

# LIGHT IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (NON-STATUTORY)

### Learning objectives

- ◆ Understand how religious festivals are related to key figures, events and stories and how these are celebrated within families and religious communities
- ◆ Appreciate places of religious importance, exploring through visits, their meaning and significance

## ENGLISH

### Learning objectives

- ◆ Develop positive attitudes to reading and understanding of what they read
- ◆ Recognise some different forms of poetry (for example, free verse, narrative poetry)
- ◆ Develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by writing poetry



## LIGHT IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

### Discover

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### Resources

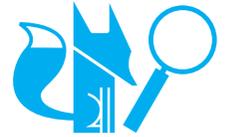
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## LIGHT IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

### DISCOVER



Activity 1 Duration: 30 mins  
Activity 1 Duration: 30 mins

#### Setting the scene

Explain that this topic will encourage pupils to explore the significance of light in a range of religious and cultural celebrations, and the ways in which they are celebrated around London. This first lesson will focus on Hanukkah, the festival of light in Judaism. Pupils will also study other religious/cultural festivals of light in the remainder of this topic.

Ask pupils if they know of any religious festivals of light, they might cite Diwali and Hannukah. Ask them if they know the reason why the festivals of light are celebrated, what are the stories behind them?

#### Activity 1: Hanukkah and the Little Jug of Oil

Begin this section of the lesson by discussing pupils' responses to light. Draw a light bulb or candle outline on the whiteboard and ask pupils to give you words or phrases to finish the sentence starting with 'light is...' Write these inside the outline.

Then sit pupils in a circle, light a large candle in the centre. Allow pupils time to reflect.

Surround the flame with words they have associated with light, then extinguish the flame and ask pupils to write what they now feel. Encourage pupils to think about sources of light and the feelings/emotions evoked, contrast them to those evoked with darkness.

#### Activity 2: Hanukkah and the Little Jug of Oil

Read the story in Fact sheet 2: Hanukkah and the Little Jug of Oil (page 98) to the whole class.

After reading the story, ask some comprehension questions to check that they understand the events in the story, and then some questions to encourage pupils to identify the significance of the story to those who practice Judaism.

Some questions could include:

- ◆ What is a Menorah?
- ◆ What happened when the Greek king poured oil into the Menorah?
- ◆ Who were the Maccabees?
- ◆ Who was the leader of the Maccabees?
- ◆ Why do you think the Menorah did not light for the Greek king?
- ◆ Why did it light for the Maccabees?
- ◆ Why do you think Jewish people celebrate this story with a festival?

## LIGHT IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

### EXPLORE

The visit for this topic could focus on further exploring Hanukkah, or could explore a different religious, or cultural, festival of light that is celebrated in London.

Some suggestions for places to visit include:

- ◆ A synagogue to learn more about Hanukkah
- ◆ A mandir to learn about the Hindu festival of light, Diwali
- ◆ A church to learn about the Christian festival of Christmas

We recommend that you contact the place of worship directly to ask if they might be able to accommodate your school group. They might offer to give you a tour and/or a talk regarding the festival of light you're interested in.

If your teaching of this unit coincides with Diwali, you might like to visit the Diwali Festival on Trafalgar Square, held annually in October. No tickets are required so it is accessible to all.

Additionally, an 8-day celebration of Hanukkah takes place on Trafalgar Square every year in December. If your teaching of this unit coincides with this festival then you might like to use this as your explore visit.

Finally, if your teaching of this unit coincides with Christmas, you might like to explore your local high street, analysing the lights and their cultural/religious significance.



DIWALI ON TRAFALGAR SQUARE

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HANUKKAH ON TRAFALGAR SQUARE

© Kois Miah

## LIGHT IN RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

### CONNECT



Duration: 45 mins

#### Setting the scene

Introduce pupils to Activity sheet 1: Light poetry (pages 101–103). Explain the mechanics of an acrostic poem to pupils: A poem that uses the letters of a word to begin each line vertically. Off of each vertical letter, another word or phrase is written that begins with the same letter.



#### Activity 1: Light Poetry

Invite suggestions for words that could be used in an acrostic poem, to describe the use of light in festivals that they will have studied in this unit. Encourage pupils to reflect on how these festivals are celebrated in their local communities/ across London as a whole. You might like to write these words on the whiteboard to scaffold pupils and complete either the 'light' or the 'darkness' acrostic poem as a whole class to support pupils before they write their own.

