

Group Members: _____

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Score: _____

Directions: Read the literary text below then analyze it by answering the questions that follows.

The Mahabharata

The innermost narrative kernel of the Mahabharata tells the story of two sets of paternal first cousins -- the five sons of the deceased king Pandu (the five Pandavas) and the one hundred sons of blind King Dhritarashtra (the 100 hundred Dhartarashtras) -- who became bitter rivals, and opposed each other in war for possession of the ancestral Bharata kingdom with its capital in the "City of the Elephant," Hastinapura, on the Ganga river in north central India.

What is dramatically interesting within this simple opposition is a large number of individual agendas the many characters pursue, and the numerous personal conflicts, ethical puzzles, subplots, and plot twists that give the story a strikingly powerful development.

The five sons of Pandu were actually fathered by five Gods (sex was mortally dangerous for Pandu, because of a curse) and these heroes were assisted throughout the story by various Gods, seers, and brahmins, including the seer Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa (who later became the author of the epic poem telling the whole of this story), who was also their actual grandfather (he had engendered Pandu and the blind Dhrtarastra upon their nominal father's widows in order to preserve the lineage). The one hundred Dhrtarashtras, on the other hand, had a grotesque, demonic birth, and are said more than once in the text to be human incarnations of the demons who are the perpetual enemies of the Gods.

The most dramatic figure of the entire Mahabharata, however, is Krishna Vasudeva, who was the supreme God Vishnu himself, descended to earth in human form to rescue Law, Good Deeds, Right, and Virtue (all of these words refer to different aspects of "dharma"). Krishna Vasudeva was the cousin of both parties, but he was a friend and advisor to the Pandavas, became the brother-in-law of Arjuna Pandava, and served as Arjuna's mentor and charioteer in the great war.

Krishna Vasudeva is portrayed several times as eager to see the purgative war occur, and in many ways, the Pandavas were his human instruments for fulfilling that end.

The Dhartarashtra party behaved viciously and brutally toward the Pandavas in many ways, from the time of their early youth onward. Their malice displayed itself most dramatically when they took advantage of the eldest Pandava, Yudhishtira (who had by now become the universal ruler of the land) in a game of dice: The Dhartarashtras 'won' all his brothers, himself, and even the Pandavas' common wife Draupadi (who was an incarnation of the richness and productivity of the Goddess "Earthly-and-Royal Splendor," Shri); they humiliated all the Pandavas and physically abused Draupadi; they drove the Pandava party into the wilderness for twelve years, and the twelve years had to be followed by the Pandavas' living somewhere in society, in disguise, without being discovered for one more year.

The Pandavas fulfilled their part of that bargain, but the villainous leader of the Dhartarashtra party, Duryodhana, was unwilling to restore the Pandavas to their half of the kingdom when the thirteen years had expired. Both sides then called upon their many allies and two large armies arrayed themselves on 'Kuru's Field' (Kuru was one of the eponymous ancestors of the clan), eleven divisions in the army of Duryodhana against seven divisions for Yudhishtira.

Much of the action in the Mahabharata is accompanied by discussion and debate among various interested parties, and the most famous sermon of all time, Krishna Vasudeva's ethical lecture and demonstration of his divinity to his charge Arjuna (the justly famous *Bhagavad Gita*) occurred in the Mahabharata just prior to the commencement of the hostilities of the war. Several of the important ethical and theological themes of the Mahabharata are tied together in this sermon, and this "Song of the Blessed One" has exerted much the same sort of powerful and far-reaching influence in Indian Civilization that the New Testament has in Christendom.

The Pandavas won the eighteen-day battle, but it was a victory that deeply troubled all except those who were able to understand things on the divine level (chiefly Krishna, Vyasa, and Bhishma, the Bharata patriarch who was emblematic of the virtues of the era now passing away).

The Pandavas' five sons by Draupadi, as well as Bhimasena Pandava's and Arjuna Pandava's two sons by two other mothers (respectively, the young warriors Ghatotkaca and Abhimanyu, were all tragic victims in the war. Worse perhaps, the Pandava victory was won by the Pandavas slaying, in succession, four men who were quasi-fathers to them: Bhishma, their teacher Drona, Karna (who was, though none of the Pandavas knew it, the first born, pre-marital, son of their mother), and their maternal uncle Shalya (all four of these men were, in succession, 'supreme commander' of Duryodhana's army during the war). Equally troubling was the fact that the killing of the first three of these 'fathers,' and of some other enemy warriors as well, was accomplished only through 'crooked stratagems' (jihmopayas), most of which were suggested by Krishna Vasudeva as absolutely required by the circumstances.

