

Chinese New Year

Bring all of your friends and your family near,
Ready to celebrate Chinese New Year.
Squeeze round the table for tang yuan and fish,
Noodles and dumplings; spring rolls by the dish.

Gaze through the windows at the bright, patterned sky
As fireworks of all shapes and colours whizz by.
Stay up until midnight with family and friends;
Wish them 'Xīn nián kuài lè!' so their luck never ends.

In the morning, we wake with excitement to see
A lucky red envelope for you and for me!
We put on our gloves, our scarves and our coats
And go to the parade to see all the floats!

The noise of the crowd is filling the air;
The streets filled with colour, and food everywhere!
Beautiful lanterns hang from every stall,
Each one red and gold, some large and some small.

Above the lanterns, a tree waves in the wind;
On its branches, small pieces of paper are pinned.
They're wishes and dreams of the crowd: everything
That they hope the new year and the future will bring.

The music begins; a drumbeat so loud,
And as it builds up, there's a gasp from the crowd.
A beautiful lion with a huge, furry head
Is dancing its way down the streets lined with red.

We're all watching, now, for our favourite part,
The one that we've waited for right from the start,
Is about to come fluttering right down the road –
We're now so excited, we just might explode!

A dragon, so large that it takes up the street
With a long, winding body and sticks for its feet.
It wriggles and whirls through the whole of the town,
Until not one person is wearing a frown.

It's standing here, watching the great dragon sway,
That I know why this is my favourite day.
Life couldn't be better when my family's here,
Helping me celebrate Chinese New Year!



Diwali

Time to celebrate: Diwali is here!
Let's all rejoice in the Hindu new year.
A festival full of bright, shimmering lights,
A festival lasting for five whole nights.
Please take your time to make Rangoli
And invite Lakshmi, goddess so holy.
Celebrate with the best of all treats:
Jalebi and Ladoo, traditional sweets.
Offer a puja (some call it a prayer)
To the elephant god sat in his chair.
The great god Ganesh is certain to hear,
And take away all problems this coming year.

The sky is lit up with fireworks so bright,
They can bring loud bangs and colour at night.
The ancient story that we like to recall
Reminds us so clearly how love conquers all.
It tells the tale of a prince and his wife:
How he kept her from evil and saved her life.
Homeward they went from a forest, they say;
The path was all clear, as lamps lit their way,
Guiding them carefully, safely back home
For the brave young prince to take up his throne.
So this is why we light many diyas,
Just as was done for Rama and Sita.

"Happy Diwali," everyone will cheer –
Good luck and good fortune for the new year.

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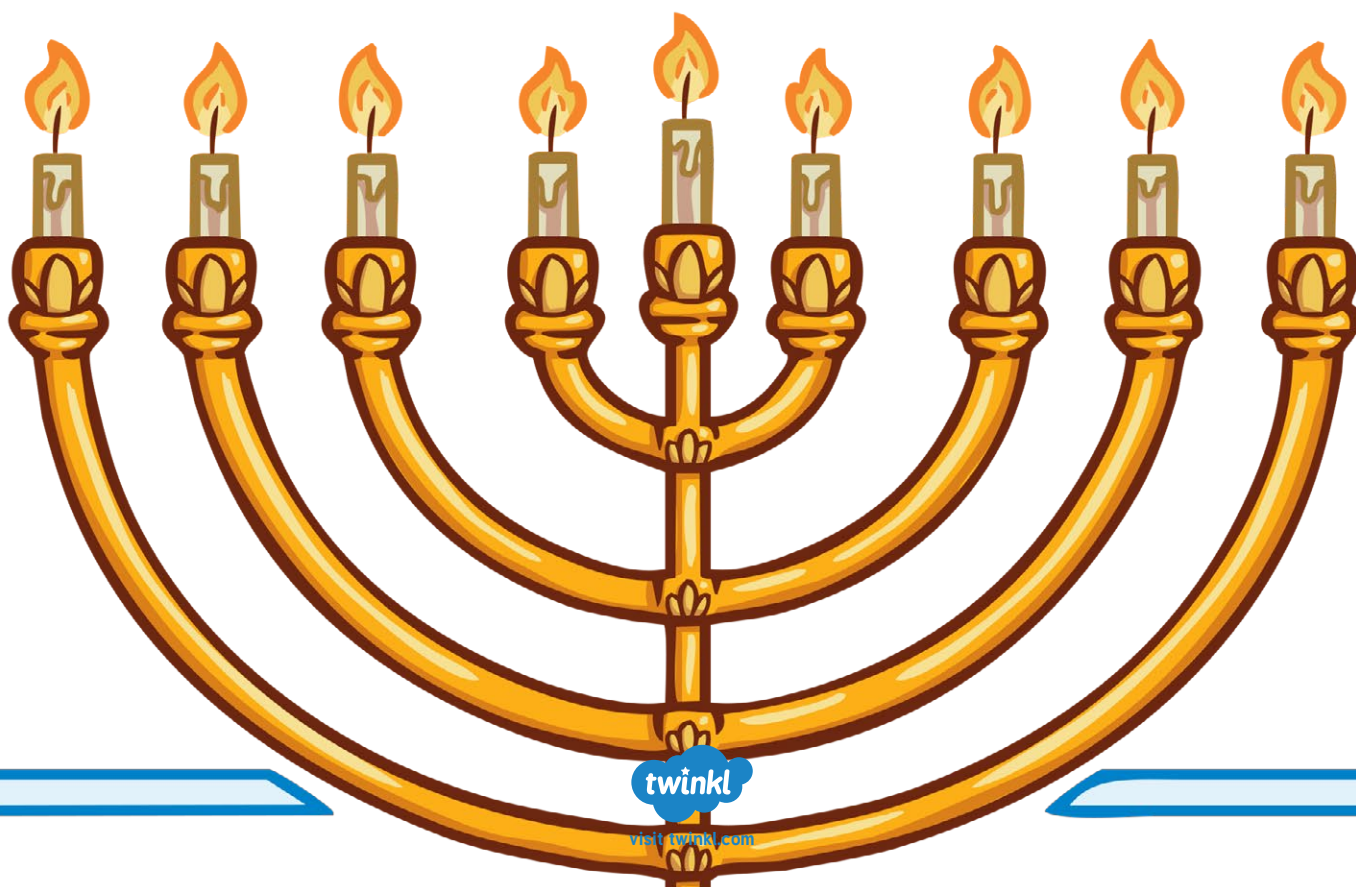


