



THE SECRETS OF THE  
**GURKHA  
SUITCASE**  
TEACHERS' VERSION





# THE SECRETS OF THE GURKHA SUITCASE.

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The following series of tasks are designed to help KS2 children understand a little of the background of Gurkha soldiers. They will learn about Nepal, where it is, what it is like to live there and its relationship to Britain.

They will discover through the postcards of Shiva and Umesh what it was like to grow up in a very poor part of the world, where most children worked in the fields and tended animals and very few went to school.

They will hear about the games and sports Shiva and Umesh played, and the religious festivals in their village. They will meet (and make) a Gurkha recruiter who will interview the village teenagers to see if they are suitable for the British Army.

Finally, they will listen to audio recordings to discover more about the things left behind in the Gurkha suitcase and consider why these things are so precious to Umesh. They will finish by thinking about and drawing what possessions are precious to them and why.

The tasks cover a variety of skills (such as interviewing, map making, ordering, research) and allow for extension activities.



# THE SECRETS OF THE GURKHA SUITCASE.

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## SET THE SCENE

You are walking along the road by your house one day when you see an old suitcase which has fallen out of a skip. You pick it up and are about to sling it back in the skip, when you hear something rattling inside.



# THE SECRETS OF THE GURKHA SUITCASE.

YOU ARE CURIOUS, SO YOU TAKE THE SUITCASE HOME AND OPEN IT.



Funny hat



A medal



Old tape



Strange knife



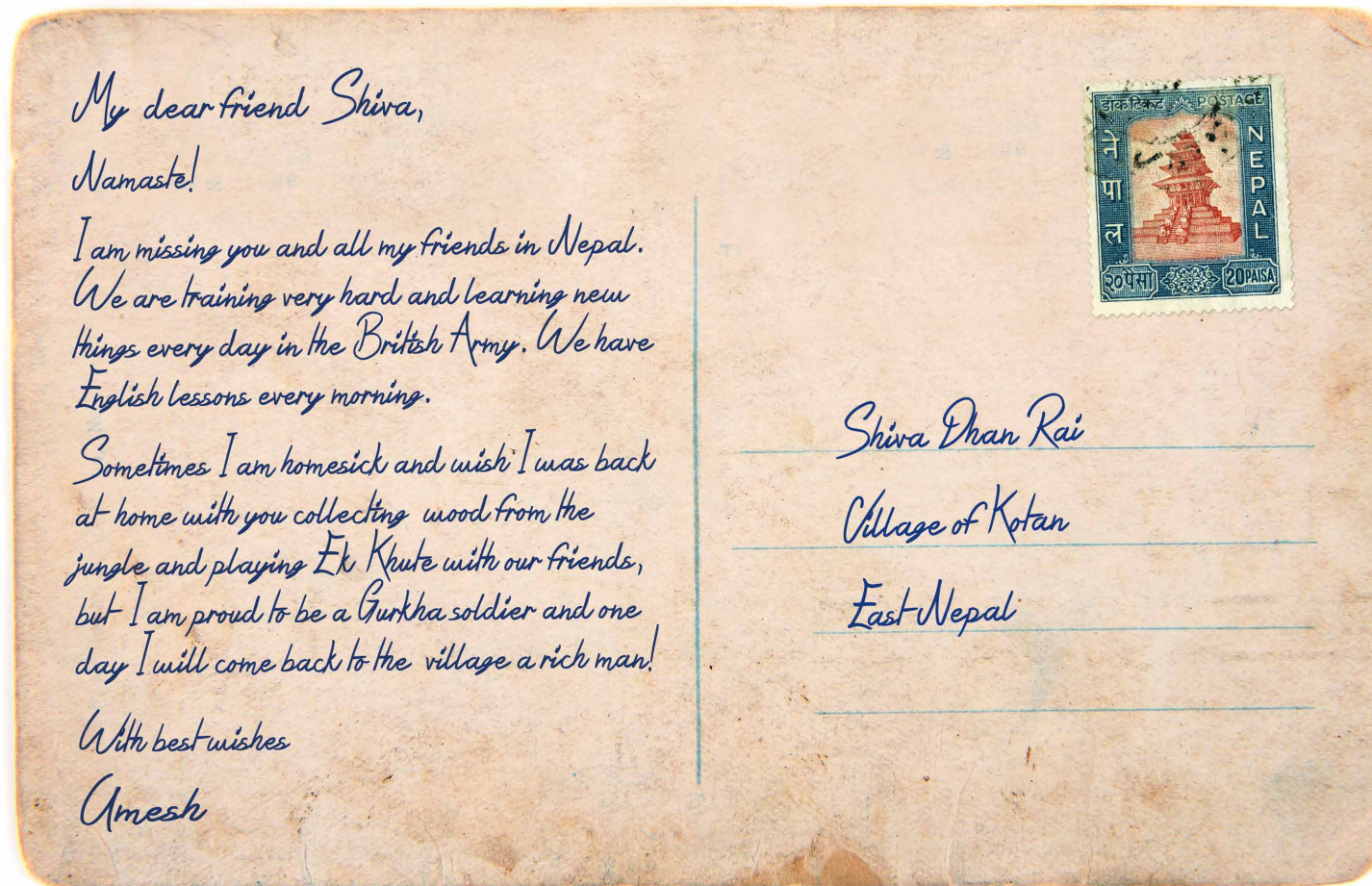
4 postcards

Who do they belong to? What are they doing there? You want to find out.