The ethical gaps were not resolved to anyone's satisfaction on the surface of the narrative and the aftermath of the war was dominated by a sense of horror and malaise. Yudhishtira alone was terribly troubled, but his sense of the war's wrongfulness persisted to the end of the text, in spite of the fact that everyone else, from his wife to Krishna Vasudeva, told him the war was right and good; in spite of the fact that the dying patriarch Bhishma lectured him at length on all aspects of the Good Law (the Duties and Responsibilities of Kings, which have rightful violence at their center; the ambiguities of Righteousness in abnormal circumstances; and the absolute perspective of a beatitude that ultimately transcends the oppositions of good versus bad, right versus wrong, pleasant versus unpleasant, etc.); in spite of the fact that he performed a grand Horse Sacrifice as expiation for the putative wrong of the war. These debates and instructions and the account of this Horse Sacrifice are told at some length after the massive and grotesque narrative of the battle; they form a deliberate tale of pacification (prashamana, shanti) that aims to neutralize the inevitable miasma of the war.

In the years that follow the war Dhritarashtra and his queen Gandhari, and Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, lived a life of asceticism in a forest retreat and died with yogic calm in a forest fire. Krishna Vasudeva and his always unruly clan slaughtered each other in a drunken brawl thirty-six years after the war, and Krishna's soul dissolved back into the Supreme God Vishnu (Krishna had been born when a part of Vishnu took birth in the womb of Krishna's mother). When they learned of this, the Pandavas believed it time for them to leave this world too and they embarked upon the 'Great Journey,' which involved walking north toward the polar mountain, that is toward the heavenly worlds, until one's body dropped dead. One by one Draupadi and the younger Pandavas died along the way until Yudhishtira was left alone with a dog that had followed him all the way. Yudhishtira made it to the gate of heaven and there refused the order to drive the dog back, at which point the dog was revealed to be an incarnate form of the God Dharma (the God who was Yudhishtira's actual, physical father), who was there to test Yudhishtira's virtue. Once in heaven, Yudhishtira faced one final test of his virtue: He saw only the Dhartarashtras in heaven, and he was told that his brothers were in hell. He insisted on joining his brothers in hell if that be the case! It was then revealed that they were really in heaven, that this illusion had been one final test for him. So ends the Mahabharata!

The Mahabharata. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-story-of-the-mahabharata-1770167>
Last March 27, 2017.

Questions:

- Who are the characters in the story?
- How does the story go?
- What are the literary devices present in the text?

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Directions: Read the literary text below then analyze it by answering the questions that follows.

The original Ramayana written by the 4th c. sage Valmiki comprised of seven (7) “kandas” or books. Many scholars question the authorship of the certain passages from the first book (Bala Kanda) and question the authenticity of the last book (Uttara Kanda) for various reasons:

- *Bala Kanda*: “The Book of the Youth,” the boyhood and adolescence of Rama;
- *Ayodhya Kanda*: “The Book of Ayodhya,” the court of Dasaratha and the scenes that set the stage for the unfolding of the story, including the exchange between Dasaratha and Kaikeyi and the exile of Rama;
- *Aranya Kanda*: “The Book of the Forest,” life in the forest during the fourteen year exile and the abduction of Sita by Ravana;
- *Kishkindhya Kanda*: “The Book of The Empire of Holy Mokeys,” Rama’s residence in Kishkindhya, the quest for Sita, and the slaying of Bali;
- *Sundara Kanda*: “The Book of the Beautiful (Hanuman),” sundara means beautiful, and this portion of the book has passages of lyrical beauty; description of the landscapes over which Rama roams, and the arrival of Rama and his allies in Lanka;
- *Yuddha Kanda*: “The Book of War,” the defeat of Ravana, the recovery of Sita, the return to Ayodhya, and the coronation of Rama; and
- *Uttara Kanda*: “The Book Beyond,” the “later section”, detailing Rama’s life in Ayodhya, the banishment of Sita, the birth of Lava and Kusa, the reconciliation of Rama and Sita, her death or return to the earth, and Rama’s ascent into heaven.

The Ramayana

Summary

Dasharatha was the King of Ayodhya and had three wives and four sons. Rama was the eldest and his mother was Kaushalya. Bharata was the son of Dasharatha’s second and favorite wife, Queen Kaikeyi. The other two were twins, Lakshmana and Shatrughna whose mother was Sumithra. In the neighboring city the ruler’s daughter was named Sita. When it was time for Sita to choose her bridegroom (at a ceremony called a swayamvara) princes from all over the land were asked to string a giant bow which no one could lift. However, as Rama picked it up, he not only strung the bow, he broke it. Seeing this, Sita indicated that she had chosen Rama as her husband by putting a garland around his neck. Their love became a model for the entire kingdom as they looked over the kingdom under the watchful eye of his father the king.

