

Festival of Lights in India: Diwali



Diwali is India's biggest and most important holiday of the year. The festival celebrates sharing light and spreading warmth. Diwali which means 'row of lights' refer to clay lamps Indians light outside their homes. These lights symbolize the inner light that protects people, with good overcoming darkness. Diwali, a five day festival, is as important to Hindus as Christmas is to Christians throughout the world.

Diwali originated as a harvest festival that marked the last harvest of the year before winter. Since India was an agricultural society, people sought the divine blessing of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, as they prayed for success at the outset of a new financial year. Celebrated as the Hindu New Year, Diwali represents the victory of the good prince Rama over evil, and symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance.

Diwali falls in October or November, based on the ancient lunar Hindu calendar. Indians celebrate with family gatherings, glittering clay lamps, festive fireworks, strings of electric lights, bonfires, flowers, sharing of sweets, and worship to Lakshmi. Some believe that Lakshmi wanders Earth looking for homes

where she will be welcomed. Therefore, people open their doors and windows and light lamps to welcome her into their homes.

Several kinds of sweets are made using sugar, milk, coconut, rice, nuts, flour and other household ingredients for this festival. It is believed that eating sweets on this day makes the rest of the year pleasant and sweet. During Diwali, friends and relatives exchange cards and gifts. Traditional gifts often have Hindu images, such as coins with the elephant-headed god Ganesh. Items made of silver, as well as homemade sweets and decorations, are also popular gifts. In recent years, gifts such as electronics, jewelry, and watches have become popular. Stores create colorful displays to entice crowds of shoppers.



Five Days of Diwali

The festival of lights is spread over five days.

On the first day of Diwali, housewives consider it auspicious to spring clean the home and shop for gold or kitchen utensils. Houses sparkle after intensive cleaning.

On the second day, people decorate their homes with clay lamps, or *diyas*, and create design patterns called *rangoli* on the floor using colored powders or sand.

The third day is the main day of the festival. Families gather together for *Lakshmi*

puja, a prayer to Goddess Lakshmi, followed by mouth-watering feasts and firework festivities.

The fourth day is the first day of the new year. Friends and relatives visit with gifts and best wishes for the season.

On the last day of Diwali, brothers visit their married sisters who welcome them with love and a lavish meal.



Teaching Basic Writing Skills

Name _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Grade: _____

Festival of Lights in India: Diwali

Directions: Using information from the article, write a follow-up sentence starting with the following transitions.

keep in mind, however, for example, specifically

1. Diwali gets its name from the row of clay lamps that the Indians light outside their homes.

2. It originated as a harvest festival that marked the last harvest of the year before winter.

3. Gifts and cards are exchanged during this holiday. _____

4. The holiday is spread over five days. _____

-
1. Keep in mind, the lights symbolize the inner light that protects people, and good overcoming darkness.
 2. However, it is now celebrated in October or November with family gatherings, glittering clay lamps, fireworks, bonfires, and worship services.
 3. For example, items made of silver as well as homemade sweets and decorations are popular.
 4. Specifically, the first day is for cleaning, the second is for decorating, the third day is for the festival, and the fourth and fifth days are for visiting with friends and family.