# SUITCASE ITEM: TAKE A PEEK AT THE FIRST POSTCARD.

THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:



# WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM THIS POSTCARD ABOUT SHIVA AND UMESH?

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**List the words which you don't know – can you find out what they mean?**

- What are the names of two friends from a village in Nepal? **(Shiva and Umesh)**
- What is the word used to say 'hello' in Nepal? **(Namaste)**
- What is the name of the country in Asia, where the two friends are from? **(Nepal)**
- What is the game played by Shiva and Umesh, where you each tie up one leg and then try to push the other person over whilst hopping? **(Ek Khute)**
- What is the name of the part of the British Army that recruits soldiers from Nepal? **(The Gurkhas)**

**Using the map provided on the next page, can you:**

- Draw a circle around Nepal?
- Work out how many countries you would have to fly over if you went in a straight line from Britain to Nepal? **(12 countries)**

# INFORMATION SHEETS: UMESH AND SHIVA'S GAMES.

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## EK KHUTE

For this game you have to stand on one leg, while someone ties up your other leg and one of your arms with a scarf or tie (not too tight!). Your opponent is tied up in the same way. You both stand in a marked circle. When the game starts you have to knock your opponent out of the circle.



## BASKETBALL, VOLLEYBALL AND FOOTBALL

Children in Nepal play all these games, but sometimes they have to create the hoops or nets out of anything they can find, such as a washing line for a net. This photo shows a muddy basketball court. The balls are sometimes made of rags or socks tied up tightly together.



## TIGERS AND GOATS

This is a board game, but often played in Nepal by marking a board on the ground and using stones for counters. One player is the tiger (1 counter) and the other is the goats (20 counters). The tiger's aim is to 'eat' 5 goats while the aim of the goats is to surround the tiger so it can't move.







# YOUR TASK: CREATE YOUR OWN QUICK QUIZ ON NEPAL.

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**Using the facts below, can you write down (on page 10) three really good quiz questions, before trying them out on your friends.**

## 10 FACTS ABOUT NEPAL:

- It is a country in Asia, about the size of England and Wales
- It is landlocked – that means it is completely surrounded by other countries and does not have any coasts
- It is one of the poorest countries in the world
- The highest mountain in the world, Mount Everest, is in Nepal (8,848 metres)
- Nepal suffered a series of earthquakes in 2015, sadly over 8,000 people died
- It takes about 10 hours to fly to Nepal from Britain
- The capital of Nepal is called Kathmandu, pronounced 'CAT-MAN-DOO'
- It is the only country in the world to have a flag that isn't rectangular or square
- Lots of tourists go trekking in a range of mountains called the Himalayas
- Most people in Nepal are Hindus.

# YOUR TASK: CREATE YOUR OWN QUICK QUIZ ON NEPAL.

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## Question 1:

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## Question 2:

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## Question 3:

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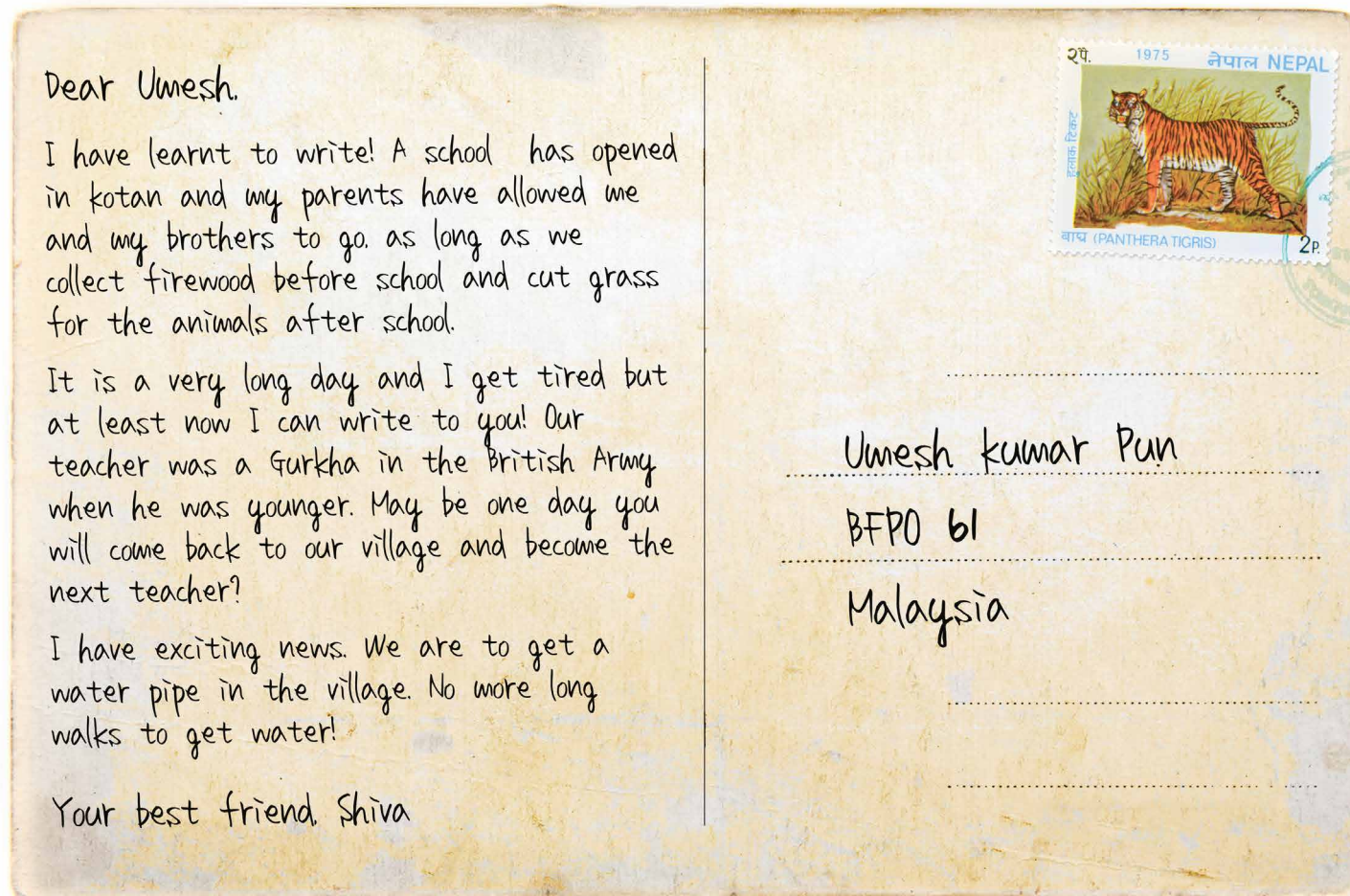
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# RECAP: WHAT YOU KNOW SO FAR.

