  
A. far away      B. against a wall      C. in great pain      D. unconscious, unfeeling
2. “...Rikki braced his back against the bulge of the red earthenware...”  
A. pottery or jar      B. clay wall      C. tile floor      D. mud bath
3. “...he was battered to and fro as a rat is shaken by a dog...”  
A. violently      B. carefully      C. back and forth      D. playfully
4. “...he held on as the body cart-whipped over the floor.”  
A. slithered      B. moved like a whip      C. crawled      D. banged slowly
5. “...something went off like a thunderclap just behind him “  
A. a sudden, loud crash      B. bright light      C. soft whisper      D. dull thud

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Main Idea: Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

For the main idea listed in the rectangle, write three examples from the text that support the main idea.

Even though it was dangerous  
and he was afraid, Rikki-Tikki  
fought Nag.



## Rikki-Tikki-Tavi - Retell the Story

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Rikki-Tikki-Tavi Word Search

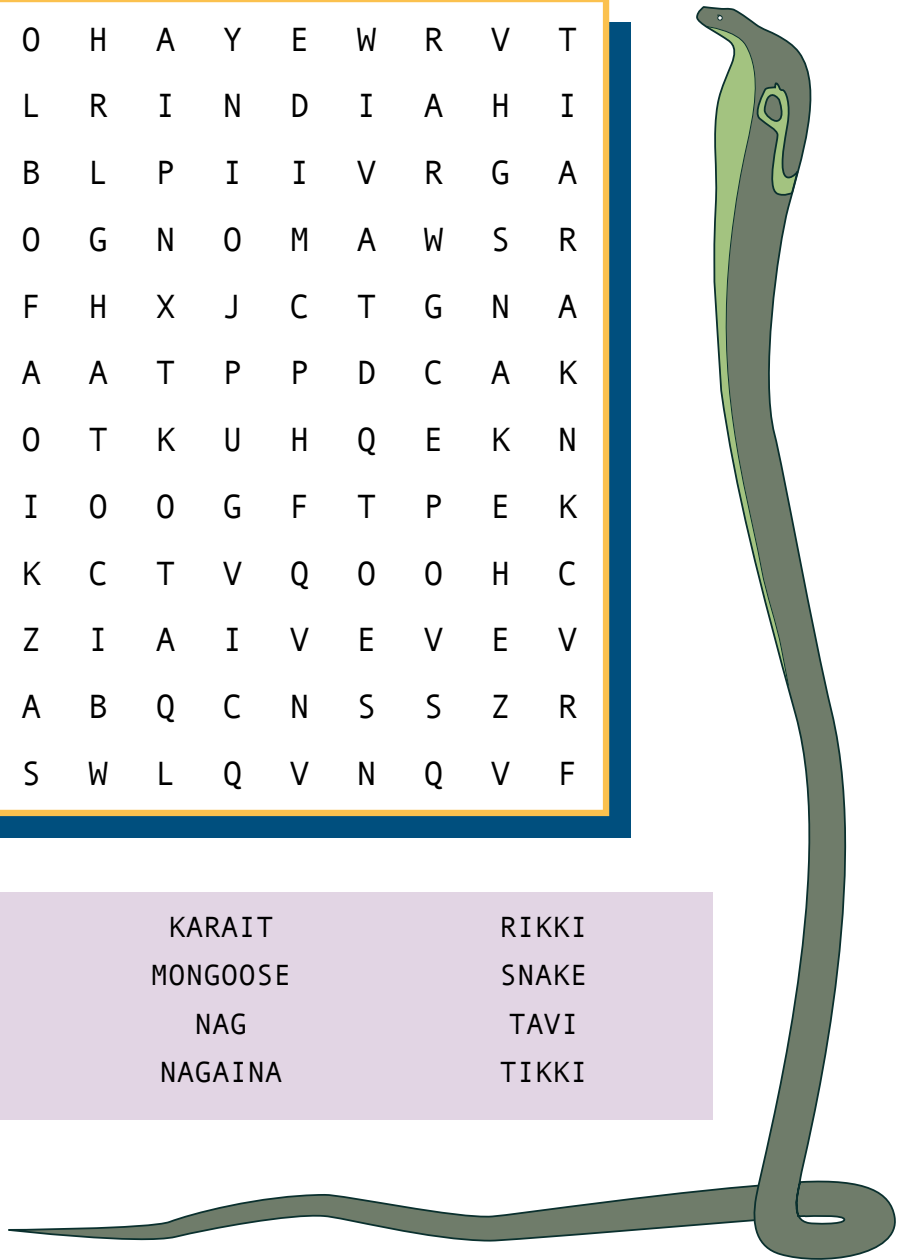
Circle each word from the list in the puzzle. The words can go in any direction.

