

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

by Rudyard Kipling (England, 1894)

This is Kipling's story of a heroic young mongoose that saves an English family from a pair of vengeful cobras. Originally from *The Jungle Book*, it gives young people an introduction to British-occupied India and young actors the opportunity to experiment with characterization. It's a good story for looking at "perspective." Consider incorporating flutes (recorders) into the beginning and end of the snake charmers' narration.



CAST OF CHARACTERS

Snake Charmer 1

Snake Charmer 2

Teddy: An English boy living in India

Alice: Teddy's mother

Big Man: Teddy's father

RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI: A heroic mongoose

Darzee: A songbird

Deezari: Another songbird, Darzee's wife

Nag: A hooded king cobra

Nagaina: Another hooded king cobra, Nag's wife

Chuchundra: The fearful muskrat

Chorus: Darzee and others

Vocabulary

bungalow roaming triumph tuft brood
curiosity stealthily valiant scuttled quivered

Scene 1: A Bungalow in India

SNAKE CHARMER 1: This is the story of the great war Rikki-tikki-tavi fought throughout the rooms and garden of a big bungalow in India.

SNAKE CHARMER 2: When Rikki-Tikki was very young, a flood washed him out of his burrow and carried him down a ditch to the middle of a garden.

TEDDY: Look, Mother, here's a dead mongoose. We should give him a proper funeral.

ALICE: Perhaps he isn't really dead, Teddy. Let's dry him off.

BIG MAN: He's not dead—just half choked. Now don't frighten him, and we'll see what he'll do once he's warmed up a bit.

SNAKE CHARMER 1: Soon Rikki was himself again and, like all mongooses, he was eaten up with curiosity.

SNAKE CHARMER 2: The mongoose motto is "Run and find out," so within moments Rikki had run around the entire room, and then he jumped on the boy's shoulder.

BIG MAN: Don't be frightened, Teddy. That's how he makes friends.

TEDDY: *Ouch!* He's tickling me.

RIKKI: *Rikk-ikk-ikki!*

ALICE: Good gracious, he's a wild creature! I suppose he's tame only because we've been kind to him.

BIG MAN: Every mongoose is like that. As long as Teddy doesn't pick him up by the tail, he'll run in and out of the house all day long.

RIKKI (aside): There is much to find out about this family, I shall certainly *try* and find out.

SNAKE CHARMER 1: Rikki spent all that day roaming the house.

SNAKE CHARMER 2: And when Teddy went to bed, Rikki-tikki climbed up, too.

ALICE: I don't like that. He may bite the child.

BIG MAN: He'll do no such thing. Having a mongoose around is the surest way to protect against deadly snakes. Why, if one came into the room right now...

Think Aloud

What is the setting of this story?