- The first postcard is from Umesh who is a Gurkha (soldier) in the British Army.
- It was sent to his friend Shiva in a country called Nepal, which is a long way from Britain and very poor. Now take a look at the second postcard (below), it is from Shiva replying to Umesh.



# YOUR TASK: DESIGN A MAP OF SHIVA'S VILLAGE.

**Shiva has given you a bit more information about his village.  
Can you use your imagination to make a plan of the village?**

Here are some ideas of what you can put on your map (on the next page):

- Shiva's house
- Umesh's house
- The new school
- A small market
- Any other village buildings
- The river in the valley and a water pipe coming up to the village
- A water hole where Shiva can take his animals to drink
- The jungle area where Shiva collects firewood
- The fields where Shiva cuts grass
- The fields where the villagers grow vegetables and crops





# **YOUR TASK:** DESIGN A MAP OF SHIVA'S VILLAGE.

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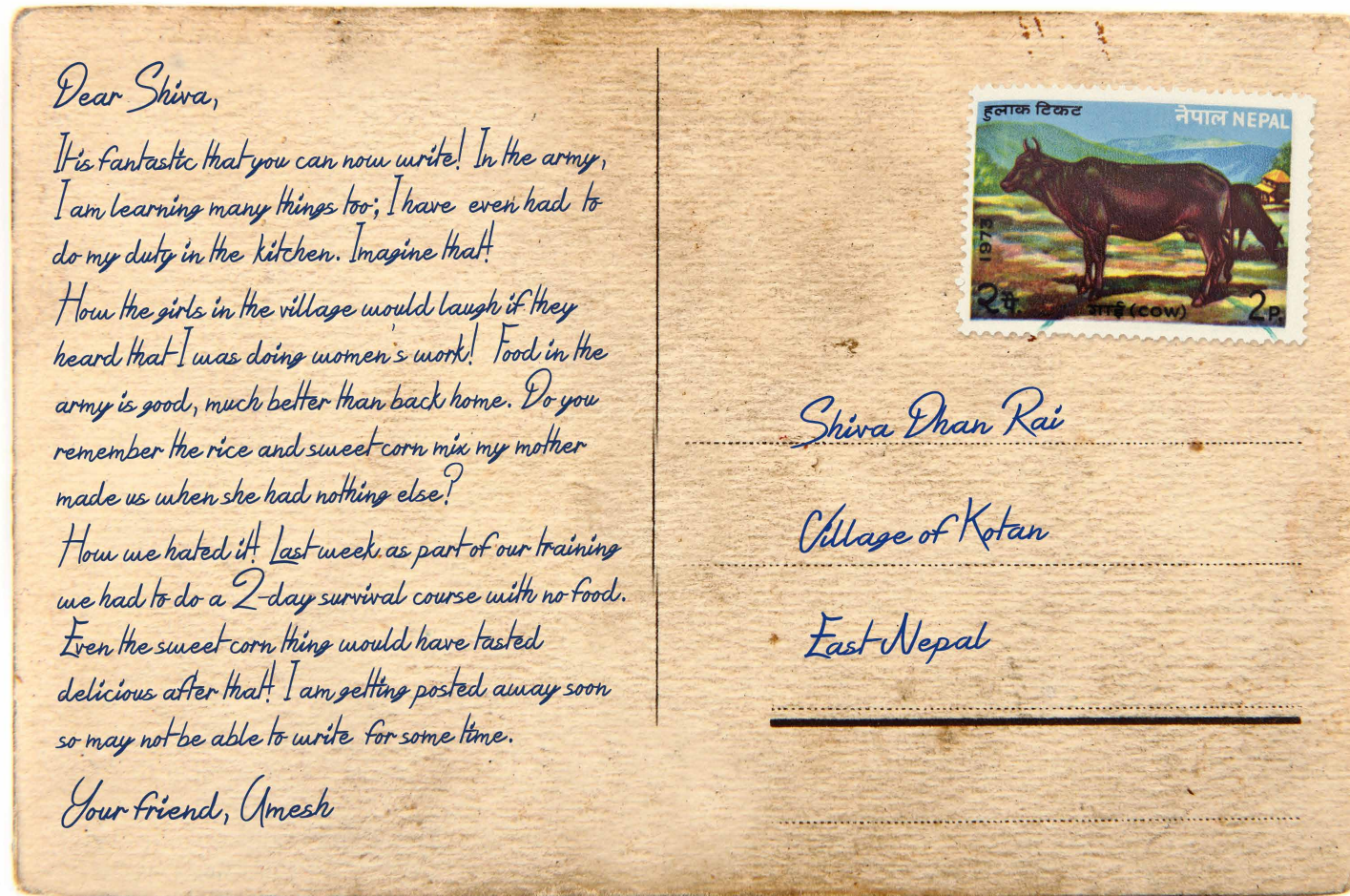
Create your village here:





# SUITCASE ITEM: POSTCARD FROM UMESH.

- Now have a look at the third postcard (below). It is from Umesh again.





