



The Rumor

Discuss the title.

Display slide 1 from the Google Slides. Then transition to slide 2: allow some discussion for the question: Why should we ask questions and gather facts before believing a story about someone?

Introduction to the story.

- Explain that today we are going to read a story from Ancient India about a wise ascetic named Hara-svāmin. This story teaches an important lesson about truth, rumors, and the harm that can be caused when people believe things without checking the facts.

Meet the Characters

Using slide 4, discuss the main characters. Allow students to discuss the question with a partner: What do you think each person's role will be in this story?

Key Vocabulary

See Slides 5-10

Spend a few minutes discussing each of the words on slides 5-10. Allow students to share examples relating to each of the words.

Pre-Reading

See Slide 11

Discuss the following question: *What is a rumor? How can a rumor affect someone's life? Have you ever heard a rumor that turned out to be untrue?* Allow students to freely walk around the room discussing this with classmates for two minutes.

During Reading

See Slides 12-14

Allow students to discuss each of the questions shown on slides 12, 13, and 14 as you read. Pause at appropriate times to allow for clarification and reflection.

The Rumor

Post Reading

See Slides 15-17.

Allow students to discuss each of the questions shown on slides 15-17. Consider discussing each question using a whole group approach or a Think-Pair-Share strategy.

Connect to Your Life.

See Slide 18.

Using the provided worksheet, have students draft a response to the Connect to Your Life question.

Extension Activities

- Rumor Role Play
 - In small groups, students act out a scene showing how a rumor might start, how it spreads, and how it can be stopped by finding the truth. (Consider using more generalized rumors to lessen the likelihood of students using pointed language. This reduce frustrations and possibly getting off topic within the class.)
- Truth-Seeker Interview
 - Students create a set of interview questions they would ask if they heard a rumor, then role-play interviewing people to check the facts.
- Compare and Contrast
 - Read another story about false accusations or misunderstandings (e.g., *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*). Use a Venn diagram to compare lessons learned.
- Fact-Checking Challenge
 - Give students short fictional “news headlines” (made up for the activity) and have them work in teams to ask questions and find evidence before deciding if the headline is true or false. (Since you know the specific needs of your class, it is suggested that you make the news headlines. Write the needed amount of large strips of paper or share using another preferred method.)

The Rumor

Adapted Story: The False Rumor

Long ago, in the city of Kusuma-pura, on the banks of the Gaṅgā River, there lived an ascetic named Hara-svāmin. He was a peaceful ascetic who traveled to sacred places and lived in a small hut he built by the river. He owned almost nothing and survived by asking for food from the people in town. Because he lived such a simple and disciplined life, many respected him.

But not everyone liked Hara-svāmin.

One day, a mean-spirited man in the city spotted him walking to town to beg for food. Out of jealousy, the man whispered to someone nearby, “Do you know who that man is? He’s a hypocritical ascetic. He’s the one who eats children!”

The listener was shocked, but instead of checking if it was true, he passed it along: “I’ve heard that too.”

A third man heard the rumor and added, “It’s true. I’m sure of it.”

Like sparks spreading in dry grass, the false story traveled quickly. Soon, people all over Kusuma-pura believed Hara-svāmin kidnapped and ate children. Parents kept their children inside and warned them not to go near him.

Frightened for their families, the townspeople held a meeting. They decided to send Hara-svāmin away—but they were too scared to tell him in person. Instead, they sent messengers who stood far away and shouted, “The people of Kusuma-pura order you to leave the city!”

Hara-svāmin was shocked. “Why?” he asked.

The messengers shouted back, “Because you eat children!”

Hara-svāmin walked toward the townspeople to find out more, but they panicked and ran. Many climbed to the top of the city’s monastery to get away from him.

From below, Hara-svāmin called up to them, “My friends, why do you believe this? Ask one another—how many children have I eaten? Whose children? Which families?” The townspeople looked at each other. Slowly, they began talking. It turned out that not a single family was missing a child. Every boy and girl was safe at home.

Realizing the truth, the citizens felt ashamed. “We have falsely accused a good man,” they admitted. “Our children are all safe. He has done nothing wrong.”

Although Hara-svāmin was exonerated, the cruel rumor had hurt him deeply. “Why should I live in a place where people believe lies without thinking?” he said, and began packing to leave. The town’s scholars and merchants begged him to stay. They apologized and promised to treat him with respect. At last, though still saddened by the slander, Hara-svāmin agreed to remain in Kusuma-pura.

The Rumor

Original Story

The Rumor About Hara-svāmin (A Tale from Ancient India)

There is a city on the banks of the Gaṅgā river named Kusumapura, and in it there lived an ascetic who visited sacred places, named Hara-svāmin. He was a learned monk living by begging. Constructing a hut to dwell in on the banks of the Gaṅgā, he became, on account of his surprisingly rigid asceticism, the object of the people's respect.

One day a wicked man among the inhabitants of the city, who could not tolerate Hara-svāmin's virtue, seeing him from a distance going out to beg, said: "Do you know what a hypocritical ascetic that is? It is he that has eaten up all the children in this town."

A second man like him heard this, and said: "It is true; I also have heard people saying this."

And a third confirming it said: "Such is the fact."

The chain of villains' conversation binds reproach on the good. And in this way the report spread from ear to ear, and gained general credence in the city. And all the citizens kept their children by force in their houses, saying: "Hara-svāmin carries off all the children and eats them."

And then the people in that town, afraid that their offspring would be destroyed, assembled and deliberated about his banishment from the city. And as they did not dare to tell him face to face, for fear he might perhaps eat them up in his rage, they sent messengers to him. And those messengers went and said to him from a distance: "The townsmen command you to depart from this city."

Then in his astonishment he asked them: "Why?"

And they went on to say: "You eat every child as soon as you see it."

The Rumor

When Hara-svāmin heard that, he went near those townsfolk, in order to reassure them, and the people fled before him for fear. And the townsfolk, as soon as they saw him, were terrified and went up to the top of the city monastery. People who are deluded by rumors are not, as a rule, capable of intelligent discrimination.

Then Hara-svāmin, standing below, called all the townsfolk who were above, one by one, by name, and said to them: “What delusion is this, good people? Why do you not ascertain with one another how many children I have eaten, and whose, and how many of each man’s children?”

When they heard that, the people began to compare notes among themselves, and found that all of them had all their children left alive. And in course of time other citizens, appointed to investigate the matter, admitted that all their children were living. And merchants and scholars and all said: “Alas! in our folly we have falsely accused a holy man; the children of all of us are alive; so whose children can he have eaten?”

Hara-svāmin, being thus completely exonerated, prepared to leave that city, for his mind was seized with disgust at the slanderous report raised against him by wicked men. For what pleasure can a wise man take in a wicked place, the inhabitants of which are wanting in intelligence?

Then the scholars and merchants, prostrating themselves at his feet, entreated him to stay there, and he at last, though with reluctance, consented to do so.

Connect to Your Life – *The Rumor About Hara-svāmin*

Name: _____

Think About It: In the story, a false rumor spread about Hara-svāmin. People believed it without checking the facts, and it almost cost him his home. This shows why it's important to ask questions, look for evidence, and think carefully before passing on a story.

1 A Time You Heard a Rumor

Have you ever heard a rumor that turned out not to be true? Who was it about? (No names needed). What happened when you learned it wasn't true?

2 Stopping a Rumor

Think about a time when you could have helped stop a false story. What could you say or do to help people get the facts?

3 Building Trust

What are three ways you can build trust with your friends, family, and classmates?

The Rumor

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Optional Drawing Activity:

Draw a picture showing someone finding the truth before believing a story.