During independent working, you could ask pupils to complete an acrostic poem from Activity sheet 1: Light poetry (pages 101–103) choosing from the words Light, Darkness, Candle, Flame, Diva or Menorah.

Encourage pupils to reflect on their learning from this unit when planning/ completing their poems. They will have studied different cultural and religious uses of light; they might like to focus on one of those uses in their poems, or a range of those uses. Also encourage pupils to reflect on the candle activity from the discover lesson: what did the light from the candle prompt them to think? How did they feel when the candle was extinguished?

You could ask pupils to accompany their poems with an illustration to represent the concepts explored in their poems.

You might like to create a 'Light Poetry' book from pupils' poems, to display in school and share with other classes.



## FACT SHEET 1: FESTIVALS OF LIGHT

Many religious and cultural traditions use light in their celebrations. Light is very often an important symbol in festivals and ceremonial celebrations. In this topic, we'll explore the use of light in some traditional religious and cultural celebrations and the way in which people who live in London celebrate them.

First, we'll explore the Jewish festival of light, Hanukkah (you may prefer to use the word Chanukah). You'll then be given the opportunity to explore other religious or cultural uses of light.

Some examples of festivals involving light are listed below:

- ◆ Diwali, Hindu festival of light
- ◆ St Lucia's Day in Sweden
- ◆ St Martin's Day in the Netherlands
- ◆ O-bon the Japanese homage to ancestors in July
- ◆ Loi Krathong (loy-kruh-thong) festival in Thailand
- ◆ Kwansaa celebrated by African-Americans in the US
- ◆ Lantern Festival of Chinese New Year
- ◆ Pingxi Lantern Festival in Taiwan
- ◆ Festival of lights in Lyon
- ◆ Las Fellas, Fire festival in Spain
- ◆ East Pretoria festival of lights



CHINESE NEW YEAR LANTERNS

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## FACT SHEET 1: FESTIVALS OF LIGHT



KWANSAA IN THE USA  
© AP PHOTO/FREE PRESS, ZACH FRAILEY



DIWALI  
© WWW.MAAVAISHNAVI.COM



ST MARTIN'S DAY IN  
THE NETHERLANDS  
© Kitchenlioness



## FACT SHEET 2: HANUKKAH AND THE LITTLE JUG OF OIL

Hanukkah, the festival of dedication, or the festival of lights, begins on the twenty fifth day of Kislev (November or December) in commemoration of the Maccabees' victory over the mighty Syrian and Greek armies of Antiochus Epiphanes. The armies intended to destroy the Jewish nation, its religion and its culture. The Jews succeeded in recapturing the capital city of Judea, Jerusalem and recapturing their Holy Temple in 165 B.C.

Hanukkah is celebrated by lighting candles each night of the Festival.

In the synagogue, prayers are offered during the festival and blessings and psalms are recited. At home, festival dishes are eaten, often pancakes.

The pupils play games with a Sevivon or Dreidel (Hanukkah spinning top), on the four sides of which are engraved the four letters: Nun, Gimmel, Hey and Shin, the first letters of: Ness Gadol Hayah Sham, meaning; "A great miracle happened there." In Israel the shin is replaced by Peh or Poh, meaning "here."

At schools and synagogues, plays and concerts take place during the Hanukkah week.

'The Little jug of Oil' story explains the events that led to the celebration of Hanukkah.



CANDLE OIL LAMPS  
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## FACT SHEET 2: HANUKKAH AND THE LITTLE JUG OF OIL

### THE LITTLE JUG OF OIL

#### Chapter 1

Many many centuries ago there stood a Menorah (lamp) in the holy temple in Jerusalem. It was made of pure gold and was called "the eternal light", because it was burning all day and night.

The Greeks arrived in Jerusalem and erected what many people thought to be an ugly statue in the Holy Temple. The Eternal Menorah saw the statue and vowed: "My pure sacred lights shall not illuminate this ugly idol!" The lights went out at once.

The Greek King was angered and shouted to his soldiers: "light it!" The soldiers obeyed, but the lights refused to burn. "Bring more oil!" the maddened King commanded. The frightened soldiers hastened to bring more oil. They poured it into the Menorah, tried to light it, but it still would not light.

The King wondered: "perhaps this oil is not pure enough! Go and find the choicest oil!" he ordered. The soldiers searched all over the city and brought the best oil they could obtain. The King himself poured the oil in the Menorah and tried to light it. The lights refused to burn.