# YOUR TASK: LIFE BEFORE BECOMING A GURKHA.

We already know that Nepal is a very poor country. In the old days most people grew all their own food. The children helped grow food and looked after the animals. They worked very hard all the time and sometimes they had very little to eat. Sometimes, however, they managed to fit in some fun. Here are some of the typical things Umesh used to do each day before he was in the army.

**Can you place them in the right order and draw a storyboard picture of each activity?**

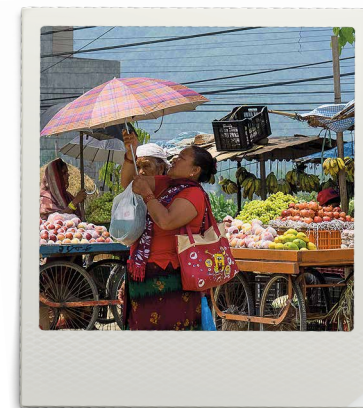
- 2pm: Brought goats and firewood back to village
- 5pm: Cut grass for the cows to eat overnight
- Midday: Collected firewood into bundles to carry home
- 9am: Ate a meal of roti (bread) and vegetables
- 8am: Milked the goats
- 6pm: Ate evening meal of dhendo (flour pudding)
- 4pm: Played volleyball with friends using a washing line as the net
- 10am: Took goats to fields about an hour from the village so they could graze
- 3pm: Went to the river to wash in freezing water



# RECAP: WHAT YOU KNOW SO FAR.

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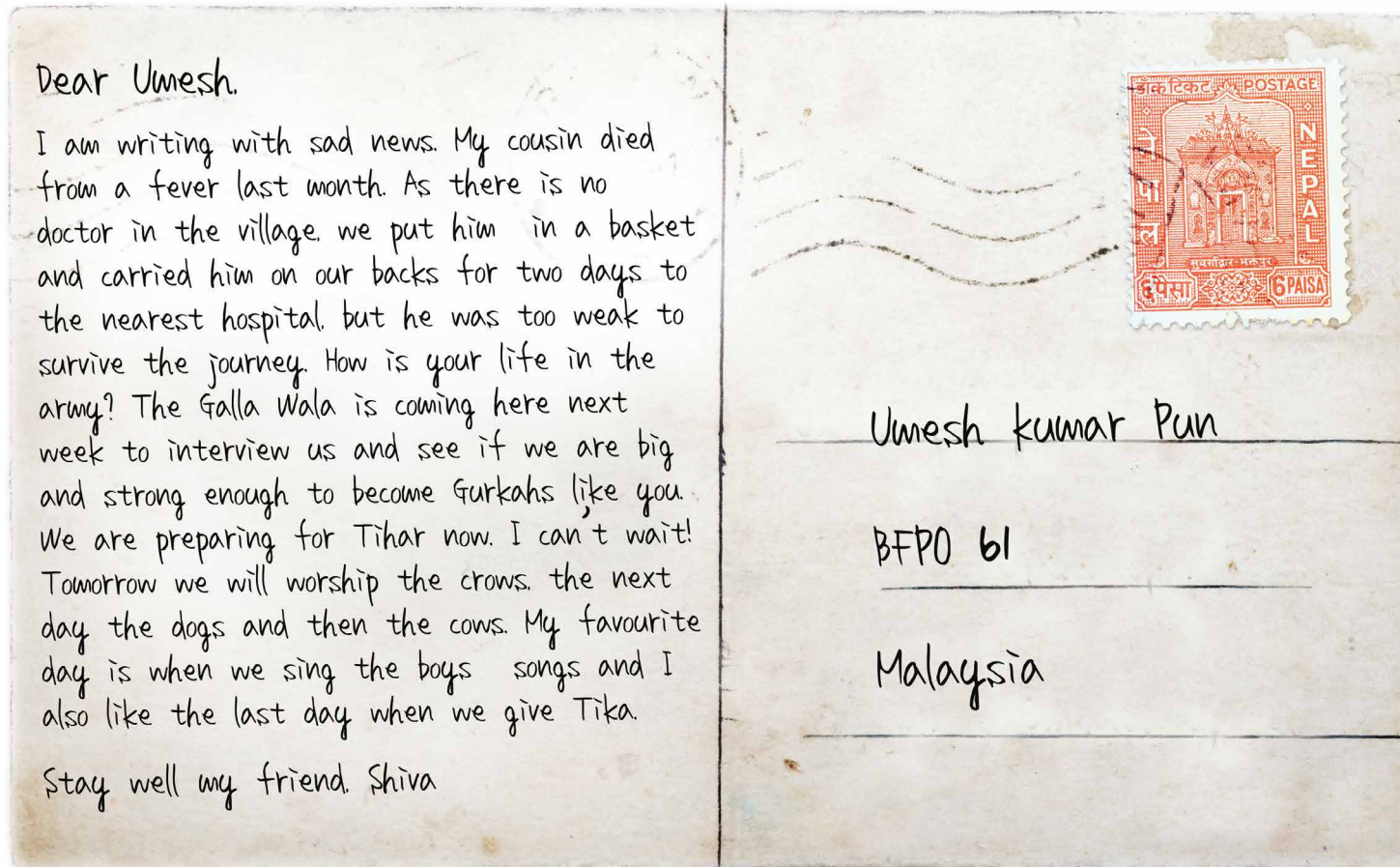
- We have learned that Umesh and Shiva live in a village called Kotan. They used to work all day either growing food or tending animals. They were very poor and did not go to school.
- A school has now been built in the village and Shiva is learning to write. A water pipe has been built from the river so they don't have to walk to get water.
- We also know that Umesh has joined the British Army. He is now training with the army in Malaysia. He is learning many new things including kitchen duties!





