



Unknown (Punjab Hills, Chamba)
The Abduction of Rukmini, ca. 1800
cotton embroidered with silk and metallic thread
38 3/4 x 40 9/16 in.
Museum purchase, Charles Webb Fund
78.3

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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This *rumal*, a cloth covering used to wrap gifts or offerings, illustrates events from the life of the Hindu deity Krishna. As the god reached his maturity, he was to leave the cowherds of his childhood and join his true royal parents. After vanquishing an evil demon, Krishna continued to battle the evil spirit's allies. He built a fortress city in a single night and, thus settled, looked to marry. Krishna would eventually marry more than 16,000 maidens but his first and favorite wife was Princess Rukmini (an avatar of the goddess Lakshmi—Vishnu's consort). Rukmini was promised, however, to a loathsome demon. On the fateful wedding day, Krishna snatched the bride. Demons and men rushed about in disarray as the couple escaped.

This elaborate embroidered panel has visible traces of a preliminary drawing, implying the original design of a professional painter.



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DISCUSS

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This *rumal*, or cloth covering used to wrap gifts or offerings, illustrates different events from the life of the Hindu god Krishna. Click the Explore tab to learn more about Krishna's life story.

Can you spot the following items in the rumal?

- 3 images of Krishna (Krishna is usually portrayed as a blue-skinned male youth wearing a peacock feather crown and a yellow silk dhoti, a cloth garment worn around the waist by men)
- A fortress
- 3 elephants
- A winged demon
- 9 soldiers with blue swords
- 3 chariots
- A bird

What other details do you notice? Why do you think the artist decided to include so many figures?



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CREATE

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Try your hand at telling your life story using images. Which important events and people would you like to include?

Before you begin drawing your illustrations, think about how you would like to organize them to tell your story. You could take inspiration from the large format of the rumal, and place all of your illustrations on one large sheet of paper. Alternatively, you could stack several smaller sheets of paper together and staple the edge to make a book. Or, you could use a long, narrow sheet of paper to make a scroll that can be rolled and unrolled.

When you are finished, share your life story with a friend. What do your stories have in common? Where do they differ? Did you learn something new about your friend?