

Card 1

Diwali

The word Diwali means "rows of lighted lamps" and the festival of Diwali is a festival of light. Although Diwali is a Hindu festival, it is also celebrated by Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains.

During the five day festival, clay lamps are lit to signify the victory of good over evil. During the festival, those who celebrate Diwali clean their homes and light them with diyas, leaving no room for darkness to enter. Doorsteps are decorated with beautiful designs called 'rangoli', special foods are prepared and when evening comes, firecrackers are set off.



Card 1 Questions

1. What does the word **Diwali** mean?

2. Which religious groups celebrate Diwali?

3. How long does the festival last?

4. Why do people light clay lamps?

5. What do people do for Diwali?

6. What are the beautiful doorstep designs called?

Card 2

Hanukkah

Every year, on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev, which usually falls in November or December, Jewish people all over the world celebrate the Festival of Light known as **Hanukkah**.

At Hanukkah, Jews remember the time long ago when their ancestors stood up to their Greek rulers who wanted them to worship many Gods but the Jewish people believed in only one God. The Greek rulers were so angry with the Jews for not believing in the same things, that they destroyed the Jews' beautiful temple in Jerusalem. This made the Jewish people very unhappy. But a brave Jewish group called the Maccabees fought the Greeks and won. They cleaned the temple in Jerusalem and lit their holy lamps. They thought there was only enough oil to keep their lamps burning for one day, but it lasted for eight days - a miracle! It is this miracle that is at the heart of this wonderful eight day festival.



To celebrate the miracle of the oil holy lamps, Jewish families light one candle of the Hannukah menorah (a special candle holder) on each night of the eight day festival.

Card 2 Questions

1. When is Hanukkah usually celebrated?

2. Who celebrates Hanukkah?

3. How many Gods do the Jewish people worship?

4. Who fought the Greek rulers?

5. What is a Hanukkah menorah?

6. How long does the Hanukkah festival last?

Chinese New Year

Card 3

Chinese New Year is a wonderful festival celebrated every year, not just in China, but in countries all over the world. It is a time for feasting with the family, fireworks and gift giving. It is a 15 day holiday beginning on the first day of a new moon and ending with the full moon on the day of the Lantern Festival.

Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival. It is the most important celebration in the Chinese calendar. In Chinese tradition, each year is named after one of twelve animals, which feature in the Chinese zodiac: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Boar.

So the animals will have a year dedicated to them once every 12 years, in a cycle.

This is an image of the Chinese Zodiac. The animals always appear in this sequence moving in a clockwise direction.



Card 3 Questions

1. How do people celebrate Chinese New Year?

2. How long does the holiday last?

3. What is Chinese New Year also known as?

4. What are the years in the Chinese calendar named after?

5. How many animals are in the Chinese zodiac?

6. If it is the Year of the Rat this year, what will it be next year?

Card 4

Thanksgiving Day

Thanksgiving is a holiday celebrated in America every year on the fourth Thursday in November. Many people use it as a day to spend time with their families, think about all the good things in life and share a special meal. Nearly everyone gets one or two days off school or work, and it marks the beginning of the Christmas holiday season.



Thanksgiving Day goes back to the time when Europeans travelled over to start new lives in America. In 1621 a group of Europeans, who became known as the 'Pilgrims', invited the local Native Americans to join them in a feast. The Pilgrims had had trouble growing enough food to eat in the years before but the Native Americans taught the Pilgrims how to grow crops successfully and, to thank them for this, the Pilgrims invited them to a big feast.

Card 4 Questions

1. In which country is Thanksgiving celebrated?

2. When does Thanksgiving take place each year?

3. What do people do for Thanksgiving?

4. Who did the 'Pilgrims' invite to their feast?

5. What did the Native Americans teach the 'Pilgrims'?

6. Which Christian festival is celebrated shortly after Thanksgiving?

Card 5

Christmas

Christmas is a Christian holy day that marks the birth of Jesus, who Christians believe to be the Son of God. It is celebrated each year on the 25th December.

The story of Jesus' birth (also known as the nativity) is often retold by children taking part in nativity plays.

Christian church services at Christmas include the singing of carols. These are happy songs which tell the Christmas story. Some Christians start Christmas Day with a midnight communion service (also called a midnight mass).

Christmas dinners are also an important part of the celebrations. Families and friends will share food together, eating traditional foods, such as turkey, mince pies and Christmas puddings.



Card 5 Questions

1. In which religion is Christmas a holy day?

2. Who do Christians believe to be the son of God?

3. What is the story of Jesus' birth known as?

4. What are Christmas carols?

5. What is midnight mass?

6. Name two traditional Christmas foods?

Card 6

Holi

Holi is a popular Hindu festival. Also known as "The Festival of Colours", it is an extremely exciting and beautiful event. Hindus celebrate Holi to welcome the arrival of spring.

This two-day Hindu festival originates in India. On the first day, people gather around a bonfire and celebrate good triumphing over evil. However, it's the second day that most people will recognise because brightly coloured, perfumed powder called **gula** is thrown at everybody.



As well as celebrating the end of winter, this truly unique religious festival, celebrates the victory of good over evil.