# SUITCASE ITEM: POSTCARD FROM SHIVA.

- What will you find out from the last postcard?



# THE FINAL SUITCASE ITEM: POSTCARD FROM SHIVA.

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**List the words in the postcard that you don't know.**

Can you find out what they mean?

- 1:** What is the name of the man who goes round the villages in Nepal finding boys to join the army? (**Galla Wala**)
- 2:** What is the Hindu religious festival in Nepal which goes on for 5 days? (**Tihar**)
- 3:** What is the special mark in the middle of the forehead which brothers and sisters give each other? (**Tika**)

# INFORMATION SHEETS: GURKHA RECRUITMENT.

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## THE RECRUITING PROCESS

At the time when Shiva and Umesh were growing up, the Galla Wala (Gurkha Recruiter) would travel around the villages in Nepal looking for boys aged about 16 to 18 to join the army. He would tell the boys about army life and make it sound exciting. He would explain that they would earn lots of money, have three good meals a day and have new clothes and things like watches. Once the boys were interested, there would be a selection process.

The Galla Wala would measure the boys to see how tall and broad they were. Then there would be a series of tests to see how fast and strong they were. Only the strongest and fittest would be selected. It was considered a great honour to become a Gurkha soldier. It was also a chance to escape from extreme poverty.



# YOUR TASK: PICTURES AND WORDS MATCHING.

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**Imagine you are planning the festival of Tihar in your village.  
It is five days long. Different things are happening on different days.**

Can you match the words and pictures on page 21?

**Day 1:** Today we will be making special treats and leaving them out for the crows.  
This will keep the birds happy and protect our families from sadness.

**Day 2:** Today we are making flower necklaces for the dogs! We want to thank the  
dogs for guarding our homes.

**Day 3:** Today we give food and necklaces to our cows as they are very important  
to us. We decorate our homes with candles and worship our goddess  
Laxmi. The girls sing a special song.

**Day 4:** Today it's the boys' turn. They sing a special song and we worship our  
oxen as they help plough the land.

**Day 5:** On the last day of the festival, girls wish their brothers good luck and give  
them a Tika, a red spot on their forehead.

# YOUR TASK: PICTURES AND WORDS MATCHING.



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



Day: ☐



# RECAP: FROM ALL FOUR POSTCARDS.

FROM THE FOUR POSTCARDS IN THE GURKHA SUITCASE YOU HAVE LEARNED QUITE A LOT ABOUT THE LIVES OF BOYS IN NEPAL. YOU KNOW:

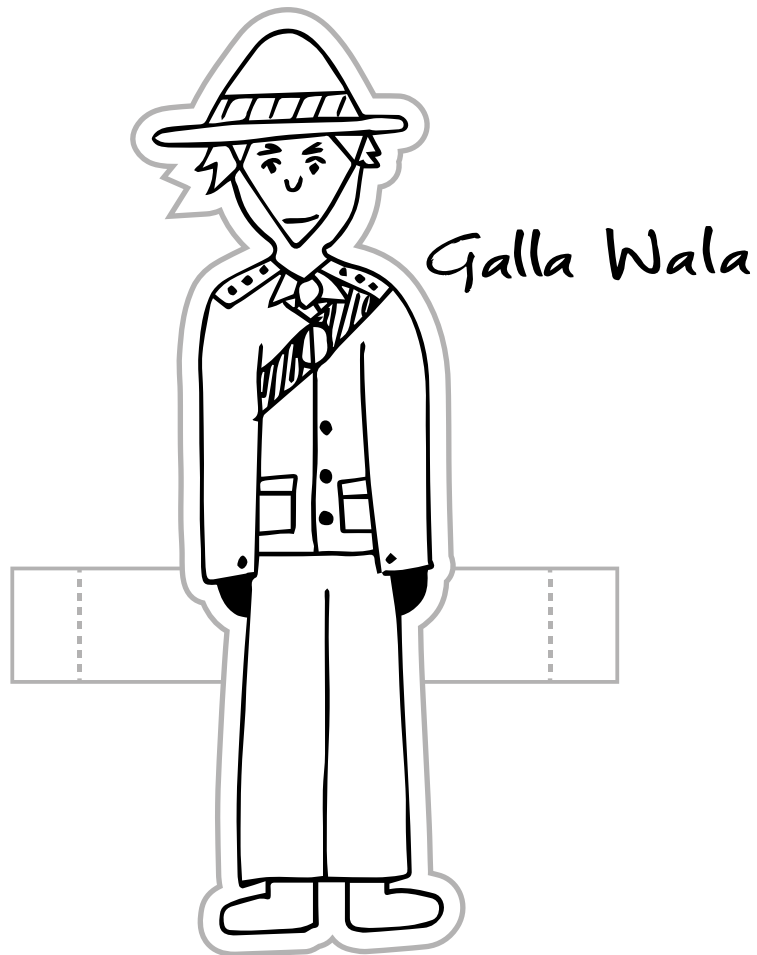
- **About their country** – where it is and what it is like.
- **About their lives** – they are very poor and spend most of their time growing food, looking after animals and gathering firewood for cooking. Many do not go to school.
- **About their religion** – they are Hindus and have religious festivals such as Tihar.
- **About the Gurkhas** – many boys want to join the Gurkhas, part of the British army.



