

THE FIRST GIRL ON STAGE

Educators Guide and Activity Sheets



www.shruthi-rao.com

What is Yakshagana?

Yakshagana (YUK-shuh-GAH-nuh) means “the song of the Yakshas.” In folktales and mythology, Yakshas are demigods or nature spirits.

Yakshagana evolved between 500 and 1000 years ago as an energetic blend of dance, music, theater, costume design, makeup and dialogues (often extempore). It is considered one of the richest art forms in the world.

Aata (AAH-tuh) means play. The art of yakshagana and the performance itself is often just referred to as aata.

Most performances are drawn from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The main emotion of yakshagana is valor or heroism.



Discussion Questions

- Did you guess what this book was about before you began reading?
- In this book, we see Tunga growing up. What elements has the illustrator used in the artwork to help you follow Tunga's growth through the story?
- What does Tunga do after she begins to perform on stage? What do you learn from her actions?
- Tunga follows her heart even though everyone around her tells her yakshagana is not for girls.
- Can you remember a time where you followed your heart to learn or do something?
- Compare Tunga's community and way of life to your own. What similarities and differences do you notice?
- If you could describe Tunga using three words, what would they be? How is Tunga like you?
- If you could ask the author or illustrator one question, what would it be?





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Text by Shruthi Rao

Art by Devika Joglekar

www.sambasivanandparikh.com

Learning about Gender Stereotypes

Have you ever been told you shouldn't do something because of your gender? Maybe a toy or an outfit you wanted, or a book you wanted to read?
How did it make you feel?

Can you think of a book or a movie or a show in which a character wasn't allowed to do something because of their gender?



Emotion Tracker

Tunga goes through various emotions and feelings throughout the story.

Can you see how they change?

Here's a table that can help you keep track of them.

| What emotion do you think Tunga is feeling? | How do you know? Pick out the words if the words told you this | How do you know? Pick out the illustration if the illustration told you this | Why did Tunga feel that way? |
|---|--|--|---|
| Amazed, surprised, very interested | "Tunga gazed at the stage, wide-eyed." | Tunga's eyes and mouth are wide open | She was watching a Yakshagana performance |
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