A few years later, King Dasharatha decided it was time to give his throne to his eldest son Rama and retire to the forest. Everyone seemed pleased, save Queen Kaikeyi since she wanted her son Bharata to rule. Because of an oath Dasharatha had made to her years before, she got the king to agree to banish Rama for fourteen years and to crown Bharata, even though the king pleaded with her not to demand such a request. The devastated King could not face Rama and it was Queen Kaikeyi who told Rama the King’s decree. Rama, always obedient, was content to go into banishment in the forest. Sita and Lakshmana accompanied him on his exile.

One day Rama and Lakshmana wounded a rakshasas (demon) princess who tried to seduce Rama. She returned to her brother Ravana, the ten-headed ruler of Lanka. In retaliation, Ravana devised a plan to abduct Sita after hearing about her incomparable beauty. He sent one of his demons disguised as a magical golden deer to entice Sita. To please her, Rama and Lakshmana went to hunt the deer down. Before they did though,

they drew a protective circle around Sita and told her that she would be safe for as long as she did not step outside the circle. After Rama and Lakshmana left, Ravana appeared as a holy man begging alms. The moment Sita stepped outside the circle to give him food, Ravana grabbed her and carried her to his kingdom in Lanka.

Rama then sought the help of a band of monkeys offer to help him find Sita. Hanuman, the general of the monkey band can fly since his father is the wind. He flew to Lanka and, finding Sita in the grove, comforted her and told her Rama would come to save her soon. Ravana's men captured Hanuman, and Ravana ordered them to wrap Hanuman's tail in cloth and to set it on fire. With his tail burning, Hanuman escaped and hopped from house-top to house-top, setting Lanka on fire. He then flew back to Rama to tell him where Sita was.

Rama, Lakshmana and the monkey army built a causeway from the tip of India to Lanka and crossed over to Lanka where a cosmic battle ensued. Rama killed several of Ravana's brothers and eventually confronted the ten-headed Ravana. He killed Ravana, freed Sita and after Sita proved her purity, they returned to Ayodhya where Bharata returned the crown to him.

The Ramayana. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://college.holycross.edu/projects/himalayan_cultures/2006_plans/ptiernan/story.htm last
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Directions: Read the literary text below then analyze it by answering the questions that follows.

The *Silappadikaram*, by Prince Ilango Adigal, is a story about a woman and her husband as they struggle with the problems of fidelity, right and wrong, and justice. The core themes of the *Silappadikaram* are very relevant to the human experience, which is probably why it still is a well read story today. It is a tale that produces good insights to the culture, lessons, *karma*, and ideals of the Tamil people who hold it dear.

Silappadikaram

The *Silappadikaram* begins in the city of Puhar in the kingdom of Chola, a bustling trading town in which Kannagi and Kovalan are to have a marriage arranged by their parents (Holmstrom 3). After the marriage Kannagi “spent most of her day learning about the household” and “[s]he knew that both Kovalan’s parents and her own looked to her to maintain the traditions and honour of her family...” thereby illustrating her devotion to her role as a wife (6,8). This role involved learning her duties as a partner and homemaker from her mother in law, then implementing her skills in a way to make home life harmonious for Kovalan and herself. Years later a dancer named Madhavi captures Kovalan’s eye. Kovalan starts another life with this woman, even having a child with her, all the while neglecting Kannagi (12-13). Kovalan becomes increasingly charitable in his new life, especially to those who have made mistakes, and he ends up frittering away his fortune (14). He starts to sell his and Kannagi’s own possessions and feels an overwhelming sense of guilt and restlessness (15).

One day he returns to Kannagi declaring “[a]ll these years I’ve lived with a woman who cannot tell the difference between truth and falsehood. On such a woman I have wasted all my ancestral wealth. I bring you nothing but poverty. I am bitterly ashamed” (25). Kannagi tells Kovalan to take her anklets, given to her by her mother as a wedding gift, to help him get his fortune back (25). This act shows her dedication to her husband even after years of loneliness and abandonment. Kovalan decides they need a new start so they sneak out of Puhar at night and start their journey to Madurai in the Pandya kingdom (25-26). They stop and talk to the “renunceint” Kavundi who decides to go with the couple on their long journey (27).

Many events happen along the trip, quite a few with lessons attached. For instance, a monk reminds the group that “each of our actions is like a seed that is sown and is bound to bring a harvest of its own kind,” which told of how *karma* affects people based on their behaviour (30). Another lesson comes from Kavundi who, after turning two people into jackals when they teased Kannagi, stated that “[d]isrespect is no small thing”. This once again illustrates how one’s life should be lived, in this case in regard to the treatment of others (32). They also stop at a temple where “Aiyai, goddess of hunters” is being worshiped (35).