# YOUR TASK: RECRUITMENT FOR THE GURKHA REGIMENT.

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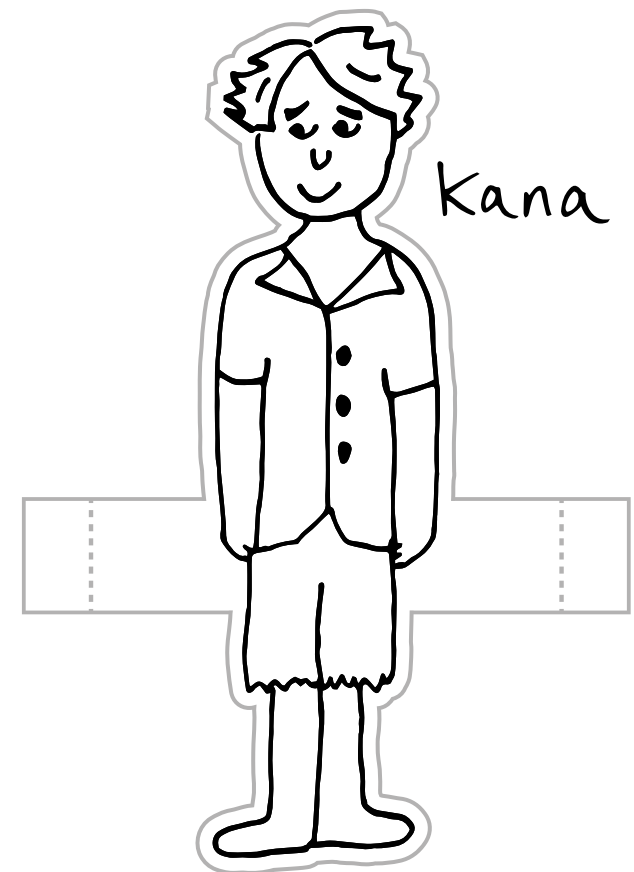
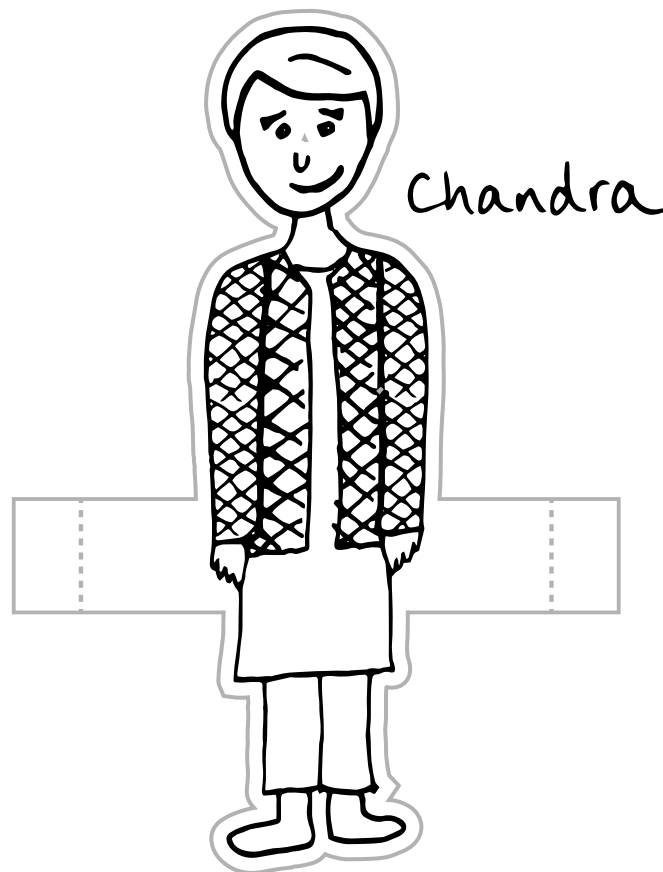
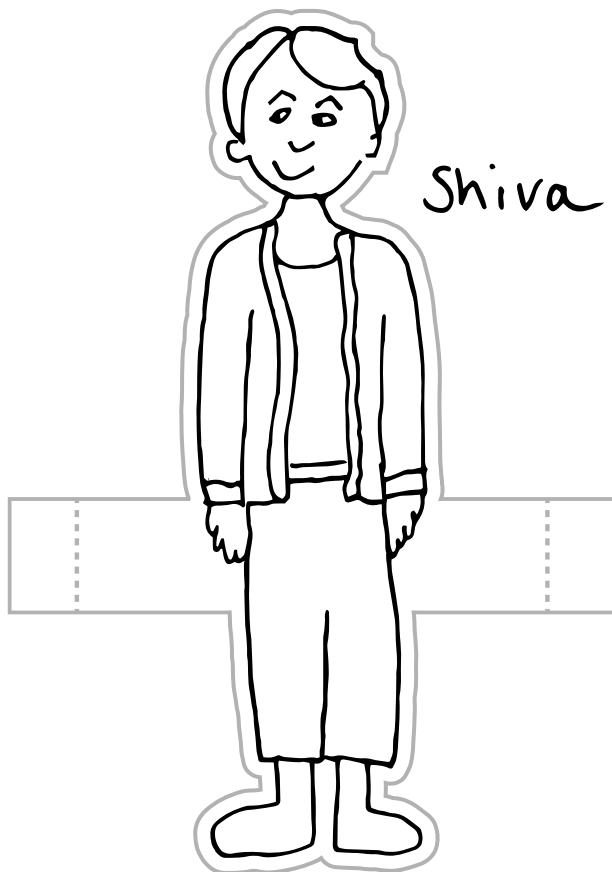
The Galla Wala is coming to Shiva's village. Here he is (below) and he is going to interview Shiva and his friends to see if they are suitable to join the army.