Card 6 Questions

1. Why do Hindus celebrate Holi?

2. Where did Holi originate?

3. How long does Holi last?

4. What is Holi also known as?

5. What happens on the first day of Holi?

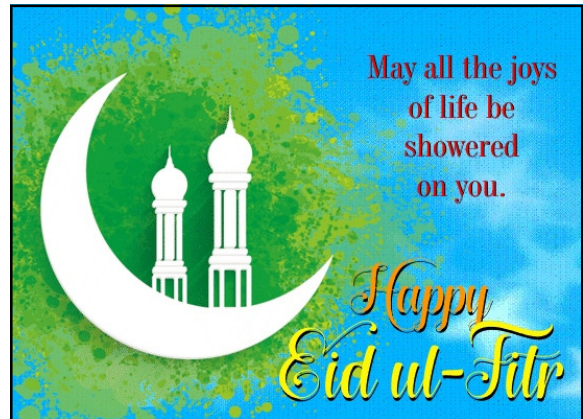
6. What is **gula**?

Card 7

Eid ul-Fitr and Ramadan

Eid ul-Fitr is an important Islamic religious festival. It is a time when Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims don't eat or drink between dawn and sunset. This is called fasting. Fasting is important during Ramadan as it allows Muslims to devote themselves to their faith and come closer to Allah, or God.

At the end of Ramadan, there is a three-day festival which marks the end of the fasting. It is called Eid ul-Fitr - the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast. It begins when the first sight of the new moon is seen in the sky. Muslims across the world begin Eid celebrations by partaking in communal dawn prayers, followed by a short sermon. After Eid prayers, people head home to spend the day visiting relatives and neighbours and accepting sweets as they move around from house to house. Children, dressed in new clothes, are offered gifts and money to celebrate this joyous occasion.



Card 7 Questions

1. Who celebrates the end of Ramadan?

2. What do Muslims do during Ramadan?

3. How long does Eid ul-Fitr last?

4. What does Eid ul-Fitr mean?

5. When does Eid ul-Fitr begin?

6. What might children be offered during the celebrations?

Card 8 The Holy Week of Easter

Easter is the most important festival in the Christian calendar. It celebrates Jesus rising from the dead, three days after he was crucified.

The Holy week of Easter begins on Palm Sunday and celebrates Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Crowds of people came out of the city to greet him, throwing down palm branches on the road.

On Maundy Thursday Christians remember when Jesus ate the Passover meal with his disciples, breaking bread and drinking wine. Christians refer to this meal as the Last Supper. Good Friday is the Friday before Easter Sunday. It commemorates the execution of Jesus by crucifixion. Easter Sunday marks Jesus' resurrection.

Christians believe that, through his resurrection, Jesus overcame death and sin. This offers people the promise of eternal life if they follow his teachings.



Card 8 Questions

1. When did Jesus rise from the dead?

2. What is celebrated on Palm Sunday?

3. What do Christians remember on Maundy Thursday?

4. What does Good Friday commemorate?

5. How many days after his execution did Jesus rise from the dead?

6. What do Christians believe they will be offered if they follow the teachings of Jesus?

Card 9

Pesach

In Judaism, Passover, or Pesach, celebrates the freedom of the Jews from slavery in ancient Egypt. Over 3,000 years ago, a group of Jewish people called the Israelites were being kept in slavery by the rulers of Egypt called Pharaohs. A man called Moses went to see the Pharaoh many times to ask him to let them go, but the Pharaoh refused. Moses told him that if he did not release them, God would make terrible things (called plagues) happen to the Egyptians. But the Pharaoh did not listen, so God sent many plagues. Not wanting the Jewish people to suffer, God made sure that the plagues "passed over" their homes. This is where the name "Passover" comes from. For the last plague, even the Pharaoh's own son was killed. The Pharaoh summoned Moses and told him to take the Israelites out of Egypt immediately. Finally, after 200 years of slavery, the Jewish people were free. Every year, Jewish people remember this story and celebrate their freedom with family and friends with a very special service and meal called **Seder**.



Card 9 Questions

1. In which religion is Pesach celebrated?

2. Which group of people did the Egyptians enslave?

3. Who went to see the Pharaoh?

4. What are plagues?

5. For how many years were the Jewish people enslaved?

6. What is the name of the special Pesach meal?

Card 10

Mardi Gras - Fat Tuesday

Mardi Gras is a Christian festival celebrated in many countries around the world (mainly those with large Roman Catholic populations) on the day before the religious season of Lent begins.

The word **Mardi** is the French word for Tuesday, and **gras** means "fat." In France, the day before Ash Wednesday came to be known as Mardi Gras, or "Fat Tuesday."

Traditionally, in the days leading

up to Lent, people would binge on all the rich, fatty foods (meat, eggs, milk, lard, cheese) that remained in their homes, in readiness for the weeks during Lent when they would eat a far more limited diet with no meat.

Nowadays, many countries throughout the world celebrate Mardi Gras with huge, colourful parades, costumes, music and dancing. These start in the weeks leading up to Mardi Gras (a period of "fattening up") and are known as **Carnival**, which actually means "farewell to meat".



Card 10 Questions

1. When does Mardi Gras take place?

2. What do the words **Mardi** and **Gras** mean in French?

3. What did people used to do in the days leading up to Lent?

4. Which populations are likely to celebrate Mardi Gras?

5. How is Mardi Gras celebrated nowadays?

6. What does the word **Carnival** mean?