When the group finally gets to Madurai, Kavundi leaves Kovalan and Kannagi in the care of Madari an animal herder (47-49). When Kovalan goes to the smith to try and sell one of Kannagi’s anklets, the smith thinks Kovalan stole the piece of jewellery from the queen (53). King Nedunchezhiyan was informed of this and put out the order “[s]ee if the thief has the queen’s anklet in his possession. If that is really so, kill him immediately and bring me the jewel to the queen’s chambers” (56). The order is carried out and Kovalan is killed (58). Kannagi receives the news of her husband’s unjust death and is devastated. She calls out to the Sun God who replies “this city which accuses him shall be destroyed by fire” (63). Kannagi goes before the king and shows him his mistake, for the queen’s original anklet had pearls whereas the one taken from Kovalan had rubies (68). Kannagi gives the Sun God the order to “not on any account spare the wicked” and the city is burned (70). Only

the goddess of the Royal Pandya house, Bharatan, was left (72). The goddess tells of how both Kovalan and Kannagi were connected in a past life. In that life Kovalan had killed Kannagi's husband by mistake; this caused Kannagi so much grief that she had thrown herself off a cliff (74). The goddess told Kannagi that "[a] virtuous life is good in itself, but may not prevent the sins of a past life from bearing fruit", putting into perspective why these unfortunate events had happened to Kovalan and herself (74).

Silappadikaram Summary. (n.d.). Retrieved <http://www.mahavidya.ca/2010/06/07/the-silappadikaram/> last March 29, 2017.

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Shakuntala

Shakuntala was a beautiful maiden who was the adopted daughter of Sage Karnva. She lived with him and her pet deer, in his hermitage in the forest. One day, Dushyanta, the king of Hastinapur, came hunting in the forest. He saw the beautiful deer and shot an arrow at it. Shakuntala found her deer whimpering in pain and tried to comfort it. Shakuntala loved the animals of the forest and her affection for the animal touched Dushyanta's heart and he asked her to forgive him for his cruelty. She forgave him but asked him to stay in the forest for a few days to tend the wounded deer. They fell in love and King Dushyanta married Shakuntala and gave her a wedding ring his name on it. The king then left for his kingdom after promising to return soon and take Shakuntala back with him.

One day, Sage Durwasa came to Shakuntala's door. He repeatedly asked for water, but Shakuntala was lost in thoughts of Dushyanta and paid no attention. The sage was insulted and got very angry. Known for his temper, he cursed Shakuntala saying that the person whom she was thinking about would forget her. When Shakuntala heard the cause, she was frightened and begged the sage to forgive her. The sage said that he could not take back the curse but he could change, if she showed Dushyanta something he had given her then he will remember again about her.

Due to the curse Dushyanta forgot Shakuntala. After days of waiting for him to return, Shakuntala decided to go to the capital to meet him. On the way, as Shakuntala was crossing a river, her wedding ring fell into the water. A fish swallowed the ring. When Shakuntala arrived at the palace, the king did not recognize her. He asked her to prove her identity but Shakuntala didn't have the ring to show him, as it was lost. She wept and told the king about the time he had spent with her in the forest but he couldn't remember anything. Feeling sad she left the palace.

Ashamed to return to her father's home, she started living alone in another part of the forest where she gave birth to a son. She called him Bharata. Bharata was a brave boy. He grew up among the animals of the forest and would play with wild animals.

One day at the king's palace, a fisherman brought him a ring. He told the king that he had found the ring in the stomach of a fish that he had brought it straight to him. As soon as the king saw the ring, the curse was broken

and the king remembered Shakuntala. He was very upset and hurried at once to her home in the forest to look for her, but could not find her. In despair, he returned to his palace.

Few years passed. The king again went hunting in the forest. There he was surprised to find a boy playing with a lion cub. The boy fearlessly held open the mouth of the cub and said, " O king of the jungle! Open your mouth wide, so I can count your teeth." The king went up to the boy and asked him about his parents. The little boy replied that he was the son of king Dushyanta and Shakuntala. Dushyanta was very happy to have found Shakuntala and asked the boy to take him to his mother. The family was united and Dushyanta took Shakuntala and Bharata along with him to Hastinapur. Bharata grew up to become a great king.

Shakuntala. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://www.kidsgen.com/fables_and_fairytales/indian_mythology_stories/shakuntala.htm#IL68PVM1zvSAxy7S.99 last March 27, 2017.

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