# YOUR TASK: RECRUITMENT FOR THE GURKHA REGIMENT.

Here are Shiva and his friends as finger puppets. Choose one of the boys or the Galla Wala, (previous page) then cut your puppet out, colour it in and stick the tabs together. You can then bring him to life.

First, find and read the information sheet about your character.





# YOUR TASK: RECRUITMENT FOR THE GURKHA REGIMENT.

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## **If you have chosen the Galla Wala puppet**

You will interview the boys to find out if they are suitable for the army.

Use the information sheets to answer the following questions:

- Can you tell me about your family?
- Can you tell me about your home and village?
- What jobs do you do?
- What do you like doing in your free time?

## **If you have chosen Shiva or one of his friends' puppets**

You can ask the Galla Wala about the army. Use your information sheet from page 26 for the following:

- Do I have to be very fit?
- Is the food good in the army?
- What will I get in the army?
- Will I be able to come home often and see my family?
- Why should I join the army?

# INFORMATION SHEETS: GURKHA RECRUITMENT.

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## GALLA WALA

I have come to the village to find suitable boys for the Gurkha Regiment. The boys need to be tall, strong and fit. One of the first things I do is measure and weigh them. We only take the very fittest boys and they have to pass tests to see if they are good runners and can carry heavy weights. I am looking for boys between 16 and 18 who are healthy and quick at learning things. If they get chosen to be in the Gurkhas, there will be many benefits for them, such as three good meals a day and fresh fruit and vegetables. This is luxury compared to what many of them are used to.

They also get issued with clothes, boots and passports as they will travel to many other countries with the British Army.

They won't see their families for long periods of time. It will be three years before they can come home on leave. Families are usually proud if their sons are chosen for the Gurkhas. It brings wealth and importance to the family.

# INFORMATION SHEETS: GURKHA RECRUITMENT.

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## SHIVA

I am 16 years old and live in a village called Kotan in Eastern Nepal. I have two sisters and two brothers. My father is in the army. We do not see him very often. My mother looks after the family. She works very hard. We have quite a lot of animals – goats, chickens, buffaloes and cattle. It is my job to look after the animals. I take them to the fields where they can graze. I also have to gather grass for them. I did not go to school until quite recently when one was built in our village.

The nearest High School is three hours' walk away. Our home is made of wood and mud. It is small but comfortable. My sisters keep it clean and help my mother with the cooking. I like playing basketball and I can also play the drums. I often play and sing at village festivals.





## CHANDRA

I am 17 years old and the eldest of six. There are about 170 houses in my village. They are close together and don't have gardens. Although we live in families, we also share everything we can with our neighbours and our doors are always open. We get our water from a well. There is a school in my village but it doesn't have any desks or benches or blackboards. We write with chalk from the river bed on slates. Our teacher used to be a Gurkha soldier and he has taught me many things.

Our fields are a couple of hours' walk away up and down very steep mountains. My mother works all day growing vegetables and making meals. My father is a builder. We don't get much time to play. I like card games and a game that you play with stones called Tigers and Goats.

# INFORMATION SHEETS: GURKHA RECRUITMENT.

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## KANA

My name is Kana, I am 17 and I really want to join the army. I am fit because I take our goats to graze in the fields every day with my sister. It takes about 45 minutes to get there. Whilst the goats are eating, we have to gather firewood into big bundles and carry it home on our backs for our cooking fire. This makes me strong. My mother is a farmer and my father is in the army.

We live in a village called Nangu. Our house has no electricity or water. Water comes to our village in little channels from the river. We wash in the river and it is freezing in winter!

There are no medical facilities in the village. If you get ill, you visit an elder in the village who makes herbal medicines. I love singing and dancing, and playing wrestling games with my friends. We also play volleyball with a ball made up of rags woven tightly together.

# RECAP: RECRUITMENT ASSESSMENT

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How did your interviews go?

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What did you find out?

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What could you do to improve your questions?

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What could you do to give better answers?

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# GURKHA SUITCASE: LISTEN TO A GURKHA'S STORY

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## WHAT YOU KNOW SO FAR

Now you know so much about Nepal and have read the postcards from Umesh and Shiva, you want to return the suitcase to its owner. But how can you find him?

You still have the four clues in the suitcase.

1. A hat
2. A knife
3. A medal
4. A recording on an old cassette tape

## CASSETTE RECORDING

Now listen to the first recording which was on the cassette tape. Cassette tapes used to be used to record music and speech.

The audio recording can be found here: **[www.gurkhastories.com/school-project](http://www.gurkhastories.com/school-project)** or read Umesh's interview from the recording on the next two pages.

