

Diwali - My favourite festival

1. Word association

What types of things do you associate with the words: festival - food - parties?

2. Festivals in your town

Are there any festivals celebrated in the Autumn in your region or town? Are any of them religious?

3. My favourite festivals

Read the text and match these headings to each paragraph:

- celebrations in the temple
- Diwali and families
- celebrations in Leicester
- the meaning of Diwali
- the legend associated with Diwali

Who celebrates Diwali?

What does Diwali celebrate?

When do they celebrate?

My favourite festival – Erisha Singh

Every Autumn I go to stay with my cousins in Leicester so we can all celebrate Diwali together. My family are Hindus, our grandparents came to Britain from India. Diwali is the biggest Hindu festival and people celebrate it all over the world. We come to Leicester because it has the largest Hindu population in Britain and the celebrations are fantastic. Diwali is a magical time for children because of the lights. We light candles and lamps called divas in our homes, especially in the windows. All the streets, houses and shops are decorated with light. Diwali comes from the Sanskrit word Deepavali which means 'rows of lights'. It is our festival of Light and starts the Hindu year. If we light our house well, we will have good fortune because the Goddess of wealth and prosperity, Lakshmi, will see our lights.

At Diwali we tell the legend of the Hindu god, Lord Rama. He had a beautiful wife called Sita and she was captured by the demon king Ravana. Lord Rama fought the demon king and rescued his wife. We celebrate Rama's return with his wife. It signifies that good triumphs over Evil. People light their lamps to celebrate the god Rama's victory.

On the first day of Diwali I walk to the temple in the next street with all my family. We always dress in our best clothes. My grandmother makes me a new Indian sari to wear for Diwali every year. We spend a long time getting ready, putting on bright clothes and jewellery. Lots of our friends come to the temple and we sing, dance and enjoy ourselves. My cousin plays an Indian instrument called a harmonium at the temple. There are always delicious sweet foods to eat. This starts five days of celebrations, my favourite five days of the year.

Back at my Uncle's house we exchange presents and eat lots of good Indian food. Many more relatives come over to celebrate with us and it is a very special time for families. If anyone has had an argument it is a good time to make friends and forget the past. Some people say that it is a sort of Christmas for Hindus.

In Leicester the Asian community is very proud of their celebrations. There are very big crowds with music, dancing and fireworks. 6,500 Diwali lights are switched on in the streets and we have a big party in the streets on Diwali day. This year Diwali day falls on October 26th.

4. Post reading

- Describe a typical Diwali day for Erisha:
“She gets up in her cousin’s house and then she... “
- Describe three things people do to celebrate Diwali.

5. Interpretation

- Why are the celebrations in Leicester special?
- Why is Diwali important for families?

6. Superstitions

- What will happen if you light your house well during the 5 days of Diwali?
- Are there any superstitions in your country or town?
- Are any superstitions associated with festivals?

7. Legends

Retell the legend of Diwali in your own words. Use these words to help you:

Lord	demon	fight
Rama	King	rescue
god	Ravana	return
Sita	capture	

Are there any legends in your area?

Are they associated with:

- particular times of the year (Spring/Winter/Autumn)?
- with special days?
- with local or national festivals?
- with religious festivals?

8. My favourite festival:

Make notes on your favourite festival or a special day that you celebrate with friends or family.

Think of these things:

- food
- clothes
- music
- customs
- activities.

Interview each other about your favourite festival.