"This Menorah requires some special oil!" the King decided, and ordered his soldiers to search the Temple for a special oil.

The King was right. There was a specially prepared oil in the Temple. It was made by the priests for the Eternal Menorah. Jugs filled with oil and sealed with the seal of the High priest stood in

a separate room of the Holy Temple. The Greek soldiers found the jugs and brought them to the overjoyed King.

"Now," exclaimed the King, "we will light this stubborn Menorah in honour of our God!" He broke the seal of one of the jugs and a heavenly fragrance filled the room. He poured the oil into the Menorah, lit it, but the lights went out at once. The King tried another jug, a third, a fourth. He opened every jug, but the result was the same.

The king became furious. He dashed the golden Menorah to the floor and kicked the jugs with his feet. Then he stormed out of the temple, leaving the jugs overturned, their precious oil spilled on the floor.

Only one tiny jug filled with oil remained hidden in a corner, its seal untouched by Greek hands.



MENORAH  
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## FACT SHEET 2: HANUKKAH AND THE LITTLE JUG OF OIL

### Chapter 2

There was a silence in the holy temple. The Greek idol stood dumb and motionless. Only the overturned Menorah wept quietly and spilled oil bubbled on the floor. The tiny jug shivered in its corner and prayed: "I hope these brutes never come back!"

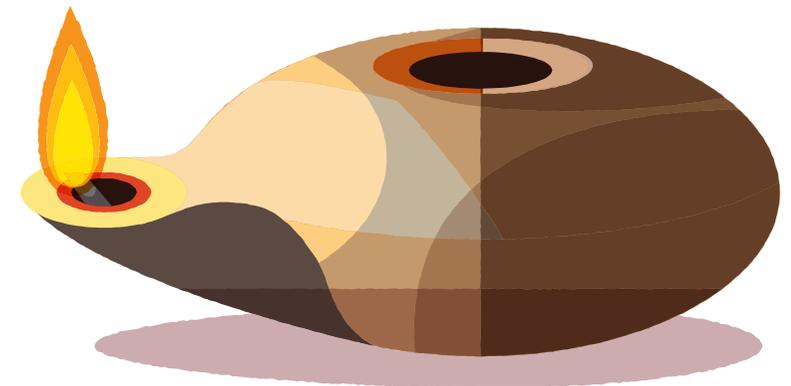
Many days and many nights passed. Then, one day voices were heard on the Mount of the Temple and steps came nearer and nearer to the entrance of the Holy House. The Menorah shuddered and the little jug shook with fear:

"They are coming back! They will spill my oil as they had done with the other jugs!" But its fear was in vain. These were not the voices and steps of the Greek soldiers. They were the voices and steps of the brave Maccabees and their heroic soldiers returning to the temple after their glorious victory over the mighty Greek army. They were coming back to clean the temple and to rededicate it to the service of God.

They entered the temple with songs of victory on their lips and flags of liberation in their hands. They smashed the statue of the Greek idol and threw it outside. They cleansed and polished the golden menorah until it glittered. They put it in its place and Judah Maccabee, the leader of the victorious army, went to light the Eternal light, but could not find any oil. He looked sadly at the overturned jugs and the pools of oil on the floor and wondered: "Where will we obtain oil to relight the Menorah?"

The little jug in the corner understood Judah's thoughts. It rolled from its corner and stopped at Judah's feet; he picked it up, broke its seal and looked inside. The tiny jug was full of oil, but Judah sighed: "One night. What will we do tomorrow and a day after tomorrow? It will take the priests at least a week to prepare pure oil!"

But then, a miracle happened. They poured the oil from the little jug into the Menorah day after day, and the jug was always full. It lasted for eight days until the new oil was ready to be used. During these eight days the people celebrated Hanukkah, the festival of Rededication, with lights in their homes, bonfires in the streets and songs of praise to God for the defeat of their enemies...





## ACTIVITY SHEET 1: LIGHT POETRY

Title of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

L

I

G

H

T



Title of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

D

A

R

K

N

E

S

S

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## ACTIVITY SHEET 1: LIGHT POETRY

Title of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

**F**

**L**

**A**

**M**

**E**



Title of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

**C**

**A**

**N**

**D**

**L**

**E**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## ACTIVITY SHEET 1: LIGHT POETRY

Title of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

**D**

**I**

**V**

**A**



Title of poem: \_\_\_\_\_

**M**

**E**

**N**

**O**

**R**

**A**

**H**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_