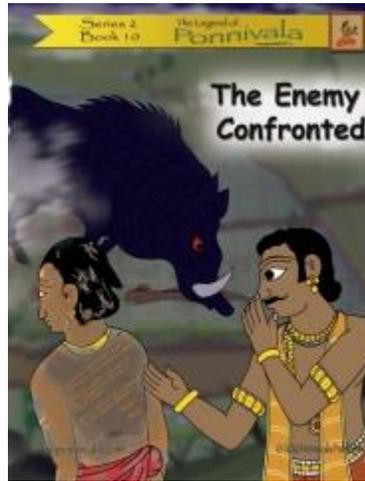


Episode 23 – The Enemy Confronted (Sub Stories a, b, c and d)

Resource Materials: Individual comic books, a graphic novel set, or 26 videos
VISIT our SHOP: Choose the retelling that works best for you



23-a A Huge Wild Boar Destroys The Farmer's Fine Crops

Now the end game begins. A great wild boar, pet of the hunters' little sister, is destined to attack the heroes and their fertile lands. He sets out and on three successive nights he systematically destroys the heroes' rice fields, sugarcane crop and finally, the palace flower garden. A gardener picking flowers for morning offerings at the local goddess' temple is the first to see all this terrible destruction. He is distraught, but still he hopes to collect the few flowers that remain visible. The great boar, which has now disguised himself as a large black rock, feels the gardener's weight on his back as he climbs on it to pick an especially pretty little bloom.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: What would you do if you were a farmer and you found all your lovely fields ripped up overnight? Why do you think the hunters (who are really behind the great boar's work) so angry? Can you think of a similar modern story where natives are angry because they feel their lands have been destroyed by cattle ranchers, by farmers or by big business in general?

COMMENTARY: This sub-episode focuses on the destruction the wild boar wreaks on the farmer's beautiful and bountiful lands. It sets out the confrontation between the hunters and their farmer enemies in a vivid way. The boar can be seen to represent a kind of "metaphorical terrorism." Even his sending a threatening letter to the heroes challenging them to war has its parallels with the way some terrorists use the modern media. The poor gardener is just a pawn, something like a hostage. Even his climbing on the boar itself (which made itself look like just another inert black boulder) could be likened to an innocent person setting off a deliberately placed explosive device.

23-b The Wild Forest Boar Sends A Challenge To the Farmer Kings

The great boar now jumps up. He begins to intimidate the gardener and bully him. Finally the gardener is asked to roll in the mud so that his body is caked with dirt. Then he is told by the boar to turn his back so that the huge creature can write a message on it with

his right tusk. The text is to be taken by the gardener to the palace of the two farmer kings. As the memo is scripted the message gradually becomes clear. It reads (as voiced by the boar) "Come challenge me in the forest within three days or die." It is signed with the well-known name of this challenger: "King Kompan." When the heroes receive this message they quickly prepare for war.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Can you find another story or folktale where the villain sends a written threat to the hero? What about modern terrorists who send their threats through video clips that are sent to the world-wide media through similar intermediaries?

COMMENTARY: Here the story is making "fun" of the boar by having it "write" on the gardener's back. This is a society where literacy and the ability to write are prized, and are rare abilities. And furthermore, in having this "gift," the boar is metaphorically juxtaposed to a famous Hindu deity (Ganesh). Ganesh is seen in several episodes in this story with a broken tusk (episode 22-b for example). Ganesh is said, to have penned the India's classic Mahabharata epic by breaking off his right tusk and using that as his writing implement. Look carefully at any statue of Ganesh (in this story or elsewhere) and you will see that his right tusk is always broken. This is an "iconographic" reminder of the famous tale. Having the boar "imitate" the famous Ganesh as he tries to write is a kind of "joke" in its own right.

23-c The Sister Foresees Disaster But Fears To Speak Out

The two brothers read the message and decide that they must go to war against the great boar right away. But the sister first wants her brothers to undergo a magical "test." She will throw mustard seeds in the air in front of the family temple. They are to split every one of them in half before these little grains can fall to the ground. After this amazing feat the sister inspects the cloth the seeds have fallen on. One seed is left unsplit split after the test. This is a sign that disaster looms, but by now the two brothers are fully committed to their war against the boar. The sister is unhappy. That one unsplit seed is a sign that their mission will fail. But she can not bring herself to tell them this terrible news.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Why do you think the sister asks for this totally "unreasonable" test? What is accomplished by her asking her brothers to do such a strange thing?

COMMENTARY: This test helps the sister see into the future. It is also a way of showing story listeners how skilled the twins are with their swords. Who could possibly cut tiny seeds in the air, as they fall from above, using such a heavy metal blade? Surely these men will be awesome fighters. Their swordsmanship is exceptional. But the test does not much help the two brothers prepare for the challenge ahead. Fearful of affecting their self confidence and their courage (and perhaps also not wanting to accept what she now knows) the sister conceals the real truth.....that her brothers will not survive this final battle. This whole "testing" event can be read as just one more way in which the bond between the two brothers and their sister is weakening. At several points they have not been truthful with her. Now, for the first time, she is also not being truthful with them.

The sister has magical powers, just as all chaste and family-oriented women do in this cultural (story) tradition. It is the sister's blessing that gives power to her brothers and allows them success in a dangerous mission. Looking deeper, the brother/sister dynamic in this episode is quite important.

23-d **The Heroes' Ritual Preparations For War Are Completed**

The great war drum is now raised from its storage place at the bottom of the irrigation tank. It is re-covered with fresh leather and a huge feast is offered to the demons of the underworld. Soon the drum is beaten and a deep "toom toom" sound can be heard throughout the kingdom.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION TOPICS & EXERCISES: Ponnivala's great war drum is repaired and beaten to announce the coming war. Can you cite other examples of where war drums are beaten to announce a looming battle? Is there any equivalent that Western armies use to announce a war today?

COMMENTARY: The use of a war drum is very traditional and can be found in many cultures. The use of a large and deep sounding drum for this purpose is been documented repeatedly in old manuscripts. The phrase "beating the war drum" is so familiar that it is often used metaphorically. The war drum is usually kept at the bottom of a large tank or well. This helps preserve both the wood and the leather. Under water is considered a traditional place to keep powerful and sacred things more generally. (The bottom of a well is a good place to do an archaeological dig, and much has been found in such places (for example in the Aztec ruins of ancient Mexico). As for the "demons" described, they are sort of like low level protectors. They hang around and can either be pests or guardians. Demons generally expect a bribe or some sort of gift. That is why they are given sacrificial food during the drum ceremony. After a demon is fed it is believed that he will take off, feeling 'satisfied,' and not bother anyone in the future.