

Children's Books with a Message – India

One Grain of Rice – Demi Scholastic Press – New York

This is a delightful folktale with beautiful artwork inspired by traditional Indian miniature paintings. From the book jacket, “Long ago in India, there lived a raja who believed that he was wise and fair. But every year he kept nearly all of the people’s rice for himself. Then when famine came, the raja refused to share the rice, and the people went hungry. Then a village girl named Rani devises a clever plan. She does a good deed for the raja, and in return the raja lets her choose her reward. Rani asks for just one grain of rice, doubled every day for thirty days. Through the surprising power of doubling, one grain of rice grows into more than one billion grains of rice – and Rani teaches the raja a lesson about what it truly means to be wise and fair.”

When I read this book to an RE class, I tie this into the practice in Khasi Hills where folks put aside one handful of rice at every meal to give to those in need.

Aani and the Tree Huggers – Jeannine Atkins Lee & Low Books Inc. – New York

This is a beautiful award-winning book with lovely illustrations. Author’s Note – “This story is based on real events in northern India in the 1970’s. The women, part of a movement know as the Chipko Andolan (“Hug the Tree Movement”) were victorious. Aani and other woman in her village defend the forest from developers by wrapping their arms around the trees, making it impossible to cut them down. Today, councils meet within most villages to decide how many trees can be cut without endangering the land and those who live there. And every spring, new trees are planted.