# GURKHA SUITCASE: UMESH'S INTERVIEW

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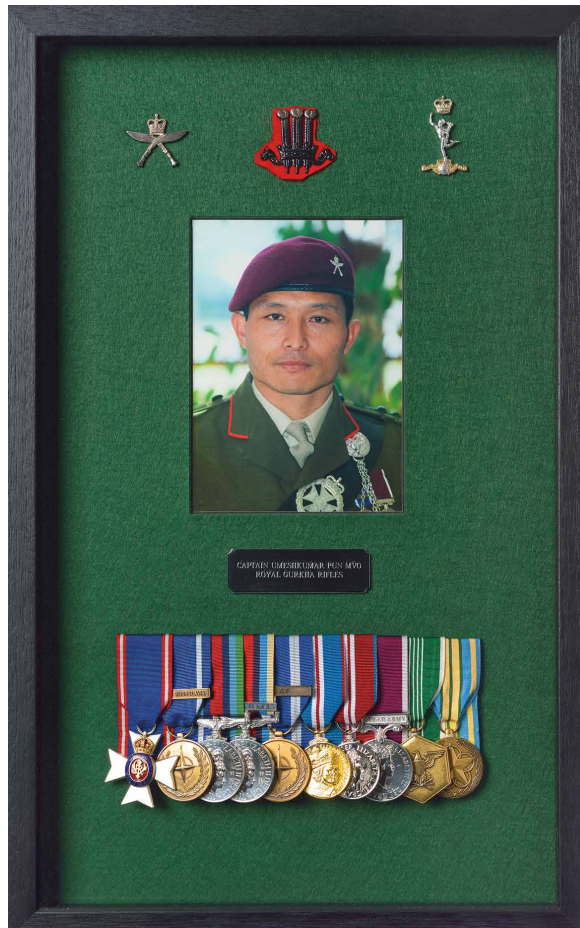
## THE KUKRI

My name is Umesh, I came from a village called Kotan, the west part of the Nepal, it's district called Magdi. I'm 55 years old, living here in Colchester and I have knife, which is the Gurkha knife, the kukri. It's very traditional weapons for the Gurkhas. When we are in war and if we don't have any ammunitions when we come to the close combat, hand-to-hand fight, then we use this kukri. Then if you look at the history, the Gurkhas actually use the kukri during the combat in order to kill the enemy. So I'm very privileged and honoured to still have a kukri in my webbing, whenever I need it I can use [it]. But if I'm in training in jungle, it's very useful tool where I can cut the roots or any branches in order to survive in the jungle.



## GURKHA HAT

Gurkha hat is a ceremonial dress, we wear on the top of our head, it's very wide shade and it gives you shadow from the sun if you are hot, it gives you protection from rain when it's rain. But it's very distinct and we wear it during the ceremony so Gurkha hat is very useful for the Gurkhas used to work in the very hot country then when we wear this Gurkha hat it protect us from the sun and rain.



## MEDALS

Right I have got eight different medals, some of them campaign medals. One of the very [great] privilege and honours, MVO, Member of Victorian Order, because I served for Her Majesty Queen in Buckingham Palace, therefore Her Majesty Queen has given a medal, Member of Victorian Order.

I'm very fortunate to be selected to do that Queen's Gurkha Orderly Officer, 2006 to 2007. Basically Gurkha Orderly Officers [job] is to escort Her Majesty Queen to any investiture happening in Buckingham Palace or Edinburgh Castle.

Our job is to escort Her Majesty Queen to lead up to the big ball hall where all the medal recipients are waiting then we have to escort her until she finish her investiture.



# GURKHA SUITCASE: QUICK QUIZ

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After listening to the recording, can you answer these questions?

**1.** Who is talking on the recording?

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**2.** What is a kukri?

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**3.** What is special about the hat?

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# GURKHA SUITCASE: QUICK QUIZ

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Now listen to the second recording.

How well did you listen? Can you answer these questions?

**1.** What is the medal called?

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**2.** Why did Umesh receive it?

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# GURKHA SUITCASE: FINAL RECAP

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The suitcase belongs to Umesh. It contains his hat, kukri and medals. These are very special possessions and mean a great deal to Umesh. By reading the postcards and listening to the recordings you have been able to find out a great deal about Umesh's life and the lives of his friends in Nepal.

Now go to the Gurkha Stories website at **[www.gurkhastories.com](http://www.gurkhastories.com)** and see if you can find a photo of Umesh and a film he appears in.

## **NOW CAN YOU THINK OF THREE THINGS THAT ARE VERY SPECIAL TO YOU.**

What are they? Can you draw them (on an additional piece of paper)?

1.

2.

3.

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Why have you chosen these three things?

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Why are they special to you?

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#### ABOUT THE NEPALI BOYS IN THIS SCHOOL RESOURCE:

The stories of Umesh and Shiva are a depiction of their lives based on an amalgamation of real life accounts as told to us by the veterans for Gurkha Stories. The village name of Kotan is fictitious but the facts and lifestyle of the various villages as told to us by our veterans where they grew up have been amalgamated into the village of Kotan to represent a Nepal village where the Gurkhas might have originated from.

The names of Shiva, Chandra and Kana are not their real names. However, they live in genuine circumstances similar to their stories and we have been given permission to use their photos by Earthducation MT Labs and the Fishtail Trust. These are two organisations of many that do charitable work helping children and villagers in Nepal with their crop cultivation and education for the children of the villages.

Photo credits:

- Earthducation MT Labs
- Gurkha Museum
- Sue James
- Umesh Pun MVO
- Shutterstock
- Niranjan Shrestha
- Durga Pun