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# Diwali — Festival of Lights

A Hindu festival lesson

## About this lesson

Diwali is one of the most important Hindu festivals — also celebrated by Sikhs and Jains. It falls in October or November and lasts five days. This lesson teaches the story behind it, what it means to those who celebrate, and how it's marked in Hindu families today. Designed for a single 45-60 minute lesson.

## The story of Rama and Sita

Long ago in ancient India, Prince Rama was the rightful heir to the throne. But his stepmother wanted her own son to be king instead, so she had Rama banished to the forest for 14 years. His wife Sita and brother Lakshmana went with him. While in the forest, the demon king Ravana kidnapped Sita and took her to the island of Lanka. Rama, with the help of his loyal monkey friend Hanuman and an army of monkeys, fought Ravana and rescued Sita. When Rama and Sita returned home to the city of Ayodhya, the people lit small oil lamps (diyas) along the path to welcome them home. Light defeated darkness; good defeated evil. This is why Diwali is celebrated with lights to this day.

## Families celebrate Diwali

Five days of celebration

- Day 1 (Dhanteras): cleaning the house, buying new things
- Day 2 (Naraka Chaturdashi): early morning bath, prayers
- Day 3 (Lakshmi Puja): the main day — lighting diyas, prayers to goddess Lakshmi
- Day 4 (Govardhan Puja): celebrating Krishna



- Day 5 (Bhai Dooj): celebrating siblings
- Lighting oil lamps (diyas) and candles around the home
- Drawing rangoli — colourful patterns on the floor using rice, flour or sand
- Wearing new clothes
- Sharing sweets and special foods (laddoo, barfi, jalebi)
- Fireworks in the evening
- Visiting family and friends
- Praying to Lakshmi (goddess of wealth and prosperity) for a good year ahead

## Why Diwali matters

Diwali celebrates light overcoming darkness — both literally (lamps in dark autumn nights) and symbolically (good defeating evil, knowledge defeating ignorance). For Hindus, it is a time of new beginnings: forgiving old grudges, starting fresh, welcoming prosperity. Sikhs also celebrate Diwali (called Bandi Chhor Divas) — remembering when Guru Hargobind was released from prison and lights were lit to welcome him home. The festival is celebrated by over a billion people worldwide and is now a public holiday in countries including India, Nepal, Singapore and Trinidad.

## Reflection

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