G	W	Q	O	H	A	Y	E	W	R	V	T
N	D	X	L	R	I	N	D	I	A	H	I
Y	I	O	B	L	P	I	I	V	R	G	A
E	S	O	O	G	N	O	M	A	W	S	R
U	C	W	F	H	X	J	C	T	G	N	A
R	R	H	A	A	T	P	P	D	C	A	K
V	I	G	O	T	K	U	H	Q	E	K	N
Z	A	K	I	O	O	G	F	T	P	E	K
N	I	K	K	C	T	V	Q	O	O	H	C
Z	K	Z	Z	I	A	I	V	E	V	E	V
I	H	T	A	B	Q	C	N	S	S	Z	R
X	I	U	S	W	L	Q	V	N	Q	V	F

BATH  
COBRA  
HOOD  
INDIA

KARAIT  
MONGOOSE  
NAG  
NAGAINA

RIKKI  
SNAKE  
TAVI  
TIKKI





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3. Rikki couldn't attack on the open floor because it would give Nag an advantage.
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ **KEY**

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**Example of correct answers:**

**Rikki-tikki was very  
frightened as he saw the  
size of the big cobra.**

**"If I don't break his back at  
the first jump," said Rikki,  
"he can still fight. And if he  
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**As he held he closed his jaws  
tighter and tighter, for he made  
sure he would be banged to death,  
and, for the honor of his family,  
he preferred to be found with his  
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## KEY

**Student's answers will vary**

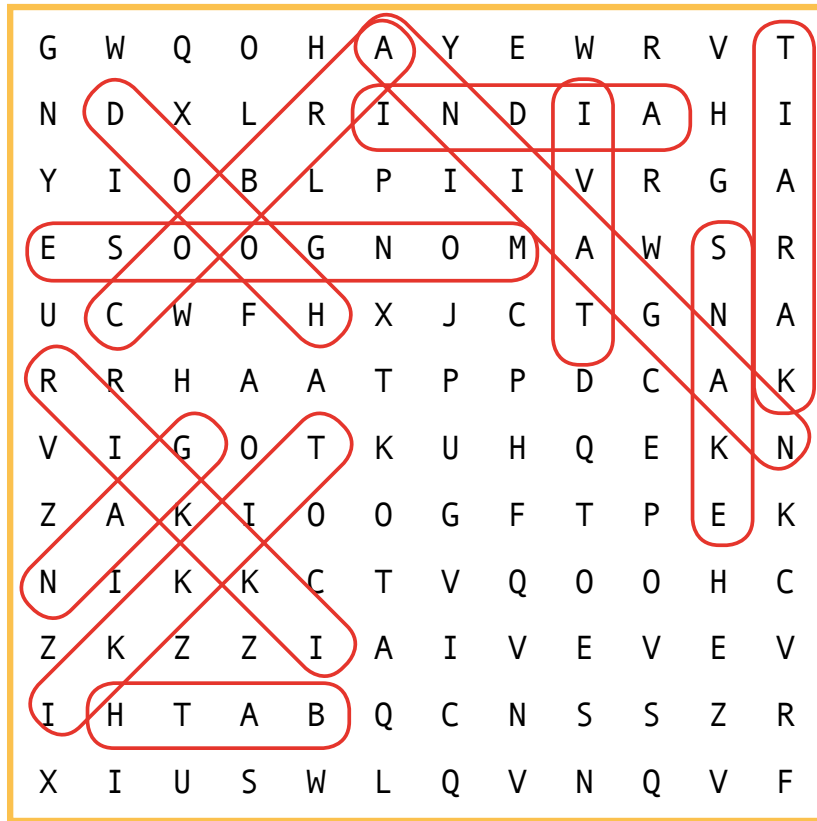
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KEY

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NAG  
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RIKKI  
SNAKE  
TAVI  
TIKKI

