

The Story of Buddha

(Ask a grown up if they can help read and explore the story with you).

Siddhartha Gautama was born around the year 580 BC in the village of Lumbini in Nepal. He was born into a royal family and for many years lived within the palace walls away from the sufferings of life; sufferings such as sickness, age and death. He did not know what they were.

One day, after growing-up, marrying and having a child, Siddhartha went outside the royal palace and saw, each for the first time, an old man, a sick man and a corpse. He was worried by what he saw. He learned that sickness, age and death were the inevitable fate of human beings - a fate no-one could avoid.

Siddhartha had also seen a monk. He decided this was a sign that he should leave the protected royal life and live as a homeless Holy Man.

Siddhartha's travels showed him much more of the suffering of the world. He searched for a way to escape the inevitability of death, old age and pain first by studying with religious men. This didn't provide him with an answer.

Instead, he made himself suffer hardship and torment. He sat in the scorching midday sun (in simple saffron robes), he slept on thorns and he starved himself until he was nothing but skin and bone. He carried on this lifestyle for 6 years.

He realised this was not the answer. Like our school values though, he persevered. So he ate a little food and sat down under a Bodhi tree.

He meditated until he knew he had found the answer. He emptied his mind of all his old thoughts and gained new knowledge. One day in May - Poya Day - he emerged from his meditation as the fully Enlightened one, the Buddha. This is celebrated in the Buddhist festival, Wesak. The Buddha taught people to be happy with change and not to fear it.

The Buddha then preached his first sermon on the Dharma (the Teaching) to his first 5 Buddhist monks. More followers and monks gathered and they founded the first monastery, the Sangha.

For the next 45 years he spent his life travelling and teaching people. At the age of 80 he died in Kushinagara.