Hanukkah



Hanukkah, the Jewish Festival of Lights;
We light a candle on these nights.
Eight nights in all, and eight flames burn
On the menorah, which we learn
Did burn for eight nights years ago
With only oil for one night's glow.

This miracle we celebrate
All around the world; we replicate
The menorah, with its shining flames.
We share presents and play games.
Laughter rings out as the dreidel spins;
We play for chocolates – Grandad wins!
As oil is part of Hanukkah's theme,
We make potato latkes with sour cream,
Or apple sauce for something sweet:
Delicious, greasy food to eat.
Remembering reclaiming our temple with pride,
So warm with family, when it's cold outside.



Peeking Past the Curtains



I'm peeking past the curtains in the eerie still of night;
The moon is shining down on me and all the stars look bright.
I'm looking out for someone who has brought me endless joy
Since my early years of childhood as a tiny boy.

I remember all those mornings when I woke to find new toys:
Figures, cars and games amount to making lots of noise.
Dressing up as superheroes, playing spaceship wars,
Ripping wrapping paper open, laughing on all fours.

Looking at the street lamp shining with its amber glow,
Watching golden glimmers settle as it starts to snow,
I think of all the Christmases long gone, now in the past,
Hoping that the fondest memories will always last.

Glancing down the road now, I can see the snow's quite thick,
The pavement's all but covered and it's coming down so quick.
It looks like heavy icing laying on the sleeping cars,
Deep and soft and chunky like white chocolate candy bars.

I think of all the presents gathered underneath the tree,
Twinkling under coloured lights, and full of mystery.
Soon the sun will rise, bringing excitement and good cheer,
Silence will be broken and the children will appear.

Off we'll stomp like elephants, running down the stairs,
Laughing like hyenas, racing past the dining chairs,
Skidding to a halt beneath the sparkling Christmas tree,
Tearing open presents as the adults sip their tea.

We'll play all day; we'll watch a film; we'll eat up all our greens;
We'll smile into our cameras or our brand new smartphone screens.
Grandpa will be snoring loudly in his favourite space;
Mum will soldier on and try to tidy up the place.

I turn again to look out at the peaceful night-time scene:
The moon shines on the snowfall with a knowing, silvery gleam.
I look up to the sky and stare into the crisp black air;
I hold my hands together and I say a little prayer.

I pray for all my family, and for others' loved ones, too;
I pray for all their dreams and hopes, and then I pray for you.
I'm looking out for someone special, 'cause I still believe;
I'm peeking past the curtains on another Christmas Eve.



Vaisakhi

Procession

Colourful, crowded

Singing, chanting, parading

Proud Sikhs come together

Beloved



Wesak

In the heart of spring, when the full moon shines,
We keep our eyes peeled for all of the signs
And the hints that our favourite festival's near:
Wesak, a wonderful time of the year.

We visit the temple, where the monks will teach
Us to be kind and gentle with our actions and speech.
We give thanks to Buddha for the lessons we heed,
Cleansing our minds of all hatred and greed.

Bring gifts, clean the house, give your cards, celebrate,
Carry lanterns and flags, share good food by the plate,
But make sure that you take time to sit and reflect
On the teachings of Buddha, of love and respect.

Wherever you're spending your festival day,
And no matter with whom you chant and you pray,
When it seems all the world's dressed up in purest white,
It's a day that feels blessed, filled with goodness and light.



Bonfire

Bonfire

Bright, beautiful

Crackling, spitting, dancing

Embers fizz in the chilly air

Beacon



Eid Mubarak

When
the new
moon is
seen in
the sky,
we know
that the end
of Ramadan
is nigh.

A whole
month of
prayer and
fasting now
ends with
charity, parties
and time spent
with friends.

As colourful
clothing fills homes
and lines streets,
biryani, pakoras
and all sorts of
sweets are ready and
waiting for each boy
and girl; on feet and on
hands, mehndi shapes swirl.

The feast and the dancing lift us so
high, when the new moon is seen
in the sky.

Firework Night

by Enid Blyton

BANG!

What's that?

Bang-Bang! Oh, Hark,
The guns are shooting in the dark!
Little guns and big ones too,
Bang-bang-bang!
What shall I do?

Mistress, Master, hear me yelp,
I'm out-of-doors, I want your help.

Let me in - oh, LET ME IN
Before those fireworks begin
To shoot again - I can't bear that;
My tail is down, my ears are flat,
I'm trembling here outside the door,
Oh, don't you love me anymore?

BANG!

I think I'll die with fright
Unless you let me in to-night.
(Shall we let him in, children?)
Ah, now the door is opened wide,
I'm rushing through, I'm safe inside,
The lights are on, it's warm and grand-
Mistress, let me lick your hand
Before I slip behind the couch.
There I'll hide myself and crouch
In safety till the BANGS are done-
Then to my kennel I will run
And guard you safely all the night
Because you understood my fright.



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