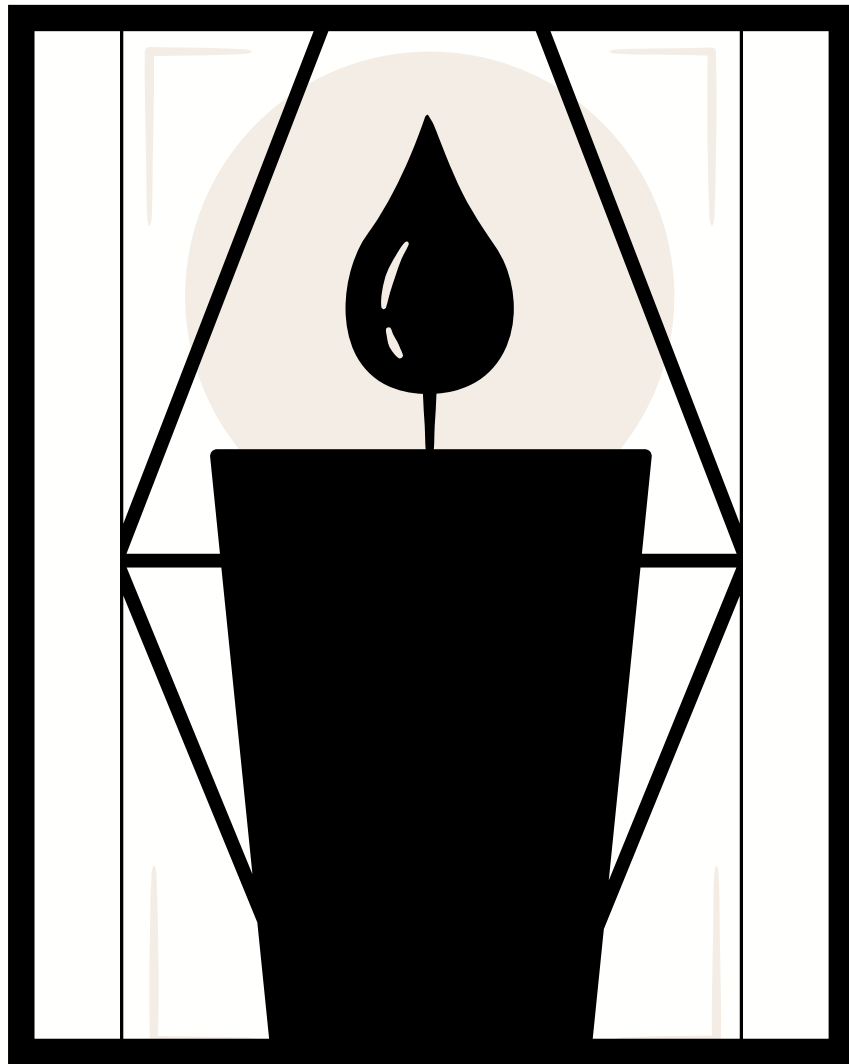


SHORT READS

FOR PEOPLE WITH NO TIME



READ

THE RAINBOW FLAME

Sixteen year old Rupali comes from a long line of candle makers, the only ones who craft the rainbow flame in all Kashi. These candles are sacred, used by the Singers, a group tasked with healing the night sky and maintaining the traditions and stories of the community. Rupali plays an important role in this ancient ritual, but has given up much in the process. However, everything changes when Rupali meets Daya, the daughter of a Singer, who knows more about the rainbow candles, and how they are used, than Rupali has ever been told.

ABOUT SHVETA THAKRAR

"Shveta Thakrar is a part-time nagini and full-time believer in magic. Her work has appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies including *Enchanted Living*, *Uncanny Magazine*, *A Thousand Beginnings and Endings*, and *Toil & Trouble*. Her debut young adult fantasy novel, *Star Daughter*, is a finalist for the 2021 Andre Norton Nebula Award. When not spinning stories about spider silk and shadows, magic and marauders, and courageous girls illuminated by dancing rainbow flames, Shveta crafts, devours books, daydreams, travels, bakes, and occasionally even plays her harp." - Biography from *Uncanny Magazine*.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Rupali's** grandmother and mother have different perspectives about tradition and family legacy. How do both influence and challenge Rupali's attitude toward her duties as a candlemaker?

2. **Why** are Rupali's family the only keepers of the rainbow flame in all Kashi? Do you think it is possible for others to learn the process of making these candles? If so, why haven't they?

