

The Holidays are Here!

Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa are celebrated in December

Each December, many people around the world celebrate holidays and traditions that are special to their culture and religion. Christmas is celebrated on December 25. This year, the first night of Hanukkah is December 20 and Kwanzaa begins on December 26.

Celebrating Christmas

On Christmas, Christians honor the birth of Jesus Christ. They celebrate the day with prayers, gifts and stories. In one Christmas tradition, a jolly, bearded man named Santa Claus brings gifts to good children on Christmas Eve. Each country has its own traditions for Christmas celebrations. In the sixteenth century, Germans started the Christmas-tree tradition as we now know it. They brought trees into their homes and decorated them with fruits, nuts, lighted candles and paper roses.



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A boy plays the dreidel game, a Hanukkah tradition.

The Story of Hanukkah

This year, people of the Jewish faith began celebrating Hanukkah at sunset on December 20. The holiday lasts eight days and nights. In Hebrew, the word "Hanukkah" means "dedication." Hanukkah honors a struggle that dates back to 165 B.C., when Jews defeated an invading army and regained the Temple at Jerusalem. According to legend, Jews found a lamp inside the temple with just enough oil to light their holy lamps for one night. By some miracle, the legend goes, it burned for eight nights. Today, Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah by lighting a candle in a menorah for each of the eight nights.

Kwanzaa Traditions

Many African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa to honor their cultural roots in Africa. Kwanzaa is modeled after a series of cultural principles called Kawaida. According to Kawaida, African Americans can improve their lives by getting back in touch with their cultural roots. The holiday lasts seven days and nights, each marked by the lighting of a candle that represents a principle of family and community.



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Families celebrate the principles of African-American culture during Kwanzaa.

Peace on Earth

People of many backgrounds and belief systems spend time in December reflecting on the year that is coming to an end, then setting goals and making plans for the new year to come. The beginning of the dark, chilly winter seems a good time to gather loved ones around a fire or a candlelit table and celebrate the new beginning that we all share at the end

of every December.

(adapted from TFK)



Teaching Basic Writing Skills

Name _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Directions: Write a question for each answer.

1. Q: _____

A: December 25th

2. Q: _____

A: the Germans

3. Q: _____

A: it means dedication

4. Q: _____

A: by lighting candles on a menorah

5. Q: _____

A: to honor their cultural roots in Africa

6. Q: _____

A: eight days and nights



Teaching Basic Writing Skills

Name _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

"The Holidays are Here!"

Directions: Use the following words and **sentence starters** in sentences.

1. **Every December**/ Kwanzaa/ cultural roots

2. **During**/ celebrate/ menorah

3. **Since**/ family/ gifts

4. *Before/* new year/ goals



Teaching Basic Writing Skills

Name _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Directions: Combine the following sentences into one sentence.

1. The Germans started a popular Christmas tradition.
They bought trees into their homes.
They decorated with fruits, nuts, lighted candles and paper roses.

2. Hanukkah begins on December 20.
Hanukkah lasts for eight days and nights.

3. Kwanzaa is celebrated by African Americans.

Kwanzaa is a way for African Americans to honor their cultural roots.

Teacher Copy:

1. When is Christmas celebrated?
2. Who started the Christmas tree tradition?
3. What does Hanukkah mean in Hebrew?
4. How do Jews celebrate Hanukkah?
5. Why do African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa?
6. How long is Kwanzaa celebrated?

1. Every December, African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa to honor their cultural roots in Africa.
2. During Hanukkah, Jews celebrate by lighting the menorah.
3. Since Christmas is a holiday to enjoy with family, gifts are bought and exchanged on Christmas morning.
4. Before the end of December, individuals set goals for the new year.

1. Germans started a popular Christmas tradition when they brought trees into their homes and decorated them with fruits, nuts, lighted candles and paper roses.
2. Hanukkah begins on December 20 and lasts for eight days and nights.
3. Kwanzaa, a holiday celebrated by African Americans, is a way to honor their cultural roots.