



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Celebrations of the Season

The holiday season and new year present great opportunities to incorporate social studies into your literacy instruction. This is a fun way to address "Listen to, read, and discuss text from different cultures and time periods, with assistance" (3.K.7- language arts), "Develop an awareness of traditional U.S. and Nevada patriotic activities, holidays, or symbols" (C13K.5A), and "Recognize maps and globes as representations of places" (G5K.1B) from our social studies CEF and "...answer a research question" (6.K.9) from our ELA standards. *Jingle Bells* by Iza Trapani is a wonderful book that covers several of the winter holidays in the context of "Jingle Bells," a song that most children already know. Here are some winter holidays, along with some read-aloud suggestions, that



you may want to teach and celebrate in your classroom.

Hanukkah (December 11-December 19): Read a book such as *Light the Lights* by Margaret Moorman or *Hanukkah* by Miriam Nerlove and teach your students about the traditions and history of Hanukkah.

St. Lucia Day (December 13): This is a holiday celebrated in Sweden, which is marked by lighting candles in honor of St. Lucia. *Hanna's Christmas* by Melissa Peterson shares the Swedish tradition of the Tomte, a Christmas gnome similar to Santa Claus, who gives out presents.



Christmas (December 25): You can read one or more of many popular books from your own library about Christmas that cover traditions from gift-giving to tree decorating. Be sure to share the history of such traditions. Christmas is celebrated in Mexico with Las Posadas, and includes the lighting of luminarias. In Italy,

children put out their shoes for "La Befana" to fill with gifts.

Kwanzaa (December 26-January 1): This is an African-American holiday that celebrates the values of family, community, and culture. Observances of Kwanzaa include the lighting of seven candles on a Kenara, which represent the seven principles of Kwanzaa. You can research more about Kwanzaa by reading such books as, *The Sound of Kwanzaa* by Dimitrea Tokunbo, or *Seven Candles for Kwanzaa* by Andrea Davis Pinkney.



Chinese New Year (February 14): Celebrated in China as the "Spring Festival," 2010 will be the "Year of the Tiger." *Dragon Dance* by Joan Holub is a good book to teach your students about the fun things to do for Chinese New Year.

As your students research and learn about each tradition, be sure to mark the location on your classroom globe and/or world map.

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Idea Corner

To help your children experience firsthand the celebrations and traditions of the winter holidays, you can set up stations in your classroom. You can also use the different holiday ideas presented for your winter holiday celebration that takes place before winter break. Teachers may want to collaborate and celebrate one or two of a culture's traditions in their classroom, having the students rotate through all the class-

rooms. However you choose to do it, here are some ideas to help you celebrate the cultural traditions of the winter holidays: **Hanukkah:** Teach your students to play Dreidel. Be sure to have plenty of "gelt" (gold coins) on hand for the winners! For directions, see http://www.ehow.com/how_5638_play-dreidel-game.html.

St. Lucia Day: Make a candle holder using a small jar, and

cover it with small tissue squares glued on with a white glue/water mixture to create a stain-glass effect. Add a tealight when finished.

Christmas: Have students take off their shoes before entering your room. While you read them a Christmas book, have a parent helper put small gifts in their shoes.

Kwanzaa: Have each child bring fruit to make a large fruit salad.

Discuss Kwanzaa's values and its meaning, "first fruits" as the student enjoy the fruit salad that they all helped to make.

Chinese New Year: Celebrate the Year of the Tiger by making a tiger mask, using a paper plate or circle cut from poster board, and a craft stick. Students may make stripes with markers, crayons or strips of orange and black tissue paper. Use a black triangle for the nose and cut out circles for eyes.