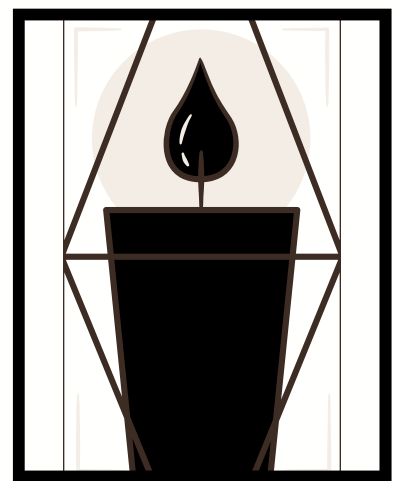
3. **What** were your initial impressions of the Singers? Consider these two differing lines:

"The Singers must heal the holes in the star field, the rents in the fabric of our traditions and stories."

"No one really knew what the Singers did with their spell candles, but rumor had it they went straight to fulfilling personal pleasures."

4. **If** you were Rupali, what would you have wished for? Keep in mind, the wish only lasts as long as the candle burns. Why did Rupali's mother give her a candle in the first place?

5. **What** caused Daya to realize that everyone is in a continuous loop? How long do you think she has known this information before confiding in Rupali?



"She tossed the cup into the river. It floated off, a tiny boat sailing away on adventures she couldn't begin to imagine."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

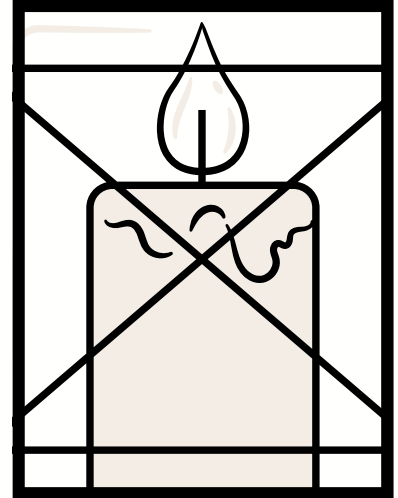
6. Imagine you are trapped in a single day like Daya and Rupali. However, you get to choose which day repeats. Which day do you choose?

7. What is the significance of Rupali imaging her cup sailing away, finding a crew, and heading out on an adventure?

8. What are the singers rationale for keeping the sky frozen in place? What do they fear will happen if they stop using the candles?

9. “Tradition is a good thing,” she said, “but sometimes we need to make our own.” This statement is a central theme in the story. What are some other sentences that capture this sentiment?

10. The world in which this story takes place changes drastically once the spell is broken. Imagine how things might change for the people of Kashi. What does it look like a week from these events? What about a month or in five years?



"Today, on Sarasvati's day, the magic goes back to the people entrusted to your care. The stories flow free, to die and change and be reborn. You may have forgotten, but your privilege is to serve them—and us."

WRITE IT DOWN

Warm Up

Write a to-do list for a character either in this story or in a different one. Pick a day at random or choose a date before a big event or scene. What does the character need to do? Include a few brief notes that the character needs to remember.

Prompt adapted from author C.B. Lee,
<https://cb-lee.com/2017/06/21/five-quickwrites-to-get-you-out-of-a-writing-rut/>

Warm Up

Reread the scene in which The Singers use the rainbow flame to stop the stars from moving: "the stars quaked and tried but failed to shift position before finally resettling themselves." In a 100 words or less, describe this scene in greater detail or from the perspective of a star.

Short Story Prompt

This story is about honoring tradition while embracing the new and unknown, but it's also about family legacy. Write a short story about a character who must choose between fulfilling their own dreams and those expected of them by their family.

For Visual Artists

This story contains vivid imagery of stars stuck in place, rainbow candles, magical doorways, and a lake on fire. Pick one and create a sketch, painting, photograph, or digital design inspired by this story.

MORE READS

Star Daughter
Shveta Thakrar

More Short Stories
by Shveta Thakrar

We Hunt the Flame
Hafsah Faizal

Thorn
Intisar Khanani

Akata Witch
Nnedi Okorafor

A Song Below Water
Bethany C. Morrow

Spin the Dawn
Elizabeth Lim

Legendborn
Tracy Deonn

Cemetery Boys
Aiden Thomas

Each of Us a Desert
Mark Oshiro

The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea
Maggie Tokuda-Hall

A Phoenix First Must Burn:
Sixteen Stories of Black Girl Magic, Resistance, and Hope

Toil & Trouble: Tales of Women & Witchcraft
Anthology including a story by Shveta Thakrar

A Thousand Beginnings and Endings:
Retellings of Asian Myths and Legends
Anthology including a story by Shveta Thakrar

**HAVE COMMENTS OR
WANT TO SUGGEST
A SHORT STORY?**

**EMAIL US!
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